

RELEASED JUNE 2025



CITY OF STAUNTON

ACTIVITY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



By the Numbers

8 scenarios over a course of 4 days.

300+ participants in the annual challenge.

The cement block used in the obstacle course weighed **1,800 lb.**

Next Rescue Challenge event, **May 2026**

Rescue Challenge Hosted in Staunton

Staunton, along with other area rescue departments, hosted the annual Rescue Challenge training event, for the first time. This week-long event, with more than 300 participants, took place in the Shenandoah Valley May 6-9. Staunton Fire & Rescue developed and hosted one of the challenge sites at the old Western State Hospital property (now the Blackburn Inn and the Villages). Rescue teams participated in different scenarios over four days. Challenges included rope rescue, trench rescue, vehicle extrication, building shoring, heavy lifting and moving, and the "Timber Jack" obstacle course. The Staunton team performed extremely well, posting the quickest time to complete several scenarios.



May 2025

Dispatched Calls for Service*

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Police | 2,498 ↓ |
| Fire & Rescue | 299 ↑ |

Average Response Time month/year

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Police | 3'53"/3'57" |
| Fire & Rescue | 4'50"/4'46" |

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

Kids Matter Day A Success

Kids Matter Day is a vibrant annual celebration at Gypsy Hill Park's gym and parking lot—completely free for families and kids! Packed with fun activities and valuable resources, it's a highlight of the year. Each year, the Office on Youth, Staunton's Fire & Rescue, Police, and Parks & Recreation departments come together for a community-filled day of connection and fun.



Staunton is Full of Color

The Tourism Department has come out with a new goody for kids and the kids in all of us. Featuring hand drawn scenes of Staunton by Gretchen Long of Queen City Creative, the little book of nine Staunton icons comes with a small container of colored pencils.



Update on JDR Courthouse

Project Manager John Keene provided an update on the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court facility construction on West Beverley Street at a recent City Council meeting. He reported that the project is 63% complete and on schedule. Key milestones include the completion of underground site utilities, substantial completion of the building exterior, ongoing interior framing with drywall installation in progress, and procurement of long-lead items such as generators and elevators. Rooftop HVAC units are installed and connected, while the sprinkler system has been installed and inspected. The project remains under budget. Although the building is not LEED certified, it includes provisions for future solar installation. The new courthouse is advancing well and now presents as a substantial structure.



Adopt-a-Spot, Keep Staunton Clean

The City of Staunton is proud to launch the Adopt-a-Spot program, combining the former Adopt-a-Street and Adopt-a-Stream initiatives to promote cleaner public spaces. Participants can adopt streets, streams, walkways, parking lots, or other areas and receive free cleanup supplies such as safety vests and trash bags. By committing to four cleanups annually for two years, volunteers earn recognition with custom signage at their location. This program supports Staunton's clean water efforts and MS4 reporting. Learn more and apply at www.staunton.va.us/adoptaspot.



June 2025 Activity Report

Community Development

Key Construction Project Updates

New Water Storage Tank at Staunton Crossing

Construction continues for the new one-million-gallon elevated water storage tank at Staunton Crossing, expected to be completed by summer 2026. This comprehensive project includes the tank, an access road, water supply lines, and additional distribution lines to support future business development in the area. It will also significantly improve fire flow and water storage resiliency in the eastern portion of the city.



Wawa

Significant construction progress was made in May on the new Wawa at 1031 Richmond Ave. Electrical permits have been issued for Tesla charging stations.

Dollar Tree

A building permit has been issued to convert the former Family Dollar located at 1500 W Beverley St. into a Dollar Tree.

Reports

Building Safety Month

May was building safety month! To honor the dedicated building safety team, City Council officially proclaimed May as Building Safety Month at the May 8 City Council Meeting.

Their jobs aren't always easy. Part educator, part enforcer, and always a partner, they work closely with contractors and citizens to help find solutions and ensure we reach that ultimate goal: a safe, strong, and resilient Staunton.



