

Activity Report Highlights

City of Staunton



WELCOMING A NEW CITY COUNCIL

On Election Day in November 2024, three new council members were elected to City Council, and Adam Campbell was re-elected. Jeff Overholtzer, Corrie Park, and Blake Shepherd were elected to council to replace Mayor Stephen W. Claffey, Vice Mayor Amy Darby, and Councilmember Mark Robertson, all of whom had decided not to seek re-election. The Oath of Office ceremony was held on Thursday, Dec. 19 in the Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers in City Hall where the four councilmembers were sworn in before friends and family. The outgoing members of council were given the honor of lighting the holiday tree at Gypsy Hill Park on Dec. 2 and were recognized for their service at the Dec. 12 City Council meeting. Claffey, Darby, and Robertson each gave their thanks to the community and city staff, and shared wisdom to the incoming Councilmembers.



December 2024

Dispatched Calls for Service*

Police	2,351 ↑
Fire & Rescue	298 ↑

Average Response Time
month/year

Police	3'41"/4'01"
Fire & Rescue	4'56"/4'43"

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

By the Numbers

The SAW Regional Radio Project

9 towers are getting new equipment

2,152 portable radios

17 upgraded dispatch consoles

Into the Future

City offices and the Library will be closed on Feb. 17 in observance of Presidents Day



BIN ROLLOUT EARLY MARCH

The city is less than two months away from rolling out the first new trash cans to residential customers across the city as part of the trash modernization program. Delivering trash cans to all residents will take approximately two weeks (weather dependent). Upgrading the curbside refuse program will benefit residents, staff, and the environment. The new policies, enhanced offerings, trash cans, and equipment upgrades will make trash collection safer for crews, combat increasing landfill costs, improve efficiency, and align with the city's organizational value: Environmentally Conscious.



SHOP WITH A COP TRADITION CONTINUES

Shop with a Cop is an annual tradition pairing area children with Staunton Police Officers and volunteers to go holiday shopping. The shopping spree gives local children between the ages of 7 and 12 an opportunity to purchase gifts for members of their household. Following their visit to the Staunton Walmart, everyone is meets at Hotel 24 South to wrap gifts and enjoy time with their shopping buddy. The event helps build relationships between police officers and the community. The entire experience is a joint effort of the Staunton Police Department, Citizen's Police Alumni Association, and the Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth. Shop with a Cop began nearly 20 years ago to benefit local families with children during the holiday season.

DISH INSTALLED ON RESERVOIR HILL

Microwave dish installation for the SAW Regional Radio Project started in December. One of two microwave dishes was installed on the Reservoir Hill tower in December. Overall, equipment has been installed on three of nine towers and will continue through early February on the remaining tower sites.



Notes from the City Manager

The City of Staunton's ordinance states the following regarding snow removal: *It shall be the duty of every person occupying any property abutting on a paved sidewalk to remove snow, sleet or ice from such sidewalk, within six hours after the snow or sleet ceases to fall or the ice ceases to form, unless the snow or sleet feel or the ice formed during the night, in which case it shall be removed by 12:00 noon on the following day. If any such property is unoccupied, it shall be the duty of the owner or the person having charge thereof to*

comply with the requirements of this section.

As this winter weather is just getting started, the city encourages everyone to be patient, be kind, and be helpful to each other. Consider helping a neighbor who can't physically clean their sidewalks, recommend companies who do snow removal to those who are in need of help, and let the city know when there are spots that have been missed. Just remember that crews are working as fast as they safely can.

December 2024 Activity Report

Community Development

Key Construction Project Updates

Shelburne Middle School

Final inspections have been completed on the renovation of Shelburne Middle School at 300 Grubert Ave.

Middlebrook Trace II Apartments

Final inspections have been completed on the single four-story apartment building consisting of 48 units and a common area at 801 Moore St.



801 Moore St- Middlebrook Trace II Apartments

107 Lacy B King Way

A certificate of occupancy has been issued for Mini Storage Units, buildings 1500, 1600, 1700, 1800, and 1900 located at 107 Lacy B. King Way.

