



Healthy Community Assessment 2011

A Report
by the Healthy Community Council
on the Quality of Life
in Harrisonburg & Rockingham County

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Healthy Community Council
Harrisonburg-Rockingham County

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Executive Summary

The City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, located in the Central Shenandoah Valley, has a rich heritage, scenic surroundings, and is home to citizens with a strong sense of community. There are four institutions of higher education, a strong emphasis on agriculture as an industry, and a desire to further develop manufacturing and technological opportunities. The Healthy Community Assessment 2011 report, assembled by the Healthy Community Council (HCC), provides an overview of quality of life based on eight key areas. The HCC was formed in 1995 and conducted the first community assessment in 1996. This fourth assessment report provides key assets and challenges in the community.

Data from the **education** sector indicate that improvements are continuing, though concerns exist. Assessment results indicate that end-of-the-year Kindergarten students are ready for first grade instruction, and improvement on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment scores indicate that students are meeting the high expectations for mastery of content. Students are graduating from high school at a greater rate. Unfortunately, the literacy rate in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County is below that of Virginia and the United States.

The **health** of a community includes children, adults, and seniors. Very low birth weights for infants are lower than the state average. Teen pregnancy among 15-17-year-olds in Harrisonburg is nearly twice the State average. Troublesome results indicate a delay in prenatal visits until 7-9 months or at delivery. Among adults obesity has increased, another challenge to health. Overall adults and seniors rate themselves lower on perceived health this year. More people are paying more “out of pocket expenses” for health care. Most people are able to obtain needed health care in a timely manner, although Latinos face more challenges than non-Latinos.

Optimal **mental health and well-being** enhances quality of life. In the last five years, adult and seniors in both the City and County reported increased symptoms of serious psychological distress with a modest decline in symptoms reported among the Hispanic population. All three populations are well above national levels. Alcohol use and abuse among seniors has more than doubled since the 2006 survey. Disruption in employment activities of caregivers in both the City and County is higher than the national average.

Individual and corporate focus on preserving and protecting our **natural resources** has led to improvements in the health of our community. Fewer people are using chemicals on their lawns, more people are picking up waste after their pets, and fewer people are concerned about tap water quality. There has been a significant increase in sidewalks and bike lanes in both the City and County.

The bi-annual **Youth** Data Survey monitors current and longitudinal trends of priority risk behaviors that threaten the health and safety of young people. Data from the Youth Data Survey provides accurate and valid estimates of the prevalence of youth risk behaviors. The most recent Youth Data Survey (2009-10) reveals promising results about the youth in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Youth assets are increasing. They are pursuing those things that make them resilient and more likely to grow into confident, responsible, and healthy adults.

Executive Summary continued

The area's **economy** is growing after the 2008 downturn with new jobs and unemployment as indicators. The per capita income is rising and tourism continues to have modest increases. However, according to data from the United States Census Bureau, in 2010, the percentage of total number of children living in extreme poverty in Harrisonburg continues to be higher than the state and national averages.

Residents of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County have a strong tradition of working together to ensure **social well-being and harmony**; however, there are gaps in the community's safety net of services for the most vulnerable residents. Twice as many low-income households lack Internet access than households in the area generally, creating profound limitation on their abilities to access information that is readily available to others. Many households have difficulty in obtaining assistance with paying utilities, rent, or obtaining food in times of personal emergencies. Many of our residents, particularly senior citizens, have serious difficulty in obtaining needed transportation services.

According to survey responses on **infrastructure**, approximately 98 percent of our residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and approximately 95 percent trust our law enforcement personnel. Crimes related to assault, burglary, and property damage declined by approximately 17 percent over the past five years, but drug and narcotic offenses increased by approximately 21 percent. Despite a decline in housing values, a need remains for affordable work-force housing. An increasing number of persons are at risk for chronic homelessness, indicating a need for transitional and permanent supportive housing.

Accomplishments

The following are a few of the many accomplishments and outcomes from the use of Healthy Community Council assessment data:

- Harrisonburg Community Health Center
- Community Resource Center
- Generations Crossing
- Housing Continuum of Care
- Youth Council
- ElderAlliance
- Safe Routes to School Grants
- Bicycle Pedestrians Plans
- LEED certified buildings
- Recycling Center
- Healthcare for Homeless – Suitcase Clinic
- Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter
- Friendly City Food Co-op
- Turner Pavilion at the Farmer's Market
- Educational commercials developed for youth by youth to reduce alcohol usage
- Over \$10 million in funding

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Did You Know?

