

Explore ASHEVILLE

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority A Joint Meeting of the Public Authority and Nonprofit Corporation

Via Zoom Webinar due to the COVID-19 Pandemic/State of Emergency

Virtual Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

- Present (Voting):** Himanshu Karvir, Chair; Gary Froeba, Vice Chair; Leah Ashburn, Andrew Celwyn, Brenda Durden, John Luckett, John McKibbon, Kathleen Mosher, James Poole
- Absent (Voting):** None
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley
- CVB Staff:** Victoria Isley, Marla Tambellini, Marshall Hilliard, Pat Kappes, Jennifer Kass-Green, Jonna Sampson, Daniel Bradley
- BC Finance:** Don Warn, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bisette
- Online Attendees:** Dewana Little, Catherine Miller, Phillippe Rosse; YMI Team Glenn Cox, Carli Adams, Kathryn Dewey, Hannah Dosa, Connie Holliday, Sarah Kilgore, Sarah Lowery, Kathi Petersen, Tina Porter, Glenn Ramey, Charlie Reed, Whitney Smith, Dodie Stephens, Nicole Will; Explore Asheville Staff Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association Demp Bradford, Madison Davis; Asheville-Buncombe Regional Sports Commission Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Bob Michel, Asheville Homestay Network Ed Manning, Leadership Asheville Chip Craig, John Ellis, Jim Muth; Past BCTDA Board Members Rick Bell, Engadine Inn & Cabins/Asheville B&B Association Jason Sandford, Ashvegas Joel Burgess, Derek Lacey; Asheville Citizen-Times Brooke Randle, Mountain Xpress Bryan Overstreet, WLOS Sunshine Request

Additional tourism community partners and members of the public registered in advance and viewed the online meeting.

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Karvir called the virtual joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:01 a.m.
- Minutes from the May 26, 2021 BCTDA regular monthly meeting were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The May 2021 financial statements were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- In her President & CEO's report, Ms. Isley reviewed lodging metrics and provided a TPDF/TMIP process update.
- Chairman Karvir acknowledged the closure of the electronic comment period of the public budget hearing, noting 70 comments were received and included in the minutes.
- The BCTDA FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund Administrative Budget Ordinance was approved with an 8-1 vote.
- On behalf of the nominating committee, Vice Chairman Froeba presented a slate of FY22 officer nominations, which was approved with a 9-0 vote. The BCTDA appointed Kathleen Mosher as Chair, Brenda Durden as Vice Chair, and Leah Ashburn as Treasurer of the Nonprofit, for one-year terms, effective July 1, 2021.
- Ms. Tambellini announced MMGY Global was selected as the BCTDA's new advertising agency of record.
- A River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project (RADTIP) TPDF contract amendment was approved with a 9-0 vote.
- A YMI Cultural Center project update was provided and a motion to approve the TPDF contract amendment as requested was approved with a 9-0 vote.
- An update from Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore was heard.
- In Commissioner Pressley's absence, Chairman Karvir shared a brief Buncombe County Commission update.
- Under Comments from the General Public, Chairman Karvir reported there were no non-budget related comments received via email, and no members of the public had requested to speak live during the virtual meeting.
- Ms. Isley and members of the board thanked outgoing BCTDA Chairman Himanshu Karvir for serving during a challenging year and for his extensive community service.
- With a 9-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Call of the Joint BCTDA Meeting to Order

Chairman Karvir called the virtual joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:01 a.m. He said meeting documents are provided on AshevilleCVB.com and additional materials will be posted after the meeting.

Board Member Roll Call: Board members responded as Chairman Karvir called roll verifying all BCTDA members were virtually in attendance, except for Commissioner Pressley, who was absent.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luckett made a motion to approve the May 26, 2021 regular meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Durden seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Financial Reports

May 2021 Financial Reports

Mr. Warn reviewed the May 2021 financial reports. There were no questions.

Ms. Ashburn made a motion to approve the May 2021 financial reports as presented.

Mr. McKibbon seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

President & CEO Report

Ms. Isley shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she provided recent lodging occupancy metrics. She also shared a Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF)/Tourism Management Investment Plan (TMIP) update and a timeline of steps that have taken place to date. Ms. Isley noted that this summer and fall, staff will confirm project priorities with primary stakeholders, monitor any legislative changes that may be introduced, and establish new TPDF application guidelines in alignment with Explore Asheville's strategic pillars and broader community goals.

Other Updates

Ms. Isley said updated versions of the CVB Staff Recap, Destination Dashboard, and Quick List are posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

Acknowledgement of Closure of Electronic Comment Period of Public Hearing

Chairman Karvir said that pursuant to N.C. General Statute 166A-19.24 (e), a virtual public hearing related to the proposed FY22 budget took place on May 26, 2021, and the public was invited to submit comments via email to Reply@ExploreAsheville.com through Tuesday, June 29, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. For the record, Chairman Karvir said the electronic comment period of the public budget hearing closed yesterday and the BCTDA received 70 emailed comments related to the budget. He said the comments were provided to board members prior to today's meeting, will be included in the minutes, and will be posted on AshevilleCVB.com. Chairman Karvir said with the closure of the electronic comment period on June 29, all parts of the public budget hearing have concluded.

Approval of Proposed BCTDA FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund Administrative Budget Ordinance

Mr. Luckett said that last month, two proposed budget ordinances were presented, as potential legislative changes, if introduced and passed, would change the occupancy tax allocation from a 75%/25% Operating/TPDF split to a 67%/33% split. He noted leadership in the local hotel community is advocating for this change.

Mr. Luckett said since the North Carolina state law has not yet changed, the ordinance being presented for approval today is based on the current occupancy tax legislation, directing 75% of occupancy taxes collected to the Operating budget and 25% to the Tourism Product Development Fund. He noted there is not a \$2 million appropriation from Fund Balance included in this ordinance, as there would have been in the 67%/33% split scenario. Mr. Luckett said that when the proposed occupancy tax change is introduced and approved at the state level during the fiscal year, the appropriate budgetary changes will be made with board approval.

Mr. Luckett presented the proposed FY22 budget ordinance, which was reviewed extensively at last month's meeting, and invited questions. A discussion took place with Mr. McKibbon, Mr. Celwyn, and Chairman Karvir providing their perspectives related to the emailed comments received during the electronic public budget hearing. Mr. McKibbon was appreciative of the comments and encouraged interested members of the public to attend BCTDA meetings and get involved with Explore Asheville if they do not meet the criteria to secure a seat on the board. Mr. Celwyn said he would like to see the BCTDA do more with occupancy tax dollars to help the community.

Mr. Celwyn requested that with the board transitioning back to in-person meetings starting next month, that public access to view meetings online and the opportunity to virtually call-in comments would be continued. Ms. Isley responded that staff is currently working through logistics to develop a plan focused on continued public access to BCTDA meetings and she will share the details when they have been finalized.

Chairman Karvir thanked Mr. McKibbon and Mr. Celwyn for their comments. He also expressed his appreciation to Sunshine Request staff for broadcasting BCTDA and other public meetings for the community.

Mr. Luckett made a motion to approve the budget ordinance as presented, adopting the BCTDA's FY22 Operating Budget in the amount of \$20,369,690, the TPDF Administrative Budget in the amount of \$440,000, and the Earned Revenue Budget in the amount of \$200,564. Vice Chairman Froeba seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 8-1, with Mr. Celwyn casting the opposing vote.

