

Activity Report Highlights

City of Staunton



EARLY VOTING BEGINS

Early voting for the 2024 General Election began on Friday, Sept. 20 and continues through Saturday, Nov. 2. The Voter Registration Office is on the first floor of City Hall, and voting is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Early voting will also be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2. The deadline to register to vote is Oct. 15, and the deadline to apply to vote by mail is Oct. 25. Absentee by mail ballots can be returned to the office in person, by mail, or by the official drop box located at the back entrance of City Hall. Any questions related voter registration and the election can be found online at www.staunton.va.us/voterinfo or by calling 540.332.3840.



August 2024

Dispatched Calls for Service*

Police 2,659 ↓

Fire & Rescue 320 ↑

Average Response Time month/year

Police 3'57"/4'03"

Fire & Rescue 4'58"/4'46"

*arrows indicate if calls are up or down compared to the previous month

By the Numbers

The Commissioner of Revenue's Office issued **40** new business licenses in August, compared to **21** in July.

11 trees were removed for the Library's terrace project.

Into the Future

The Housing Strategy Work Group meets **Sept. 30**.

Fall Plant Giveaway is **Oct. 3 at 4:15 p.m.**



CLERK'S CORNER: ST. FRANCIS

Mayor Stephen Claffey recently presented a proclamation in recognition of the completion of the historic renovations at St. Francis of Assisi Church. Many are aware that the 13th Century English Gothic style church was designed by T.J. Collins, but **did you know** that it was his first ever commission in Staunton? It's true! In 1895, Mr. Collins and his son, Samuel, designed what would become one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. Pictured, a bishop blesses the cornerstone of the new St. Francis church in 1895.



SDDA WELCOMES SMITH

On August 23, the SDDA announced the appointment of Darren Smith to lead the organization as its new executive director. Mr. Smith spent the past decade working to promote Downtown Staunton and other historic business districts across the Mid-Atlantic as the founder and CEO of Traipse Public Benefit Corporation, the developer of the Traipse smartphone app and other tools for local businesses.

TRANSIT HUB OPENS

At the end of August, City Council, staff, and members of the Planning District Commission gathered for a ribbon cutting for the new and improved Lewis Street Hub. The BRITE bus hub now includes a designated bus lane, ADA-accessible sidewalks, curb ramps with detectable warning surface plates, safety lighting, and new landscaping.



Notes from the City Manager

The City of Staunton was awarded a \$9 million grant by the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) to fund infrastructure improvements at Staunton Crossing. These funds will help pay for the construction of a 1-million-gallon water tower and water supply lines on the site, making it more appealing to potential developers. Staunton Crossing is located at the junction of I-81 and I-64 and is the former site of Western State Hospital. The Economic Development Authority purchased the 300 acres in 2009, and the

city has been preparing and marketing the site for future employers and manufacturers ready to call Staunton home. Long-range development plans allow for a wide variety of users, including a combination of offices, medical facilities, manufacturing, and limited retail. Staunton was one of 23 localities awarded funding across the Commonwealth, totaling \$126 million. The VBRSP is administered by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

August 2024 Activity Report

Community Development

Key Construction Project Updates

Middlebrook Trace

A Certificate of Occupancy has been issued for 601 Moore St Building 2000, a three-story apartment building, consisting of 41 dwelling units.

Staunton Apartments II

Footers are being poured for Building 400, a 10-unit, 12,900 square foot apartment building at 1013 Seth Dr. A building permit application has been submitted for Building 500, another 10-unit building of the same size.



Arcadia Building

Footer and underslab inspections are complete for the former Arcadia Building located at 119 East Beverley St. to create 23 apartments and one commercial space.

1031 Richmond Ave

Demolition of the Econo Lodge is complete and cleanup is underway. Building permits have been issued to build a Wawa convenience store and gas station.

