

Activity Report Highlights

City of Staunton



COMMUNITY BLITZ BUILD

Community Development staff from the Building Services Division performed inspections for the Community Blitz Build which took place at Valley Career and Technical Center in Fishersville. The Community Blitz Build consisted of the construction of nine small houses in nine days by students, contractors, and volunteers. In order to accommodate the condensed construction schedule, the city's Building Official John Glover, Deputy Building Official David Smithgall, Building and Electrical Inspector Mark Wade, and Plumbing and Mechanical Inspector Lloyd Otte conducted many of the inspections during the weekends. The city is proud to have participated in such a great cause. Many material vendors and suppliers donated materials and, in some cases, provided onsite installation instruction. Four of the dwellings were sold at auction for a total of \$142,600. The proceeds from this auction covered the construction costs for the remaining units, allowing them to be donated to people in need in the community or to victims of hurricane Helene in southwest Virginia.



September 2024

Dispatched Calls for Service*

Police 2,537 ↓

Fire & Rescue 317 ↓

Average Response Time month/year

Police 3'43"/4'01"

Fire & Rescue 4'51"/4'41"

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

By the Numbers

45 Flu shots were administered at the Employee Picnic.

Firefighters participated in approximately 13 community events in Sept.

Into the Future

Only 3 City Council meetings are scheduled for the remainder of 2024:

Oct. 24

Nov. 14

Dec. 12

In November, the city is closed on Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day and Nov. 28 & 29 for Thanksgiving.

STAUNTON
VIRGINIA

JASON BALL NAMED FIRE CHIEF

Jason Ball was named the new Fire Chief for the City of Staunton after serving as the interim Fire Chief since April of this year. Ball has been with Staunton Fire and Rescue since 1998 where he quickly rose to Lieutenant, then Captain and Shift Commander, and then Deputy Fire Chief of Operations in 2012. Ball started his firefighting career volunteering at Weyers Cave Fire Company in 1994. He has a degree in occupational safety and health with a fire science concentration from Columbia Southern University. Ball continues to push Staunton Fire and Rescue forward, taking advantage of improving technology to better serve the people of Staunton.



SNIDER NAMED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

At the city's annual employee picnic on Sept. 19, Firefighter Savannah Snider was named Employee of the Year for FY 2024. To better prepare herself for her firefighting duties and to encourage others to stay fit for duty, Savannah trained for and completed her first marathon. She's also the organizer behind the ASL class at the fire station to better serve our hearing impaired community and an organizer and leader for Camp LIT (Leadership, Integrity, Trailblazer) for area teenage girls interested in fire and rescue. Savannah's work ethic and drive to help the community is a model for all and why she was originally chosen as an Employee of the Quarter.

SUNDAY HOURS RETURN

Sunday hours returned Sept. 8 at the Staunton Public Library and will continue through May 18, 2025. Staunton Public Library is the only library in the immediate area with seven day/week service.



Notes from the City Manager

The Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board's GoVA Grant was awarded in the amount of \$250,000. The City of Staunton is a partner in this grant. The Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board (SVWDB) will determine gaps and opportunities to expand the workforce in the manufacturing and the transportation and logistics industries. SVWDB will act as the coordinating entity, and in partnership with WorkED, will create a comprehensive talent pathways

plan, serving as a roadmap for future workforce development projects. GO Virginia is an economic initiative that fosters regional collaboration focusing on investments in workforce development, start-up ecosystems, sites and infrastructure, and cluster scale-ups.

September 2024 Activity Report

Community Development

Key Construction Project Updates

Staunton Apartments II

A building permit has been issued for Building 500 at 1013 Seth Dr., a 10-unit, 12,900 square foot apartment building.

Reports

Community Development

The city held the first meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee to update the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning process will span approximately 18 months and address various topics, including land use, housing, economic development, and transportation. The meetings will be held on the third Thursday of each month, following Planning Commission meetings, in the Caucus Room, City Hall. The Comprehensive Plan will establish a vision for Staunton's future and provide detailed guidance on achieving the city's goals. There will be numerous opportunities for stakeholders and community members to engage in the process.