Reports

Community Development

Plumbing and Mechanical Inspector Lloyd Otte passed his certification for Commercial Plumbing.

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 – 27 active sites with 64 inspections in December
- Commercial Construction – 9 active sites with 24 inspections in December

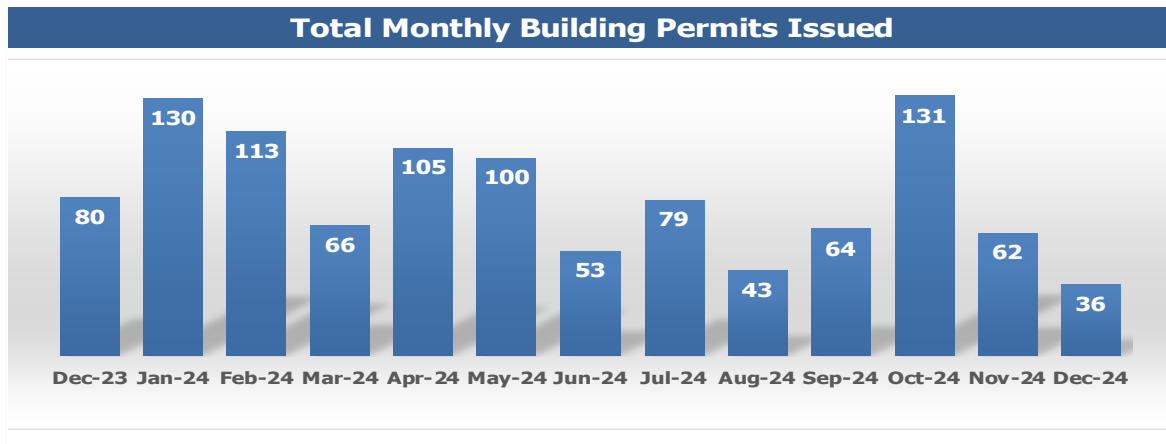
On Dec. 5, Environmental Programs Administrator Pete Kesecker presented details of the Gypsy Hill Park Stream Restoration Project to the Staunton Kiwanis Club. The presentation, held at Seed to Tail, aimed to inform the 15 attendees about the project's dual purpose: Reducing pollutants and improving the ecological health of Peyton Creek.

Dec. 19, Planning Commission Actions

The Planning Commission recommended approval of a special use permit for a revised master plan for the Olde South/South View residential development, and deferred action on a special use permit for Panorama Ridge, a 308-unit multi-family development on Frontier Drive. The Commission also recommended that City Council approve an amendment allowing alleys and private easements for access to new single-family homes when direct access from a public street is deemed unsafe due to factors like topography or traffic.

Building Construction and Related Activity

Permits Issued	Dec-24	Dec-23	# Chg	% Chg
New Residential	0	1	-1	-100.0%
Residential Renovations	10	15	-5	-33.3%
Electrical Permits	10	25	-15	-60.0%
Mechanical Permits	6	10	-4	-40.0%
Plumbing Permits	3	19	-16	-84.2%
Commercial New-Renovations	5	9	-4	-44.4%
Miscellaneous	2	1	1	100.0%
Total	36	80	-44	-55.0%



