Staunton Connect
City Council Progress Update

June 25, 2026

Connecting Community to Opportunity

OVERVIEW

What This Update Covers

This update is organized around four areas of work & runs on **two simultaneous tracks**, both now underway.

1 Community Conditions

What the data tells us about who is not reaching economic security, and why.

2 Community Voice

Who we have heard from and the move into structured community co-design.

3 Systems Change

The internal and external work examining how City systems function.

4 Outcomes

The infrastructure outcomes produced in this foundation-building phase.

INTERNAL TRACK

Data, analysis, and City systems — building the picture and aligning staff.

EXTERNAL TRACK

Community engagement and co-design — reaching households we don't typically reach.

01

COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

What the data tells us

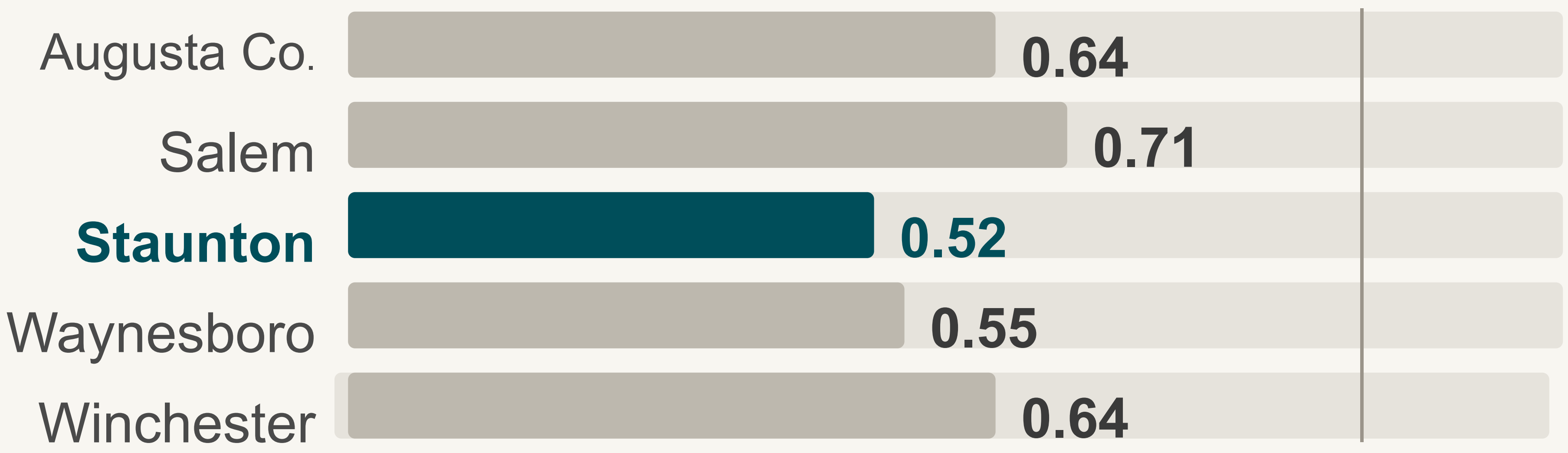
Staunton has services — but households in need are **not reaching economic security.** Understanding why required building a detailed picture of who they are and what stands between them and opportunity.

Staunton's wage gap is the defining challenge

The average Staunton job pays only **52 cents for every dollar** of basic living costs for a family of three — the lowest in the peer set.

Wages vs. cost-of-living ratio

Line marks 1.0 — where local wages cover basic living costs.