Community Development staff from the Building Services Division performed inspections for the Community Blitz Build which took place at Valley Career and Technical Center in Fishersville. The Community Blitz Build consisted of the construction of nine small houses in nine days by students, contractors, and volunteers. In order to accommodate the condensed construction schedule, the city's Building Official John Glover, Deputy Building Official David Smithgall, Building and Electrical Inspector Mark Wade, and Plumbing and Mechanical Inspector Lloyd Otte conducted many of the inspections during the weekends. The city is proud to have participated in such a great cause. Many material vendors and suppliers donated materials and, in some cases, provided onsite installation instruction. Four of the dwellings were sold at auction for a total of \$142,600. The proceeds from this auction covered the construction costs for the remaining units, allowing them to be donated to people in need in the community or to victims of hurricane Helene in southwest Virginia.

Environmental Inspections Report

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

- Residential Construction – 32 active sites with 62 inspections in September
- Commercial Construction – 12 active sites with 24 inspections in September

Planning Commission

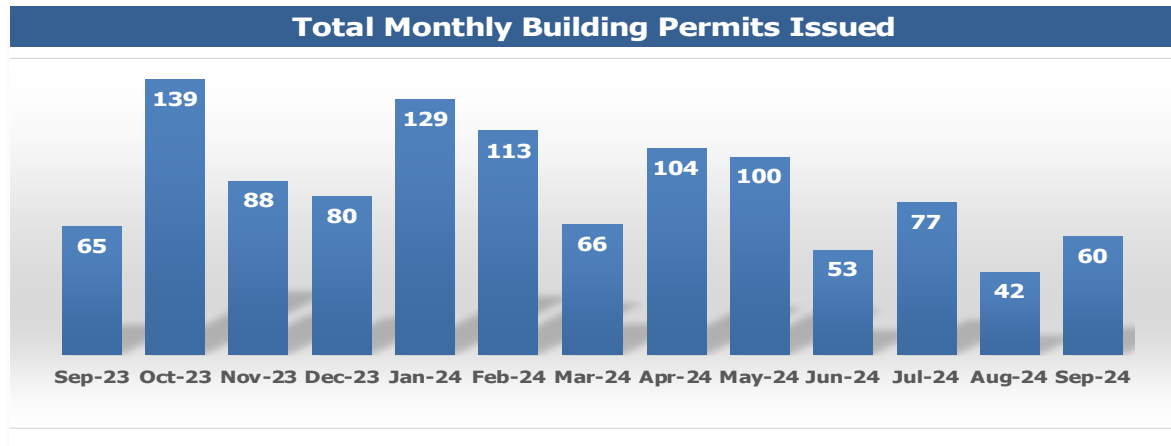
At their Sept. 19 meeting the Planning Commission recommended approval of a request to vacate an alley running between Poplar Street and a previously vacated portion of Cedar Street. The Commission gave further consideration to proposed amendments to reduce the amount of required parking for multi-family dwellings, and to allow freestanding signs for single-family subdivisions and multi-family dwellings. The Commission considered a citizen requested amendment to allow beekeeping as a principal use. It declined to authorize that amendment, but authorized staff to work on an alternate amendment to allow beekeeping as an accessory use.

Housing and Grants Coordination

On Sept. 30, the city kicked off its Housing Strategy planning process with the first meeting of the Strategy's Workgroup. The Workgroup is comprised of members who are involved in a variety of aspects of housing in the city, two representatives from City Council, a representative from the Planning Commission, and a representative from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission. The workgroup will provide input based on their expertise, review sections of the strategy document, and create and prioritize the housing policy objectives. More information about the Staunton Housing Strategy can be found on the city's website under the Community Development section.