Reports

Site Plans

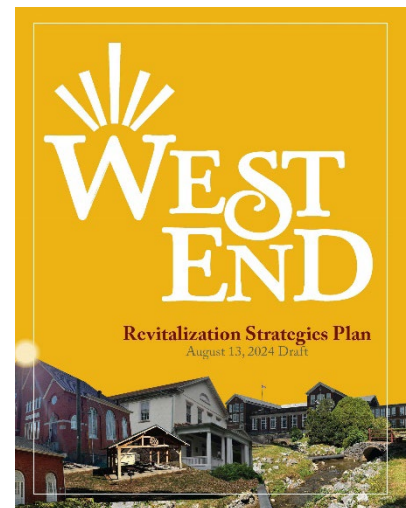
The following is a newly approved site plan:

- 44 Morris Mill Rd., dock for existing doors and a lot for trailer parking.

Community Development

As part of the implementation of the flood sensor system, meetings were conducted with interested downtown businesses to gather input. On Aug. 21, Community Development and IT staff met with Randy Laird, Chip Clarke, and Jeff Ramsey to discuss the performance of the system during Hurricane Debby, which impacted Staunton on August 8. These meetings have been very helpful as city staff continue to make adjustments to the system.

During a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council on Aug. 22, the Draft West End Revitalization Strategies Plan was presented. The plan is the City of Staunton's first holistic study and plan for Staunton's West End. It was a community-driven process that involved input from approximately 300 residents and stakeholders through work-shops, open-house meetings, online surveys, and individual meetings. Its vision and goals come directly from public comments, and participants unanimously approved those goal statements. Upon the conclusion of the presentation, City Council noted their desire to have the plan adopted as an addendum to the City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan.



David Smithgall was promoted to Deputy Building Official. Mr. Smithgall has been with the City of Staunton for nine years serving as a building/electrical inspector and a plan reviewer.

Environmental Inspections Report

The Environmental Programs Division of Community Development completed erosion and sediment control inspections on residential and commercial constructions sites throughout the city as follows:

- Residential Construction – 38 active sites with 74 inspections in August
- Commercial Construction – 9 active sites with 19 inspections in August

Environmental Programs Specialist Willow Hughes attended the Virginia Institute of Government's LEAD training program at UVA in August. This was a weeklong training that focused on leadership development for local government employees. The course included lectures and discussions on a variety of topics, engaging hands-on activities, and the opportunity to connect with and learn from other local government employees from around the country.

Planning Commission

At its Aug. 15 meeting, the Planning Commission approved a request to withdraw 2.343 acres of land from the Merrifield Agricultural-Forestal District. The Commission also authorized staff to begin work on a draft amendment to Chapter 18.140 to allow freestanding identification signs for multi-family developments and single-family subdivisions.



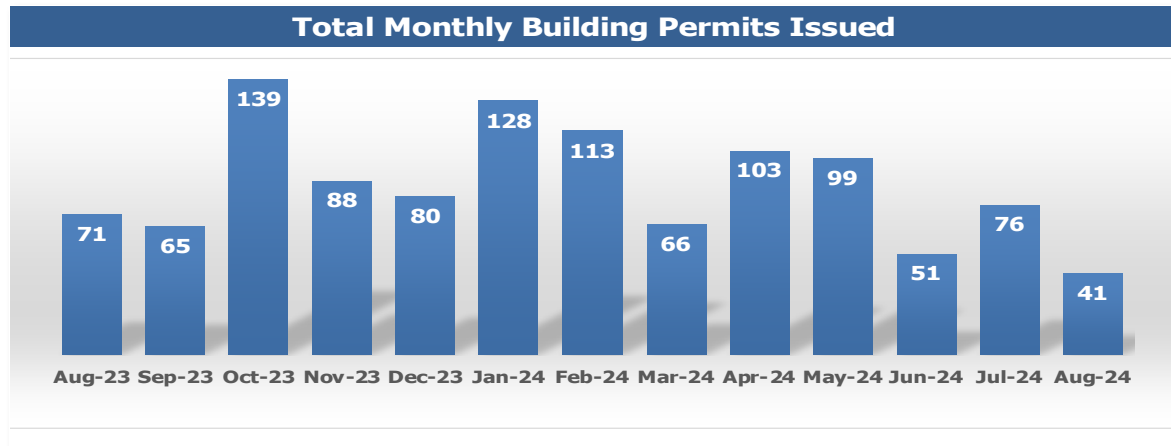
Planning Commission discusses an application during their August field trip.

