

Activity Report Highlights

City of Staunton



PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR GYPSY HILL PARK STREAM RESTORATION

The City of Staunton's Environmental Programs Division was honored in early November with the Garden Club of Virginia's Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation Leadership in Government Award for the stream restoration project in Gypsy Hill Park. This prestigious award recognizes outstanding government leadership and commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices in the Commonwealth. Willow Hughes, Environmental Programs Specialist, accepted the award on behalf of the city. Staunton is the first recipient of this award, which was established in 2023. The Gypsy Hill Park stream restoration project aims to revitalize Peyton Creek by repairing damaged channels and enhancing the park's ecology. The project will not only improve water quality and help reduce flooding risks downstream, but also create a more aesthetically pleasing environment for park visitors.



October 2024

Dispatched Calls for Service*

Police 2,672 ↑

Fire & Rescue 283 ↓

Average Response Time month/year

Police 4'05"/4'01"

Fire & Rescue 4'39"/4'41"

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

By the Numbers

In **5** days, the Friends of the Library raised **\$7,000** to support the Staunton Public Library.

113 citizens went home with plants from Parks & Rec's Fall Plant Giveaway.

There were **75** cats entered in SDDA's Halloween cat decorating contest.

Into the Future

It's holiday time in the City of Staunton. The city will be closed:

Nov. 28 & 29

Dec. 24 & 25

Jan. 1

Jan. 20



RECITE ME TOOLBAR ON WEBSITE

The City of Staunton now provides an inclusive online experience to enable website visitors to access online content and services barrier-free. As part of our diversity and inclusion strategy, website visitors are now able to access a wide range of accessibility and language support tools to customize their digital experience through Recite Me assistive technology. The Recite Me assistive toolbar includes screen reading functionality, multiple reading aids, customizable styling options, an on-demand live translation feature with over 100 languages including 65 text-to-speech, and styling options.



HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORTS

Recently, Firefighter Christopher Brown, along with his Cornerstone Church of Augusta family, partnered with Swannanoa Christian Church in NC to fix homes and place displaced families into safe housing. The team spent time working on homes and handing out supplies to families in need.



OOY BRINGS SCREENAGERS PROJECT

The Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth brought an important documentary to the community, along with classroom lessons that highlight the dangers of constant connection to the internet, social media, screentime, and the impact it has on teens' decision-making in relation to vaping, drugs, and alcohol. The documentary explores the latest research and highlights the changing landscape that teens and families must navigate in an evolving digital age. The film also offers solutions for how to best empower teens as they face decisions about what they will and will not be influenced by. The film is grounded in teens' current reality of being flooded by images on social media, movies, and TV shows about vaping, drugs, and alcohol.



Notes from the City Manager

BRITE Bus service is always being improved and expanded and here are a few recent examples:

- The Afton Express has expanded its routes, providing convenient service between Staunton, Waynesboro, and Charlottesville for commuters, with new stops added over time.
- Several loops were redesigned this month to improve connections, including a new stop at Middlebrook Trace Apartments in a growing residential area.

- A new BRITE stop was added at the Staunton Crossing commuter lot near the 64/81 intersection.
- A stop at the Valley Community Services Board was added to help individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues access services.

These improvements reflect the growing demand for expanded transit options, and BRITE will continue to enhance public transportation in the region.

The data shared in the Activity Report and Activity Report Highlights are from the month prior, unless otherwise noted.