BCTDA Nominating Committee

On behalf of the BCTDA nominating committee, consisting of Mr. McKibbon, Ms. Ashburn, and himself, Vice Chairman Froeba presented the following slate of officer nominations, effective for a one-year term beginning on July 1, 2021:

BCTDA Chair: Kathleen Mosher
BCTDA Vice Chair: Brenda Durden
BCTDA Treasurer (Nonprofit Only): Leah Ashburn

Mr. Celwyn made a motion to approve the nominations for FY22 officers as presented for BCTDA Chair, BCTDA Vice Chair, and Treasurer of the BCTDA nonprofit only, as presented. Mr. Luckett and Mr. Poole simultaneously seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Advertising Agency Selection

Ms. Tambellini shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she provided an overview of the advertising agency selection process, which was facilitated by Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group. She outlined the RFP criteria, selection, and posting process, noting 14 agencies responded with proposals, with none of them being local. Ms. Tambellini said after reviewing the submissions, four agencies came to Asheville to make in-person presentations, and after additional follow-up was completed, a decision to hire a new agency was made.

Ms. Tambellini announced MMGY Global has been selected as the BCTDA's new agency of record, effective July 1, 2021. She said MMGY was founded in 1981 and has 200 employees, noting that while the CVB will work with staff from the Kansas City office, MMGY will also establish a small agency office in Asheville. Ms. Tambellini provided additional insights on how

MMGY's experience, clients, strategic partnerships, and data-driven research offerings align with Explore Asheville's strategic pillars, leading to the agency's selection.

Next, Ms. Tambellini reviewed the upcoming advertising plan and praised the team at 360i for the work they have done throughout the agency transition process. She then answered all related questions. Ms. Isley added Explore Asheville and MMGY are committed to using local talent whenever possible in advertising efforts.

Chairman Karvir thanked Ms. Tambellini for the presentation.

Tourism Product Development Fund Project Updates

River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project (RADTIP)

Ms. Kappes presented a TPDF amendment request for the City of Asheville's Riverfront Destination Development project. She said the project received three TPDF awards totaling \$7.1 million, and \$3.3 million has already been disbursed. Ms. Kappes said the project is complete and open to the public, however, the grant contract requires that all punch list items must be completed in order to disburse the final payment. She noted there are remaining punch list items, however, they are related to infrastructure and are not impacting the TPDF-funded project elements. Ms. Kappes said the City of Asheville is requesting that the BCTDA waive the punch list completion requirement so that the remaining \$3.8 million in funding can be released.

Chairman Karvir said this project is a great example of the BCTDA partnering with the City of Asheville by providing \$7.1 million in infrastructure funding to support this greenway project. He noted that back in 2017, the TPDF committee and BCTDA board proactively awarded the City of Asheville an additional \$4.6 million for the project, without going through an additional application process, in order to allow for its completion after construction costs had skyrocketed. The city planned to significantly scale back on the project and construct it in phases over six years instead of three, however, the additional \$4.6 million in funding allowed it to be completed as originally planned. Chairman Karvir said it is great to see a lot of residents and families using the greenway, and he is glad the BCTDA could play a role in helping to bring the project to fruition. He then called for a motion.

Vice Chairman Froeba moved to approve the contract amendment to waive the punch list completion requirement and disburse the remaining \$3.8 million balance of the City of Asheville's Riverfront Destination Development project grant. Mr. Celwyn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

YMI Cultural Center

Ms. Kappes said Dewana Little, executive director of the YMI Cultural Center, Catherine Miller, project manager of the Self-Help Real Estate Team, and Philippe Rossi, capital campaign manager for the YMI Cultural Center, are attending today's meeting to present a YMI update to include a refined scope of work and contract amendment request.

Ms. Kappes provided the following background information on the project:

- The YMI project was originally proposed by Eagle Street Development Corporation in 2018, for building renovations to preserve the historic landmark and facilitate public uses, and an \$800,000 TPDF grant was awarded. The matching funds requirement was waived.
- New leadership at the YMI assumed responsibility of managing the development of the project in early 2019.

- The YMI aligned with additional partners (Self-Help Real Estate Development Team and Weaver-Cooke) for support in managing the planning and development of the renovation project.
- The original contract has been amended twice to allow for early disbursements. The remaining balance of the grant will be disbursed in thirds throughout the construction process, per standard TDPF contractual terms.

Ms. Kappes said the contract needs to be amended to reflect the updated scope to include additional construction details resulting from the design and construction planning process conducted by the Self-Help Real Estate Development Team and Weaver-Cooke. She added this is a clarification, not a change in scope.

Ms. Little, Ms. Miller, and Mr. Rossi shared a PowerPoint presentation that included a project overview, new renovation goals, progress so far to date, a revised construction budget and timeline, and a report on current and anticipated fundraising efforts.

Ms. Miller concluded the presentation by thanking the BCTDA for its support of the project and sharing next steps, which include preparing construction documents and working to secure the additional \$2 million in fundraising needed to break ground this year. Mr. McKibbon and Ms. Ashburn commended the YMI team for the presentation and their efforts.

Mr. Poole made a motion to amend the YMI Cultural Center's TPDF contract to reflect the updated project scope as presented, to include the additional construction details resulting from the design and construction planning process conducted by the Self-Help Real Estate Development Team and Weaver-Cooke. Ms. Ashburn seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Chairman Karvir thanked Ms. Little, Ms. Miller, and Mr. Rossi for the presentation.

Asheville City Council Update

Councilmember Kilgore provided an update on city-related business, including the FY22 budget, changes to the noise ordinance, and regulations/enforcement efforts related to homestays/short-term rentals.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Pressley was absent from the meeting, however, had provided a written update to share with the board. On Commissioner Pressley's behalf, Chairman Karvir reported on county-related business, including recent lacrosse and cornhole tournaments, the Buncombe County Local Fiscal Recovery Fund RFP process, and gratitude to Senator Chuck Edwards for supporting the new I-26 interchange and the AB-Tech Training Center.

Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business discussed at this meeting.

Comments from the General Public

Written Public Comments

Chairman Karvir said members of the public were invited to submit comments via email to Reply@ExploreAsheville.com through 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 29, 2021. He reported there were no public comments received by the deadline other than those related to the FY22 public budget hearing.

Live Public Comments

Chairman Karvir said members of the public were invited to sign-up to verbally share live comments during monthly virtual BCTDA meetings. He reported that as of yesterday's 12:00 p.m. registration deadline, no requests to speak at today's meeting had been received.

Recognition of Outgoing BCTDA Chair Himanshu Karvir

Noting that this is his last meeting as BCTDA Chair, having served on the board for two terms spanning six years, Chairman Karvir said it has been a pleasure serving and working with the board and staff during his tenure. He noted he plans to stay involved and will continue attending BCTDA meetings.

Ms. Isley thanked and commended Himanshu Karvir for his leadership and dedication in serving as Chairman of the BCTDA during the past fiscal year, and as Vice Chair the year prior. She said his term included guiding Explore Asheville's efforts through a global pandemic that brought unprecedented challenges to our area's tourism community. She recognized Chairman Karvir for the role he played in the collaborative effort to enact legislation to pass the BCTDA's Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund, providing \$5 million to nearly 400 businesses to help them reopen safely and sustainably. She said that together, with members of the Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association, Chairman Karvir has been advocating for changes to the occupancy tax legislation to provide more funding for community projects through the Tourism Product Development Fund. Additionally, Chairman Karvir served on the TPDF committee that has provided funding to [community projects](#) that benefit residents and visitors alike.

Ms. Isley thanked Chairman Karvir for his extensive and unwavering community service, which includes serving on several boards, but especially highlighted the Horizons program that he and his wife established to help underserved children find success and stay in school.

Ms. Isley concluded her remarks by stating she was grateful to have the opportunity to onboard into her position working alongside Chairman Karvir over the past year. Ms. Ashburn, Ms. Durden, Vice Chairman Froeba, and Ms. Mosher also thanked Chairman Karvir for his leadership and for being a community champion.