Pictured from left to right: John Glover, David Smithgall, Mark Wade, Lloyd Otte, Mary Tyler

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:

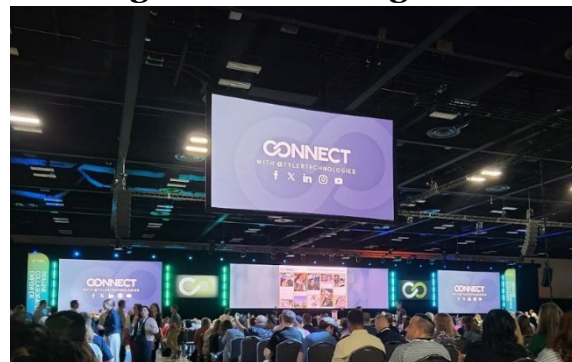
- Residential Construction – 36 active sites with 75 inspections in May
- Commercial Construction – 13 active sites with 32 inspections in May

Mass Rezoning Public Meeting

Staunton is updating its zoning map to better reflect current property use, specifically for homes in areas zoned for business or industrial. The city's zoning, established in 1924 and majorly updated in the 1960s, has largely served the city well, but some adjustments are needed to address properties that are legally non-conforming. This "non-conforming" status can limit property expansion, create financing challenges, and prevent repairs if damage exceeds 50% of the assessed value. The city held an informational meeting on **June 11** for affected property owners to learn more and discuss individual inquiries with staff.

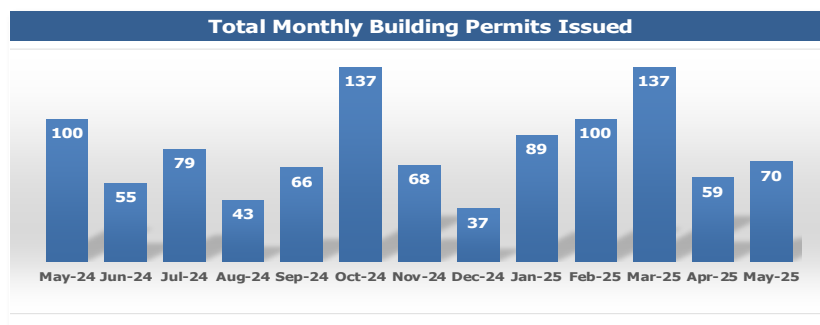
Strengthening Community Development Through Tech Training

Zoning Administrator Linda Nesselrodt recently attended the Tyler Connect Conference in San Antonio, TX. She was able to gain valuable knowledge and resources for the Community Development Department's upcoming migration to new Enterprise Permitting and Licensing software, set to happen in the next five months. This upgrade will enhance how the department processes all building and zoning permits.



Building Construction and Related Activity

| Permits Issued | May-25 | May-24 | # Chg | % Chg |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| New Residential | 1 | 5 | -4 | -80.0% |
| Residential Renovations | 22 | 18 | 4 | 22.2% |
| Electrical Permits | 18 | 32 | -14 | -43.8% |
| Mechanical Permits | 8 | 12 | -4 | -33.3% |
| Plumbing Permits | 11 | 14 | -3 | -21.4% |
| Commercial New-Renovations | 3 | 8 | -5 | -62.5% |
| Miscellaneous | 7 | 11 | -4 | -36.4% |
| Total | 70 | 100 | -30 | -30.0% |



Economic Development

Staunton Crossing

Columbia Gas held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new regional operations center at Staunton Crossing on May 9 — a major milestone for both the company and the City of Staunton’s long-term economic development efforts. The site of the new facility represents more than a decade of preparation and investment by the city, including demolition, infrastructure improvements, and strategic planning. Columbia Gas’s decision to locate here builds on their long-standing presence in Staunton, dating back to the 1880s, and reaffirms their commitment to the region.

Enterprise Zone (EZ) Efforts

Assistant Director of Economic Development Jessica Blythe met with a group of stakeholders identified through the Business Retention Survey to obtain more direct input on what amendments to the Enterprise Zone. She also met with representatives from the Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development to clarify questions from the EDA and received a positive reaction to the initial draft amendments.

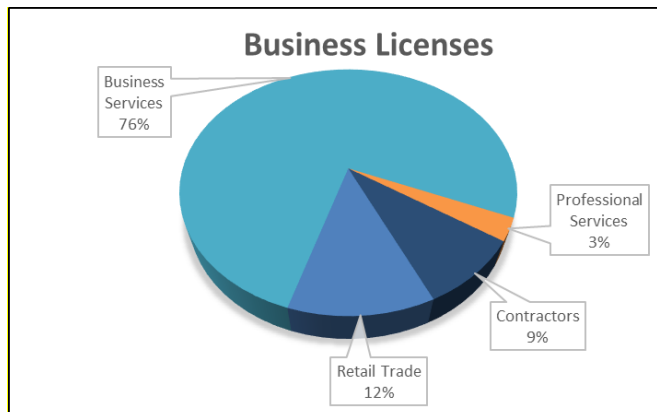
Tourism Zone

Wirt Confroy, Director of Business Development with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, walked the team through the creation of a tourism zone as well as best practices. Kelli Weaver, destination development manager for our area, also attended and provided input on the value a tourism zone would bring to Staunton and offered to provide assistance should this become a priority. This was the first step in understanding the requirements and the work necessary to bring this to the city.