Economic Development

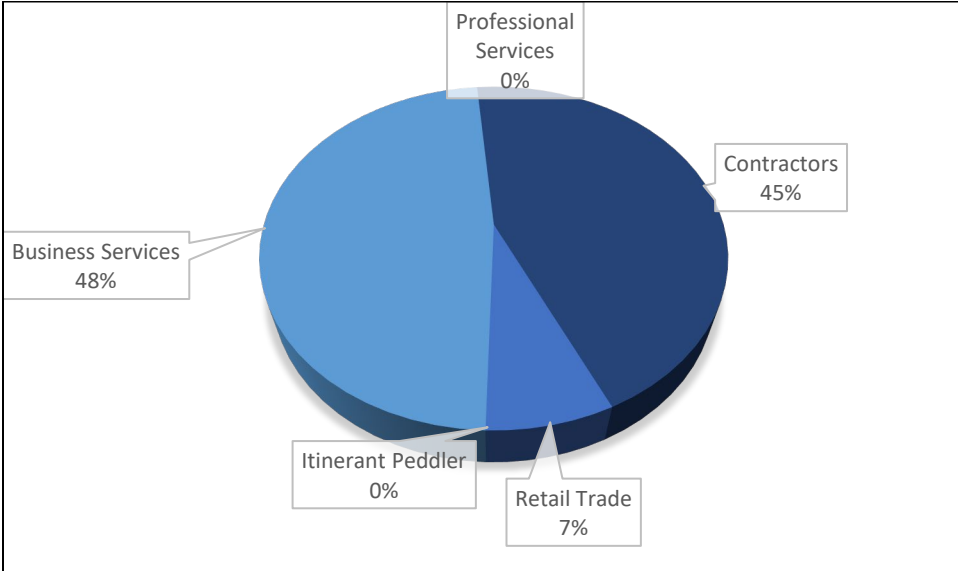
Staunton Crossing

This past month there have been two closings on parcels within the Staunton Crossing Development. 12.36 acres sold for \$1,236,000 and 1.52 acres for \$60,000.

Business License Activity

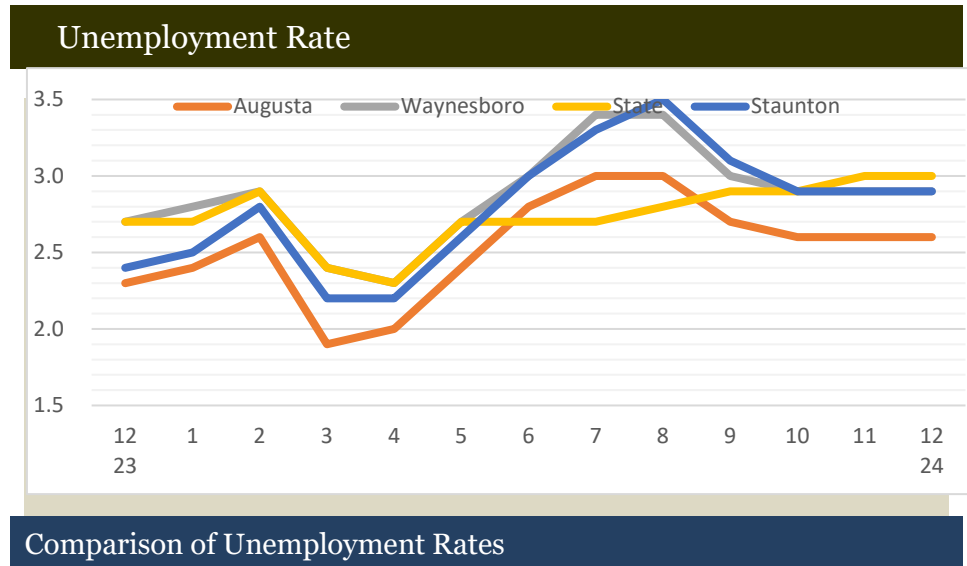
During the month of December, the Commissioner of Revenue’s office issued 28 new business licenses, compared to 36 the previous month, representing a 22% decrease. This month a year ago, 18 new business licenses were issued.

As seen in the following pie chart, the Business Services sector accounted for 48% of the total licenses issued in December, and the Contractor sector accounted for 45%.



Unemployment Data

In November, Staunton’s unemployment rate of 2.9% remained the same as the previous month. As seen in the graph below, Staunton’s rate was the same as Waynesboro’s and below the State’s rate of 3.0%. With a labor force of 12,786, Staunton had 12,410 employed and 376 unemployed in November.