Adults with debt in collections

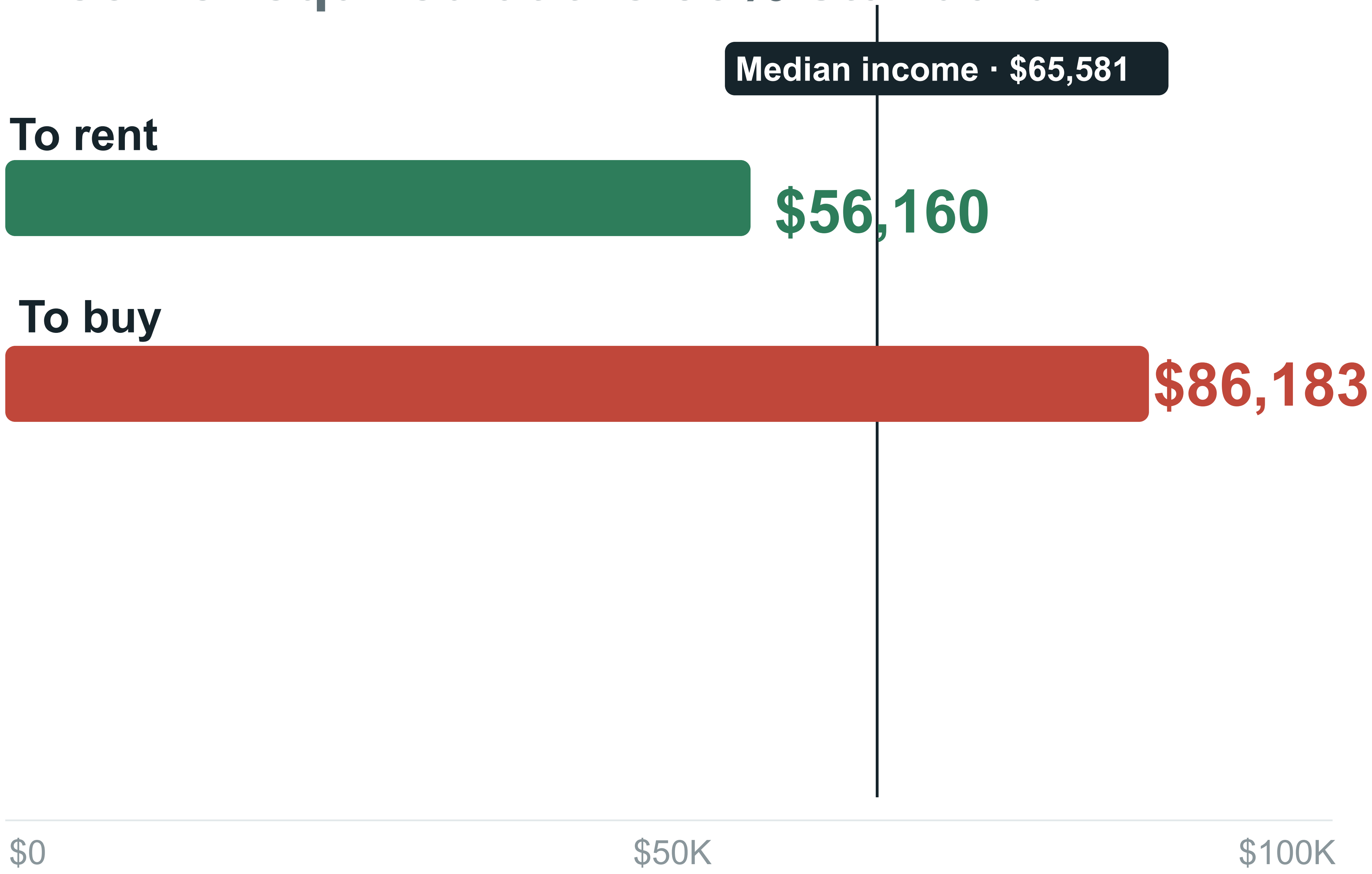
This is not a Staunton-specific challenge but a regional structural condition.

Source: Urban Institute, 2024 (wages); 2025 (debt). Wage ratio = average local wage ÷ MIT cost-of-living estimate, family of 3.

THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD

Renting vs. buying for a typical household

Income required at the 30% standard



$20,000 (plus) short — the gap between what a typical household earns and what buying requires.

