“See You on Beverley”: Beverley Street Demonstration Project

Beverley Street is the heart of downtown Staunton, but its narrow sidewalks leave little room for people to walk, sit, or gather. With support from the Virginia Walkability Action Institute (VWAI), the City of Staunton closed one travel lane on a two-block stretch for one month in June 2026 and filled the space with planters, crosswalks, pavement markings, seating, turf, and tables. Average vehicle speeds in the project area dropped from about 21 mph to 13 mph, creating a safer, more welcoming street for people on foot. Feedback from residents on the demonstration project will be used to guide permanent intersection improvements slated for construction in 2027.

Team:

This project was led by Susan Wilson, a Transportation Planner for the City of Staunton, with support from fellow City colleagues Rhodney Rhodes, Josh Knight, and Samantha Johnson. Garreth Bartholemew from the Bicycle Pedestrian Action Committee (BPAC) also played a large role. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, the Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA) and Visit Staunton collaborated on some project efforts.

Goals and Vision:

- Implement a demonstration project to collect data for safety improvements through pedestrian counts and community surveys
- Engage stakeholders, residents, and businesses to communicate the purpose and timeline of the demonstration project, and receive feedback on the demonstration project
- Analyze data from engagement activities, pedestrian counts, and community surveys to create community informed and evidence-based recommendations for final design

The VWAI Staunton Site Visit.
Source: Horizon 54

Background:

Staunton, Virginia is a city in the Shenandoah Valley which has preserved much of its original Victorian architecture and historic charm from the mid-19th and early 20th century. Beverley Street runs through the middle of downtown and is lined with museums, restaurants, shops, and theaters. It also hosts parades and other community gatherings throughout the year. However, limited sidewalk space in the historic downtown core constrains pedestrian movement and 'third place' activity such as sitting, eating, resting, and gathering.

In 2026, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) awarded Staunton $2.2M to improve nine downtown intersections, six of them along Beverly Street. The Staunton team used this momentum, along with VWAI funding and technical assistance, to install a demonstration project on Beverley Street. The project closed one of two travel lanes along a two-block section for one month and transformed the space with seating, planters, and other pedestrian amenities. The temporary installation let residents, businesses, and visitors experience how the street could function with additional space dedicated to people walking, gathering, and spending time downtown.

A local artist painting at the demonstration site.
Source: City of Staunton

Community engagement and data collection were central to the project. Nearly 600 people responded to the pre-installation survey, with most respondents expressing support for the demonstration. The team also conducted outreach to downtown businesses, including those with concerns about the project, speaking directly with business owners to reaffirm that the delivery and emergency vehicle access would not change, emphasize the project's temporary nature, and indicate the potential increase in business. Cameras recorded the site around the clock to count pedestrians and vehicles, and additional surveys gathered feedback from people who experienced the installation.

Residents enjoying the demonstration project. Source: City of Staunton

Together, strong community engagement and quantitative traffic data collected during the installation gave a fuller picture of the project's impact and strengthened the case for future improvements—namely that Beverley Street could handle the amount of traffic it received with just a single lane and that nearby business boomed during the demonstration project.

As the first demonstration project in the City of Staunton, the VWAI helped prove that this sort of temporary infrastructure project is possible and developed a process that others can follow. The City of Staunton now has a toolset to test solutions and collect data before breaking ground, to make the best use of investment downtown.

Outcomes and Impact:

- Collected pre- and post-installation data on street use, vehicle speeds, and traffic flow
- Produced measurable changes in vehicle speeds, with average speeds around the demonstration project area decreasing from approximately 21 mph to 13 mph
- Found that people who visited and experienced the demonstration were generally more supportive than those who had not visited the site
- Showed the value of using multiple types of data to evaluate demonstration projects
- Installed and removed a temporary demonstration project and set the precedent for future demonstration projects
- Informed future engagement and evaluation efforts as the City moves toward permanent intersection improvements planned for 2027