Chairman Karvir thanked everyone for their kind words and said he can't wait to see what changes happen to the BCTDA and CVB under Ms. Isley's leadership. He added 76% of hotels in the area are locally owned and operated by individuals that live in Buncombe County, and the money visitors spend is reinvested back into our community.

Ms. Isley also thanked Vice Chairman Froeba for his leadership through the pandemic, and said she looks forward to resuming in-person board meetings next month.

Adjournment

Mr. McKibbon said he would like staff to send responses out to the 70 people that submitted public budget comments, and invite them to become involved in BCTDA meetings and committees.

Mr. McKibbon moved to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Mosher seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0 and the virtual meeting ended at 10:40 a.m.

The full meeting PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau and are posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be on Wednesday, July 28, 2021, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in person in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place, in Asheville.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager

**BCTDA Board Meeting | June 30, 2021
Electronic Public Budget Hearing Comments**

At the May 26, 2021, meeting of the BCTDA, pursuant to N.C. General Statute 166A-19.24 (e) during the COVID-19 state of emergency, an electronic public hearing was held. The BCTDA board received public comments related to the proposed BCTDA FY22 budget via email to Reply@ExploreAsheville.com through Tuesday, June 29, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. The comments are provided in the order in which they were received.

From: James Kammann <jlkammann@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 3:41 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: TDA Budget

Hi,
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

In looking at Marketing and Group Sales expenditures.... with 12mm visitors that is only \$1.38 per visitor.... a lot of revenue from these visitors for relatively few dollars. My suggestion is that additional money is added on to promote Asheville with a food and beverage tax or better yet an increase to the sales tax over all, maybe 1/8-1/4%, this could be used to promote and take care of most of the wear and tear that 12mm visitors make on our infrastructure.... this has been discussed for over 15 years, but nothing has been done.... I think it is time for more than Hotels and Private Lodging (new to this) to fund the entire promotion of the Asheville area and beyond.

Wishing you the best of luck,

Jim

James L. Kammann
46 Haywood Street Suite 334
Asheville, NC 28801-2758
c 828-215-8753
Email: jlkammann@gmail.com

"Try to learn something about everything and everything about something"
Thomas Huxley

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From: Allie E. <allie.ellenbogen@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 6:48 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Input: Marketing budget increase

Hi there, I read about the increase to the marketing budget for FY 20-21 in AVL Today. I have lived in Asheville for about 4 years having moved here from San Francisco (another city with many tourists). Up

until recently I lived in walking distance of downtown. One factor for my family's move was that while we were close to downtown we could not enjoy it because it was packed with tourists.

I know covid has had an impact on tourism and that so many businesses rely on tourists to survive. While there has been a dip in tourism, from what I see it looks like it's bouncing back and would still recover with a similar marketing budget to previous years. My primary feedback is to use the money to encourage tourism that can be woven into the city more gracefully so residents and tourists can coexist. In San Francisco residents relished getting the chance to tell tourists about their favorite spots, but here we are like two separate entities. I'd like to see a focus on spreading tourism out across the city and surrounding areas. I'd also prefer to see some of the money used to study how to curb over-tourism so residents and tourists can coexist happily. I found this article to be interesting on over-tourism <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/25/overtourism-in-europe-historic-cities-sparks-backlash>

Thanks for your consideration,
Allie

Sent from my iPhone

From: A. Michael Edwards <edwards.mike@charter.net>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 6:59 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Spending on tourism

Asheville should spend ZERO on tourism and disband idiotic TDA.

From: Bonnie H <BonnieBrite@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:17 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: TDA dollars

Re: Buncombe TDA to spend \$15 million to promote tourism in 2021-2022. The visitors are going to come, whether these funds are spent luring them or not. Wouldn't these funds be better spent on ensuring that the businesses that serve the tourism industry have sufficient staffing? Housing costs in Asheville are so high as to force service industry employees out of the area. Using TDA dollars to offset these costs, or to create affordable housing opportunities, makes more sense than attracting more tourists that can't effectively be served due to labor shortages. If businesses are fully-staffed it's a win-win for tourists and locals alike!

Bonnie

From: Cotter, Carole <ccotter@fullerton.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:19 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: 55% increase for marketing tourism???

Hi there,

Not sure Buncombe County TDA is spending their money wisely at all on this one. Does the area really need a 55% boost in the tourism marketing budget? It's not like people will have totally forgotten about Asheville and the area over the pandemic. Some more money in the budget for marketing seems normal but that much? I'm sure there are others things that could use development. Just dumb.

Oh well,
Carole

From: Jim Forward <jtfbuilder@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:28 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Tourism

Please use the 15 million to help Asheville end poverty, hunger, abuse, and homelessness. Spending that money on bringing more people here is unconscionable when so many are facing these issues. Please follow your hearts and not your pocketbooks!

Thank you,
Jim Forward
Local homebuilder for 40 years

From: mimi strang <mimistrang@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:35 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Stop the madness!

You have successfully turned our town into a tourist destination. Thumbs up for accomplishing a goal butit's been at the expense of our quality of life.
Put your funds towards improving things in our town.

No more HOTELS!
Deal with the puking drunks!
We need more police and fire for the increase in people(?tourists) in the town.

Im sure you have gotten this same ear full. It's time y'all listen and do something about the problems you are contributing to.

Sent

From: Cynthia Heil <cheil17@att.net>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:47 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: More money for tourists?

"The Buncombe County TDA has announced its plans to spend more than \$15 million on marketing tourism for the 2021-22 fiscal year. This spend would be a 55% increase from the current budget cycle and would be the TDA's biggest-ever marketing spend to date. Share your input through Tues., June 29. (Mountain Xpress)" [From 28 May 2021 Asheville Today]

How about putting some of that money into infrastructure for those of us who live here? If the state won't allow it, then help the residents/tax payers lobby the state for more tourism money to go into local needs.

How about helping tourist-industry employees stay safe for the remainder of this pandemic by giving the industry some options for dealing with surly, rude, even threatening tourists who don't want to mask, don't want to wait for a table, etc.? If not this pandemic, the next crisis??? In fact, how about helping us residents who bore the brunt of threatening tourists, as well?

During some of the TDA and assoc'd orgs' discussions regarding a safe tourist environment, no one---NO one---addressed the tourists who dissed residents/svc workers for trying to be safe.

How about supporting svc workers so they can get a living wage? Without them, you've got nothing for tourists.

C. Heil
Asheville, NC

From: Jim personal Email <jmsf7@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 9:14 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Ads for tourists

PLEASE depict some people of color in the ads!!!!

Jim McAllister

Sent from my iPhone

From: Mark Bloom <markhenrybloom@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 9:50 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>; letters@mountainx.com
Subject: TDA's Biggest Ever Marketing Spend

Before we go hog wild on marketing Asheville to the world, can we pause (or at least more slowly ramp up) to consider what's best for the city and its inhabitants? What results came from the result study on tourism and the recent moratorium on hotel development? How can the city best heal from the effects of the pandemic?

I think having the city immediately overrun with tourists may not be the best idea, except for the hotels. Yes, the restaurants that made it through deserve to be rewarded. But there are a lot of people struggling in this town. And minimum-wage jobs (or less than minimum-wage jobs when you think of the restaurant servers) aren't helping.

\$15 million on marketing? Is that the best use of that money? I agree with Ben Williamson (Buncombe Commissioners Must Rein in the TDA) to defund the TDA until the state recognizes that Asheville needs a more useful distribution of these funds.