Finance

- The department issued 7,382 utility bills and general bills totaling \$1,662,037 during December.
- Collection activities in December resulted in the recovery of \$3,394 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 3,599 receipts in the amount of \$781,777 during December.
- The department processed 479 City and 209 School accounts payable checks totaling \$6,596,018. 851 City and 560 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$3,985,508 and 26 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$4,787,510 during December.
- The department is submitting data and other pertinent information to Maguire Associates of Virginia, Inc. to begin preparation of the FY 2024 Cost Allocation Plan. The cost allocation plan distributes central service overhead costs such as finance, city manager, engineering, and legal to operating departments such as public works, parks and recreation, and public safety.
- The department received bids on behalf of Public Works for the city's fuel contract, the low bidder was Sunoco Fuels, and the contract has been awarded.
- Finance continued working with other city departments to make sure all American Rescue Plan Act funds were encumbered by the Dec. 31, 2024 deadline.

- The FY 2024 audit and the FY 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report were presented to City Council at the Dec. 12 meeting by Kristen Holland from Brown Edwards LLP, independent auditors.
- FY 2026 Budget development is under way. In-person budgets meetings started in December and will continue into February. The deadline for outside agency requests for the FY 2026 budget funds is Jan. 24.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 298 incidents in December. In total, there were 3,583 incidents in 2024. The average response time for December was 4 minutes and 56 seconds. The average response time for 2024 was 4 minutes and 43 seconds.
- Staff received over 448 hours of training for the month. There were 6,095 hours of training conducted throughout 2024.
- Staff conducted 60 business fire safety inspections and 19 re-inspections in December. During 2024 staff conducted 641 inspections and 304 re-inspections
- Participated in the city's annual Christmas Parade
- Hosted newly elected City Councilmembers for orientation.
- Firefighter Savannah Snider received her master's degree from Southeastern Oklahoma State University.
- Welcomed new full-time hires Devin Davis and Zach Reese to C-Shift at Station 1.
- The Firefighters for Literacy prize winner from A.R. Ware Elementary was escorted home in a firetruck.
- Lieutenant Adam Dolan was promoted to Captain on C-Shift; Master Firefighters PJ Sibold and Alex Foresman were promoted to Lieutenants; and Firefighters Chris Layman and Aaron Fletcher were promoted to Master Firefighters.
- The Fire Marshal's Office conducted three fire alarm inspections, one sprinkler inspection, three final site inspections, and three warm shelter inspections. They also reviewed one site plan, one special use permit, one fire alarm plan, one semi-annual fire suppression inspection report, and two special event applications. They issued one hazmat storage permit and denied one open burning permit. In addition, they investigated the origin and cause of four structure fires and one outside fire.



Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time— 3

Part Time/Seasonal— 6

Hired:

Full Time— 6

Part Time— 5

Retired— 2

Activities

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

Recruitment:

Initiated recruitment for the following positions:

- Probation Officer – Pretrial (FT), Blue Ridge Court Services
- Assistant Director of Human Resources (City & Schools)
- Equipment Operator I – Park Maintenance
- Crew Leader – Park Maintenance
- Public Safety Dispatch
- Equipment Operator I – Utilities
- Equipment Operator II – Utilities

- Continued recruitment for the following positions:
 - Probation Officer – Pretrial (PT), Blue Ridge Court Services
 - Firefighters/EMTs (PT)
 - Equipment Operator II – Streets
 - Equipment Operator I – Streets
 - Water Treatment Plant Operator
 - Police Officer – Certified

Orientations:

Conducted orientations for five full-time employees.

