

**QUARTERLY
SUMMARY OF
ACTIVITIES**
FY21 Q2

STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This summarizes the activities and work of the Stafford County Department of Economic Development & Tourism for the second quarter of FY21.

OUR MESSAGE: MARKETING STAFFORD

ED&T is the marketing and sales arm for Stafford—to encourage business expansion and investment.

We have made significant strides, this past quarter in our messaging and are working on ways to continue to improve.

The announcement of the DHL investment and our Community Development Block Grant award for Stafford Cares were big “wins” (More below).

Beyond those announcements we are continuing to improve our online and marketing presence. I encourage all BOS and EDA members to follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and our other social media platforms and share projects or news using the hashtag **#whatsnextstafford**.

We have continued to build our Message by participating as panelists or featured speakers during online seminars. In November, Manager of Economic Development Rick Cobert participated in a panel at the CAPRE Mid Atlantic Digital Infrastructure Industry Forecast. CAPRE presents conferences, summits, news and training events and seminars for professionals in data center industry. The panel featured discussion about Virginia’s growing dominance in data center attraction.

Our Message is not just delivered by ED&T. It is delivered in the news with input from all businesses, commissions, and the Board. Mike Cannon, Stafford’s Chief Technology Officer, presented to an Artificial Intelligence working group and was interviewed for a new blog through the Society of Information Management (SIM) about Stafford’s Smart Downtown and broadband expansion efforts.

Although the physical opening of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed has been delayed due to Covid-19 and other buildout issues, working with CIT we helped design and launch the [Smart Community webpage](#). Please note Stafford’s significant presences in this statewide initiative—since launching this website, Stafford has been getting noticed and top-of-mind attention in the marketplace. We are being contacted and connected by others with interests in the Testbed, Downtown Stafford, and other opportunities for technology businesses wanting to be a part of Stafford.

Our online messaging included, with CARES Act funds and support from the Board, providing additional entrepreneurial development programs and virtual training to businesses on how to “pivot” and adjust to the changing markets due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (more details below).

THE MESSAGE	FY21 TARGET	FY21 Q2	FY21 YTD	% GOAL
Department Newsletter (+PR)	35	7	22	63%
Tour Stafford Website Page Views	169,000	48,592	88,120	52%
Tour Stafford Website Users	94,000	14,403	34,246	36%
Go Stafford Website Page Views	70,000	14,736	36,305	52%
Go Stafford Website Users	35,000	7,614	16,658	48%
Business & Networking Events	8	13	15	188%

Total Employment 42,750 ↓ (Second Quarter, 2020)	MOST AFFORDABLE BUSINESS LOCATION IN THE DMV	HOME TO 2,873 BUSINESSES	SIGNIFICANT AND GROWING CYBER AND TECH SECTOR	545, 992 TOURISM VISITORS EACH YEAR
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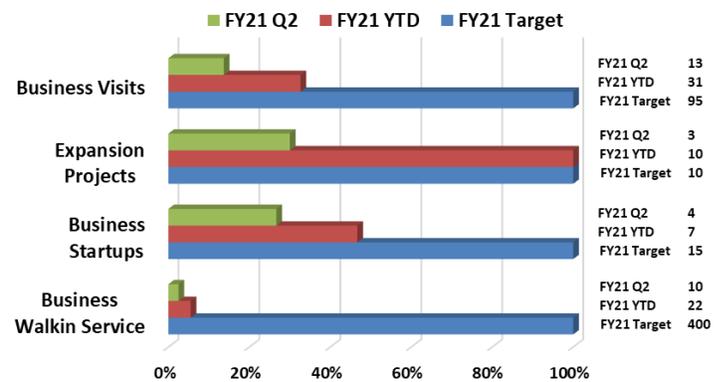
EXPAND BUSINESS: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)

ED&T is the customer service arm for businesses in Stafford.

Our direct one-on-one, in-person outreach to existing business has, of course, been diminished due to safety concerns around Covid-19. That has not stopped us from assisting our existing business community. We have made enhancements to our [Starting a Business webpage](#) which now allows business prospects and entrepreneurs to register their business and obtain their permits exclusively online.