- Area schools continue to increase in number of students graduating from high school on time.
- The percent of local third through eighth-grade students passing their Standards of Learning assessments continues to increase indicating that more students are mastering the content of the core subjects being taught.
- High cholesterol and high blood pressure continue to top the chronic health conditions.
- Being “overweight”, as defined by health care providers, increased nine percent since 2006.
- The number of persons reporting symptoms of depression has increased since 2006.
- The percentage of adults who drink has continued to increase; alcohol use and abuse among seniors has more than doubled since the 2006 assessment.
- Seventy-eight percent of City and County residents report that they recycle.
- Employment opportunities and median family incomes are increasing; however, 20 percent of the families in Harrisonburg live below the poverty level.
- Since 2005, the average price of a home has decreased by approximately 14 percent; however, the median household income is below what is necessary to afford a median priced home.
- Harrisonburg City has nearly twice the Virginia state rate for teen pregnancies among 15 to 17 year olds.
- Monthly use of alcohol among youth in Harrisonburg and Rockingham is lower compared to the national data.
- Obtaining assistance with utilities, rent, and food in time of personal emergencies is reported as the most difficult service to access.
- Obtaining transportation services was the number one problem confronting senior citizens.
- Ninety eight percent of residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and 95 percent trust our local law enforcement personnel.

I ntroduction

For the 2011 Healthy Community Council (HCC) community-wide needs assessment, a committee was formed from the Healthy Community Council (HCC) Steering committee in March 2009. The committee reviewed the process and assessment instrument from 2006. The 2006 HCC Assessment committee obtained feedback at a community leaders' breakfast in June 2009 in preparation for the 2011 assessment. The committee, with community input, decided to keep the categories and the indicators evaluated in the 2006 assessment in order to obtain longitudinal data to assess trends within the community.

In October 2010, a random list of 5,000 residents were obtained from Survey Sampling International, Inc. (SSI). Of the 5,000 names purchased, 600 were cell phones and 4,400 were landlines. Cell phones were purchased in an effort to obtain a growing sample of individuals that no longer have landline phones. According to national data, over 10 percent of the population no longer have landline phones. Students from area universities contacted the 5,000 names to encourage participation in the assessment. Residents who agreed to participate were mailed an assessment instrument that was approved by the James Madison University Institutional Review Board (IRB) with reminder postcards mailed a week later.

Of the 1,927 assessment instruments mailed to community residents, approximately 750 were returned for a response rate of 40 percent, compared to a 42 percent response rate in 2006. A separate random list purchased from SSI was used to contact native speaking Latinos by telephone, utilizing a modified version of the 2011 HCC assessment instrument. Of the 500 names purchased, 205 completed the assessment for a 41 percent response rate.

Data for both the English-speaking and Hispanic assessments were entered into a statistical package (PASW) for data analysis. For quality assurance, every fifth entry (20%) was checked for accuracy.

Preliminary data analysis revealed that the data did not align with the United States Census for the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. In consultation with a doctoral level statistician, it was advised that the data be weighted by 1) age, 2) education, 3) sex, and 4) race. It was also suggested that the data be split by City and County because there was over-representation in the City in comparison to combining the locations, which was done in 2006. Readers should be aware when comparing 2006 data with 2011 data that the City and County were separated and the data was weighted for the 2011 assessment.

Data on our youth was obtained from the 2009-10 Youth Data Survey conducted by the Office on Children and Youth (OCY). This survey is administered to 50 percent of all eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders in Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County every two years. OCY has conducted the Youth Data Survey for 14 years with the longitudinal data revealing promising results about the youth in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

The tables that follow provide an overview of the demographics of those who completed the written English-speaking assessment and the Hispanic telephone assessment.