Renting

Affordable

1.17 affordability index

Monthly cost
$1,404

Income needed
$56,160

Buying

Cost burden

0.76 affordability index

Monthly cost
$2,155

Income needed
$86,183

Index ≥ 1.0 = affordable at the 30% income standard · Redfin & Freddie Mac 2025 · ACS 2019–23

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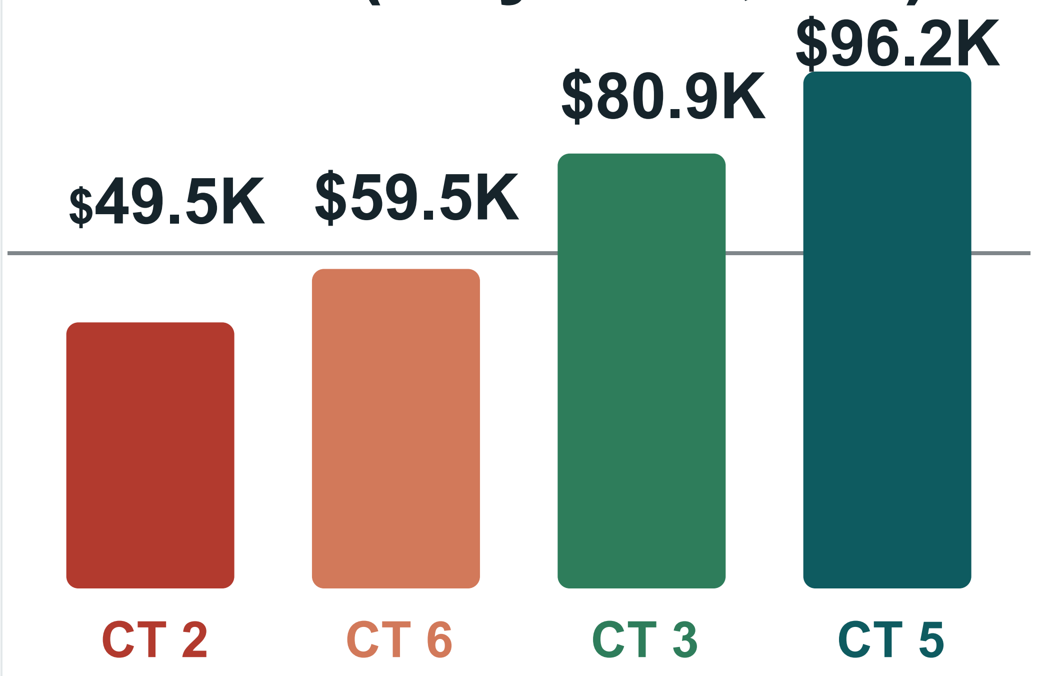
Where you live shapes economic mobility

Inside one city, the odds of getting ahead diverge sharply by neighborhood. Staunton's two highest-need tracts trail its higher-opportunity tracts on the ladder to mobility.