Building Construction and Related Activity

Permits Issued	Sep-24	Sep-23	# Chg	% Chg
New Residential	1	2	-1	-50.0%
Residential Renovations	14	12	2	16.7%
Electrical Permits	15	20	-5	-25.0%
Mechanical Permits	8	9	-1	-11.1%
Plumbing Permits	9	11	-2	-18.2%
Commercial New-Renovations	9	4	5	125.0%
Miscellaneous	4	7	-3	-42.9%
Total	60	65	-5	-7.7%



Economic Development

Virginia Economic Development Association

Director of Economic Development Amanda DiMeo attended the fall conference of the Virginia Economic Development Association at Hotel Roanoke Sept. 25-27.

Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute

Ms. DiMeo attended a session of the Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute Sept. 18-20, hosted by Staunton at Hotel 24 South. A group dinner kicked off the first evening at Queen City Bistro including a welcome special guest City Manager Leslie Beauregard. Ms. Beauregard also participated in the Friday roundtable session as a mastermind.

Business Retention, Expansions, and Ribbon Cuttings

Councilmembers and city staff attended the ribbon cutting for the new Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum's Visitor Center and Gift Shop, Sept. 5

On Sept. 13, staff attended a ribbon cutting at Firestone Tire and Auto Center.

On Sept. 17, Cadence announced an expansion at their Staunton facility.

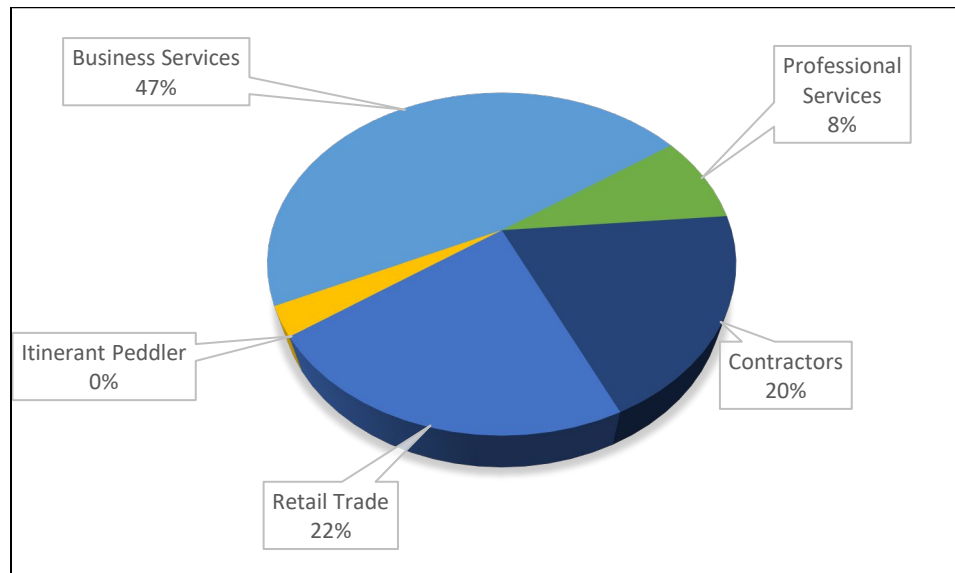
[Cadence Announces Cleanroom Expansion at its Virginia Facility - Cadence \(cadenceinc.com\)](#)