October 2024 Activity Report

Community Development

Reports

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:

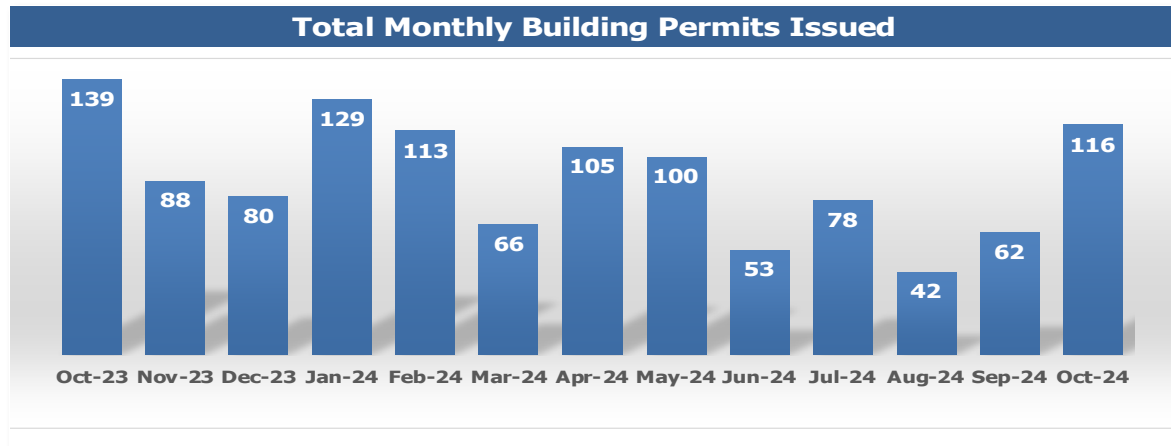
- Residential Construction – 29 active sites with 52 inspections in October
- Commercial Construction – 11 active sites with 17 inspections in October

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission reviewed several requests at their Oct. 17 meeting, approving rezonings for properties at 2408 Cedar St., 612 Randolph St., 300 Churchville Ave., and 309 W Beverley St., and a conditional rezoning for 503 Dupont Ave. and 672 Churchville Ave. A special use permit for 1219 Stoneburner St. to add two residential units was also approved. The Commission recommended zoning text amendments to allow freestanding signs for multi-family dwellings and to modify roof line definitions for wall signs on flat-roofed buildings.

Building Construction and Related Activity

Permits Issued	Oct-24	Oct-23	# Chg	% Chg
New Residential	8	11	-3	-27.3%
Residential Renovations	13	20	-7	-35.0%
Electrical Permits	33	39	-6	-15.4%
Mechanical Permits	21	28	-7	-25.0%
Plumbing Permits	20	22	-2	-9.1%
Commercial New-Renovations	13	6	7	116.7%
Miscellaneous	8	13	-5	-38.5%
Total	116	139	-23	-16.5%



Economic Development

Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute (VWMLI)

Director of Economic Development Amanda DiMeo attended the eighth and final session of the Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute in Roanoke. On Oct. 18, a graduation was held at Hotel Roanoke Virginia Tech Center with City Manager Leslie Beauregard in attendance.

Business Retention and Expansions

Ms. DiMeo and city staff attended the following ribbon cuttings:

- PCB Bank's new location, in Terry Court, Oct. 13. Vice Mayor Amy Darby was also in attendance.
- Cottonwood Commercials new location on S. New Street, Oct. 30

Partner Agency Interaction

On Oct. 30, Ms. DiMeo attended the annual Worlds of Work event at Augusta Expo Event Center. Over 2,500 7th Graders from Staunton, Augusta, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, and Rockingham County Schools participated with a variety of employers to learn about