Information Technology

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

- Microwave installation for the SAW Regional Radio Project started. One of two microwave dishes was installed on Reservoir Hill tower in December. Overall, equipment has been installed on three of nine towers and will continue through early February on the remaining tower sites.
- Two students from Wilson High School and Blue Ridge Community College completed semester long internships. Each student spent over 100 hours on a variety of IT projects.
- Staff replaced five workstations and two laptops. IT is on track to replace all Windows 10 workstations by Microsoft's announced Windows 10 end-of-life date in October 2025.
- Work continues on the Building Security project. Several City Hall offices are now live, with several more scheduled for completion in January. Cabling and door work continued in several other facilities and other project hardware was ordered.
- IT co-hosted a virtualization workshop at the Blackburn Inn for local government and government related agencies. Nine entities and two vendors were onsite for the half-day event.
- Installation continues on network connectivity to the new Gardner Springs pump station. A significant amount of rock has slowed installation by the vendor. The new circuit is scheduled to be live by the end of January.
- The mugshot camera was upgraded in the Police Department booking room.



Library

The library hosted a range of holiday and winter themed events throughout the month:

- Merry Making art activities for kids
- Homeschool Hour: Science of Winter
- All Together Now holiday storytime
- Holiday Stories with Bright Star Children's Theatre with over 100 attendees!
- Caravanserai concert with more than 60 attendees

The library concluded recruitment for the most recent Circulation Assistant vacancy: library page Jess Burgh was promoted to Library Assistant I and will join the circulation team in January.

Hoopla usage has skyrocketed this calendar year, exceeding projections that the budget request and allocations were based on. Library managers are discussing options to ensure the resource will be financially sustainable in the months to come.

Library Statistical Report: December 2024

CIRCULATION	Month	YTD		SERVICES	Month	YTD
Adult	9,569	58,661		ILLs Borrowed	15	73
Young Adult (YA)	691	4,347		ILLs Lent	0	0
Juvenile	5,356	41,566		Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians	2	9
Digital	5,920	34,401				
Total Circulation	21,536	138,975		PROGRAMS		
Talking Book Center Circulation	1,417	9,259		Adult	13	85
				Attendance	235	1,748
Items Checked In	18,739	117,756		YA	5	29
				Attendance	332	2,646
Outgoing to VLC Libraries	1,578	10,114		Juvenile	39	216
Incoming from VLC Libraries	1,444	9,339		Attendance	1,633	8,940
Total Holds Filled	4,491	29,719				
				PEOPLE		
Added to Collection	695	5,355		Library Visits	11,725	77,511
Withdrawn from Collection	133	9,466		Curbside Visits	45	278
				Computer Users	510	3,834
Database Use/Sessions	2,903	11,604		Juvenile Computer Users	1,241	8,792
				Meetings Held	4	37
				Volunteer Hours	65	909
				New Card Registrations	113	1,079
				Total Registered Cards		15,211

Library Statistics: First Half of FY 2025

- Physical material circulation is down a negligible .1% from the first half of FY 2024
- Digital circulation is again increasing dramatically, up 20% from FY 2024
- Overall circulation is up 4%
- Talking Book Center check-outs are up 28% from FY 2024
- Though a dozen fewer children's programs were held, attendance at children's events is up 1%

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- Decorated the City Christmas tree in Gypsy Hill Park and assisted City Council with the lighting ceremony on Dec. 2.
- Assisted a contractor at the Sensory Garden located at the library. At the request of the donor from the original project, the existing sign was removed and new sign was fabricated and installed. The new sign was donated by Pam Huggins.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed the following:

- Installed fencing around the tot lot located in the west end of Gypsy Hill Park.
- Assisted with the Celebration of Holiday Lights displays in Gypsy Hill Park.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities

- Created online payment option for monthly HEART payments.
- Reviewed summer camp fees and updated registration form.
- Programs offered:
 - Morning Warm Ups, 23 participants
 - Toddler Open Gym, 53 participants
 - Chess Club, 11 participants
 - Indoor Walk, 9 participants
 - Indoor Futsal League, 23 participants
 - Kendo, 5 participants
 - Kung Fu, 12 participants
 - American Red Cross Blood Drive
 - Open gym for intermediate and advance pickleball and volleyball

Police

- Lieutenant Rod Burke retired on Dec. 19, having served the city for more than 27 years.
- A promotion process was completed for the open lieutenant and sergeant positions as a result of Lieutenant Burke's retirement. Sergeant Ryan Shaw was promoted to lieutenant, and Investigator Caleb Pappalardo was promoted to sergeant, both effective Jan. 5, 2025.
- The Department entered into an agreement with CarFax for Law Enforcement, which provides investigative tools for officers, and outsources requests for crash reports.
- The Police Department's E-911 Center handled a total of 3,435 telephone calls during the month, including 955 9-1-1 calls.