Business License Activity

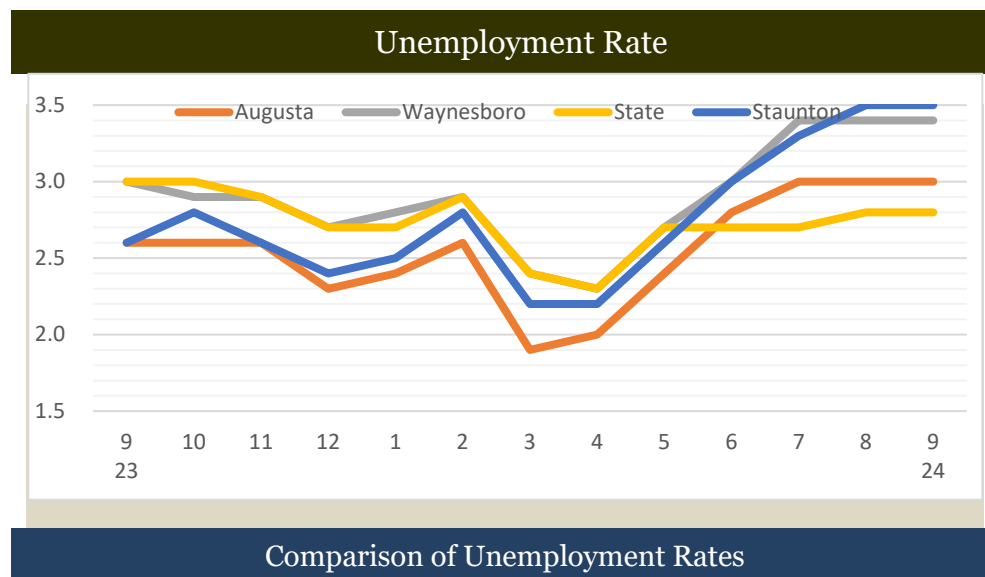
During the month of September, the Commissioner of Revenue's office issued 36 business licenses, compared to 41 the previous month, representing a 12.2% decrease. This month a year ago, 20 business licenses were issued.

As seen in the following pie chart, the Business Services sector accounted for 47% of the total licenses issued in September, and the Contractors sector accounted for 20%.



Unemployment Data

In August, Staunton's unemployment rate of 3.5% increased .2% from the previous month. As seen in the graph below, Staunton's rate was .1% higher than Waynesboro's and .7% higher than the State's rate of 2.8%. With a labor force of 12,769, Staunton had 12,328 employed and 441 unemployed in August.



Finance

- The department issued 7,787 utility bills and general bills totaling \$1,611,673 during September.

- Collection activities in September resulted in the recovery of \$2,378 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 3,044 receipts in the amount of \$1,860,425 during September.
- The department processed 459 City and 264 School accounts payable checks totaling \$3,851,185. 852 City and 566 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$3,940,443 and 25 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$7,396,575 during September.
- The contract agreements have been fully executed for the Staunton Crossing Water Tank and Utility Improvement Projects.
- The FY2024 Annual School Report was completed and filed with the Department of Education.
- Finance held a kick-off meeting to start the planning process for the five-year FY2026-FY2030 Capital Improvement Plan.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 317 incidents in September, with an average response time of 4 minutes 51 and seconds. The average response time for the year is 4 minutes and 41 seconds.
- Staff received over 550 hours of training for the month. Augusta Co-Op allowed each shift to conduct high angle rescue training from their grain bins on Richmond Road.
- Staff conducted 48 business fire safety inspections and 15 re-inspections in September.
- The Fire Marshal's Office issued two flammable liquid storage permits, one tent permit and one LP gas storage permit; conducted two fire alarm inspections and one sprinkler system inspection; reviewed three site plans and one special use permit; reviewed one fire alarm system plan and one hood suppression system plan; conducted two final site inspections; and reviewed two special event applications; investigated two fires — one outside fire and one vehicle fire.
- Firefighter Savannah Snider was named the city's employee of the year at the Employee Picnic.

Community Engagement

- Participated in the 9/11 memorial ceremony at Mary Baldwin University.
- Lieutenant Dolan taught a CPR class for Blue Ridge Court Services staff.

- The Firefighters for Literacy continued in the elementary schools. The first round of prizes was awarded at each school.
- Provided standby crew for one varsity, two little league, and two junior varsity football games.
- Participated with the Touch-a-Truck night at St Paul's Methodist Church.
- Spoke with a group of pre-school students at the Two-by-Two Learning Center.
- Participated in the annual fall festival at Cherryvale Methodist Church.
- Two staff members were assigned as standby each day of the Queen City Mischief and Magic festival.

Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time— 1

Part Time/Seasonal— 1

Hired:

Full Time— 3

Part Time— 2

Retired— 0

Activities

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

Recruitment:

Initiated recruitment for the following positions:

- Probation Officer (PT) – BRCS
- Deputy Fire Chief – Operations
- Police Officer
- Utility Service Clerk (PT)
- Library Assistant I – Circulation Substitute
- Aquatics Director/Recreation Programmer
- Transportation Planner

- Deputy City Engineer
- Continued recruitment for the following positions:
 - Equipment Operator 1 – Utilities
 - Equipment Operator 1 – Streets
 - Water Treatment Plant Operator
 - Firefighters/EMTs (PT)
 - School Crossing Guards – Police Department
 - Police Officer – Certified
 - Sanitation Worker
 - Utility Service Technician – Traffic Signals
 - Equipment Operator II – Utilities

Orientations:

- Conducted orientations for five full-time employees.

Benefits:

- Staff worked with Anthem, United Concordia, and other benefit vendors in preparation for the open enrollment period at the end of October.

Other:

- Coordinated with the Employee Committee and Augusta Workplace Wellness to provide 45 flu shots at the Employee Picnic on Sept. 19.

Information Technology

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

- Started a project to upgrade Kronos time and attendance.
- Completed door access control upgrades at the Staunton Public Library. This project provides better security for staff in work areas and areas not open to the public. The cabling project has started in City Hall for similar upgrades.
- Orders were placed to establish network connectivity to the new Gardner Springs facility. The new circuit is scheduled to be live by the end of the year.
- Chief Technology Officer Kurt Plowman attended Commonwealth of Virginia Innovative Technology Symposium (COVITS) in Richmond. COVITS brings together state and local government IT professionals for two days of training and networking.

Library

Sunday hours returned Sept. 8 and will continue through May 18, 2025. Staunton Public Library is the only library in the immediate area with seven day/week service.

The busy fall outreach season started, with library staff lined up to attend a series of community events. In September this included a National Library Week table at Mary Baldwin University, a disabilities resource fair, and the African American Heritage & Multicultural Festival in addition to regular early childhood centers.

Special programs included an *Adventures in Jobhunting* class for job seekers, National Voter Registration Day with Director of Elections and General Registrar Christi Linhoss, a Homeschool Hour collaboration with the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum, and an Apple Day storytime.

In addition to receiving a new seasonal pass for the American Shakespeare Center's performances of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the library partnered with ASC to kick-off a new Shakespeare-themed book club. Participants will focus on works by Shakespeare, commentary about his work, and scene readings.

Talking Book Center staff member Ilia Desjardins attended the National Library Service's conference in Washington, D.C., an event centered around serving blind, low vision, and print disabled readers through the national network of local libraries. The Talking Book Center board of directors also launched a raffle fundraiser with generous donations collected from local businesses. The goal is to raise at least \$1,200 towards annual operational costs.



Library Statistical Report: September 2024

CIRCULATION	Month	YTD	SERVICES	Month	YTD
Adult	9,641	30,758	ILLs Borrowed	13	36
Young Adult (YA)	676	2,390	ILLs Lent	0	0
Juvenile	7,098	21,966	Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians	2	5
Digital	1,919	13,652			
Total Circulation	19,334	68,766	PROGRAMS		

Talking Book Center (TBC) Circulation	1,460	4,484	Adult	15	39
			Attendance	176	660
Items Checked In	19,042	61,413	YA	4	11
			Attendance	636	1,512
Outgoing to VLC Libraries	1,674	5,346	Juvenile	35	91
Incoming from VLC Libraries	1,601	4,879	Attendance	1,451	4,275
Total Holds Filled	5,244	15,836			
			PEOPLE		
Added to Collection	925	2,760	Library Visits	12,782	39,834
Withdrawn from Collection	95	6,726	Curbside Visits	65	152
		-	Computer Users	641	2,039
Database Use/Sessions	1,639	5,385	Juvenile Computer Users	1,448	4,852
			Meetings Held	10	19
			Volunteer Hours	73	335
			New Card Registrations	202	625
			Total Registered Cards		14,710