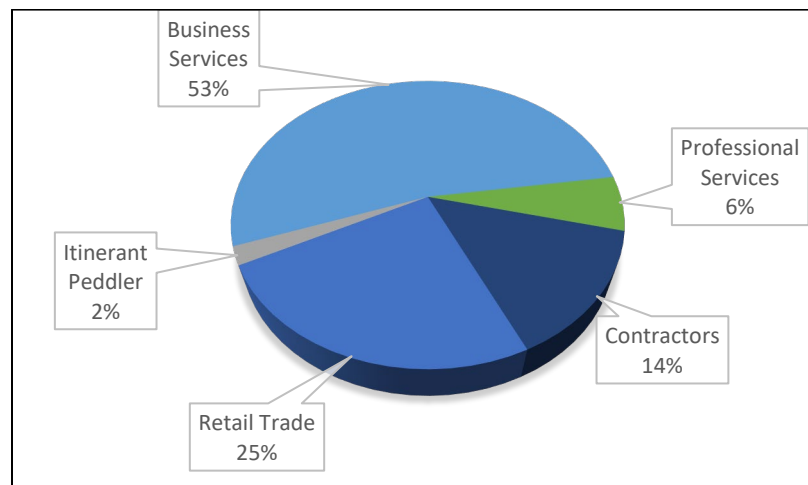


different industries. Environmental Specialist Willow Hughes was there highlighting work with stormwater projects.

Business License Activity

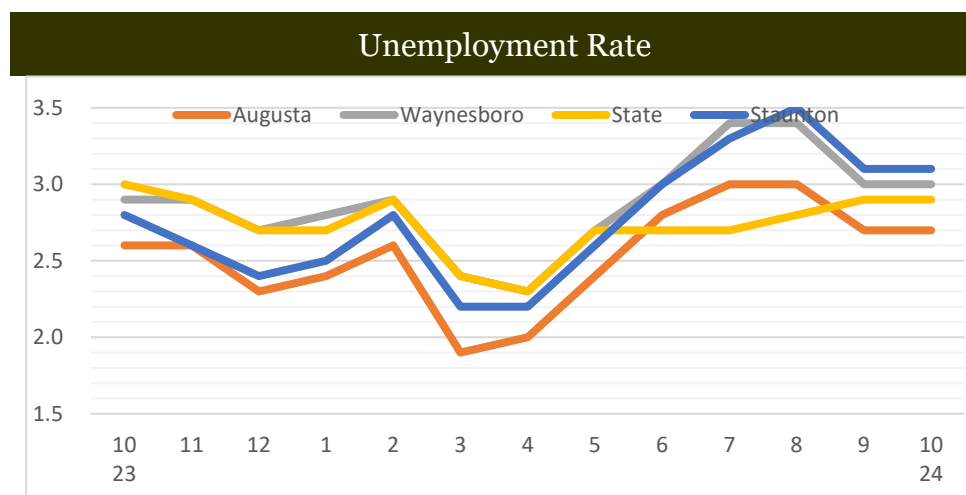
During the month of October, the Commissioner of Revenue's office issued 50 business licenses, compared to 36 the previous month, representing a 38.9% increase. This month a year ago, 47 business licenses were issued.

As seen in the following pie chart, the Business Services sector accounted for 53% of the of the total licenses issued in October, and the Retail Trade sector accounted for 25%.



Unemployment Data

In September, Staunton's unemployment rate of 3.1% decreased from the previous month. As seen in the graph below, Staunton's rate was .1% higher than Waynesboro's and .2% higher than the State's rate of 2.9%. With a labor force of 12,842, Staunton had 12,439 employed and 403 unemployed in September.



Finance

- The department issued 7,264 utility bills and general bills totaling \$1,283,493 during October.
- Collection activities in October resulted in the recovery of \$3,526 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 3,498 receipts in the amount of \$1,062,307 during October.
- The department processed 476 City and 270 School accounts payable checks totaling \$5,931,356. 867 City and 568 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$4,035,297 and 86 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$4,394,141 during October.
- Unclaimed Property was submitted to the Commonwealth of Virginia for FY 2024.
- The city's auditors, Brown Edwards, were on-site completing post-closing audit work for FY 2024.
- Staff participated in several informational meetings with VRS and VOYA regarding the upcoming transition of the Defined Contribution Plan record-keeping services from Mission Square to VOYA. The transition to VOYA, which is slated to occur January 1, 2025, is anticipated to bring new services, state-of-the-art retirement readiness tools, and access to professional investment advice and financial wellness support to all plan participants. This change is relevant to VRS Hybrid plan participants.
- A Capital Improvement Program committee meeting was held on Oct. 24 to kick off the development of the FY2026-FY30 five-year plan. In addition, several individual department meetings were held. The next meeting is planned for December to review the first draft of the plan.
- The FY2026 Budget Call memo went out to department directors on Oct. 18 to officially start the FY2026 budgeting process. Department directors will be working over the next month to develop their operating budgets.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 283 incidents in October, with an average response time of 4 minutes 39 and seconds. The average response time for the year is 4 minutes and 41 seconds.