Housing and Grants Coordination

In August, Rebecca Joyce, the city's Housing Planner and Grants Coordinator attended an environmental review training at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Richmond office.

Building Construction and Related Activity

Permits Issued	Aug-24	Aug-23	# Chg	% Chg
New Residential	2	2	0	0.0%
Residential Renovations	12	9	3	33.3%
Electrical Permits	13	30	-17	-56.7%
Mechanical Permits	4	5	-1	-20.0%
Plumbing Permits	3	12	-9	-75.0%
Commercial New-Renovations	4	7	-3	-42.9%
Miscellaneous	3	6	-3	-50.0%
Total	41	71	-30	-42.3%



Economic Development

Staunton Crossing

On Aug. 9, Director of Economic Development Amanda DiMeo was interviewed by *Virginia Business Magazine* regarding Staunton Crossing for the October issue.

On Aug. 23, Ms. DiMeo participated in a meeting with the Real Estate Team at Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), along with City Engineer Lyle Hartt, to discuss the scope and timeline for the \$9M grant awarded to Staunton Crossing for infrastructure as part of the Virginia Site Readiness Program.

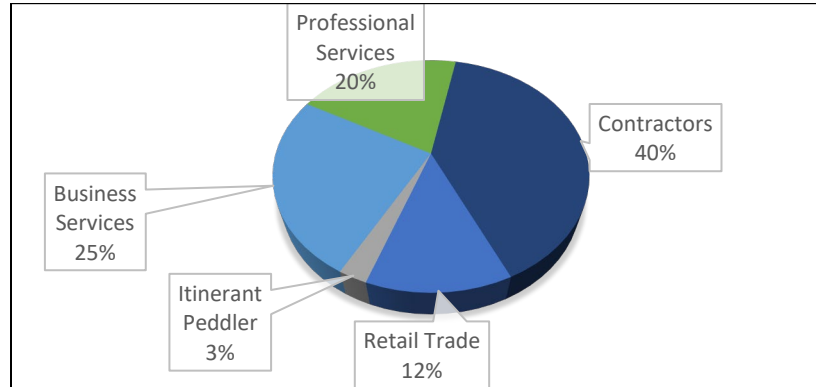
Mary Baldwin University and Workforce

On Aug. 16, staff met with MBU President Dr. Stein to discuss ways to break barriers between the community and campus so students can become more integrated in the local economy. Stay tuned for further details on inauguration weekend, scheduled October 17-20 to coincide with MBU reunion.

Business License Activity

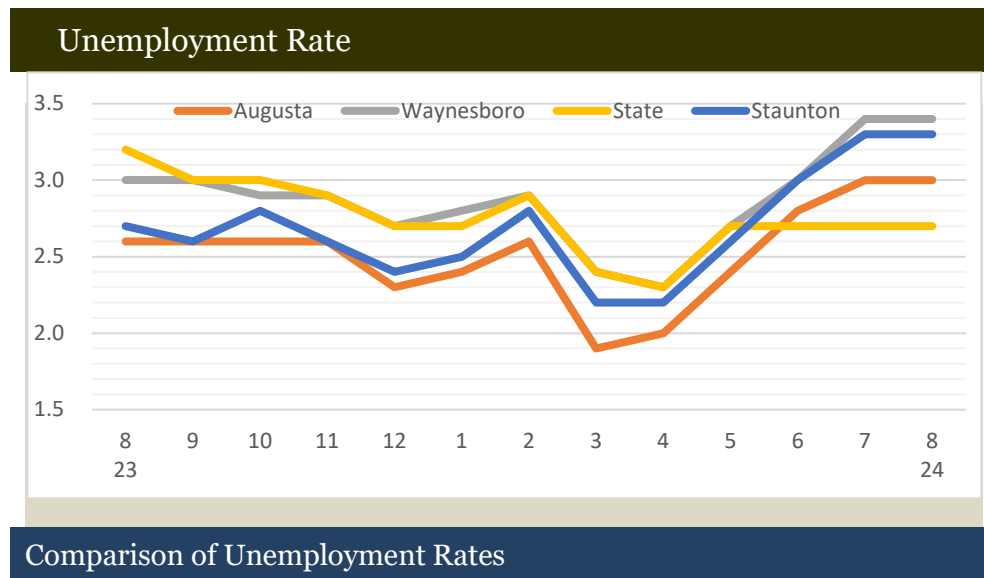
During the month of August, the Commissioner of Revenue's office issued 40 new business licenses, compared to 21 the previous month, representing a 90.47% increase. This month a year ago, 36 new business licenses were issued.