Business License Activity

During the month of April, the Commissioner of Revenue’s Office issued 35 new business licenses, compared to 45 the previous month, representing a 22.2% decrease. This month a year ago, 29 new business licenses were issued.

As seen in the following pie chart, the Business Services sector accounted for 76% of the of the total licenses issued in May, and the Retail Trade sector accounted for 12%, the Professional Services sector accounted for 3% with a remaining 9% represented by Contractors.



Unemployment Data

In March, Staunton's unemployment rate of 3.3% did not change from the month previous. With a labor force of 12,950, Staunton had 12,518 employed and 432 unemployed in April.

Finance

- The department issued 7,636 utility bills and general bills totaling \$4,967,516 during May.
- Collection activities in May resulted in the recovery of \$1,406 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 2,960 receipts in the amount of \$1,225,447 during May.
- The department processed 503 City and 258 School accounts payable checks totaling \$7,088,827, 1,319 City and 578 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$5,045,528 and 83 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$2,979,941 during May.
- The department published an Invitation to Bid for the Gypsy Hill Park Pool House construction project on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Preliminary work has begun on the FY2025 financial statement audit by the city's external auditors, Brown, Edwards, & Co. The auditors were on-site for audit work the first week of June.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 299 incidents in May, with an average response time of 4 minutes and 50 seconds. The average response time for the year is 4 minutes and 46 seconds.
- Staff received over 1,038 hours of training in May.

- Staff conducted 13 business fire safety inspections and 24 re-inspections in May.
- Participated in Kids Matter Day with the Fire Safety Trailer and also the Kids Fishing Derby.
- Captain Dolan provided CPR classes to 38 city school bus drivers and Parks & Recreations summer staff.
- Firefighters for Literacy wrapped up another wonderful season at Bessie Weller. Major Elder was the winner of the ride home from school in a firetruck! Principal McGrath said Major, a first grader, had worked super hard on his reading goals. His classmates chanted his name as he climbed into the truck!
- The department hosted a propane emergencies class sponsored by Southern States.
- Staunton High School's Athletic Trainer Kwadwo Donkor provided warm weather emergency training to each shift.
- Participated in Career Days at A.R. Ware Elementary School.
- Master Firefighter Joey Ayers completed the 16-week Virginia Fire Marshal Academy.
- During May, the Fire Marshal's Office issued one UST closure permit, one combustible liquid removal permit, five fireworks sales permits, one tent permit, and one fireworks display permit; collected \$875 in permit and inspection fees; conducted one final site inspection; conducted two sprinkler rough-in inspections and one hydrostatic test at the new courthouse; witnessed one blasting operation and one UST closure; reviewed two site plans, three street/alley vacation requests, and one special use permit; reviewed one sprinkler plan and one hood suppression plan; reviewed three semi-annual fire detection and suppression system inspection reports; and reviewed two special event applications.



Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time— 0

Part Time/Seasonal— 3

Hired:

Full Time— 3

Part Time— 37

Retired— 0

Activities

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

Recruitment:

Initiated recruitment for the following positions:

- Deputy Sheriff
 - Deputy Sheriff – Part-time
 - Parking Enforcement Officer
 - Equipment Operator I – Parks and Recreation
 - Probation Officer
 - Water Treatment Plant Operator
 - Codes Inspector II
 - Parking Attendant
 - Maintenance Worker – Public Works
 - Custodian – Part-time
 - Custodian – Full-time
 - Equipment Operator II – Public Works
 - Lifeguards
- Continued recruitment for the following positions:
 - Superintendent – Facilities Services and Refuse
 - Bus Driver – Part-Time – Parks and Recreation
 - Utility Service Clerk – Part-Time
 - Certified Police Officer
 - Sanitation Worker
 - Equipment Operator I – Utilities

Orientations:

Conducted orientations for three full-time employees.

