

**QUARTERLY
SUMMARY OF
ACTIVITIES**
FY21 Q3

STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This summarizes the activities and work of the Stafford County Department of Economic Development & Tourism for the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 21.

OUR MESSAGE: MARKETING STAFFORD

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

Over this past quarter (January - March, 2021), we have continued to improve and develop our behind-the-scenes messaging efforts.

A major online “push” this past quarter was the announcement and gathering applicants for our [Stafford Cares Program](#) — to purchase meal cards from Stafford restaurants and distribute them to families in need. At the end of the quarter, we awarded 50 Stafford restaurants as participants in this program.

We have made significant strides, this past quarter in our messaging and are working on ways to continue to improve. A key objective of this effort is to optimize our current websites and increase engagement from our two target audiences: business executives and tourism visitors. Significant progress was made by our Band, under the guidance and leadership of Courtney, who was promoted to Marketing Manager and will lead the redesign of both the tourism and economic development websites. In February, Linzy Browne, the EDA Marketing and Events Coordinator redesigned the Stafford EDA website and it was relaunched in February as www.StaffordEDA.com.

In January, John Holden was a guest speaker on an Urban Land Institute National Leadership Program—sharing our work and experience with the plans for Downtown Stafford and Smart Stafford. Josh Summits also spoke in January as a panelist on the Data Centers and Virginia – The State of the Union, presented by the Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC) Data Center and Cloud Committee. Josh discussed opportunities and incentives Stafford County can offer to technology companies.

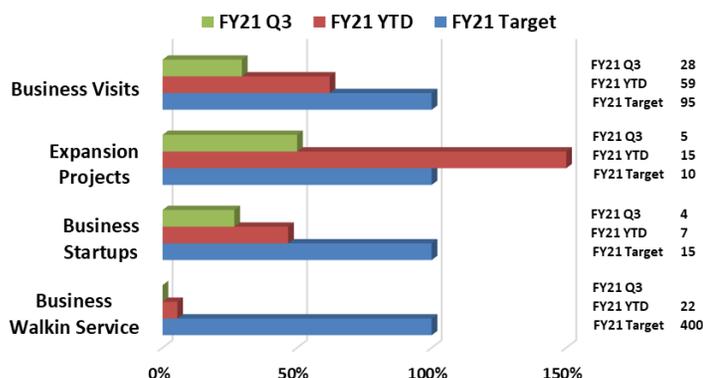
Planning began for the opening of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed in Stafford. The opening has been scheduled for May 25 and will follow our next virtual entrepreneurial development program. The messaging of both started in March and will ramp up in as we near the date.

Stafford Cares Program: Supporting Stafford Restaurants and Families in Need.

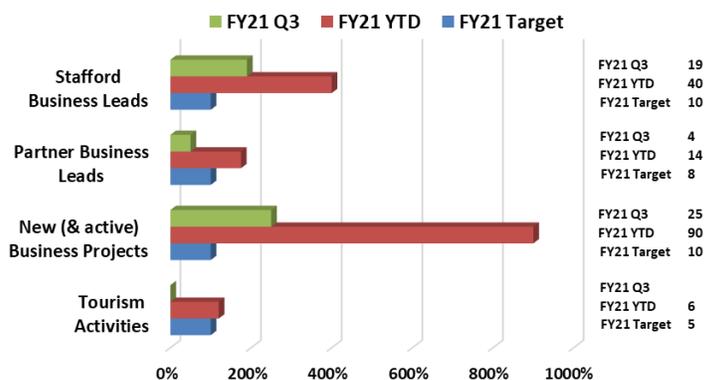
- ED&T secured a \$782,000 Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the [Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development \(DHCD\)](#).
- Stafford will purchase meal cards or certificates from local restaurants.
- Meal cards or certificates will be distributed to families in need throughout 2021.

THE MESSAGE	FY21 TARGET	FY21 Q3	FY21 YTD	% GOAL
Department Newsletter (+PR)	35	10	32	91%
Tour Stafford Website Page Views	169,000	89,533	177,653	105%
Tour Stafford Website Users	94,000	29,314	63,560	68%
Go Stafford Website Page Views	70,000	20,650	56,955	81%
Go Stafford Website Users	35,000	11,179	27,837	80%
Business & Networking Events	8	7	22	275%

EXPAND BUSINESS: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)



ATTRACT INVESTMENT



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

Direct BRE business visits increased, both “virtual” and in-person as Covid-19 restrictions waned. A significant outreach to our restaurant community accompanied our Stafford Cares program.

We met with a handful of our visitor-related businesses as we launched the Share the LOVE Campaign. During the month of February, we partnered with the local radio station B101.5 to launch a month-long Instagram project. Content encouraged visitors to post a picture with our five new LOVE signs around the county. The Virginia Tourism Corporation awarded Stafford County Tourism a WanderLove Grant in early Fall 2020 and Stafford partnered with our four breweries and one winery to have LOVE signs at their locations. Over the years, the LOVE signs have become special places, not only for local communities, but also for travelers.