With remaining CARES Act funds, the EDA pivoted and launched a Critical Tourism Asset Grant program. From this grant, eight visitor-based businesses received a total of \$300,000 in grant funds. In 2020, we assisted a total of 25 tourism businesses through our various Coronavirus Business Recovery Grants.

At the request of Supervisor Allen, the EDA revisited and updated its [loan programs](#) primarily designed to assist existing and startup business in Stafford. We should highlight, specifically, the [EDA's Covid-19 Loan Program](#) with **forgivable interest if the principal is paid within 24 months**. [Click here](#) for a snapshot of the Stafford EDA's 2020 accomplishments.



ATTRACT INVESTMENT

ED&T works to attract new business and visitors to Stafford.

[The big news, of course, in this quarter was the DHL investment](#), Peterson Company's investment to develop the [Stafford Logistics and Enterprise Park](#), and [Merritt Business Park at the Quantico Corporate Center](#). These projects are informative as to our work, for those not involved in economic development day-to-day.

The interest in Stafford by DHL (and others) began when the Board took leadership, along with Stafford's Commissioner of Revenue, to get state code changed that allowed our Board to set [a new tax classification for large warehouse distribution](#) (W/D) facilities (above 200,000 square feet). That took place in late 2018.

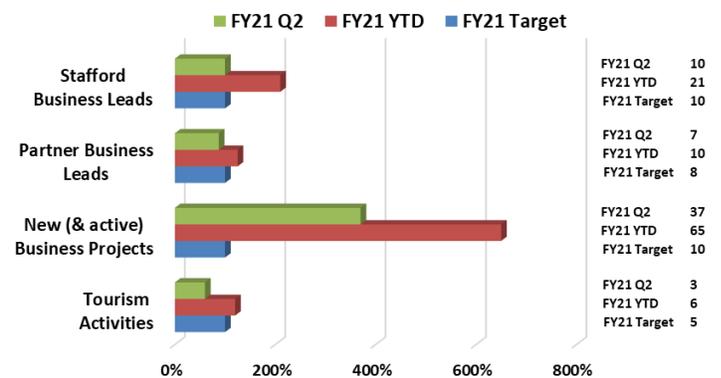
In 2019, ED&T began focused marketing to the W/D market and advanced manufacturing sector, specifically for Centreport—an area long designed for such facilities. In late 2019 and early 2020, we began to get much more interest. We had met and discussed projects with Peterson Company as a result of our networking in the DC market in early 2019. That led to more conversations and, ultimately, their investment in what we called "Project Clover," now called the Stafford Logistics and Enterprise Park.

In March, 2019, DHL first approached Stafford regarding the site they had identified. There were other competing sites across Virginia, Maryland, and in Stafford. ED&T reached out to VEDP to develop what became the incentive project for "Project Mover" and DHL. DHL intends to be in operation by December, 2021.

ED&T Staff had been talking with Merritt Properties for over three years, off and on, about making an investment in Stafford. We met again with them, soon after John Holden began as Director, showed them some properties and discussed what we call the "Stafford Advantage."

In October 2020, Merritt Properties broke ground on the first of two flex/light industrial buildings at the Merritt Business Park at Quantico Corporate Center.

These projects represent the importance of the "Message" and laying the infrastructure (roads, interchanges, zoning, and tax codes) to position Stafford as a place for new business investment. As we close the books for quarter two of FY21, these projects bring an estimated 2.6 million square feet to Stafford county.



ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

To meet the needs of our growing entrepreneurial ecosystem and program offerings, we have updated our [Stafford Entrepreneurship page](#). The Stafford EDA's entrepreneurial development programs continue to expand and help foster regional collaboration. On December 3rd, we held a virtual event called "Mapping the Future of King George" as part of our Go Virginia funded project. Forty-eight individuals from around the region attended this event. Since then, John Holden and Nick Minor, Director in King George, have discussed how to expand and foster collaboration around entrepreneurship.