Sincerely, Mark H. Bloom

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Mark H. Bloom
27 Parkway Loop
Asheville, NC 28803
828-280-1686

From: Cliff Hall <12barz@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 10:10 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: TDA's budget increase

This seems to me to be a remarkably short-sighted move. Does the city have the infrastructure to support increased tourism? Putting all our eggs in the basket of tourism may also make us vulnerable to economic, social, environmental, and public-health events and changes that might effect that industry's vitality. If we don't want to risk becoming an abandoned amusement park, I believe Asheville would be better served long-term by a more concerted effort to diversify our economy. It might be better to set our sights and economic resources on ways to increase non-tourism job and business growth. To that end, maybe we should *reduce* the TDA's budget and establish a Diversified Enterprise Development Authority.
Cliff Hall

From: sharon haberfield <skhab1945@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 10:37 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: 55% inc

Perhaps this \$\$ better spent .. city run over with tourists Schools .. homeless .. child hunger .. might need an increase

Sent from my iPhone

From: Susan Waldman <namlaw@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 2:31 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Marketing for tourism

1.5 million is lots of money to bring more tourists to a town that is already inundated with tourists and hotels. It ignores the needs of most Ashevilleians and makes the city almost unlivable as hordes descend on it. Shame on you. Why not use the 1.5 million for something for the community...I am sure there are lots of better uses for that money. It is tax money going into the pockets of hotel owner who also happen to sit on the tourism board.

Susan Waldman

From: Susan L Harrison <susanh@dragonseye.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 4:01 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: \$15 million on marketing tourism

I'm an Asheville resident, and while I'm not from here, I am aware of the damage being done to this community by increasing prices, unchecked tourism, and low-paying service jobs. Spending \$15 million on marketing is obscene, when the people living here face outrageous housing costs, and the homeless rates grow. Asheville doesn't need more marketing. People who vacation domestically know this beautiful place exists, has a moderate climate, loads of touristy activities, a cool artsy vibe, and more ways to get sloppy drunk on beer than you can try without going to rehab afterward. Why not put some of that wasteful marketing money into funding healthcare for tourism employees, raising their wages, or helping out with affordable housing?

If you care about infrastructure to support tourism, how about spending a few million on public transit and reducing private car access to the city center? Convince the city to close a few streets to cars and make them strictly pedestrian spaces, like the plazas of Spain. Add small electric streetcars that run frequently, not enormous and noisy city buses that are too few and far between. While you're doing that, include residential areas in your plans and add sidewalks. All this would make the air cleaner and therefore make the city more enticing, and it would help the locals to like the TDA instead of loathing it.

What makes you think research and analysis will give people more vacation days to spend here? I'm sorry, but Asheville is a long weekend destination, full stop. People with two weeks will save longer stretches of time for more enticing things like a beach, a cruise, or foreign travel. The long weekend niche is a successful formula, so stick with it while helping the locals. We could be allies if only...

Susan L. Harrison
Asheville Resident

From: Tess Burton <thetaooftess@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:40 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Tourism opinion

Enough is enough! When is it enough? Absurd amount of money going to tourism whe the community continues to yell and scream about all the issues of more interest and dollars going to "tourism" and NOT the community. You continue to destroy what is left. On the graph, "Good paying jobs" as a result of tourism? That's a joke. We all know the pay is low and the cost of living is high. Places have closed due to inability to find solid workers. Tourists don't care about the community here, they just want to have a good time. I have been here almost 33 years, change is inevitable but as Leni Sitnick said, " Shame on you" what happened to all the community talk years ago, save Asheville, keep it unique, save the soul of this mountain town. You are killing it and not in a good way. Not a happy camper as far as the increase in tourism energy and Dollars spent.

So nice of you to ask but as history proves, it will fall on deaf ears.

Tess Burton

From: debbie emmons <smartmacs@charter.net>
Sent: Saturday, May 29, 2021 9:14 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: tourism \$

I feel this money should be spent on updating roads and sidewalks instead. We have enough visitors, share the money for local upgrades and help the homeless. build more affordable housing for our server workers instead!!!!

Sincerely,
Debbie

A concerned local business owner

Smart Computer Solutions

☐ *Mac Sales and Service since 1987*

- Apple Certified Mac Technician
- Apple Business Affiliate
- Mac Support Specialist
- Creative Services

14 Beaverdam Knoll Road, Asheville, NC 28804 T.828-255-2660

From: Russ Towers <russtowers@charter.net>
Sent: Sunday, May 30, 2021 9:06 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: 'Laurie Towers' <laurieatowers@gmail.com>; 'Buffalo McMurry' <buffalo@secondgearwnc.com>; 'Chris Webster' <chris@secondgearwnc.com>; 'Jack Igelman' <jack@igelman.com>; 'Lissa Calloway' <lissacalloway@gmail.com>; luciouswilson1@gmail.com
Subject: Occupancy Tax Allocation

Hello Explore Asheville,

I'm writing to submit a comment about the proposed change to the allocation of the Asheville hotel occupancy tax:

As a the owner of a retail business (Second Gear) that benefits from visitors to Asheville, I certainly appreciate the funding that goes towards marketing and promoting Asheville. My business has seen exceptional growth over 17 years, partly as the result of increased tourism in Asheville and more specifically in West Asheville.

As a 20+ year resident of Asheville, I've experienced the extraordinary growth of tourism in Asheville over the past two decades. The current amount of tourists visiting Asheville (11 million/year) is detracting from the quality of life for Asheville residents, is stressing the infrastructure of the city and is contributing to the unaffordability of housing here. If I were now choosing a city to relocate to, as I did in early 2000, I would not choose Asheville. We don't need to increase the number of tourists visiting Asheville.

I propose the occupancy tax allocation be changed to 50/50. That would provide nearly \$14 million each for operating budget and for the TPDF fund.

Please note, I'm writing this comment personally and may not be representative of the views of all the Second Gear owners.

Thank you.
Russ Towers

From: Karen Quasny <kquasny@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 1, 2021 9:51 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: \$15 M on marketing!

REALLY?

We have more tourists and people moving here than we can handle! Every list of top ten places to live includes Asheville in the top 3. Why in the world would we put that much into marketing a destination that already has boatloads of tourists and new residents (but, not enough housing).

PLEASE, invest in our infrastructure. Add some green space down town. Invest in our schools and educators, or or public safety and police departments. But NOT on more marketing for increased tourism!!!

How can we, the citizens of Asheville and Buncombe county, be heard? I am so frustrated by this, but feel powerless to curb the spending. This is my only option, to write to ExploreAsheville and hope it reaches the politicians deciding on this crazy budget amount.

V/R

K. Quasny

Sent from my iPad

From: Dan <dnwllms@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 1, 2021 10:10 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Marketing tourism budget

To spend more money to entice more tourists to a saturated tourism market is akin to the \$400 toilet seat. You are spending money simply because you have it on thicker glossy paper headed for the landfill.

Change the law to address what is needed such as; Tourism planning and management, funds to offset tourism impact in both the near and far term.

Dan Williams
Fairview

From: Bebe Kern <bebeoctober@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 11:33 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: REMARKS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The headline was there in Xpress on the page like business as usual--not surrounded by giant, bold eyeroll emojis, not displayed in 72 pt. disaster caps. I couldn't believe it. "BCTDA plans to spend \$15 M on marketing." (p. 13, June 2-8) What world are they living in? Isn't this like telling a family of eight living in a two-room house that you're persuading a couple of baseball teams to move in with them?

At 2:00 pm Tuesday, it took 40 minutes to navigate downtown traffic. Today I spent 30 minutes trying to go four blocks on Haywood Road. I couldn't find a simple breakfast anywhere without a long line of customers waiting. Montford and downtown were mobbed. If there's budget waiting to be spent, give it to public services or underserved families, and let the marketing take care of itself. Or embrace a new tag line--Myrtle Beach of the Mountains.