Demographics: Written English-speaking Survey

Rockingham County

Sex	Female Male	55% 45%
Marital Status	Married	71%
Education Level	High School GED College Degree Graduate	33% 5% 21% 18%
Income	Less than \$11,000 11,001-25,999 26,000-37,499 37,500-49,999 50,000-74,999 75,000-99,999 100,000-149,999 150,000 +	6% 17% 16% 16% 25% 10% 7% 5%
Age	less than 65 years 65 years and older	58% 42%
Race	Caucasian African American Asian Latino/Hispanic Other	98% 1% 0% 0% 1%

City of Harrisonburg

Sex	Female Male	63% 37%
Marital Status	Married	63%
Education Level	High School GED College Degree Graduate	24% 2% 26% 32%
Income	Less than \$11,000 11,001-25,999 26,000-37,499 37,500-49,999 50,000-74,999 75,000-99,999 100,000-149,999 150,000 +	3% 24% 7% 10% 29% 13% 11% 5%
Age	less than 65 years 65 years and older	57% 43%
Nationality	Caucasian African American Asian Latino/Hispanic Other	97% 2% 1% 1% 1%

Demographics: Hispanic Telephone Survey

City of Harrisonburg & Rockingham County

Sex	Female Male	70% 30%
Marital Status	Married	61%
Education Level	High School GED College Degree Graduate	24% 2% 26% 32%
Age	less than 65 years 65 years and older	97.5% 2.5%

Income	Less than \$11,000 11,001-25,999 26,000-37,499 37,500	11% 80% 8% 1%
Nationality	Mexican Honduran El Salvador Puerto Rican	52% 17% 14% 3%

Our Region

Geography: The Harrisonburg-Rockingham area covers 871 square miles of land and is home to about 125,228 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Alleghany Mountains form the western border of Rockingham County and the Blue Ridge Mountains form the eastern border; the county is situated at the headwaters of the Shenandoah River. Approximately 35 percent of Rockingham County is protected as National Forest/National Park land.

Climate: The Rockingham-Harrisonburg area enjoys mild winters and warm summers with an average annual temperature of 53 degrees and 35 inches of precipitation each year.

People: Based on the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the City of Harrisonburg has a population of 48,914. Seventeen percent are under the age of 18; 9 percent are over the age of 65; and the median age is 23. Rockingham County has a population of 76,314 with 23 percent under the age of 18; 14 percent are over the age of 65; and the median age is 39. *Virginia Atlas 2005* population breakdowns by race:

	White	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Other
Harrisonburg	78%	6%	4%	16%	12%
Rockingham	93%	2%	0.6%	5%	4%

Percentages above add to more than 100 percent, which reflects self-identification of more than one race.

Education: For the 2010-11 academic year there were 4,822 students enrolled in Harrisonburg and 11,921 in Rockingham. English as a Second Language (ESL) students accounted for 42 percent of students in Harrisonburg and 6 percent in Rockingham. In 2010, 339 graduated and 79 percent continued their educations in Harrisonburg. In Rockingham, 899 graduated and 73 percent indicated that they were continuing their educations. Data from the 2010 Census shows the following educational attainment:

	Harrisonburg	Rockingham
Less than High School	23%	23%
High School Graduates	27%	37%
Some College or Associate Degree	18%	20%
Bachelor, Graduate or Professional Degree	32%	21%

Work force: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) showed that 18,030 individuals, who resided in the City of Harrisonburg, were employed, and the average travel time to work was 15 minutes. In Rockingham County, 38,659 were employed with an average travel time of 22 minutes. Data from the 2010 Census reports the following data by occupation:

	Harrisonburg	Rockingham
Management, Professional	29%	29%
Sales, Office	23%	14%
Production, Transportation	15%	20%
Service	20%	14%
Construction/Maintenance	12%	13%
Farming, Forestry, Fishing	1%	2%

Get to know us . . .
the Healthy Community Council

www.healthycommunitycouncil.org.

Who we are and what we do

The Healthy Community Council is a gathering of representatives from more than 100 entities with a stake in the Harrisonburg/ Rockingham County Community—government, schools, business, higher education, health and human services, faith community, law enforcement, media—all working together to improve the quality of life in our community.

Our Mission

- To enhance the quality of life for the community through collaborative efforts of individuals, agencies, and institutions.

Our Vision

- Striving for a healthier community

Our Goals

- Assess community needs
- Identify priorities based on assessment data
- Facilitate and support community initiatives

Our 2011 Objectives

- Evaluate progress of 2006 HCC priorities
- Hold quarterly meetings to engage, educate, and inform stakeholders
- Report 2011 assessment results
- Identify 2011 assessment priorities and establish work groups

To Learn More

To find out more about the Healthy Community Council and the 2011 community-wide needs assessment, please visit the HCC web site at www.healthycommunitycouncil.org

Want to be a part of your community?

The Healthy Community Council meets once each quarter (January, March, June and September) to engage, educate and inform stakeholders. Please consider attending one of our meetings.