The next Go Virginia Entrepreneurial Connection event will be a virtual event on March 16th highlighting community and business success that used advancements in technology. This event "Technological Innovation in 22401," features a panel of three local Fredericksburg businesses who will share their technology innovations supporting their business growth and sustainability during these challenging times. The final event of this project will be "in" Stafford and focus on Smart City Technology and the opportunities to engage business in the Testbed and Downtown Stafford.

As noted above, through CARES Act funding provided to the EDA by the BOS, we hosted three, multi-day, Covid-19 virtual business development programs last quarter:

- Customer Discovery (Virtual Workshop) focused on market development and had 16 participants representing 11 companies.
- MBA in IOT (Virtual) offered insights on the use of technology in all businesses and had 32 participants.
- COVID-19 Market Shifts focused on how businesses can pivot to the changing market and had seven individuals representing six companies.
- Smart Infrastructure & Cybersecurity Event focused on government contracting and recent developments in cyber security and infrastructure and had 19 individuals attended this event.

In the coming quarter, Staff will develop and the EDA will prepare a Go Virginia Grant application to expand Stafford's and our Regions' entrepreneurial development offerings.

Upcoming Q3 Entrepreneurial Development Events, visit:

www.StaffordEntrepreneurship.com



NEW TOURISM ACTIVITIES

In the midst of Covid-19, Stafford Tourism is still busy helping to attract visitors and spending. Like many in the private market, we have to pivot our marketing and focus on potential travelers by engaging with our local audience, the DMV, and drivable markets to highlight Stafford as a safe place to travel. We also worked to engage with our local tourism stakeholders and businesses to provide financial assistance through the economic hardship.

That pivot included the following marketing campaigns and events:

- As part of the WanderLOVE grant Stafford Tourism received through the State of Virginia Tourism, we were able to launch a new Savings Pass for wineries and breweries called the Kegs and Corks Trail Pass. Our marketing message was directed to the drivable market and encouraged visitors to experience all the hidden gems Stafford has to offer from outdoors, to food and beverage, to history.
- Stafford County partnered with Elite Soccer to host the WAGS and Nationals Soccer Tournaments which brought outside visitors and teams to the community.
- As one of the recipients of the Stafford Tourism Sponsorship program, FTM Fashion Week brought a brand-new event to Stafford County.



INITIATIVES

Initiatives include continued review and update of our economic development “tool box” and major development projects across Stafford.

SMART STAFFORD: IT’S ALL COMING TOGETHER!

Last quarter we shared with you our plans to brand and market “Smart Stafford.” Smart Stafford includes:

- [The Virginia Smart City Testbed](#)
- Downtown Stafford (as “Smart Place”)
- [Our Tech-Entrepreneurial Development Programs](#)
- The expansion of broadband across Stafford
- Messaging around our talented workforce “pipeline”

Our branding and new webpage for Smart Stafford is still in the works as we plan to launch in quarter three of FY21. This work is integrated with the EDA plans to explore funding to expand our entrepreneurial development programs and models for continued broadband expansion. As noted, Staff are preparing the groundwork for a Stafford EDA application to Go Virginia to follow-up on and develop an entrepreneurial development “accelerator program” for Stafford, based on what we have learned in our current project. The EDA has also formed, with ED&T staff, a working group to explore innovative public-private partnerships for broadband expansion.



TESTBED DETAILS

1. Improved cameras
2. Video analytics and AI
3. Sensors
4. Drones
5. Microsoft Government Azure Cloud



DOWNTOWN STAFFORD

ED&T Staff developed and provided to the Planning Commission an economic impact assessment for the development of Fountain Park and the County’s 28 acres in the area called Downtown Stafford. ED&T has taken lead on preparing and is still working on a request for interest in private partners to develop the County’s acres, to be ready after the UD5 zoning is approved by the Board.

PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES 2021-2022

ED&T Staff have been developing three primary initiatives for future economic development investment in Stafford. Much of this work has been “behind the scenes” and has included significant research and outreach to colleagues and communities. In the coming quarter (scheduling allowing) ED&T will bring forward to the EDA and Board for their input and directing these initiatives to encourage new business investment in the Centreport Area, for tourism businesses, and for data centers.