Bebe Kern
Emma

Bebe Kern
281 Brickyard Road
AVL 28806
336-671-6383

From: Susan Michael <s.michael3@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2021 11:05 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Occupancy Tax

Hello Buncombe County Tourism Board,

I am writing you to please request we change the revenue split from 75% 25% TO 66% 33%. As a resident and lover of Asheville, I feel we are being overrun by tourists. It makes it hard to enjoy the area we call home. We don't need to continue to advertise our area, we are already well known far and wide. Please give our city a break and let the residence enjoy what we moved here to enjoy!!!

Sincerely,

Susan Michael

From: kathryn liss <kathrynliss5@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2021 11:35 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Occupancy tax

If I had my way we'd stop spending any money advertising Asheville. We need that money for infrastructure and if we can't have that, let's get rid of the tax altogether.

Kathryn
Liss
Haw Creek

From: Jane Roman Pitt <romanpitt@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2021 12:04 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: To the Buncombe County Tourism Board

Dear BCTB,

Asheville is on all the "best place to . . ." lists in the country already---please do not spend money on advertising it more! Everyone knows about Asheville now, and wants to visit or move here---it's already so crowded with tourists that it makes it difficult for those who live here and want to use and enjoy the city.

There are so many serious educational, social, and justice issues here that need that money more than wasting it on advertising.

Thank you,
Jane Roman Pitt

From: Cathy Holt <cathyfholt@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 1:02 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Stop advertising for more tourists!

Dear TDA,

Please spend more money on repairing Asheville's infrastructure, not bringing in more tourists!

Thanks,
Cathy Holt

--

Cathy Holt
www.heartspeakpeace.com
Coaching for health and resilience
Go slowly, breathe and smile - Thich Nhat Hanh

From: Keaton Hill <khill@jayhill.net>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 8:32 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>;
alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-
ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert
Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org;
terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: BCTDA Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA Board members and County Commissioners:

As an Asheville resident, parent, person of conscience, and active community member, I am writing about the BCTDA FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund budgets.

I am deeply disturbed that in the current configuration of the BCTDA, over \$20 million of our tax dollars are controlled by for-profit tourism business owners. My understanding is that the majority of this Board does not pay their employees a living wage, yet the Board members enjoy incredible profits from the rigorous tourism industry of our region.

Budgets are moral documents. And the BCTDA's proposal that over \$15 million be used to market for more tourism does not reflect the values of our community or region. Rather than spending over \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, I believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I am asking for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until these revenues can be community controlled.

We no longer need to market our region -- the tourists are coming! As the BCTDA's own financial records demonstrate, tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level. In October 2020, during the pandemic when their advertising was paused, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.

How is the BCTDA using tax dollars for repair, and not to further harm? Tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address a long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities. The BCTDA's tourism marketing has accelerated gentrification and development, and therefore accelerated the displacement of Black people and damage to our natural environment. Taxes must be used to repair this damage through investing in Black residents, Black-owned businesses and Black-led initiatives, not to grow industry profits.

Sincerely,
Keaton Hill
28804

From: W Michael Smith <wmsinavl@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:15 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-
ferrara@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org;
amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>;
parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear Buncombe County TDA,

Your decisions in 2021 hold opportunity for a significant change of direction. Now is the time to invest in forms of reparations that allow our black and brown neighbors to overcome the chronic barriers to

accumulating inter-generational wealth, adequate housing, education for their children on par with what is available to white kids in more prosperous neighborhoods. Many studies have been done to identify barriers to thriving for our black neighbors. So we don't need new information. We need consistent political will. Make your budget choices for this year reflect that intention.

This is also the year to insist that this tax revenue be controlled by and for the public, and not by and for for-profit businesses.

Please do the right thing.

Michael

W Michael Smith
1 Faulkner Avenue
Asheville, NC 28805
828-575-7963

From: Anne Craig <ennagiarc@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:25 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

I am writing to say that I oppose the BCTDA's proposal that \$15 million of occupancy tax income being used to market for more tourism. Our area is beyond its 'carrying capacity' in regards to tourism now. The money should be used in investing in our community, particularly through reparations. We need to be investing in healing and repairing the damage done to generations of Black citizens.

The use of this tax revenue should be controlled by our community rather than the for-profit businesses whose only goal is to increase their profits and not the overall welfare of our community. Getting rich on tourism needs to have some limits.

Sincerely, Anne Craig

--

Anne Craig
828-423-2087
ennagiarc@gmail.com

"I wonder how the foreign policies of the United States would look if we wiped out the national boundaries of the world, at least in our minds, and thought of all children everywhere as our own." — Howard Zinn

From: Marion Danforth <marionmdanforth@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:37 AM
To: Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org; Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>; alfred.whiteside@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear Council,

Investing in a vibrant community, using tourism tax income to contribute to ongoing reparation, creates an environment that draws others to come and visit; builds a just community that reflects a positive experience for visitors. Thank you for looking at building our community as a process of working together for the benefit of all.

Marion Danforth
9 Williams St.
Weaverville NC

From: Vivian Ellner <ellner.v@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:46 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Regarding the proposed budget:

To Whom It May Concern:

Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, many believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations.

- Investing in our Black residents benefits us all. As the majority of occupancy tax dollars are required by state law to go towards “advertising,” a case can be made that investing in community healing and repair through Reparations is advertising.
- Tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address a long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today’s racial inequities.
- Beyond this budget vote, this tax revenue should be community controlled rather than controlled by for-profit businesses with the goal of increasing profits. In its current form, the profits of tourism rely on underpaid labor and create negative environmental impacts.
- Tax-funded tourism marketing isn’t needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level. For example, in October 2020, during the pandemic when their advertising was paused, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.
- The BCTDA’s tourism marketing has accelerated gentrification and development, and therefore accelerated the displacement of Black people and damage to our natural environment. Taxes must be used to repair this damage, not to grow industry profits.

With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen, we call for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Ellner
Weaverville, NC 28787

From: Jason Krekel <jasonkrekel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:00 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

I am writing to demand as a longtime resident of downtown Asheville that all proceeds from ALL tourism taxes be allocated to racial equity and structural change aimed towards addressing systemic racism in our community that is being exacerbated by the status quo of TDA spending.

Jason Krekel

--

jasonkrekel.com
krekprints.com

From: mary berg <marhber@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:13 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

I am vehemently opposed to increasing the budget to promote tourism. This does not help our community. There is far more need to invest in reparations and building community cohesiveness.
Thank you.
Mary Berg

Sent from my iPhone

From: Pamela Culp <130pjc@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 4:06 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue and Tourism Product Development Fund Budget Comment

June 28, 2021

Dear BCTDA Board and County Commissioners,

I am a life long North Carolinian and have lived in Buncombe County for 20 years. This is a beautiful state. The Western North Carolina mountains are a rich diverse precious ecosystem that is showing signs of diminishment. In addition here in Buncombe County many of the families whose heritage makes this region rich have had to move or can hardly afford to live here. We are throwing the baby out with the bath water.

There was a time when continuing to build our tourist business was crucial. However in 2021, an increase in marketing tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable. I am angry at the greed of the BCTDA to ask for 75% of their budget be used for tourism marketing or related expenses. With millions of tax dollars on the table, our community needs to refurbish and enrich all areas of Buncombe County that helped build this community and stewarded these mountain ecosystems.

Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities. Investing in Black residents benefits us all. Tax revenue should be community controlled, rather than controlled by for-profit businesses with goals of profit not community and ecosystem preservation and enrichment. The BCTDA's tourism marketing has accelerated gentrification and development thereby accelerating displacement of Black people and damage to our natural environment. Taxes must be used to repair this damage, not to grow industry profits.