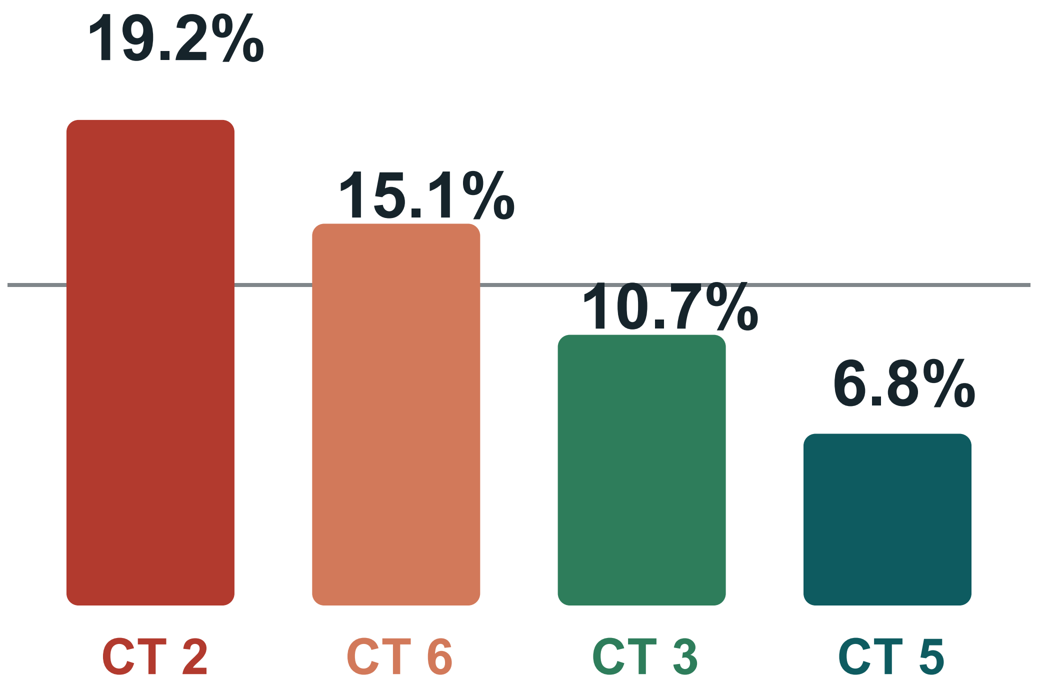
Higher = more opportunity

Median household income (City: $62,048)



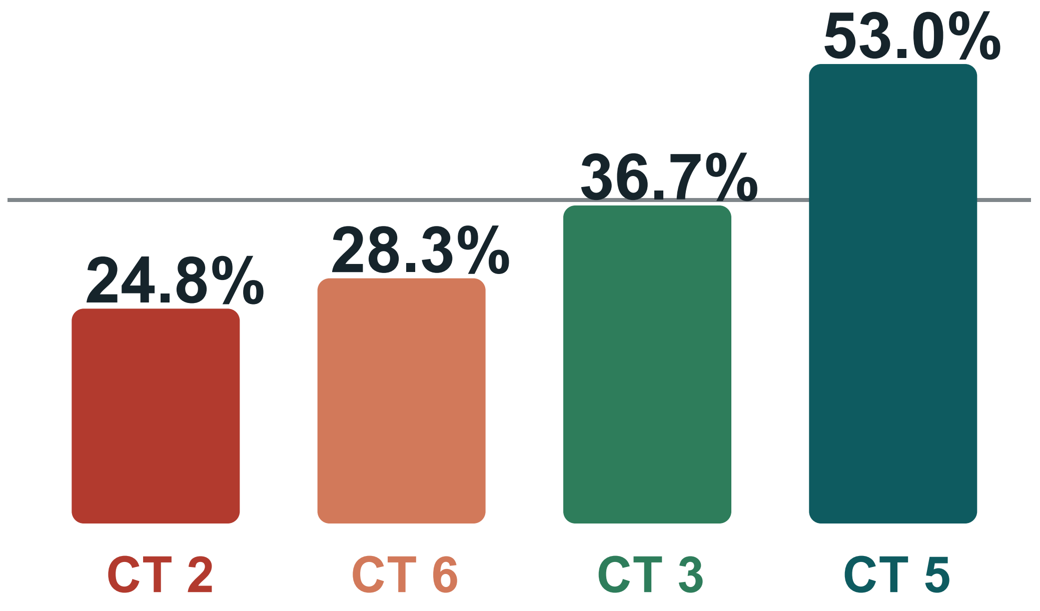
Lower = more opportunity

Poverty rate (City: 12.6%)



Higher = more opportunity · ages 25+

Adults with a bachelor's degree (City: 37%)



A typical **CT 2** household earns about **$47,000 less** than a **CT 5** household, lives with **nearly 3× the poverty rate**, and is **half as likely** to hold a college degree — within the same city.