- Staff received over 419 hours of training for the month.
- Staff conducted 60 business fire safety inspections and 27 re-inspections in October.
- Captain Brian Butler was promoted to Deputy Chief of Operations.
- Firefighters provided safety talks to children at the Bison Learning Center, Bears and Blanket Daycare, and Marquis Memorial Church.
- Firefighters Ryan Wagoner and Chris Brown spent time in North Carolina and Southwest Virginia assisting with hurricane relief efforts.
- The first-grade education program was conducted at each of the elementary schools.
- The Happy Birthday America committee provided lunch to staff as a thanks for the support provided during the Fourth of July celebration.
- Staunton Citizen University visited Station 1 for a tour and information session.
- Provided a standby crew for two little league, two junior varsity, and one varsity football game.
- Participated in Truck-or-Treats at Linden Heights Church, Kings Daughters Nursing home, and the Howard Johnson Hotel and attended the Calvary Baptist Church Fall Festival.
- Hosted station tours for children from McSwain Elementary, Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, Grace Christian School, St. Francis Pre-School, and Staunton Montessori School.
- Assisted with the Regional Firefighter Testing in Harrisonburg.
- Launched the Staunton Community Connect program that allows citizens to share life-saving information with first responders.
- Participated in the Amato Clinic Family Fun Day at the Sunspots Pavilion.
- The Fire Marshal's Office issued one flammable liquid storage permit, one commercial open burning permit, one hazmat storage permit, one tent permit, one UST removal permit, and one flammable liquid removal permit; conducted three fire alarm inspections, one sprinkler inspection, and one hood suppression inspection; reviewed one site plan and one special use permit; reviewed two fire alarm plans and one hood suppression plan; reviewed nine semi-annual fire suppression inspection reports; and reviewed two special event applications.

Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time— 3

Part Time/Seasonal— 1

Hired:

Full Time— 1

Part Time— 2

Retired— 0

Activities

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

Recruitment:

Initiated recruitment for the following positions:

- Equipment Operator II – Streets
 - Utility Electrical/Pump Technician
 - Human Resource Generalist – Staunton City Schools
 - Parking Attendant
 - Assistant Director of Economic Development
 - Planner – Comprehensive Planning
 - Firefighter/EMT
- Continued recruitment for the following positions:
 - Probation Officer (PT) – BRCS
 - Utility Service Clerk (PT)
 - Transportation Planner
 - Deputy City Engineer
 - Equipment Operator 1 – Utilities
 - Equipment Operator 1 – Streets
 - Water Treatment Plant Operator
 - Firefighters/EMTs: Part-Time
 - Police Officer – Certified

- Utility Service Technician – Traffic Signals
- Equipment Operator II (Public Works Utilities)

Orientations:

Conducted orientations for two full-time employees.

Benefits:

- 2025 open enrollment for health, dental and vision benefits began on Oct. 28 and ran through Nov. 15

Other:

- At the October Employee Service Pin Luncheon, 16 employees with a combined 215 years-of-service were honored, as well as three employees of the quarter.

