

POPULATION NEEDS

Introduction

Since 1990, the youth population in James City County has decreased in relation to the overall population, while the population over the age of 65 has seen a dramatic increase. Despite this, the number of youth and aging citizens has continued to increase as the population of the County has risen. The needs of both the youth and senior population segments remain important concerns for many residents and County agencies and many of the issues that face both groups are the same: availability of transportation, affordable health care, and recreational activities.

Like the 2001 Community Services report *Strategic Plan for Children and Youth*, this section summarizes the current status of youth within the County and identifies objectives ensuring that “all children and youth in our community will be valued as an asset, and as such, will be given every opportunity to grow up healthy, safe, and prepared for a positive future.”

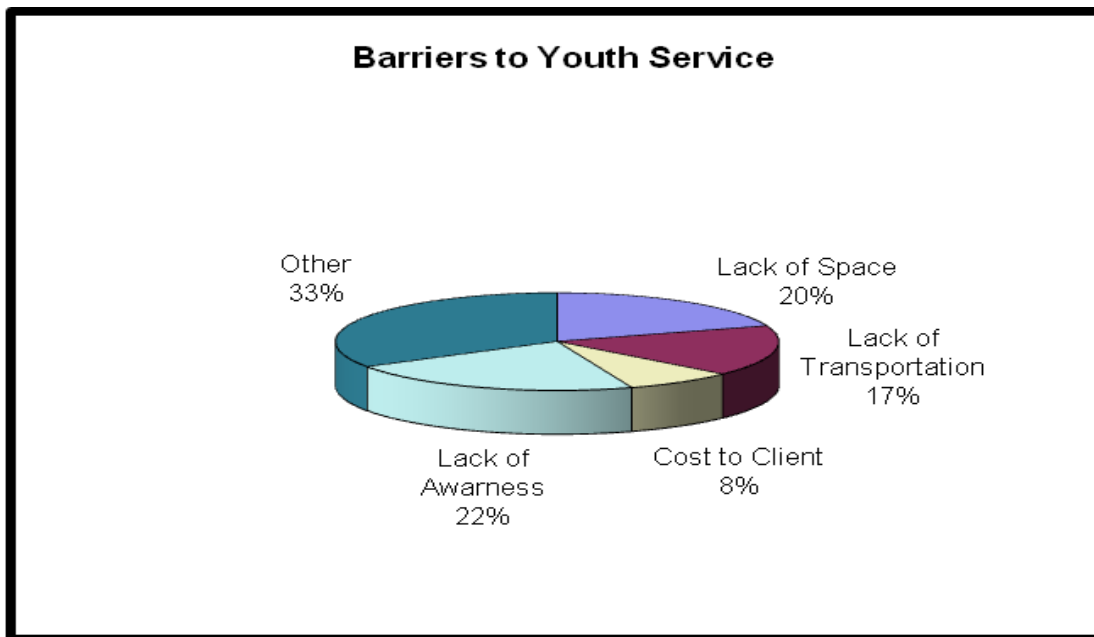
While senior services are new to this section of the Comprehensive Plan, it is intended to serve as a start to promoting, building, and sustaining a healthier and safer community for seniors through a comprehensive senior services system in James City County.

Status of Youth in James City County

The youth population of James City County (residents under 18) has decreased in proportion to other demographic groups. Despite this, the raw numbers show substantial growth, from 8,493 in 1990 to 13,183 in 2006. This growth has placed an increased demand for youth services in the County.

In focus group sessions conducted for the Community Services’ *Strategic Plan for Children and Youth* to determine barriers to youth services, participants’ most popular response was lack of awareness, with 22% stating this as their most significant obstacle. As a result, increasing public information efforts is a critical component of the Comprehensive Plan. Other barriers noted were the lack of space for programs and services, lack of adequate transportation, and direct cost to client. These barriers also affect the larger considerations of child care, recreation facilities, and community economic development.

These barriers were further validated during recent focus groups conducted by Parks and Recreation and Social Services to develop the *Community Needs Assessment* as part of a federal requirement to continue funding for youth service initiatives.



Source: James City County Strategic Plan for Children and Youth 2001

Youth Leadership

James City County Parks and Recreation and Virginia Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development have identified key leadership skills that will enable youth to gain a better understanding of themselves, their peers, and their community and have integrated these skills into their programming. Their belief is that youth should be given the opportunity to be involved in decision-making that directly impacts their lives and their communities. The Youth Advisory Council, Teens Towards Success, and 4-H Leadership programs provide mechanisms through which young people can shape and influence the decision-making that affects their lives and communities.

The G.R.E.A.T program, Too Good for Drugs, Peer Mediation, and Computers for Kids are all additional County programs aimed at teaching children good decision-making and positive communication skills while providing them with increased potential for academic achievement. The private sector offers many other programs and services for youth. Organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girl Scouts, and the YMCA are just a few of the ones available to young people in our community.