The high school graduate or higher rate is 93.9%, which means there's a substantial group with *some* post-secondary experience but no bachelors. **That's your workforce credential gap population.**

ACS 5-Year · Urban Institute Upward Mobility Framework

COMMUNITY CONDITIONS · CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Staunton's advantage

Two metrics where Staunton leads its peers — and one where we have room to grow.

Civic associations per 10,000 residents

Staunton leads by a wide margin (22.4 vs. next-highest 18.5) — the civic density that anchors the connector model.

Transportation cost burden · % income at 80% AMI

24.4% is 2nd-lowest in the set — well below car-dependent Augusta County (29.8%).

VOTER TURNOUT 2024

Augusta Co.	Salem	**Staunton**	Waynesboro	Winchester
70.5%	65.9%	**66.0%**	66.3%	60.5%

Source: Urban Institute, 2022 (transportation); 2023 (civic associations); 2024 (voter turnout).

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02

COMMUNITY VOICE

Who we have heard from

Data alone cannot tell us what will work. STAUNTON Connect is not a new concept — it is **finetuning existing practice** to reach households not typically engaged through standard City channels.

A Cross-Departmental Effort

INTERNAL PLANNING TEAM — GUIDING DESIGN FROM THE START

COMMUNICATIONS
Josh Knight

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Jessica Blythe

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Meggie Taylor

TRANSPORTATION
Susan Wilson

HOUSING
Rebecca Joyce

EMOSA
Anna Leavitt

Staunton City Schools participates as schedules allow

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

30+ — **Key informant interviews** with City staff, nonprofit leaders, and human-service program staff — validating barriers and surfacing gaps.

17 — **Allied professionals** reviewed the 16 personas, expanding the barrier list to **158 opportunity categories.**

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THE PICTURE, IN THREE NUMBERS

30+

Key Informant Sessions

Residents, providers, employers, and civic leaders across the region.

182

Regional Services Catalogued (Asset Map)

SAW-area programs and services with eligibility and barrier tags.

158

Barriers Identified

Opportunity categories mapped across 16 personas.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (INTERNAL TRACK)

Four GEARS & a Foundation

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GEAR 1
Engaged Learners, Brighter Futures

- Childcare access: increasing slot supply & Extended & non-traditional hours
- Youth workforce programs

GEAR 2
Good Wages, Growing Careers

- Upskilling & short-term workforce credentials
- Employer storytelling & pathway awareness

GEAR 3
Healthy People, Healthy Places

- Access to healthy foods
- Mental health supports
- Peer support & social belonging

GEAR 4
Resilient Neighborhoods, Vibrant Spaces

- Home modification & aging in place
- Landlord engagement & voucher acceptance
- Heir property & estate navigation

Foundation — Civic Connection & Community Infrastructure

- City communications reach & equity
- Boards & commissions as civic pipeline

Aligning City Systems

Where the City has a **direct lever and mandate**, we can use it.
Where we have a role but not the lead, we inform, consult, involve, collaborate → empower

DECISION-MAKING:

Equity Screening Tools

A decision-consideration guide for staff: presented at the management team retreat to **embed equity screening** into City processes.

COORDINATION:

Neighborhood Planning

EMOSA is working with City staff to steward the West End Revitalization and Uniontown Neighborhood Action plans.

- Quarterly meetings will be scheduled, and a structured amendment process will be developed to keep both documents current.
- This work also advances a broader standard: that city-produced plans include built-in stewardship from the outset and active pathways for community-based steering committees to remain engaged beyond the planning process.

CAPACITY:

Learning & Training

- Scholarship to the **New Growth Innovation Network** conference.
- Accepted into Urban Institute's **Effective Interventions Training Sprint** (June–September 2026).
- Member **Sub-Regional Ready Regions** Workgroup (focused on childcare)
- Member statewide **Economic Mobility Workgroup**

What We Built

SAW Regional Service Inventory

182 agencies catalogued across the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro region, each with service descriptions, eligibility criteria, and access-barrier tags.