Information Technology

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

- The SAW Regional Radio project continues on schedule with microwave backhaul and radio tower work installations in May. Acceptance testing is scheduled for late June on the microwave backhaul. The system will be going live in the fall.
- Upgraded several components in the City Council Chambers AV system.

- Implementing a records management system in the Sheriff's office. The system will be integrated with the system currently in use at the Police Department.
- Site surveys are completed and approved for fiber installation to the new courthouse and the Reservoir Hill radio shelter.
- Rollout continues on the implementation of multi-factor authentication application.

Library

The Friends of the Staunton Library held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new library terrace on May 6 (featured in last month's Activity Highlights). Excavation work occurred later in the month in preparation for support piers to be installed.



Library staff, in partnership with representatives of a dozen businesses and job paths, hosted its first Unconventional Career Fair on May 14. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about non-traditional careers such as guitar making, dog training, tattoo artistry, and more.

The Talking Book Center hosted an Open House on May 22 during which patrons, community members, and donors could learn more about the organization's operations. There was also an exhibit on the history of recorded books for the blind and print disabled. So far, this fiscal year, the TBC has seen more than a 34% increase in check-outs over FY2024.

Despite the rainy weather, the community turned out for the annual Summer Reading Game kick-off with a change of venue from Gypsy Hill Park to the library's meeting room. Over 80 attendees enjoyed music from the Hot Mamas, face painting, and other family-friendly activities.

Other special events included:

- Free Comic Book Day
- Mother's Day Card Making
- Card Trick Workshop with Magician Brian Bence
- Sandbox Storytime at the Montgomery Hall Park Nature Playground



The library completed recruitment and onboarding for two new circulation assistant substitutes, with a new regular circulation position being filled in early June. One employee left on extended parental leave: with the anticipated staffing levels, librarians planned a less intensive summer schedule of events.

Library Statistical Report: May 2025

| CIRCULATION | Month | YTD | | SERVICES | Month | YTD |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------|--|------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Adult | 10,257 | 108,929 | | ILLs Borrowed | 19 | 154 |
| Young Adult (YA) | 872 | 8,466 | | ILLs Lent | 0 | 0 |
| Juvenile | 8,088 | 77,672 | | Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians | 7 | 28 |
| Digital | 6,475 | 65,398 | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Total Circulation | 25,692 | 260,465 | | PROGRAMS | | |
| Talking Book Center Circulation | 1,901 | 18,597 | | Adult | 18 | 160 |
| | | | | Attendance | 286 | 2,848 |
| Items Checked In | 20,020 | 216,200 | | YA | 6 | 58 |
| | | | | Attendance | 1,150 | 6,258 |
| Outgoing to VLC Libraries | 1,667 | 18,461 | | Juvenile | 39 | 406 |
| Incoming from VLC Libraries | 1,406 | 17,201 | | Attendance | 1,628 | 16,544 |
| Total Holds Filled | 4,978 | 54,012 | | | | |
| | | | | PEOPLE | | |
| Added to Collection | 756 | 9,870 | | Library Visits | 13,400 | 141,250 |
| Withdrawn from Collection | 1,252 | 15,488 | | Curbside Visits | 27 | 398 |
| | | | | Computer Users | 612 | 6,957 |
| Database Use/Sessions | 2,549 | 23,222 | | Juvenile Computer Users | 1,623 | 16,390 |
| | | | | Meetings Held | 10 | 97 |
| | | | | Volunteer Hours | 85 | 1,390 |
| | | | | New Card Registrations | 176 | 1,948 |
| | | | | Total Registered Cards | | 16,014 |

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- Assistant Horticulturist Leah Roadcap completed the requirements and passed the exam to obtain her Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences registered technician license. This license, required by law, allows her to apply pesticides and herbicides when needed.
- City Horticulturist Matt Sensabaugh completed the certified fertilizer applicator re-certification program through the Virginia Turfgrass Council.
- Students in the horticulture class at Valley Career & Technical Center donated Caladium plants for the summer annual plantings. The Caladiums will be planted in shade beds in Gypsy Hill Park.
- Planted six shade trees in Gypsy Hill Park and two on the golf course.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed the following:

- Cleaned and painted overlooks at Besty Bell Park.
- Staff attended training from the Department of Conservation and Recreation on fertilizer application.
- Repaired water leaks on the golf course.
- Assisted with opening procedures for Montgomery Hall Park and Gypsy Hill Park pools.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities

- Youth fishing derby was held in May with over 200 children participating. The Senior Fishing Derby had over 100 participants.
- A pickle ball clinic was offered through a partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Pickleball Association.
- Red Cross Lifeguard re-certification classes were offered in May.
- Filter tank refurbishment was completed and a new computerized pool system for Gypsy Hill Park Pool was done by National Pools from Roanoke, Virginia.
- Kids Matter Day was held at the Gypsy Hill Park gym.
- Programs Offered:
 - Adult co-ed softball league, season started May 7
 - Gypsy Hill/Montgomery Hall Pools, season started May 24
 - Paddling on Lake Shenandoah, 5 participants
 - Evening with bats
 - Flame Fitness bootcamp, 5 participants
 - Adult Lap swim, 12 participants
 - Intro to Disc Golf

Police

- The Department participated in Kids Matter Day on May 10.
- Officer Christian Berg graduated from the Basic Law Enforcement Academy and began field training.
- The triennial Virginia Criminal Information Network audit was completed by Virginia State Police representatives on May 27.
- The E-911 Center received 4,234 calls during the month, including 1,208 911 calls.
- Police personnel responded to 2,498 incidents during the month, including 1,383 citizen calls for service, 600 officer initiated activities, 163 administrative calls, and 352 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 3 minutes and 53 seconds; it is 3 minutes and 57 seconds for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 39 new owner accounts, 21 new rental residential accounts, and 6 commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$41,883 in payments.
- 34 accounts were cut off for non-payment during two cut off weeks. Of those cut off, 30 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan established.
- Utility crews repaired seven water main breaks, three valves, and nine water meters. The crew responded to seven sewer main blockages and ten sewer lateral blockages.

Tourism

Activities:

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

- Staunton blog promotions featured Welcome Back, Warm Weather!, Staunton's Wharf: Top Things to See and Do, Make It A Long Weekend In Staunton, Let Us Be Your Guide on a Staunton Tour
- Podcast Episodes Released: The U is Silent; We Aren't – Episode 6: Real, Rooted, & Rising: Danielle McEwen's Bold Playbook to Business, Episode 7: Watch Ya Mouth, Trust Ya Gut: How Chaos and Creativity Launched Startup Success

- *Made of Magic* campaign hyper-targeting family travelers and the Charlotte market
- Hosted 10 international travel agents from the UK with VTC and Brand USA
- Hosted regional focus groups + hosted site visits for VTC Strategic Plans



Public Relations

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

| Date | Headline | Source | Reach |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| May 10 | <u>19 Fascinating Small Towns Where Historic Theaters Still Stand as Living Testaments to Imagination and Community Spirit</u> | MSN.com | 110,190,075 |
| May 12 | <u>Heifetz 2025 Festival of Concerts: 63 Concerts and Events Across Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley</u> | Yahoo Entertainment | 31,383,340 |
| May 20 | <u>11 VA Towns Ranked Among Best Places to Live by U.S. News</u> | Patch.com | 8,651,777 |
| May 23 | <u>Virginians Are Hitting the Road for The Mouth-Watering Mashed Potatoes at This Humble Restaurant</u> | Family Destinations Guide | 1,186,381 |
| May 23 | <u>The Mashed Potatoes at This Virginia Restaurant Are So Good, You'll Want to Live Next Door</u> | Family Destinations Guide | 1,186,381 |
| May 23 | <u>This Unassuming Restaurant in Virginia Has Mashed Potatoes That Are Absolutely to Die For</u> | Family Destinations Guide | 1,186,381 |
| May 8 | <u>Staunton: Heifetz Institute Latest to Lose NEA Grant Funding</u> | Augusta Free Press | 569,929 |
| May 7 | <u>Staunton Music Festival Loses \$10K NEA Grant. How you can help</u> | Augusta Free Press | 569,929 |
| May 12 | <u>Heifetz Institute Loses \$20,000 in Funding from National Endowment for the Arts</u> | WHSV-TV | 260,455 |
| May 1 | <u>Staunton, Virginia: A Place to Press Pause and Reconnect</u> | Northern Virginia Magazine | 60,862 |
| May 12 | <u>Heifetz 2025 Festival of Concerts: 63 Concerts and Events Across Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley</u> | News Leader | 60,062 |
| May 5 | <u>Secrets Of Virginia's Great Wagon Road Junctions</u> | TouristSecrets | 45,018 |
| May 2 | <u>Roam If You Want To</u> | Richmond Magazine | 40,578 |
| May 1 | <u>New 'Beer Hiking in Virginia' Guide Connects Shenandoah to Eastern Shore, Hikers to Brews</u> | The News and Advance | 38,610 |
| May 14 | <u>Misty Morning Valleys of Virginia's Shenandoah Await</u> | TouristSecrets | 32,771 |
| May 21 | <u>Staunton Named in "Best Places to Live in Virginia in 2025-2026"</u> | Rocktown Now | 24,373 |
| May 14 | <u>Summer Arts Preview</u> | The Georgetowner | 23,582 |
| May 1 | <u>New 'Beer Hiking in Virginia' Guide Connects Shenandoah to Eastern Shore, Hikers to Brews</u> | The News Virginian | 13,547 |
| May 28 | <u>The 10 Best Blue Ridge Parkway Museums to Visit</u> | Blue Ridge Mountains Travel Guide | 11,293 |