Information Technology

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

- Prepared an upgrade to the voice logging recorder in Dispatch. The new recorder will improve search capabilities and will integrate with the new public safety radio system.
- Replaced four workstations and three laptops.
- Completed network cabling work for security upgrades in City Hall. Work on door locks and other upgrades have started.
- Work continues on network connectivity to the new Gardner Springs pump station. The new circuit is scheduled to be live by the end of the year.
- Remediations on two SAW Regional Radio towers were completed. Microwave installation will start in November.
- Chief Technology Officer Kurt Plowman presented *Drones in Public Safety* at the 2024 Virginia APCO/NENA Interoperability conference in Roanoke.

Library

The Friends of the Staunton Library held their annual book sale from Oct. 7–11. The five-day sale raised over \$7,000 in support of library services! The Friends also held their annual meeting for all members and elected a new slate of officers for 2025.

Fall outreach season continued, with library staff attending CAPSAW's poverty simulation, Waynesboro's Fall Foliage Festival, Aging in Place roundtable, a high school career fair, and Pride, reaching well over 500 community members.

In-house programs included:

- Homeschool Hour with the Wildlife Center of Virginia featuring birds of prey
- True Crime Discussion Club
- Halloween programs including a children's costume party and creepy craft event

A new book to reflect the changing season was installed at the Montgomery Hall Park StoryWalk.

Staff recruited and onboarded a new Library Assistant I: Circulation Assistant. The Library also bid farewell to Linda Lloyd, a Technical Services Assistant who retired after 28 years of service at Staunton Public Library.

Staff changed out the rotating gallery display on the first floor and hung a *Democracy at Work* exhibit created by the Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism at WHRO Public Media.



Library Statistical Report: October 2024

CIRCULATION	Month	YTD		SERVICES	Month	YTD
Adult	9,491	40,249		ILLs Borrowed	12	48
Young Adult (YA)	639	3,029		ILLs Lent	0	0
Juvenile	6,785	28,751		Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians	1	6
Digital	5,583	22,740				
Total Circulation	22,498	94,769		PROGRAMS		
Talking Book Center Circulation	1,730	6,214		Adult	17	56
				Attendance	559	1,219
Items Checked In	19,247	80,660		YA	8	19
				Attendance	559	2,071
Outgoing to VLC Libraries	1,711	7,057		Juvenile	44	135

Incoming from VLC Libraries	1,613	6,492	Attendance	1,587	5,862
Total Holds Filled	4,787	20,623			
			PEOPLE		
Added to Collection	1,126	3,886	Library Visits	13,992	53,826
Withdrawn from Collection	2,554	9,280	Curbside Visits	33	185
			Computer Users	704	2,743
Database Use/Sessions	1,745	7,130	Juvenile Computer Users	1,321	6,173
			Meetings Held	8	27
			Volunteer Hours	452	786
			New Card Registrations	207	832
			Total Registered Cards		14,918

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- The Fall Plant Giveaway was held the first week of October with a total of 113 citizens participating. Everyone went home with plants for their home gardens.
- A total of 17,00 pansies and 5,000 fall bulbs were planted in the fall flower displays.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed the following:

- Started leaf removal in both Gypsy Hill and Montgomery Hall Parks.
- Assisted with maintenance support for the Pride Festival held at the bandstand in Gypsy Hill Park.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities

- Superintendent of Recreation Steve Taetzsch completed the National Recreation and Parks certified playground inspectors' program. He is now licensed and will assist Park Maintenance with the monthly inspection program.
- Staff assisted with the annual Veterans Fishing Derby held at Lake Tams.



- Thomas Hannon joined Parks & Recreation as the new Aquatic/programming manager.
- Programs offered:
 - Morning Warm Ups, 22 participants
 - Afterschool hiking, 5 participants
 - Explorers Club, 18 participants
 - Chess Club, 11 participants
 - Little Movers, 10 participants
 - Handprints, 9 participants
 - Indoor walking club, 9 participants
- The annual Pumpkin Float was held Oct. 26 at Lake Tams, with more than 50 participants.