Persona Deck

16 composite personas representing the lived experience of Staunton households — reviewed by 17 allied professionals.

Gap Analysis

Services compared to 158 opportunity categories using a **coverage rating system** — based on number of assets (services) in the inventory impacting that opportunity (need).

What We Built

Civic Participation Analysis

Modest sample sizes make this a starting point, not a decision-making tool. The value is in establishing a baseline and a repeatable methodology — one that will yield more actionable insight as participation data accumulates over time.

Compounding Cost Analysis

For a single parent in Census Tract 2, housing, transportation, and childcare consume **80–100% of take-home pay.**

Housing Affordability Calculator

Built on 2025 Staunton market data, this tool lets users enter a home price or rent amount and see the income required to afford it

03

SYSTEMS CHANGE ACTIVITY

Two tracks of work

Internal work focuses on City systems, data infrastructure, and staff alignment. External work focuses on community engagement and co-design. **Both are moving.**

Engaging the Community

CO-DESIGN

Community Co-Design Launch

Work group structure and facilitation design are underway, covered through **ICMA grant funds.** One to two sessions set expectations, followed by outreach activities and a synthesis process to develop action priorities.

HOUSING · FALL 2026

Housing Conditions Study

With Housing & Community Development staff, a **windshield study** of existing units and a **vacant-land buildability analysis** are being planned — funded through a proposed Virginia Housing grant.

WHY IT MATTERS

Both efforts feed one destination — a **Mobility Action Plan** grounded in real conditions and with community voice.

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OUTCOMES

What this work has produced

STAUNTON Connect is in its foundation-building phase. These are **infrastructure outcomes** — the preconditions for systems change. Resident-level outcomes will be tracked once implementation begins.

Foundations Now In Place

Initiative named & structured

STAUNTON Connect has a mission, **four GEARS** , priority focus areas, and a cross-departmental planning team. (Internal)

Gap picture completed

158 opportunity categories mapped against 182 regional services, with coverage and capacity ratings.

Equity baseline established

Census-tract civic participation data **geocoded and analyzed** — informing both engagement strategy and City policy.

City systems continue to align

Cross-departmental infrastructure continues.

STAUNTON Connect — Cost Compounding Analysis

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Housing + Transportation + Childcare (+ Healthcare for seniors)

Cost Category / Assumption	Lower Income Single Parent, 1 child *Take-home $3,298/mo* *CT2 ~$49k*	Moderate Income Two Earners, 2 children *Take-home $4,165/mo* *CT4.1 ~$62k*	Middle Income Two Earners, 2 children *Take-home $5,394/mo* *CT3 ~$81k*	Senior Fixed Income *Take-home $1,907/mo* *SSA avg ~$22k*
Total monthly cost: Housing + Transport + Childcare (no subsidy) (+ Healthcare for D)	$2,589	$3,727	$3,996	$1,783
Remaining per month	$709	$437	$1,397	$124
Needed: food, healthcare, clothing & personal care (BLS CEX 2024 — 26% of gross)	$1,075	$1,358	$1,759	$497
Gap (remaining minus basic necessities)	–$366	–$921	–$362	–$373
Combined burden as % of NET take-home income	78.5%	89.5%	74.1%	93.5%

KEY FINDING: Compounding costs create severe burden across all income levels — not just the lowest earners.

Sources: ACS · Urban Institute · SAW Childcare Needs Assessment 2025 · HUD FMR · SSA avg. retirement benefit 2025 · KFF 2024 · BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey 2024

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STAUNTON Connect | Your Personal Housing Calculator

Update the blue numbers as needed. The calculator shows what income is needed to afford each option .