As seen in the following pie chart, contractors accounted for 40% of the of the total licenses issued in August, and business services accounted for 25%.



Unemployment Data

In July, Staunton's unemployment rate of 3.0% rose from the previous month. As seen in the graph below, Staunton's rate was lower than Waynesboro's and higher than the state. With a labor force of 12,887, Staunton had 12,456 employed and 431 unemployed in July.



Finance

- The department issued 7,318 utility bills and general bills totaling \$2,287,891 during August.
- Collection activities in August resulted in the recovery of \$3,531 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 3,448 receipts in the amount of \$708,023 during August.

- The department processed 476 City and 240 School accounts payable checks totaling \$7,587,798. 891 City and 560 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$3,984,608 and 81 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$1,564,741 during August.
- Staff assisted in preparing and reviewing contract agreements for both the Staunton Crossing Water Tank and Utility Improvement Project.
- The department coordinated meeting with key stakeholders to start work on the J&DR Court House furniture purchases.
- The department completed annual continuing education training with the IT department regarding Tyler Content Manager and Ready Forms.
- Finance, along with Human Resources, has been working with Marsh McLennan Agency on the annual health plan renewal.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 320 incidents in August, with an average response time of 4 minutes 58 and seconds. The average response time for the year is 4 minutes and 46 seconds.
- Staff received over 633 hours of training in August.
- Staff conducted 60 business fire safety inspections and 20 re-inspections in August.
- Staff held fire extinguisher training for a group of Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind employees.
- Annual aerial and ground ladder testing was completed.
- Each shift participated in surface water rescue training at the Westside Swim Club.
- Ray Owen joined the A-Shift team at Station #2 to fill a full-time vacancy, while Cameron Bishop joined the C-Shift team at Station #1 to fill a full-time vacancy.
- Captain Butler, along with Firefighters Goodbar and Foresman, assisted with the Fire Chief interviews.
- The Fire Marshal's office issued three underground storage tank and aboveground storage tank permits; conducted one fire alarm inspection; witnessed two blasting operations; reviewed two site plans, three re-zoning requests and one zoning text amendment request; reviewed two sprinkler plans; conducted two final site inspections; and reviewed one special event application.



Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time—2

Part Time/Seasonal—28

Hired:

Full Time—4

Part Time—13

Retired—1

Activities

Human Resources staff members took part in the following activities in August:

Recruitment:

Initiated recruitment for the following positions:

- Deputy II: Business Tax Analyst – Commissioner or the Revenue
- Probation Officer: Therapeutic Docket – Blue Ridge Court Services
- Assistant Director of Economic Development
- Equipment Operator I – Utilities
- Equipment Operator I – Streets
- Utility Electrical/Electronics Technician
- Water Treatment Plant Operator

Continued recruitment for the following positions:

- Firefighters/EMTs, part-time
- Regional Firefighter Testing Announcement
- School Crossing Guards – Police Department
- Trades worker – Electrician
- Utility Electrical Technician/Utility SCADA Technician
- Utility Service Technician – Traffic Signals
- Police Officer-Certified
- Equipment Operator II – Public Works Utilities
- Sanitation Worker
- Maintenance Worker – Traffic Control

Orientations:

Conducted orientations for seven full-time employees.