Police

- The Police Department hosted Staunton Citizen University on Oct. 7.
- During the month, work began on the renovation of the E-911 Center. Public Works replaced the old ceiling tiles, installed new overhead lighting and new light switches, and began prepping the walls for paint. The new consoles and carpeting are scheduled to be installed the week of January 20, 2025.
- The Police Department's E-911 Center handled a total of 4,242 telephone calls during the month, including 1,128 9-1-1 calls.
- Police personnel responded to 2,672 incidents during the month, including 1,523 citizen calls for service, 565 officer initiated activities, 222 administrative calls, and 362 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 4 minutes and 5 seconds; it is 4 minutes and 1 second for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 35 new owner accounts, 24 new rental residential accounts, and two commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$55,208 in payments.
- 23 accounts were cut off for non-payment during 2 cut off weeks. Of those cut off, 17 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan established.
- Utility crews repaired three water main breaks, one valve, and 15 water meters. The crew responded to seven sewer main blockage and 10 sewer lateral blockages.
- Montana Welcher was promoted to Water Treatment Plant Supervisor.

- The Streets Department placed concrete patches city wide, and completed asphalt work for utility cuts.
- The Recycling Center had over 4,000 customers in October.
- Traffic Department is upgrading Barterbrook Road to adaptive traffic lights with new cameras and a new processor.

Tourism

Activities:

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

- Staunton blog promotions featured *Sip, Savor, Staunton: A Guide to Virginia Wine Month in the Queen City*, *New Faces and Places in Staunton*, *Let's Meet Staunton Pride's AnhThu Nguyen*, *Top 10 Things We're Thankful for in Staunton*.
- Tourism and Economic Development's Department Secretary, Kim Cormier, celebrated 20 years of service to the City of Staunton.

Public Relations

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

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Oct. 23	<u>Staunton Pride Returns to Gypsy Hill Park on Saturday</u>	USA Today	85,680,588
Oct.19	<u>We Asked Southern Chefs Their Secrets for The Best Pimento Cheese</u>	Southern Living	12,844,814
Oct. 31	<u>9 Old-World Towns to Visit in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,630,448
Oct. 30	<u>8 Best Places to Retire in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,630,448
Oct. 23	<u>9 Close-Knit Towns to Visit in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,630,448
Oct. 11	<u>9 Slow-Paced Towns to Visit in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	5,630,448
Oct. 5	<u>9 Picturesque Towns in Virginia for A Weekend Retreat In 2024</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
Oct. 1	<u>9 Towns in Virginia with Unique Traditions</u>	World Atlas	5,137,422
Oct. 19	<u>The 9 Best Towns in Virginia for Antiquing</u>	Yahoo! Life	3,896,288
Oct. 11	<u>Pumpkin Picking and Corn Mazes: 4 Places You Can Go for A Fun Day Outdoors</u>	Yahoo! Life	3,896,288