IF YOU ARE BUYING		
Home price you're considering	$300,000	*← Type a dollar amount, e.g. 250000*
Mortgage interest rate	6.48%	*← Find today's rate at freddiemac.com/pmms or check with your lender. Enter as a decimal, e.g. 0.0672 for 6.72%.*
Down payment %	10%	*← 0.10 = 10%, 0.20 = 20%*
Loan term (years)	30	*← Usually 30; can also enter 15*
Monthly HOA / condo fees	$0	*← Change if you know your actual costs*
Monthly utilities	$371	*← Change if you know your actual costs*
Amount you'd borrow	$270,000	
Monthly mortgage payment	$1,703.03	
Monthly property tax + insurance	$352.50	
Total monthly cost (buying)	**$2,426.53**	
Total annual cost (buying)	**$29,118**	
Income needed to afford this — 30% rule	**$97,061**	

IF YOU ARE RENTING		
Monthly rent you're considering	$1,024	*← Type the rent amount you're looking at*
Monthly utilities	$361	*← Change if you know your actual costs*
Monthly renters insurance	$18	*← Change if you know your actual costs*
Total monthly cost (renting)	**$1,403.00**	
Total annual cost (renting)	**$16,836**	
Income needed to afford this — 30% rule	**$56,120**	

Zillow April 2026 data for average house listing price/average sale price;
Rent based on ACS 5-year estimates.