The blemishes of profits, more profits and more profits till we bust is already evident here in Buncombe County. Please listen to the people and help preserve and restore this wondrous county. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dr. Pamela J. Culp, M.D.

From: Sandra Brooks <brooksandra308@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 7:39 PM

To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: TDA

IMHO this machine should be stopped and NOW. Go to downtown Asheville (which people who live here never do) and see if you can stand the throngs on the streets. Next step is honky tonk. You are killing the goose that has been laying golden eggs for us all.

No more funding for advertising!! Do you think there is a soul in the U.S. now who has not heard of Asheville, NC??

--

*Best,
Sandra Brooks
Asheville resident for 14 years*

From: Joe Wilkerson <wilkerson.joseph@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:03 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Cc: County Commissioners and County Manager

Re: FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund

I am a nearly twenty-year resident of Buncombe County. I understand you are bound by statute to spend money earned by the occupancy tax to attract tourists to Asheville. Tourism at current levels already is unsustainable, however, and increasingly contributes to long-standing inequities in our community. I support, at most, a *significant reduction* to the advertising budget, to support only those businesses that contribute public goods to the broader community (e.g. those offering living wages to all employees). *All* further expenditure on advertising for extractive businesses goes against the interests of Buncombe County's residents and accelerates community decay.

Control over moneys raised by the occupancy tax should devolve to County-level managers accountable to the public. If this change is not achieved, I will advocate to repeal the tax. The County agreed to join the City of Asheville in supporting reparations for Black residents who have long experienced the worst consequences as more and more extractive businesses have taken root in our city. Local, elected control of these funds can be one important step toward the County fulfilling its commitment. If we want to "advertise" Buncombe County, prioritize making it into a place where people of all backgrounds can flourish, and let the results speak for themselves.

Sincerely,

Joe Wilkerson
60 Mildred Avenue
Asheville, NC 28806

From: Heather Tate <heather.tate@evergreencs.org>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:20 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA Board members and County Commissioners:

As an Asheville native and engaged community member, I am writing about the BCTDA FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund budgets.

I am upset that over \$20 million of our tax dollars are controlled by for-profit tourism business owners in the current configuration of the BCTDA. My current understanding is that many of the members of this Board do not pay their employees a living wage, yet the Board members enjoy incredible financial benefits from the rigorous tourism industry of our region.

The BCTDA's proposal that over \$15 million be used to market for more tourism does not reflect the values of our community or region, at least not the community I know. I believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I am asking for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until these revenues can be community controlled.

It seems we have a thriving tourist industry and anyone I talk to around the country knows about Asheville. We seem to be at max capacity and as a local, I do not feel like I am able to enjoy the town in the way I wish due to crowded streets, lack of parking, etc. As the BCTDA's own financial records demonstrate, tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point. In October 2020, during the pandemic when there was no advertising, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.

Tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address a long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities. We have the means, now it is time to take action. Taxes must be used to repair this damage through investing in Black residents, Black-owned businesses and Black-led initiatives, not to grow industry profits.

Sincerely,
Heather Tate
28805

--

Heather Tate, NBCT
She/Her/Hers
Kindergarten Lead Teacher
Evergreen Community Charter School
"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." -Nelson Mandela



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From: Karen MacNeil <karenskyli@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:00 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Public Comment on Budget

Hello Explore Asheville,

I would simply like to ask that you do your best to keep the occupancy taxes collected in Buncombe County, in Buncombe County. By this I mean hiring a local advertising agency and other local

professionals and otherwise channeling messaging through them. The millions of dollars sent out of our county every year are benefitting the businesses and communities those people work in, not the residents here. This is one of the main problems our community struggles with in regards to the TDA.

Thank you,
Karen MacNeil

From: phil cheney <logdove@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 9:55 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

No more advertising budget, please! The City has already lost ALL of its charm... Tourists can roll the dice to get the exact same experience anywhere... it isn't weird, it isn't cool and aside from the Mountains around asheville, it could be Anywhere, USA... stop it, please!

:o(

George Philip Cheney IV

Sent from my iPhone

From: Ami Worthen <amiworthen@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 10:06 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Alfred Whitesides <alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; Parker Sloan <parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: BCTDA Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA,

How occupancy tax revenues are spent should be determined by our community, and not by a small board of for-profit businesses. The BCTDA board currently uses tax money to commodify their version of who we are for profit. At the same time, only one member of the BCTDA (Herbiary) is Living Wage Certified. Private companies which do not guarantee living wage jobs with benefits should be precluded from using tax dollars for their own material gain. Our social services networks subsidize these low wages. This is just one of many issues I have with this tourism industry-controlled tax.

Thus, I will continue to call for the Buncombe County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until all of the revenues can go towards the public good, not private profits.

However, since you still exist at this moment, I am submitting a comment on your proposed FY22 budgets. The BCTDA has the opportunity to put the over \$15 million budgeted for marketing into the Reparations fund. This would be a start of a move towards repair of the inequities embedded in and damage caused by the tourism industry. In terms of complying with the state statue, you can simply take the stance that investing in community wellbeing is advertising.

There is no longer a need for the kind of marketing the BCTDA has been engaged in since your inception, as evidenced by record breaking sales last October after promotion was almost completely paused. Buncombe County is on the map, and tourism is already at unsustainable levels.

Our occupancy tax dollars would be better used to heal what is hurt, rather than to continue to cause increasing injury.

Moreover, the pandemic is not over and it is completely irresponsible to be inviting large numbers of people to our home at this time.

Sincerely,

Ami Worthen

From: Geneva Bierce-Wilson <biercewilson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 10:58 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Cut the Check

I would like county tourism tax revenue be allocated to support Reparations now.

Life long resident of Buncombe County,
Geneva Bierce-Wilson

From: TOM BELT <tombelt@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:02 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

I strongly recommend applying a substantial portion of revenues from the occupancy tax to reparations for support of historically disadvantaged black citizens of this area. Tourism has provided little benefit to this population thus far, and in fact has been damaging. If the community can't obtain control of the use of these funds, the occupancy tax should be suspended until this can be accomplished.

Tom Belt

Sent from my iPhone

From: Chris Bainbridge <creativebainbridge@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:11 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Good morning,

My name is Chris Bainbridge and I am writing to request that Buncombe County tourism tax revenue be allocated to support reparations and investing in Black-owned businesses in our area. Our community has begun to receive positive national media attention due to our efforts to right our historic wrongs. The continued press coverage that we would receive by utilizing this revenue in this way would very much align with the state requirements to allocate this money to marketing and advertising. I see it as a win/win. Thank you.

Chris Bainbridge
828-242-2377

From: Tyler Ramsey <tylerramsey01@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:24 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org;

terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget public comment

It is time to stop dumping money into advertising Asheville to attract more tourists- let's invest in our community and gain some sense of who we are as a city rather than sell off what is left of our identity here.

From: Carol Anders <caroldec25@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:24 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Allocation of Tourist Dollars

We need to allocate more of the tourist revenues, to serving the needs of the very people who tourists come to see (the artists, musicians for example) and the people who serve the tourists (hotels, restaurants, etc) ..housing here is outrageously expensive as you know...The Black community is being priced out of housing in their own backyard (Shiloh as an example) ...what if the communities cited above disappear, move away do you think wealthy tourists will enjoy a modicum of services and entertainments for example. Let's increase the percentage allocated to the community for housing, support creatives, and specifically reparations for our Black community.

"My Asheville" that I dearly love (16 years a resident) is disappearing, going downtown - parking an issue, I rarely if ever see anyone I know (peers don't go downtown anymore too crowded, restaurants, and entertainment is too expensive - we don't need "Craft Cocktails" at a bar and grill... Retirees have a limited ability to enjoy now approx half of what they did 5 or six years ago.