Status of Seniors in James City County

The over 65 population of James City County has increased in proportion to other demographic groups. State and national Census data also show an increase, but not as great as that seen in James City County. In the County there were 8,097 citizens over the age of 65 in 2000. In 2006, Census data indicated an increase to 11,540 citizens. Growth of this population segment can be attributed to the natural aging of the population (baby-boomers aging in place) and people moving to James City County to retire. This substantial growth of the over 65 population has increased the demand for senior services in the County.

The 2000 Census and Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) project a 94% increase in the over 60 population in James City County by 2020 and a 117% increase in the over 85 population. By 2020 the VEC projects the over 65 population in James City County to be 21,051 people.

Three critical issues have been identified for the senior population: health care, housing, and employment.

Health Care: Necessary health care services are mainly provided by the private sector at this time. Older adult addiction, the need for additional geriatric psychiatric beds and personal care providers, and increased incidence of dementia, memory loss and Alzheimer's disease, have been cited as problems for the senior population. Also, the Census states that 2,681 people over the age of 65 (or 33% of those over 65) have a disability. The growing number of aging citizens requires a variety of different health care services and increases the need for additional affordable health care service providers in the coming years.

Housing: At the time of the 2000 Census, 1,706 of the 19,003 total households in the County were headed by individuals over the age of 65. Many seniors require different levels of daily care, and a large number of seniors are forced into situations where they can no longer live in their homes. There is a need for both affordable housing units for seniors, as well as affordable in-home care and services to allow seniors to remain in their homes as they age. Housing units need to be located along public transportation routes and adequately served by pedestrian facilities in order to accommodate seniors around the community.

Employment: Many seniors are on fixed incomes and are negatively impacted by inflation, forcing them to seek employment to support themselves. A study for the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance noted that the area's over 50 population comprises more than 18% of the workforce. Many of these individuals, in addition to those over 65, are skilled, well-educated, require little on-site job training, and many want to hold part-time employment positions. Efforts to increase and expand the area's job opportunities should include strategies informing employers of the availability of this potential workforce and encouraging them to employ these retirees.

While these issues are currently being addressed mainly by the private sector, public organizations need to be cognizant of these issues and must be prepared to respond should the private sector not be fully equipped.

Community Sustainability Spotlight

While all citizens of James City County are important, the youth and senior populations have specific needs that have been expressed as concerns by the community. In order to provide a healthy and safe community for these populations, James City County has identified the following strategic issues for sustaining a strong community:

Youth Share Leadership

- Youth need opportunities on both the local and regional level to share leadership and participate fully in decisions that affect them.
- Youth should be encouraged to engage in civic activities.
- Teens should be equipped with the proper skills to succeed in a job.
- Youth should have access to employment opportunities that provide training and work related skills.

Places to Go and Things to Do for Youth and Seniors

- Youth should have places specifically set aside for them that can be easily accessed and are affordable.
- James City County should have places and activities that entice young adults to choose the County as a place to live.

- A wide variety of age appropriate activities for all citizens, especially youth and seniors, should be available in neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods and public places in which youth meet and recreate should be safe.

Getting Around

- Youth and seniors should have knowledge about transportation accessibility and have options available both locally and regionally.
- Youth and seniors should have knowledge about how to get around using public transportation.
- Transportation should be available that meets the needs of individuals with special health issues and a variety of physical abilities.

Senior Needs

- Seniors should have access to affordable health care, housing, and services that allow them to age in place.
- Seniors should have access to housing options that range from independent living to skilled-care retirement centers.

By promoting these skills and goals, a community is preparing its young people for active roles in adulthood and providing the ability for seniors to maintain a high quality of life.

Citizen Commentary

From the 2007 Virginia Tech Citizen Survey, almost six in ten respondents rated the current recreational and cultural opportunities for youths in the County as either excellent or good. The most prevalent responses on the open-ended portion of the survey suggested specific desired activities for youths: more music venues, clubs, parks and recreational centers, activities or places where teens could go at night, and opportunities to reach these areas through public transportation. A number of respondents indicated that the County should ensure that these facilities are drug-free, safe, and affordable to residents of all income levels. Comments at the Community Conversations also referenced these ideas.

Respondents to the survey and participants at the Community Conversations raised healthcare, housing, transportation, and activities as important issues facing seniors in JCC.

Goals, Strategies and Actions for Population Needs

Goal: Ensure that all citizens, especially youth and seniors, have safe, affordable and convenient access to programs, services and activities.

Strategies and Actions:

1.1 Provide public transportation services and multi-modal access including the Williamsburg Area Transport Authority and future Greenway connections.