Information Technology

Information Technology staff took part in the following activities in August:

- Work is nearly complete at the Library for door access controls. This will provide better security for staff in work areas and areas not open to the public. Work is being scheduled for security upgrades to City Hall starting in September.
- The project to migrate to a connectivity solution for police department mobile data terminals is complete. The project replaced an outdated solution and provides improved connectivity and security.
- The city's document imaging system has been upgraded.
- Interns from Wilson Memorial High School and Blue Ridge Community College started with the department for the fall semester.
- Due to changes from the carrier, staff reworked the connectivity to Valley Voice reading service that is rebroadcast on the Public Access Channel when there are no broadcast city meetings.
- Significant changes in Tyler Munis for the Commissioner of Revenue in determining vehicle valuation were completed.
- Staff actively monitored the flood awareness sensors and alerting during the tropical storm Debby event. IT staff, along with Community Development, met with several property owners afterwards to debrief on the project and how well it worked in its first major event.
- Successfully completed factory acceptance testing at the L3Harris production facility for the SAW Regional Radio project. This is a major milestone in the project and allows L3Harris to begin shipping core radio infrastructure. Actual construction and implementation at tower sites and dispatch centers should start in September. In addition, a new radio technician has been hired for the project. He will be based in Augusta County and will start in September.

Library

- Phase One of the Friends of the Staunton Library's Terrace Project is done: 11 trees were removed to make space for the future accessible walkway and hardscape patio. The start date for the next phase is still being determined as design and manufacturing details for the permanent shade sail are finalized.

- The library hosted two *This is Home* events presented by Chris Lassiter of the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge. Focusing on housing insecurity in the area, the photojournalism project is a striking reminder of how difficult finding attainable housing can be, even in Staunton. The discussions at both presentations were eye-opening and engaging.
- Public Technology assistance continued with an *Are You Smarter Than Your Smart Phone* workshop and two book-a-librarian appointments focused on mobile devices.
- A project to install badge readers and controlled access points throughout the library is ongoing.
- Library staff shifted from Summer Reading to planning mode, mapping out the upcoming storytime, outreach visits, and event series for the fall. The Youth Services team has been working with educators to extend support and resources to teachers and students alike.
- Librarians continue to conduct an intensive assessment of collections ranging from adult fiction to juvenile materials: staff are shifting collections to reallocate space for both accessibility and future furniture and layout changes.

Library Statistical Report: August 2024

CIRCULATION	Month	YTD		SERVICES	Month	YTD
Adult	10,483	21,117		ILLs Borrowed	16	23
Young Adult (YA)	821	1,714		ILLs Lent	0	0
Juvenile	7,048	14,868		Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians	2	3
Digital	5,862	11,733				
Total Circulation	24,214	49,432		PROGRAMS		
Talking Book Center Circulation	1,537	3,024		Adult	11	24
				Attendance	138	484
Items Checked In	20,720	42,371		YA	3	7
				Attendance	291	876
Outgoing to VLC Libraries	1,787	3,672		Juvenile	16	56
Incoming from VLC Libraries	1,620	3,278		Attendance	1,163	2,824
Total Holds Filled	5,178	10,592				
				PEOPLE		
Added to Collection	876	1,835		Library Visits	13,706	27,052

Withdrawn from Collection	1,503	6,631	Curbside Visits	48	87
			Computer Users	689	1,398
Database Use/Sessions		2,061	Juvenile Computer Users	1,566	3,404
			Meetings Held	6	9
			Volunteer Hours	113.5	262
			New Card Registrations	203	423
			Total Registered Cards		14,526

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- Contractors for the city removed a dead oak at Betsy Bell Park, a walnut at Hole 3 on the Gypsy Hill Golf Course, and pruned one tree at the Booker T. Washington Community Center.
- The Fall Plant Giveaway has been scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 3 at 4:15 p.m.
- Held a meeting with representatives from Dominion Virginia Power and city staff to discuss a project involving tree removal.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed the following:

- Assisted with maintenance support for Art in the Park.
- Completed football field prep for the upcoming Staunton High School season.
- Repaired damaged bumper rails throughout the park system.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities:

- HEART afterschool program began at Ware, McSwain, and Bessie Weller elementaries. The program is staffed with 25 new and returning staff and all parent contact information has been updated in the GovDelivery notification system.
- Summer Lovin Sock Hop dance was held in Gypsy Hill Gym on Aug. 24.
- Staff attended the Holiday Lights Committee meeting.
- Programs offered in August:
 - Morning Warm Ups, 16 participants
 - Little Seedlings, 5 participants
 - Explorers Club, 18 participants
 - Jam Nights, 7 participants
 - Little Movers, 8 participants
 - Toddler Open Playground, 9 participants
 - Gypsy Hill Open Gym, 80 participants
 - American Red Cross Blood Drive, 40 participants