- Police personnel responded to 2,351 incidents during the month, including 1,224 citizen calls for service, 531 officer initiated activities, 181 administrative calls, and 415 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 3 minutes and 41 seconds; it is 4 minutes and 1 second for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 39 new owner accounts, 27 new rental residential accounts, and 4 commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$55,745 in payments.
- 25 accounts were cut off for non-payment during two cut off weeks. Of those cut off, 21 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan established.
- Utility crews repaired eight water main breaks and seven water meters. The crew responded to 16 sewer main blockage and 11 sewer lateral blockages.
- The Streets Department continued with leaf pickup throughout the city.
- The Recycling Center has seen an increase of customers with about 1,200 people per week.

Tourism

Activities:

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

- Staunton blog promotions featured Discover The Magic Of Staunton, Holiday Scavenger Hunt, Staunton Holiday Countdown
- Hosted the first Staunton Group Travel Symposium for 25 local tourism partners at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library.



Public Relations

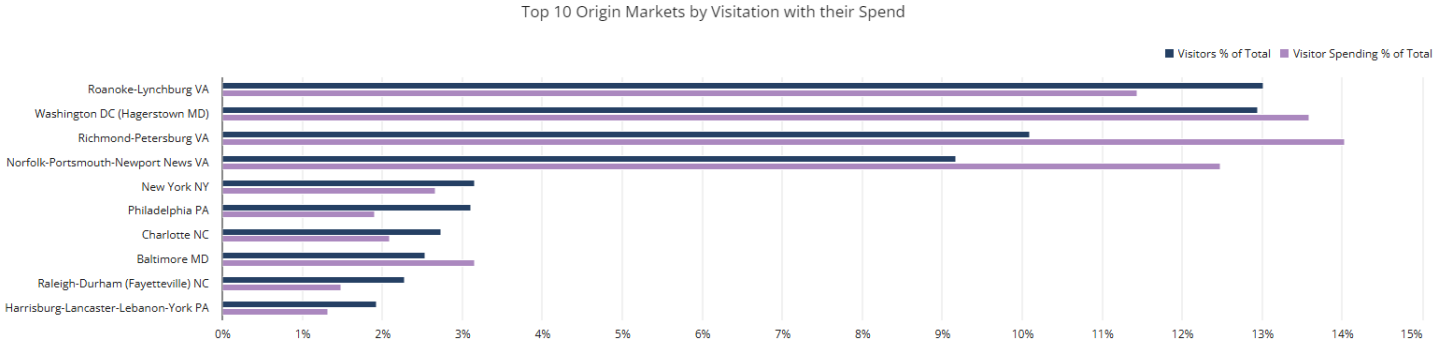
The Following is a list of newspapers, websites, magazines, and television stations that published articles about Staunton:

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Dec. 10	The Best Things Our Editors Ate This Year	Southern Living	14,270,453
Dec. 26	12 Perfect Destinations for A Long Weekend In Virginia	World Atlas	5,938,242
Dec. 21	11 Towns in Virginia That Transport You to The Past	World Atlas	5,938,242
Dec. 7	9 Of the Most Captivating Small Towns in Virginia	World Atlas	5,859,707
Dec. 17	Santa’s Scenic Railway Looking to Expand After Another Sold-Out Season	WCAV-TV	163,221
Dec. 17	The Junction: Staunton’s Newest Lounge Opens in Historic Train Depot	News Leader	96,419
Dec. 4	“A Christmas Carol”	C-ville Weekly	31,991
Dec. 28	Waynesboro, Staunton, Augusta Festivals Awarded Tens of Thousands of Dollars	News Virginian	27,122
Dec. 12	Hop Aboard These 6 Holiday Train Rides in Virginia for Festive Fun	The Dogwood	16,614
Dec. 10	Foodie Q&A: Ryan Zale of Local Chop & Grill House	The Harrisonburg Citizen	5,207
Dec. 9	In Case You Missed It: December 2024 Digest	Virginia Main Street	unknown
		TOTAL	32,347,218

