

Staunton Downtown Development Association's Customer Perception and Behavior Survey Summary Remarks

The following points represent overarching conclusions based on the survey data. They represent the opinions of the consultant based on experience in evaluating survey data in communities. The following points represent "highlights" of the data and can serve as an executive summary of key findings. Survey data may be accessed at www.StauntonDowntown.org.

The survey had a high participation rate. While the survey was not intended as a random sample, **871 respondents** represents a large response number when compared with similar surveys. In our experience, only one jurisdiction had a larger number of participants and Staunton had a 3.5% participation rate based on the population of the City. It is important to note, however, that the survey was not limited to City of Staunton residents.

To that end, **9.3% of the respondents indicated they lived in Downtown Staunton**, and additional **37.5% lived in the City, 24.7% lived in Augusta County**, and the balance were students, residents of Waynesboro, and from other locales.

78.4% of the respondents were women. Women drive 70-80% of all consumer purchasing decisions nationally.

The age and race of the respondents mirrors that of the broader population and serves as an indicator that the survey has representation from a broad base of the population.

Overall, the attitudes toward Downtown Staunton are very positive. **Out of 10 factors downtown ranked at or above 4 on a 5 point scale in customer service, variety of dining options, and quality dining options.** Downtown ranked above 3.5 in business variety, shopping options, exciting events and activities, and variety of family dining. Downtown ranked above 3 in preferred shopping location and variety of entertainment. Only one factor, nightlife, factored below 3 at 2.9.

Downtown atmosphere also ranked high with 13 out of 15 factors ranking above 3.0 and 6 ranking at 4.0 or above. Only "the reason I moved to Staunton" ranked below 3.0 at 2.8.

Downtown functionality had very high indicators as well. **The top indicators were safety at 4.4, walkable at 4.3, attractive buildings at 4.3, safe at 4.1, clean at 4.1, and attractively landscaped at 4.1.** Lower factors were bike friendly at 3.0, enough green space at 3.0, affordable living at 3.2, and convenient pet stations at 3.1

While many respondents indicated ranked parking above average (3.0), the open ended comments section of the survey had many comments about parking availability, timing, convenience, and related issues. **Overall parking issues scored in the 3.0-3.9 range** with adequate vehicle signs ranking highest, and conveniently located charging stations lowest.

56% of respondents shopped downtown at least once a month and 68% dined downtown at least once a month.

The favorite businesses in Downtown Staunton include **The Split Banana and Pufferbellies.**

The most popular locations outside of downtown Staunton to shop were major big box stores in Waynesboro.

The **Farmers Market** was the most popular event in downtown Staunton with the **American Shakespeare Center** as a close second.

Green space emerged as a major issue with many open ended comments about adding green space and **52% of respondents indicating that they would spend more time downtown with dedicated green space.** The comments offer up a broader definition of green space from small pocket parks, to broader sidewalks, to plazas and gathering spots that are not necessarily all "green."

24.8% of respondents received the "Downtown Lowdown" from the SDDA and 17.7% of the respondents had the Downtown Discount Card. (an additional **50.6% wanted the Downtown Discount Card** but didn't currently have it.)

Content from Friends' Facebook pages was the number one digital format that respondents received information about downtown Staunton at 44.8%, the **SDDA Facebook page ranked high at 35.8%.**

An evaluation of the open ended question about needs in downtown Staunton revealed that Green Space and parks ranked number one, Parking issues ranked two, and more restaurants/dining options ranked three.

The number one response on the open ended question "Please indicated anything you would like to add about Downtown Staunton not already covered" was "Love Downtown Staunton."

Summary compiled by Tripp Muldrow, from the consulting firm of Arnette Muldrow, Greenville, SC

Top 25 Ideas from the 2017 Customer Perception Survey

** The list below is distilled from survey answers and comments.



SDDA Design Committee:

- 1) Green or outside gathering spaces: parklets, seating, shade, trees
- 2) Close off Beverley Street and mall it, or close Beverley temporarily for events
- 3) Provide dog-friendly areas
- 4) Better Lighting on Beverley Street and connecting streets between Beverley and The Wharf
- 5) More or different pedestrian signs and maps in the kiosks that are marked with business locations and restrooms
- 6) More walk/don't walk signs at crosswalk: perception that crosswalks aren't safe and are hard to see at night.
- 7) Repair or install sidewalks connecting Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods
- 8) Customer-friendly parking lots
 - A. Free parking restored in the Augusta Lot and removal of reserved spaces.
 - B. Brighter lighting in parking garages
- 9) Lanes, sharrows and parking for bikes. Make Downtown cycle-friendly.

SDDA Economic Development Committee:

- 10) Later evening hours at stores (til 9PM) for shopping
- 11) Vibrant Nightlife: Dancing, Music that goes until after midnight, more choices.
- 12) Affordable housing for students and workers
- 13) Affordable or moderately-priced, clothing and quick foods (hamburgers, sandwiches)
- 14) Amenities and businesses that support residential: Full service grocery, pharmacy
- 15) Tenant for the Mockingbird or establish another music venue like the Mockingbird
- 16) Re-open the Dixie as a movie house or as the performance venue that SPAC envisioned

SDDA Promotions Committee:

- 17) Monthly event, like Shakin' or Fourth Fridays
- 18) Pet-friendly stickers on stores and more pet bag stations.
- 19) MBU outreach: easier access to information, events, activities and Discount Card sign-up
- 20) Special offerings and activities, gathering spaces for the under 21 age category: nightlife w/o alcohol
- 21) Advertise low-cost options for entertainment, products, meals, etc.
- 22) Free radio spots for Downtown businesses and low-cost marketing

SDDA Organization Committee:

- 23) Redesign the Downtown Lowdown
- 24) Stronger MBU and Stuart Hall connection
- 25) More volunteer opportunities

**Survey "Highlights" from the summary and the "Top 25" ideas, listed above will be used as a basis for SDDA strategic planning including the SDDA Board Retreat and 5-Year Strategic Plan and SDDA 2017-2018 Work Plan.

The SDDA would like to thank it's community partners for their help with the survey e-distribution and promotion: the Greater Augusta Chamber of Commerce, Mary Baldwin University, the Staunton Augusta YMCA, the United Way of Greater Augusta, the Staunton Creative Community Fund and the Downtown Staunton businesses.