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- City Horticulturist Matt Sensabaugh attended the Waynesboro Tree Care Workshop. The workshop included sessions on tree care, new tree disease issues, and care of mature trees. The workshop provides continuing education credits towards the ISA certified Arborist credential.
- Summer Flower displays wound down with final watering and weeding before the rains returned to provide some much-needed moisture to the ground. Staff began pulling summer flower beds in preparation for the fall plant giveaway and fall flower rotation.
- Tree Work:
 - Installed stem guard on young trees to protect them from deer horning.
 - Crews from Dominion VA Energy cleared a portion of the banks at the underpass to prepare for an upgrade to overhead electrical lines.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed the following:

- Installed pool covers on both Gypsy Hill and Montgomery Hall pools.
- Assisted with maintenance support for the African American Heritage & Multicultural Festival held at the bandstand in Gypsy Hill Park.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities

- Superintendent of Recreation attended a Certified Playground Safety Inspection course held in Roanoke.
- Staff attended the Virginia Recreation and Parks Conference held in Norfolk.
- Programs offered:
 - Morning warm up, 19 participants
 - Hiking afterschool, 5 participants
 - Explorers Club, 18 participants
 - Chess, 11 participants
 - Little Movers, 8 participants
 - Gardens of Glass, 8 participants
 - Nature Walks, 13 participants
 - Indoor Walk, 9 participants

Police

- All sworn personnel qualified with firearms during the month.
- New Rapid SOS functionality was added in the E-911 center, allowing dispatchers to view live stream video and photos from citizens who have contacted 9-1-1.
- The Police Department's E-911 Center handled a total of 4,528 telephone calls during the month, including 1,289 9-1-1 calls.
- Police personnel responded to 2,537 incidents during the month, including 1,432 citizen calls for service, 551 officer initiated activities, 207 administrative calls, and 351 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 3 minutes and 43 seconds; it is 4 minutes and 1 second for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 36 new owner accounts, 19 new rental residential accounts, and three commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$49,456 in payments.
- Thirty accounts were cut off for non-payment. Of those cut off, 22 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan was established.
- Utility crews repaired two water main breaks, two valves, and two water meters. The crew responded to four sewer main blockage and four sewer lateral blockages.

- The Streets Department completed asphalt cuts, installed berms where needed, cleaned out storm drains, and cleaned up trees that fell from the recent storms.
- The Recycling Department has had an increase of customers week by week, even with the storms.
- Public Works employees from the various departments assisted in preparation of and participation in Queen City Mischief & Magic. Pictures of some of the staff who worked the event are included below:



Tourism

Activities:

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

- Staunton blog promotions featured [Staunton's Must-See Fall Festivals](#), [Let's Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month in Staunton](#), [Find Magic at Staunton's Queen City Mischief & Magic Festival](#), [Fall Foliage in Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley](#).
- Provided meeting brochure, visitor guides, and promo items to Hotel 24 South for the Virginia Society of Association Executives Fall Expo.
- Volunteered for Queen City Mischief & Magic and arranged for B-roll to be filmed at the event.