Police

- The Department is currently testing for entry level police officers to attend the January academy; a total of 19 applications were received.
- A new digital call recoding system has been purchased for the E-911 Center; it is scheduled to be installed in October. The system was required to ensure compatibility with the new radio system that will be operational next year.
- The Police Department's E-911 Center handled a total of 4,316 telephone calls during the month, including 1,129 9-1-1 calls.
- Police personnel responded to 2,659 incidents during the month, including 1,454 citizen calls for service, 551 officer initiated activities, 191 administrative calls, and 463 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 3 minutes and 57 seconds; it is 4 minutes and 3 seconds for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 41 new owner accounts, 26 new rental residential accounts, and 5 commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$54,274 in payments.
- Thirty-five accounts were cut off for non-payment. Of those cut off, 31 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan was established.
- Utility crews repaired four water main breaks, one valve, three water services, and five water meters. The crew responded to two sewer main blockages and ten sewer lateral blockages. The crew installed two new water service connections and one new sewer connection.
- The Streets Department completed concrete curbs and gutters on Statler Blvd where there had been a water leak and completed curbs and gutters on David St. Traffic Engineers made and installed several signs throughout the city.

Tourism

Activities:

Visit Staunton staff took part in the following promotional, networking, or administrative activities in August:

- August blog promotions featured [CHEERS TO CRAFT BEERS](#), [Train Travel To And From Staunton](#), [College Send-Off Family Weekend](#), [Exploring Staunton on Your Own](#), and [4-Day Weekend Itinerary in Staunton](#).
- A new media profile kit was designed and released.
- Staff worked with videographers to film a new destination commercial.
- Staff met with the Staunton Music Festival board to review a proposed strategic plan.
- Partnered with Virginia Tourism to host a familiarization tour with ten Australian Travel Operators.
- Hosted influencer Roshni Shah at Frontier Culture Museum.

Public Relations

The Following is a list of newspapers, websites, magazines, and television stations that published articles about Staunton:

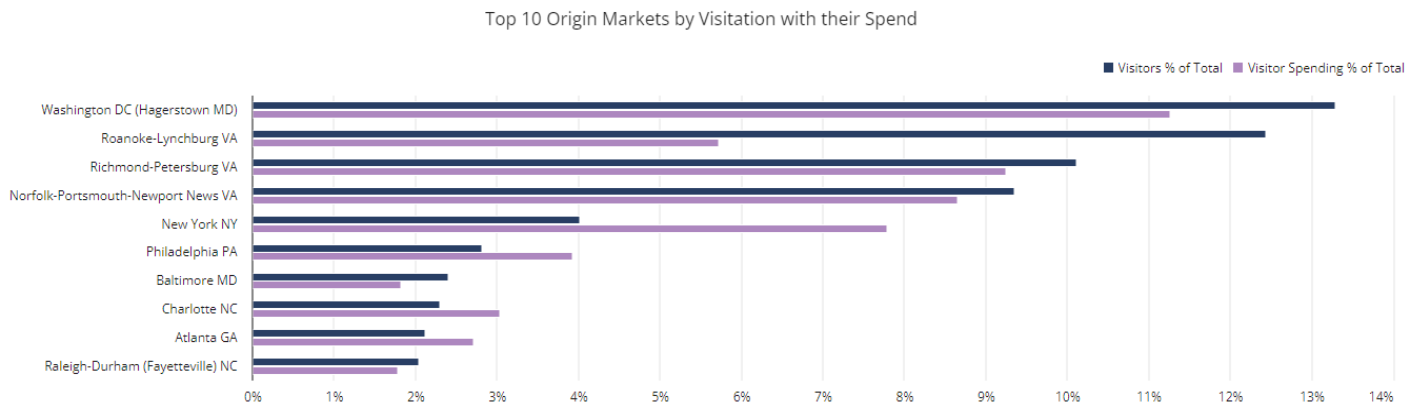
Date	Headline	Source	Reach
July 14	10 Best Places to Live in the South	Travel + Leisure	14,869,703
Aug 30	22 Picturesque Mountain Towns to Visit This Fall with Fewer Crowds and Fabulous Foliage	Southern Living	13,169,296
Aug 25	8 Undiscovered Small Towns in Virginia	World Atlas	5,403,689
Aug 23	10 Towns in Mid-South that Were Ranked Among US Favorites	World Atlas	5,403,689
Aug 5	Multiple West Virginia towns are finalists in the 14th annual Top Adventure Towns Contest	Yahoo! Lifestyle	4,382,107
Aug 15	Photos: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST At ASC's Blackfriars Playhouse	BroadwayWorld.com	1,275,417
Aug 15	Photos: Shakespeare Center Presents MACBETH	BroadwayWorld.com	1,275,417
Aug 23	7 Charming Small Towns In The Blue Ridge Mountains To See Autumn Colors	The Travel	2,027,878
Aug 7	Maude & the Bear	InsideNoVa.com	330,490
Aug 26	Staunton students exposed to classical music through partnership with Staunton Music Festival	World News	254,196
Aug 17	Compositions, instruments span centuries at Staunton Music Festival	The Daily Progress	198,293
Aug 14	Staunton Music Festival spans centuries: The Eras Tour begins Friday	News Leader	107,767
Aug 25	Staunton: SDDA names Traipse CEO Darren Smith new executive director	The Augusta Free Press	98,295
Aug 7	All aboard: Fall excursion in the Shenandoah Valley offers immersive experience by train	The Augusta Free Press	93,256
Aug 17	Staunton Music Festival	News Virginian	17,822