- 1.1.1 Provide public transportation and mobile services stops, within or adjacent to, new high density and multi-family housing and senior living communities.
- 1.1.2 Retrofit existing high density and multi-family developments and senior living communities to provide stops for public transportation and mobile services.

1.1.3 Implement the Greenway Master Plan.

1.1.3.1 Make youth and senior destinations more accessible from home and school, by foot and bicycle, by implementing the Bikeway, Sidewalk, Greenway, and Parks and Recreation Master Plans into the design of new development proposals.

1.1.3.2 Interconnect and create pedestrian and bikeway networks that serve destinations by using the Bikeway, Sidewalk, and Greenway Plans as guides.

1.1.4 Develop new partnerships and alternative means to increase the County's ability to provide transportation services.

1.1.5 Promote a variety of transportation options to address the needs of individuals with special health issues and a range of physical abilities.

1.1.6 Work with Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) to develop programs to increase ridership including, but not limited to the following:

1.1.6.1 Continuing to offer rides for middle and high school students in James City County and expanding marketing and cooperation within the school system.

1.1.6.2 Seeking grant funding to expand service to underserved growth areas such as Jamestown Road and High Street.

1.1.6.3 Implementing a transit pass system which offers reduced fare for riders who use the card instead of cash.

1.1.6.4 Conducting a comprehensive ridership analysis, including a rider survey, every three years to evaluate routes and hours of operation.

1.2 Provide recreational activities and locations geared toward specific interests and ages of youth, adults, and seniors.

1.2.1 Ensure that children and youth have adequate and safe facilities where they may participate in programs and services, including child care and where appropriate, home based child care businesses.

1.2.2 Collaborate with Child Development Resources to promote the importance of quality preschool service and affordable day-care as referenced in its plan, "*Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings*."

1.2.3 Ensure that seniors have adequate and safe facilities where they may participate in programs and services, including adult care and where appropriate, home based adult care businesses.

- 1.2.4 Encourage and promote additional safe and licensed child care businesses, including home-based child care, near adequate and accessible transportation routes.
- 1.2.5 Encourage and promote additional safe and licensed adult care businesses, including home-based adult care, near adequate and accessible transportation routes.
- 1.2.6 Assess recreational interests of County youth and seniors and form partnerships to create or enhance programs and facilities to serve these interests, and explore the preferred development and operations model for these programs and facilities given the character of the community.
- 1.2.7 Promote community arts and recreational activities inclusive of all ages and cultures.
- 1.2.8 Provide funding to the Historic Triangle Senior Center contingent upon its expanding programs throughout the County.
- 1.2.9 Work with community organizations to establish at least three family learning centers.
- 1.2.10 Include input from youth and seniors in all master plans for new parks.
- 1.2.11 Conduct a survey every two years through the Youth Advisory Council to identify and prioritize ideas for recreational activities/locations for youth.

1.3 Advocate costs that promote all citizens', especially youths' or seniors', ability to participate in programs, services, and events; to visit facilities; and to access healthcare and housing.

- 1.3.1 Continue to pro-rate membership to community centers and cost of programs according to income.
- 1.3.2 Continue to support quality pre-school services for all at-risk children.
- 1.3.3 Promote community health care centers for persons of all ages and cultures within close proximity to where people live.
- 1.3.4 Promote affordable senior housing options, from independent living to Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) and skilled care, for all.
- 1.3.5 Continue to offer free times at the James City/Williamsburg Community Center.
- 1.3.6 Continue to provide free access to the James River Community Center for youth.
- 1.3.7 Increase the participation of eligible families enrolled in the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan (FAMIS) and Food Stamps programs by increasing their awareness of the plans.
- 1.3.8 Seek grant funding to construct senior housing.

- 1.3.9 Develop a program that allows youth to volunteer in exchange for free or reduced fees for recreational programs.
- 1.3.10 Increase funding for scholarships for recreation programs.

1.4 Coordinate public and private programs and services for citizens, especially youth and seniors, in James City County and increase awareness of services.

- 1.4.1 Implement the specific strategies proposed in the James City County Department of Community Services *Strategic Plan for Children and Youth*.
- 1.4.2 Educate and promote citizens about available physical health, mental health, and social services benefits.
- 1.4.3 Work with the Senior Services Coalition to develop a strategic plan for seniors.
- 1.4.4 Revise the *Strategic Plan for Children and Youth* every five years.
- 1.4.5 Participate in the development of community wide needs assessments and strategic plans initiated by community organizations and develop a process for staff to report on the progress of these efforts to the Board of Supervisors.

1.5 Promote citizen access to, and knowledge about, technological resources.

- 1.5.1 Facilitate extension or improvement of communications coverage in under-served areas of the County.
- 1.5.2 Provide access to hardware, software, and training so that all citizens can benefit fully from Web-based services and information.