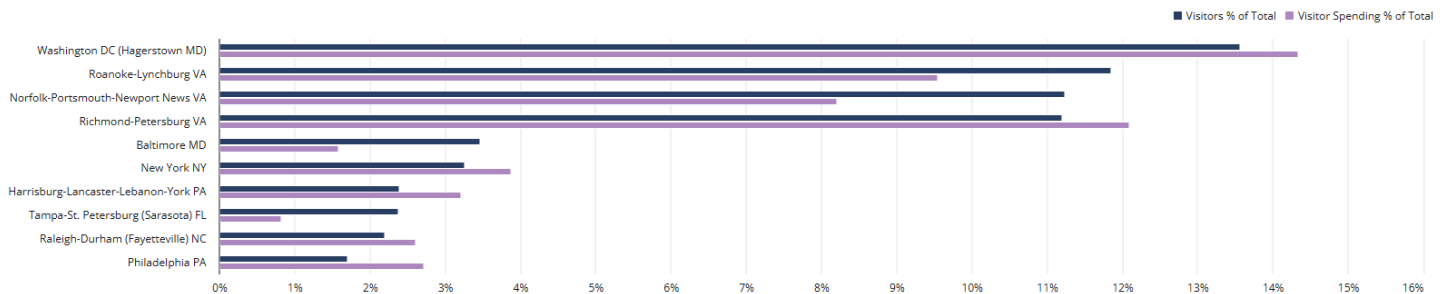
| Date | Headline | Source | Reach |
|--------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| May 6 | The 13 Coolest & Quirkiest Museums in Virginia | The Dogwood | 6,868 |
| May 7 | Beyond Your Backyard - Staunton, VA | WORLD-AM | 1,645 |
| May 27 | 18 Virginia Attractions You Can Visit for Free with Culture Passes | The Good Information Foundation | 96 |
| May 5 | The 2025 Top 25 Historic Hotels of America® Best of Adaptive Reuse List Is Announced in Celebration of Preservation Month | Metro Latino USA | - |
| | | TOTAL | 155,543,953 |

Website Visitation

| Website Traffic | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| May 2024 | May 2025 | % Change |
| 40,986 visitors | 43,659 visitors | +6.3 % |
| 138 guide requests | 185 visitor's guide requests | +34% |

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending -April 2025-

Top 10 Origin Markets by Visitation with their Spend



9,220 Sample Size



13% of Overall Restaurant Spend - \$73



Hotel Occupancy +7.5%



16.6% of Overall Retail Spend - \$157



9% of Attraction Spend - \$70



52% Ages 25-54
48% Household \$100k+
38% Have Children

Office on Youth

Crime Control Programs

- Nine youth received detention alternative services.

Parenting Programs

- Staunton adults participated in the following programs:
 - *Active Parenting*, 4
 - *Parenting and Divorce*, 1

Check and Connect

- Participants include 92 students from 14 schools. Eight of those students were from Staunton High School and 13 from Shelburne Middle.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

- The 2025 SDDA Downtown Flower Program kicked off with spring plantings across the downtown district.
- SDDA continued to work with the city on ways to improve the appeal of the Wharf area in the midst of repairs to tunnel infrastructure, including signage, decorative barriers, and other amenities.
- SDDA Executive Director Darren Smith, the board president and vice president, along with City Manager Leslie Beauregard and Assistant City Manager Amanda Kaufman, attended a workshop in Harrisonburg provided by Virginia Main Street on effective collaboration between staff and boards.



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.