Shall I assume the city doesn't want fixed income, educated retirees any more in their midst? And are we now working to make it almost impossible for our hardworking hourly workers both Black & White to enjoy the benefits of home-ownership and just allow them the Privilege of paying approx 50% of their monthly income for rent?

Will tourists come to Asheville a decade from now to "have hotel tours", purchase \$30 T-Shirts, eat at expensive restaurants, pay \$50-80 for tickets to big name regional acts and hire a tour company to drive them by some hiking trails...

A slippery slope to balance...nourish and support our existing folks now or continue to plan to attract the high end luxury seeking tourist. Even BIPOC tourism, which is now being eagerly sought out, will not continue if people do not see people who are culturally like them.

Fostering tourism does not ensure a sustainable growth for our community - young people will leave for high paying jobs, and middle income people will be priced out of the housing market and once again our Black communities will not realize economic equity. --

Thank You for reading
Carol Anders

JOIN ME for the DREAMERS & DOERS Show
AVL fm 103.3 / Stream: www.ashevillefm.org
Thursday @ 9am EST
"The World Needs Dreamers Who are Doers"

From: Jenna McLeod <jenna.marissa@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:43 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment - Jenna McLeod

Most of the revenue for these budgets comes from occupancy tax income. In the current structure of the BCTDA, Buncombe County allows for-profit tourism business owners (the majority being hoteliers who do not pay a living wage to their employees) to control \$20 million of our community's tax dollars. The BCTDA is proposing that \$15 million of their budget be used to market for more tourism. This is the largest BCTDA marketing budget to date. Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, we believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations.

With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, we call for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

We want the BCTDA to know that an increase in marketing to grow tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable. Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities.

Thank you,

Jenna McLeod

Asheville resident

From: Stephen Wilkerson <sywilkers@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:47 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear ExploreAsheville,
I fully support redirecting the current \$15 million of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority intended to market for additional tourism and instead to invest it in our local community in much needed and entirely suitable Reparations.
Thank you for your consideration of my views.
Yours sincerely,
Stephen Y. Wilkerson

From: Kim Hunt <highfivetogether@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:49 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget

Hi, good afternoon. Writing you all with a request for any tax dollars generated by tourism be directed towards a local community allocated reparations fund. \$15 million budget line for advertising our already tourism saturated city would only exacerbate existing problems of gentrification, displacement of workers and residents, and reinforce racial inequities. Asheville doesn't lack tourists, they will continue to come regardless of the advertising. It's not needed and is perpetuating harm. Instead, why not invest in our community, and those most impacted by the development that our city has experienced.

If this is not possible because of existing laws, then the tax should be repealed by the County Commissioners until the community can control the revenue. Our communities and environment have been damaged by the occupancy tax dollars and there is a chance to pivot, and reconsider priorities and determine as a city what and who we really want to invest in. Please choose to invest in caring for our community, it's not in the advertising to tourists but investing in the members of our community that are already here.

Thank you,

Kim Hunt

From: Jay Hill <jayhill+buncombe@jayhill.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:54 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA members,

I am writing to encourage you to revisit your planned expenditures for the upcoming budget.

As a resident of Asheville and Buncombe County, I want you on our side, working to keep Buncombe County hospitable for those who live here. Please advocate with us to push for Raleigh to untie your hands with how you spend occupancy tax dollars, so we can work together to strengthen our communities instead of extracting wealth from them.

With record occupancy already, we don't need a higher-than-ever marketing spend. Take a courageous step and ask for a reduced budget. Ask to right-size the tax, the budget and the marketing spend to maintain a sustainable tourism industry that employs people with a living wage — not one that requires constant growth at the expense of workers and residents.

I know many of you make your living from the tourism industry and I don't expect your livelihoods are in jeopardy if we don't grow the industry further. Is it ever enough? I hope so.

This body exists for the benefit of the people of Buncombe County and if it cannot manage itself toward that end, then we will abolish it.

With hope and encouragement,
Jay Hill

From: Linda <linda@networktype.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:58 AM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>;
alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org;
terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Asheville Rising! Your vote is critical

Hello TDA board members and County Commissioners.

In your meeting tomorrow and in other upcoming deliberations, you will be deciding Asheville's future. As a business owner who moved here in 2017 from Chicago to grow my editorial business, and as a gigging musician in Asheville and a new homeowner in Alexander, I feel I am a good representative of the influx of folks from other states who came to Asheville first as tourists and returned to become part of this wonderful community and join in its success. Seeing Asheville thrive is important to me, and of course, as a musician, I benefit greatly from the tourist trade. In all my comings and goings around town since arriving here, however, I have grown increasingly aware of the unsavory side of the tourist business—the rising housing costs and the forced exodus of lower-income people, especially people of color.

Downtown Asheville always seemed to be a vibrant, fun, safe, and clean area to me at first, filled with smiling faces and eager shoppers. That looks like the face of success, doesn't it? And one of the big things that drew me to Asheville was its friendliness and the feeling that all were welcome and appreciated. But since Covid and then the onslaught of national repercussions regarding the police killings of Black people, Asheville has taken a hard hit. I was very proud when the Reparations Resolution was passed and the Vance Monument taken down, and I remain proud of the steps that are being taken to address our own police procedures and our racist history. If the TDA is required to invest a large portion of its budget on advertising, there can be no brighter message about Asheville than to show the world that we stand behind our commitment to reparations and the lifting up of the Black community that has historically provided the heavy lifting that built the Biltmore Estate, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Grove Park Inn, and downtown Asheville itself in the first place.

I think making a substantial investment of several million dollars to the Reparations Fund to be used by a Reparations Commission made up of Black community leaders in collaboration with City government would be the best advertising Asheville could make to the world of what a beautiful and just community we are. Ensuring the safety and happy times of our visitors is important, and it is also important for us to extend that to visitors of color. Creating a downtown that is stress-free, collegial, multi-racial, and welcoming to all is an important investment we all need to make. Let's send a loud and clear message that we are not just talking about reparations but actively contributing to it. Let's continue the good work we have begun by standing behind our promise of reparations—as individuals, businesses, organizations, and government.

I'm counting on you all to do the right thing. People the world over recognize a community that takes care of its own, and people naturally gravitate toward righteousness. Let's do this.

Thank you,
Linda Wolf
847-650-3476

Network Publishing Partners, Inc.

From: Steve Plever <steveplever@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:02 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Comment on TDA budget vote, tourism, infrastructure, and reparations

Greetings. The last thing Asheville needs is more tourism advertising. We're having room-sale records that promise to be smashed again now that pandemic restrictions are lifted. Downtown is again crowded even as us locals avoid it more and more.

We've hit a point where advertising and bringing in more tourists will actually hurt a sustainable tourism economy as WNC's special qualities are overwhelmed and Asheville becomes known as a tourist trap. The overgrowth of tourism is also warping our economy to the point where workers needed for hospitality businesses can't afford to live here, public transit is insufficient to support workers' needs, and the last thing we need is more people having to drive and park downtown to work in hospitality.

There is dire need for funding of basic infrastructure, including the social and physical infrastructure of justice. One great solution that would be in keeping with state law would be to use funds for reparations instead of advertising, and use free media to publicize this action. Truly affordable workforce housing and assistance to mass transit are also needed and justifiable as supports to the tourism industry.

If those things can't be done with occupancy tax money, then please just stop collecting the tax and petition the legislature to change the rules so it can fund things our region needs.

Other than Biltmore Estate which can afford its own advertising, Asheville has nothing in common with tourist destinations like those of Disney. People come here not to be in an artificial environment with other tourists, but for our landscape, and homegrown culinary, brewery and arts scenes, All of those are endangered by advertising that could put tourism well past a healthy level of quality and sustainability for our city. We have real needs. Please recognize them.