Public Relations

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

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
9/5	<u>Maude & The Bear Merits a Road Trip to The Shenandoah Valley</u>	The Washington Post	40,182,339
9/24	<u>9 Darling Small Towns in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/21	<u>7 Most Bike-Friendly Towns in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/17	<u>9 Towns in Virginia with Vibrant Downtown Areas</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/16	<u>10 Most Laid-Back Small Towns in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/14	<u>These 8 Towns in The Southern United States Have Bustling Main Streets</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/10	<u>These 9 Towns in Virginia Have Bustling Main Streets</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
9/17	<u>How To Drive the Entire Blue Ridge Parkway in Five Days</u>	Lonely Planet	3,715,728
9/23	<u>Apps, Maps and Parking Info: What You Need to Know About Queen City Mischief & Magic</u>	Yahoo! Lifestyle	3,443,575
9/14	<u>14 Cities with Spooky Legends That Are Perfect for A Halloween Vacation</u>	Islands Magazine	1,737,022
9/17	<u>7 Best Small Towns Near Shenandoah National Park</u>	The Travel	1,818,827
9/03	<u>10 Fall Things to Do Near Dc to Cross Off Your Bucket List</u>	Washingtonian Magazine	1,195,649
9/25	<u>Peak Fall Foliage Will Be Here Soon. Here Are Some of The Best Places to See It in Virginia</u>	WTVR-TV	646,177
9/04	<u>Pro Re Nata Brewery Opens for Business in Staunton</u>	WHSV-TV	307,388
9/29	<u>Queen City Mischief and Magic Festival Honors 'Harry Potter' Actress's Life</u>	WHSV-TV	265,144
9/27	<u>Wands At the Ready: Queen City Mischief and Magic Takes Over Staunton This Weekend</u>	WHSV-TV	265,144
9/22	<u>'Glad To See We're Getting The Recognition That We Well Deserve:' African-American Heritage And Multicultural Festival Wraps Up</u>	WHSV-TV	265,144
9/23	<u>Apps, Maps and Parking Info: What You Need to Know About Queen City Mischief & Magic</u>	News Leader	108,749
9/16	<u>35th African-American Heritage & Multicultural Festival Happening This Weekend</u>	News Leader	108,749
9/10	<u>African-American Heritage Festival Benefit Concert Saturday in Staunton</u>	News Leader	108,749
9/27	<u>Staunton: Local Residents Work to Bring Harry Potter Characters to Life</u>	Augusta Free Press	94,447
9/06	<u>'Deep Roots in Staunton': Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library Dedicates Frederick Street Building</u>	Augusta Free Press	94,447
9/05	<u>One Director. Three Very Different Plays</u>	The Georgetown	26,916
9/13	<u>Local Travel: The Fantastical World of The Queen City Mischief & Magic Festival</u>	MoCo360	108,783
9/09	<u>Staunton's Queen City Mischief & Magic Festival Is Spellbinding</u>	Arlington Magazine	30,209
9/24	<u>See Charles Dickens' Great-Great-Grandson Bring 'A Christmas Carol' to Life</u>	AARP	*15,386,008
		TOTAL	83,347,718