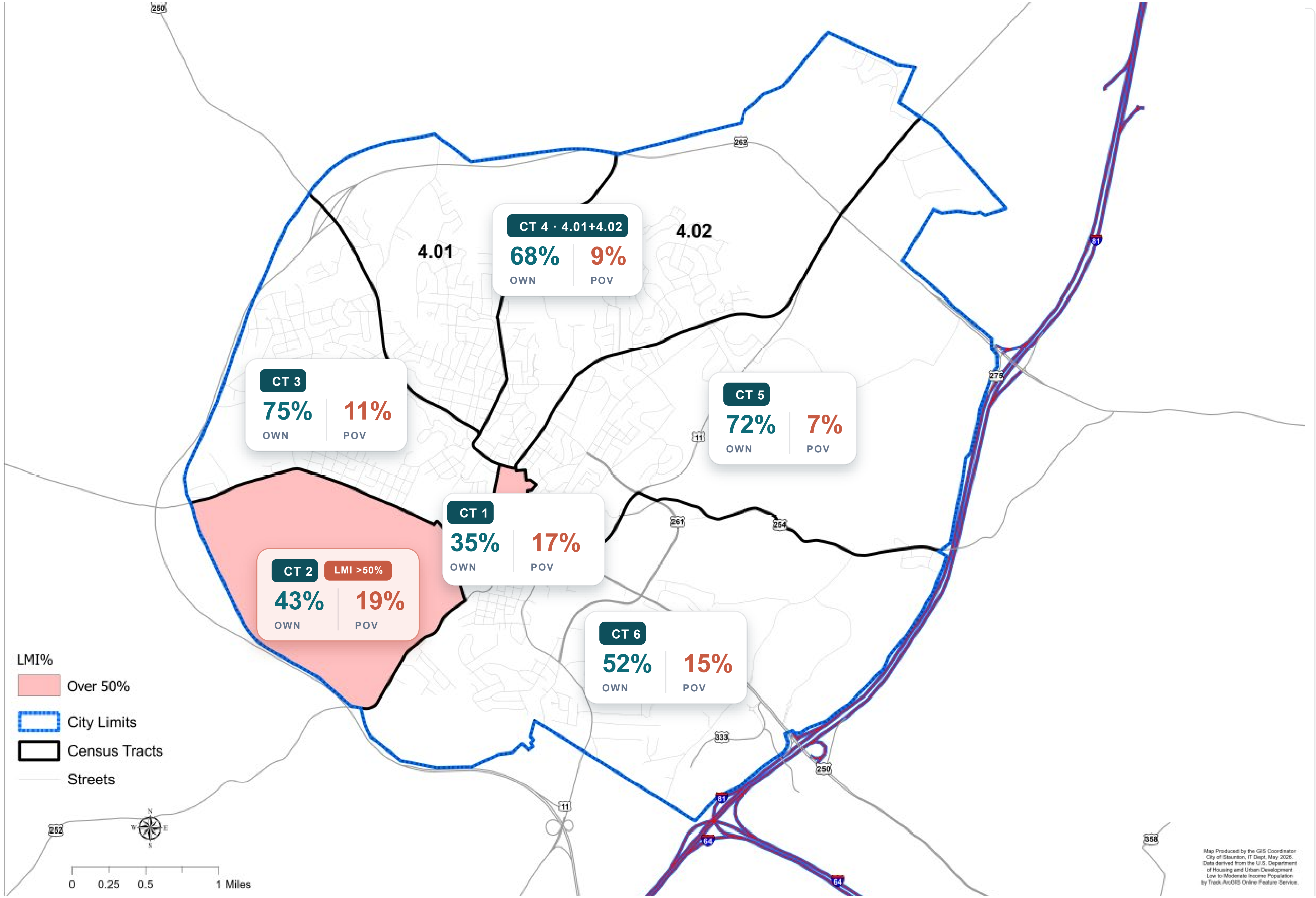
05

LOOKING AHEAD

Next quarter priorities

Planned for **Q3 FY2026 (July–September)** — advancing both tracks toward the Mobility Action Plan.

Homeownership and poverty, by census tract



2024 RATE SHOWN ON EACH TRACT

- **Own** — homeownership rate (59.5% city wide)
- **Pov** — poverty rate (12.6% city wide)

2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, rounded to the nearest point. CT 4 combines tracts 4.01 and 4.02. Shaded tract (pink) = low-to-moderate income population over 50%.

Key finding — Tract 2 and Tract 1 are Staunton's only LMI **tract** areas above 50%, and they carry the city's **lowest homeownership** and **highest poverty rates.**

Census BLOCK level drills down deeper and looks at smaller groupings. That level of data is not available for all data points. CDBG funding is based on block level information.

Things can change

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Mobility outcomes are not fixed. From 2010 to 2024, homeownership rose and poverty fell across most of Staunton's census tracts — measurable proof that conditions change over time. **We cannot attribute the change to a single cause from this data alone.** The tables tell us *what changed*, not *why*.

Homeownership rate by census tract

Census Tract	2010	2024	Change
CT 1	29.4%	35.4%	**+6.0 ▲**
CT 2	42.2%	43.4%	+1.2
CT 3	70.0%	75.2%	**+5.2 ▲**
CT 4 (combined)	61.5%	67.5%	**+5.9 ▲**
CT 5	66.0%	71.7%	**+5.6 ▲**
CT 6	56.4%	51.8%	−4.5

Poverty rate by census tract

Census Tract	2010	2024	Change
CT 1	17.4%	17.4%	+0.1
CT 2	27.2%	19.2%	**−8.0 ▼**
CT 3	23.5%	10.7%	**−12.8 ▼**
CT 4 (combined)	11.1%	9.1%	−2.0
CT 5	15.3%	6.8%	**−8.5 ▼**
CT 6	17.1%	15.1%	−2.0

ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010–2014 vs. 2020–2024. CT 4 combines tracts 4.01 and 4.02.
Tract-level rates carry margins of error of ±4–10 pp; changes near the 5 pp threshold should be read as directional.

Next Quarter Priorities

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INTERNAL TRACK

1. Complete the Urban Institute Training Sprint and apply findings to intervention design.
2. Finalize the internal Mobility Action Plan framework ahead of co-design synthesis.
3. Establish Neighborhood Plan stewardship process & reporting cadence
4. Design and launch the STAUNTON Connect page on the City website.

EXTERNAL TRACK

1. Finalize co-design format and work group structure, and secure facilitators.
2. Convene the community co-design work group.
3. Advance the Virginia Housing grant application for the Residential Opportunity Inventory.
4. Design the process for synthesizing engagement findings toward the Mobility Action Plan.