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Aug 4	Hear Together: Frontier Culture Museum – Lord Dunmore’s War Weekend	WNRN-FM	5,550
Aug 19	Day Trips for This Labor Day Weekend	Lynchburg Living Magazine	3,386
Aug 26	Roberto Sierra, Featured Living Composer at the Staunton Music Festival	Subito Music Corp	2,886
			48,919,137

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
August 2023	August 2024	% Change
37,000 visitors	30,000 visitors	-18.92 %
224 visitor’s guide requests	151 visitor’s guide requests	-32.6%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending



Changes from July: Increase of nearly 1% in spending and visitation from D.C. market. New York saw a large jump of nearly 3% in visitor spending. Baltimore also increased, and Atlanta and Raleigh reappear in the Top 10 Origin Markets. Visitors contributed 16.9% of overall monthly spending, up 14.4% from last year, with a \$56 daily average, which is down from \$59 last year.

Office on Youth

Crime Control Programs

- Twelve youth received detention alternative services.

Family Service Programs

- Eleven adults participated in Parenting and Divorce co-parenting program.

- Eight adults participated in Loving Solutions program.

Community Outreach Program

- Outreach Coordinator completed necessary renovations to the Community in Motion Bus.

Truancy Prevention - Check and Connect

- Participants include 65 students from 12 area middle and high schools. There were 8 students from Staunton High School and 10 from Shelburne Middle School.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)/ Healthy Community Action Team (HCAT)

- Coordinator provided bike safety instruction for Staunton home school group on August 22.

Community/Etc.

- Three OOO staff participated in the SAW Clothing Event at Wilson Middle School sponsored by area school social workers.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

On Aug. 23, the SDDA announced the appointment of Darren Smith to lead the organization as its new executive director. Mr. Smith spent the past decade working to promote Downtown Staunton and other historic business districts across the Mid-Atlantic as the founder and CEO of Traipse Public Benefit Corporation, the developer of the Traipse smartphone app and other tools for local businesses. A Meet-and-Greet event was held on Aug. 29 at Yelping Dog Wine, at which Smith was introduced to the Downtown Staunton community.

SDDA welcomed new business Charlotte's Kitchenette to downtown. The restaurant serves up soul food from its location at 101 State St.



¹ The Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA) is an independent, non-profit corporation, separate from the City of Staunton. Pursuant to the Staunton City Code and a contract with the city, SDDA provides facilities and services funded by the City in the City's downtown service district. SDDA furnishes information to the City Manager's Office for inclusion in this Activity Report to update the city in the performance of its obligations.