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
December 2023	December 2024	% Change
32,772 visitors	33,927 visitors	+3.5 %
79 guide requests	100 visitor’s guide requests	+26.6%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending





8,275 Sample Size



4% of Overall Restaurant Spend
\$44



Increase in visitation by key Out-of-State Visitors including Baltimore and Lancaster



18% of Overall Retail Spend - \$162



12% of Overall Spend



52% Ages 25-54
46% Household \$100k+
35% Have Children

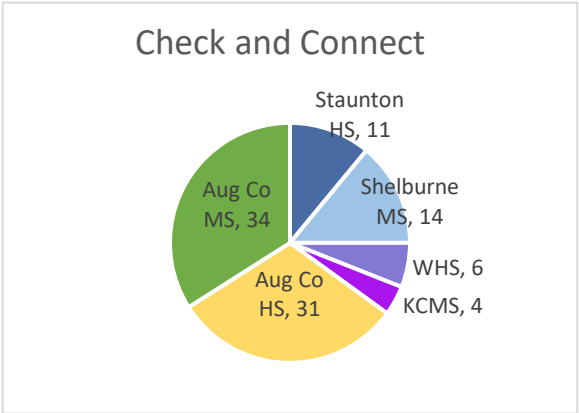
Office on Youth

Crime Control Programs

- Nine youth received detention alternative services.
- One youth completed the *3rd Millennium Respect and Resolve class*.
- Five youth participated in and completed the *Youth Empowerment Session* on Dec. 20.

Truancy Prevention - Check and Connect

- Participants include 100 students from 14 schools
- Five seniors graduated early.
- One senior passed the *Microsoft Office Specialist* test for business accreditation.



Community/Etc.

- The OOO staff assembled a Celebration of Lights display at Gypsy Hill Park.
- Division Supervisor coordinated with families for their participation with Staunton police Department *Shop with a Cop* Dec. 9.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

- The 2024 Staunton Christmas Parade, organized by the SDDA with crucial assistance from the City of Staunton and Kiwanis Club of Staunton, took place on the chilly Monday evening of Dec. 2. Despite the cold, nearly 120 entrants participated in the parade and kept everyone in high spirits. The following list has the winning entrants in each category, as awarded by a panel of community judges:
 - Small Business: **Apex Heating and Air**
 - Large Business: **Williams Brothers Tree & Lawn Service**
 - Music/Dance: **Shenandoah Civic Dance Company**
 - Children/Youth: **Grace Christian School Auto Mechanics Class**
 - Religious/Church: **Parkview Christian Church**
 - Nonprofit/Civic: **Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center**
 - Grinch's Choice: **Hugill's Septic Services**
- Grand Marshal of the parade was Fredrick "Dale" Hobson, who retired in July 2024 after 42 years with Columbia Gas (and also celebrated his 63rd birthday on Parade Day). Chief parade sponsor was the NiSource Charitable Foundation, and Santa's sleigh was sponsored by McKee Foods.
- The SDDA, the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum and Sylvan Scapes landscaping company, co-hosted the Gingerbread Gardens and Cottage on Dec. 14. SDDA also hosted Santa's Workshop at The Space on New Street on Dec. 21.
- Several businesses participated in a downtown holiday puzzle hunt. Participants searched for keywords attached to clocks in various storefront windows and put the keywords together to form the lyrics of a mystery Christmas carol. Those who completed the hunt got the privilege of opening a gift-wrapped package from Santa's workshop with a mystery prize

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.