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Oct. 15	Photos: Shakespeare's Merry Wives at ASC's Blackfriars Playhouse	BroadwayWorld.com	1,191,380
Oct. 24	7 Leaf-Peeping Fall Excursions and Experiences in The DC Area	Washingtonian Magazine	1,053,035
Oct. 23	Discover The Beautiful Routes of The Virginia Scenic Railway	WTKR-TV	325,916
Oct. 28	Tickets For Virginia Train Ride with Santa Go on Sale Tuesday	Northern Virginia Magazine	221,581
Oct. 17	Autumn Destinations to Visit in Virginia	Northern Virginia Magazine	221,581
Oct. 14	Charlottesville, Albemarle County, And Staunton in AARP Top Livable Communities	WHSV-TV	210,219
Oct. 30	Top 5 Weekend Events: Virginia Film Festival, Montpelier Hunt Races and more	The Daily Progress	205,746
Oct. 3	Go Beyond Nova to Enjoy Fall Festivals Throughout Virginia	Northern Virginia Magazine	199,014
Oct. 14	Charlottesville, Albemarle County, And Staunton in AARP Top Livable Communities	WVIR	193,982
Oct. 14	Staunton Book Festival Welcomes 50 Authors During National Book Month on Saturday	The Augusta Free Press	137,122
Oct. 17	Local Authors Headline Queen City Word Fest	Daily News-Record	60,710
Oct. 30	"Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors"	C-Ville Weekly	32,888
Oct. 9	An Otherwise Brilliant Version of The Scottish Play	C-ville Weekly	32,888
Oct. 22	Sponsored Love: Discover The Hidden Gems of Virginia, A Road Trip Guide	Harlem World Magazine	23,322
Oct. 14	Autumn Adventures: Can't-Miss Fall Opportunities Within A Few Hours of Fauquier County	Fauquier Now	22,763
Oct. 16	Staunton Hosts Inaugural Book Festival on Saturday	WMRA-FM	11,872
Oct. 29	A Quest to Bring Long-Lost Pea Back to The Shenandoah Valley	Virginia Living	17,820
Oct. 25	Buy Tickets Early to Ride the Rails with Santa	Virginia Living	17,820
Oct. 1	4 Reasons to Visit Staunton This Fall	Virginia Living	17,820
Oct. 1	The Virginia Scenic Railway Brings Train Travel Back to Virginia	Virginia Living	17,820
	TOTAL		143,329,913

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
October 2023	October 2024	% Change
42,000 visitors	41,230 visitors	-1.83 %
114 guide requests	134 visitor's guide requests	+17.5%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending

Visitor Market Area	% of Visitors	% of Visitor Spend
Washington DC (Hagerstown MD)	13.2%	11.1%
Roanoke-Lynchburg VA	13.1%	7.5%
Richmond-Petersburg VA	10.7%	13.1%
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News VA	10.1%	11.8%
New York NY	3.0%	3.8%
Raleigh-Durham (Fayetteville) NC	2.7%	2.2%
Philadelphia PA	2.5%	3.6%
Charlotte NC	2.4%	1.1%
Baltimore MD	2.3%	2.5%
Harrisburg-Lancaster-Lebanon-York PA	2.3%	2.0%



10,664 Sample Size



**9% of Overall Restaurant Spend
\$48**



**Steady increase in spending seen
by top VA Markets**



**15% of Overall Retail
Spend - \$75**



**64% of Overall
Attraction Spend - \$83**



**44% Ages 25-54
32% Household \$100k+
47% Have Children**

Office on Youth

Parenting Programs

- October 2024 class participation:
 - Active Parenting, 3 Staunton adults
 - First 5 Years, 7 Staunton adults
 - Parenting and Divorce, 4 Staunton adults
 - Parent Project, 1 Staunton adult

Check and Connect

- Participants included 95 students from 13 schools, with 29 of those students being from Staunton City Schools.

PREP

- The Personal Responsibility Education Program was facilitated at Staunton High School Oct. 1 through Oct. 11 for 19 students in the ninth grade.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

In October, the SDDA hosted a Halloween contest for Downtown merchants and the public. Participants picked up a free tinsel cat, decorated it, and returned it for display. Over 75 cats were submitted, with winners determined by a public vote on social media. Prizes from Downtown businesses were awarded to the winners. The cats were displayed at the Visitor Center, City Hall, and storefronts. Special thanks to Staunton Tourism, The Well Balanced Paw, Foxtails Gift Shop, and Art Hive Creative Reuse and Art Center for their support, and congratulations to Frederick House for winning in the business category!

Chop House Tavern, an upscale steakhouse focused on sourcing fresh, local ingredients and creating a welcoming atmosphere for the community, opened its doors at 29 North Augusta St. on Oct. 2.

The SDDA brought its “little truck” to the Staunton Pride Festival on Oct. 26, and set up a Decoration Station for attendees to style Halloween cats while learning more about the open and inclusive environment of Downtown Staunton.

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.