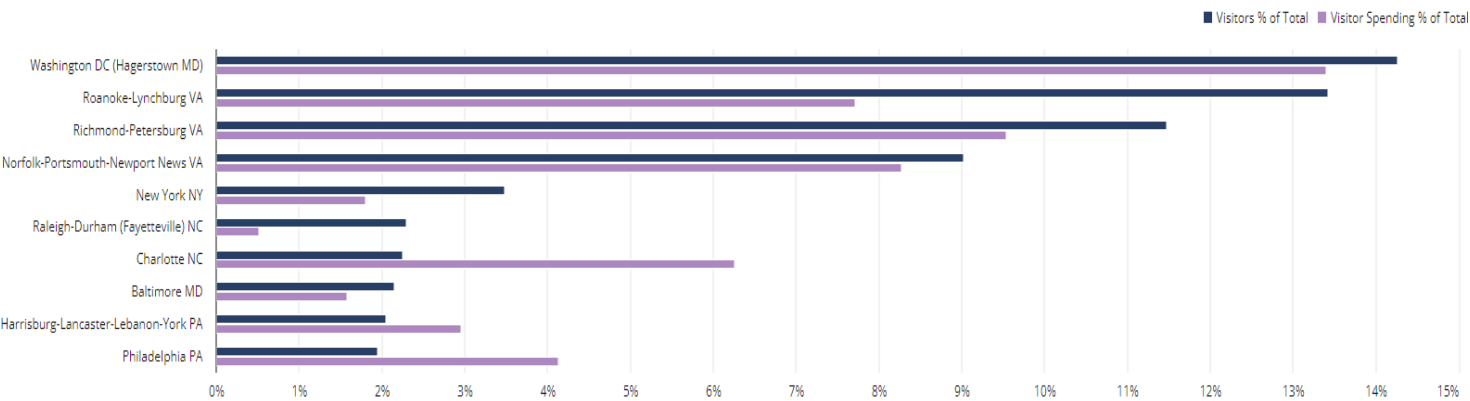
*not included in total

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
August 2023	August 2024	% Change
43,000 visitors	40,000 visitors	-7 %
158 guide requests	169 visitor's guide requests	+6.96%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending

Top 10 Origin Markets by Visitation with their Spend



9231 Sample Size



8% of Overall Restaurant Spend



15.7% of Overall Retail Spend



Charlotte Market:
Increase from 3% in Aug.
to 6.3% spend in Sept.



56.6% Out of State



\$56 Avg Visitor Spend

Office on Youth

Crime Control Programs

- Six youth received detention alternative services.

Family Services Programs

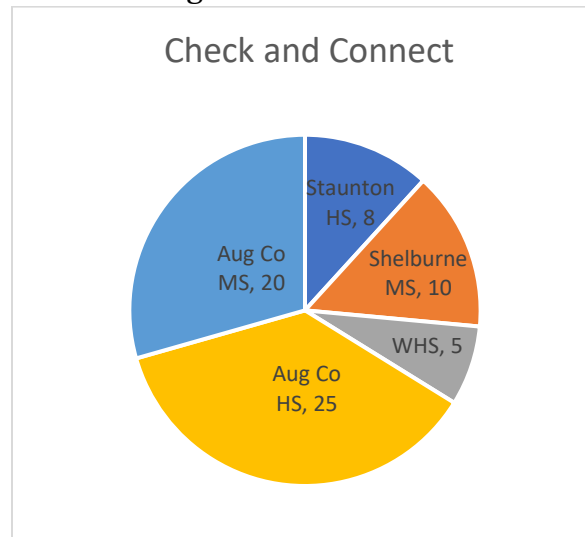
- The following parenting classes were conducted:
 - Active Parenting, 12
 - Parenting and Divorce co-parenting, 4
 - Loving Solutions, 8
 - The Parent Project, 9
 - Mom's Inc. at Middle River Regional Jail, 7
 - WARM Shelter parenting programs, 6

Outreach Program

- Outreach Coordinator participated in the African American Heritage & Multicultural Festival at Gypsy Hill Park Sept. 22.

Check and Connect– Truancy Prevention

- Participants include 68 students from 12 area middle and high schools. There were eight students from Staunton High School and ten from Shelburne Middle School



- Three truancy staff and division supervisor attended the Check and Connect Virtual Global Reach Conference Sept. 25.

Personal Responsibility Education Programs (PREP)

- Four OY staff trained in *Prevention Project*, human trafficking curriculum September 9–16.

- PREP program facilitated programs with 104 -10th grade and 41 -9th grade students at Staunton High School September 17– 30

Community/Etc.

- Division Supervisor and two OOH staff attended Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) training September 11-12.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

In September, SDDA opened registration for the annual Staunton Christmas Parade, scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 2. This year's theme for holiday celebration Downtown is "A Timeless Christmas." Downtown storefronts and parade entrants are encouraged to pick a decade to represent with their decorations and costumes, and clocks of various types will be placed in windows for Downtown visitors to spot.

SDDA promoted Downtown with a table at the Staunton African-American Heritage & Multicultural Festival, and provided support for this year's Queen City Mischief & Magic Festival.

Also in September, SDDA welcomed new business Collins Market to the Downtown District, at 29 W. Beverley St. In addition to traditional convenience store offerings, Collins Market stocks fresh and locally sourced sandwiches, baked goods, salads, and coffee.

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.