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

We continued to generate and respond to new “leads” for new business in the County. Much of this past quarter, in addition to new leads, was focused on working with Planning and Permitting to support the aggressive timeline for DHL’s facility in Stafford. Plans are on track for DHL to be operating their new facility in March, 2022 and likely begin hiring (over 575 persons) this summer or fall.

At the same time, there are other projects under development in food production, manufacturing and Smart Technology. We have begun to see an increase in the latter as we continue and expand our technology-entrepreneur programs and our partnership with Virginia CIT and the expansion of the Testbed and plans for Downtown Stafford—**indicating, again, how all parts of community economic development and tourism work together:** Messaging, Expanding Business, and Attracting Business.

NEW TOURISM ACTIVITIES

While we are still in the midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Stafford Tourism has been on the forefront helping to attract visitors and increase spending in Stafford. We have seen a steady rise in our social media and website marketing analytics of people interested in outdoor activities and close to home travel. Thus we have focused our messaging to engage a more local and drivable audience. We have seen an increase in requests for meeting space for government and retreat travel. We also wrapped up two large marketing campaigns focused on brand awareness to attract a drivable leisure market.

Activities included the following marketing campaigns and tourism servicing requests:

- Share the LOVE social media contest in partnership with local B101.5 radio station.
- Rediscover Stafford Digital Marketing Campaign focused on our leisure travel market.
- Worked with the FBI National Academy Association to secure two conferences in Stafford. One took place at the Holiday Inn & Conference Center from March 21 - 24 in South Stafford with an attendance of 100 people. Another is scheduled to take place in June-July with around 100 people at the Hampton Inn in North Stafford.
- Sponsored the [Special Olympics Basketball Championships](#) as part of the tourism sponsorship program. Stafford has been home to the Basketball Championships for more than 25 years.



ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

We continued to deliver and further develop our entrepreneurial development programs. The EDA has been a leader around the Rappahannock Region, with support from Go Virginia in these new programs. In March we developed and held an event “Technological Innovation in 22401” which featured a panel of three local business who shared technology innovation and advances that supported recent business growth. *The event engaged 38 participants from across the region.*

Meanwhile, we finalized a Preliminary Report and the EDA submitted a Go Virginia grant application to expand and solidify our technology-based entrepreneurial development programs. The project, if funded, will allow for the expansion of RIOT (www.riot.org) to Stafford and the launching of a technology-based “accelerator” program in the Virginia Smart Community Testbed. This will be RIOT’s first formal expansion in Virginia and we are hopeful we can secure their presence and program in Stafford, our Region, and the Commonwealth.

Stay tuned for our next program, [Project Next](#), on May 25. This will be a virtual event the morning of the opening of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed. A big day in Stafford.



INITIATIVES

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

Smart Stafford

As noted, this past quarter final plans were being made for the opening of the [Virginia Smart Community Testbed \(May 25\)](#). The Testbed Program and our partnership with CIT represents a significant opportunity in Stafford. To date, over \$1.0M in R&D has been put into Pilot Projects.

Downtown Stafford

ED&T Staff has continued to advise along with Planning Staff as the Planning Commission reviewed changes to the Comprehensive Plan, code changes, and rezoning for 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 interested private partners to develop the County’s acres, to be ready soon after the UD5 zoning is approved by the Board.

Priority Economic Development Initiatives 2021-2022

ED&T contracted with McGuire Woods Consulting and have begun to further develop plans for three primary initiatives for economic development in Stafford. These will be presented to the Board in April. They include the development of Tourism Zones, an Economic Infrastructure Fund to support future development in Centreport, and a Data Center Overlay Zone to speed up the time-to-market for potential data center sites.

Upcoming Entrepreneurial Development Events:

www.StaffordEntrepreneurship.com

The poster has a dark blue background with a network of white dots and lines. At the top, it says "SAVE THE DATE" in white. Below that, "PROJECT NEXT" is written in large, bold, white letters. Underneath, "Smart Technology & Entrepreneurship" is written in a smaller white font. The date and time, "TUESDAY, MAY 25th @ 9AM VIRTUAL EVENT", are prominently displayed in white. At the bottom, there is a row of logos for participating partners: Go Virginia, EDA Stafford, King George Economic Development & Tourism, FXBG, RIOT, and Virginia Smart Community Testbed Stafford, VA.

The poster features a dark blue background with a white diagonal line. The text "RIBBON CUTTING" is written in large, bold, white letters. Below it, "TUESDAY, MAY 25th from 10-11 AM" and "1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford, VA 22554" are written in white. On the right side, there is a graphic of a mountain with a Wi-Fi symbol, a house, and a building. Below the graphic, "VIRGINIA SMART COMMUNITY TESTBED STAFFORD, VA" is written in white. At the bottom, there is a red banner with the logos for Stafford Virginia, CIT (Center for Innovative Technology), and OST.