Thank you for considering my thoughts.

Sincerely,
Steve Plever
51 Oakwood St.
Asheville, NC 28806
828.301.3409
steveplever@gmail.com

From: Gene and Christine Callaway <58godisgood@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:19 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; avril.pinder@buncombecounty.org; brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Hello,
As a resident of Buncombe County, I am requesting that County tourism tax revenue be allocated to support Reparations in our County. Tourism in this area, historically built upon the labor of Black people, has increased wealth for white community members and compounded the disadvantages Black folks in our area experience today.

With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, we call for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

We want the BCTDA to know that an increase in marketing to grow tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable. Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Christine and Gene Callaway

20 Twin Hills Drive

Weaverville 28787

From: Bonnie H <BonnieBrite@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:30 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: public comment

To Members of the TDA,

PLEASE heed the needs of those of us who live here and find it increasingly difficult to navigate congested and ill-repaired roads, to visit local businesses and restaurants, to find affordable housing, to even enjoy an uncrowded peaceful drive or hike in the mountains.

It's past time for the TDA to allocate funds to support our residents and businesses! Use these funds to address the homeless population and to work toward a solution for housing costs that have escalated to the point that service workers cannot afford to live here. Address infrastructure and public services. Protect our natural resources before they disappear.

If these issues aren't addressed, visitors will leave Asheville and spread the word about their poor experiences. No amount of money spent on advertising will counter the negative publicity generated by unhappy travelers.

The handwriting is on the wall, the Asheville that you are promoting is fast-disappearing. You have an opportunity to turn the tide. Please use your power wisely.

Thank you,

Bonnie Holstein
Montford homeowner

From: Lori Thomas <lorithomas4@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:58 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget public comment

To whom it may concern:

The idea of spending \$15 million in taxpayer dollars to advertise for tourism is ridiculous and absurd. As a resident of Asheville since 2008, I am very dismayed by the increase in traffic and the number of hotels going up faster than we can count them. This town and the tourism industry was built using enslaved labor, on the backs of uncompensated Black people and is now causing acceleration of gentrification of Black neighborhoods and increasing racial inequities. Our Black neighbors and community members deserve reparations for these harms, and tax monies should be specifically allocated for them to repair and build their neighborhoods.

PLEASE listen to the people of Asheville, don't spend more money on tourism. Pay Black people what they have earned and deserve. The time is now.
Sincerely,
Lori Thomas

From: Sabrina Delk <SDelk@ncobs.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:33 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Please reconsider the use of BCTDA funds to support more advertising. Asheville is full to the brim with tourist with fewer and fewer people to support them. Normal people can no longer afford to live here because of how tourism has affected the cost of living.

The BCTDA has the opportunity to put the over \$15 million budgeted for marketing into the Reparations fund. This would be a start of a move towards repair of the inequities embedded in and damage caused by the tourism industry. In terms of complying with the state statue, you can simply take the stance that investing in community wellbeing is advertising.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sabrina Delk
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North Carolina Outward Bound School

From: Emily Ogburn <emily.ogburn@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:38 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Hello,

I believe that the \$15 million proposed to go toward further marketing of the area for tourism should be redirected to go toward the actual community. There is already an unsustainable level of tourism in Asheville and the surrounding area. Real, fair-wage, sustainable jobs are needed for locals that live in the community. Hotels, most of which do not pay their own employees a living wage, should not get to decide how these tax dollars are used. These tax dollars should, instead, be invested in the local community. An investment in reparations with these tax dollars is the right thing to do with these funds. This industry has done years of harm to the local community and was built using stolen, enslaved labor. Reparations for the Black community is not only the just thing to do but it serves the entire local community and uplifts us all. In this day and age, Asheville has received significant press attention for promising to adopt plans for Reparations. A case could be made that healing our community and repairing some of the harm that has been caused by investing in Reparations is "advertising" for the justice and loveliness of the area (because state law says this money has to go towards "advertising"). If there is no way that this money can be used to actually benefit the local community and it must be used to advertise for tourism then I ask you to repeal the occupancy tax until these taxes can be controlled by the local community. I'm not sure why advertising for tourism in the area is even useful to anyone, at this point it seems like everyone has definitely heard of Asheville and visited at least once already. Continued use of millions of dollars in this way is irresponsible and a waste of much needed funds.

Thank you,
Emily Ogburn

--

Emily Ogburn

emilyogburn@gmail.com

From: Esther Cartwright - AvL <ecartwright@avltech.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:01 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Hello--I would like all proceeds from all tourism taxes to be allocated to racial equity, structural change, and addressing systemic racism across the community. Thanks--

Esther Oliver Cartwright
AvLTECHNOLOGIES
15 North Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28804
Office: 828.210.3522
Cell: 828.505.5005
avltech.com

From: Miranda Poe <mirandarpoe@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:06 PM

To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>; brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; avril.pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

I am writing to reiterate the call made by CoThinkk last year that, "all proceeds from all tourism taxes [be] allocated to racial equity, structural change, and addressing systemic racism across the community." The BCTDA has the opportunity to put the over \$15 million budgeted for marketing into the reparations fund. This would be a start of a move towards repair of the inequities embedded in and damage caused by the tourism industry. Investing in community wellbeing promotes Asheville as a nice place to live and visit. Everyone benefits when everyone has what they need. This is currently very far from the case.

Sincerely,
Miranda Poe

From: Heather Laine Talley <heatherltalley@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:13 PM

To: Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org; Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org
Subject: "Budget Public Comment

Dear Commissioners,

In this moment of rising violence, intensifying gentrification, and fewer and fewer pathways to economic security, any increase in marketing to grow tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable.

I am requesting that County tourism tax revenue be allocated to support Reparations in our County.

Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities.

Sincerely,

Heather Laine Talley

--

Heather Laine Talley

<http://www.heatherlainetalley.com/>

Buy *Saving Face* from a [local bookseller](#).

[Saving Face: Disfigurement and the Politics of Appearance](#)

Editorial Collective, [The Feminist Wire](#)

From: Jeanne Devany Cummings <cummingsjd@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:19 PM

To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>

Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org;

Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>
Subject: comments about BCTDA Budget/NO!

Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, these dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community by paying for roads, affordable housing, emergency services, waste and water and reparations.

This revenue should be community-controlled, rather than controlled by for-profit businesses with the goal of increasing profits. In its current form, the profits of tourism rely on underpaid labor and create negative environmental impacts.

Tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level.

From: Jean Parks <jparks@grandcreative.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:16 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Please direct the vast majority of the proceeds of the occupancy tax to expenditures that will benefit the citizens of Asheville and Buncombe County directly. I can think of roads that need repair, public parks that need enhancement, programs for our most vulnerable people that need investment...

Sincerely,
Dr. Jean Parks
28803

From: Emily Peele <highfive.emily@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:35 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Reallocate the Occupancy Tax for Reparations

Thank you for taking public input on this increasingly vital matter!

I want to add my voice to the many who have named the increasingly extractive nature of tourism in Asheville at the great cost of its residents, especially our Black and brown citizens.

As we saw in 2020 when tourism advertising was largely paused due to the pandemic, hotel revenues continued to break records and garner great sums for the TDA.

We must address the massive inequalities in education, homeownership, wages and well being for Asheville's Black community.

We need persistent and brave representation to challenge the use of the occupancy tax at the state level. Ensuring access to generational wealth for Black Asheville through reparations of land and money is the best use of this occupancy tax for the very survival of our neighborhoods and local residents.

Please repeal and re-evaluate the use of the occupancy tax to stave off the unsustainable pace and outcomes of tourism currently happening in Asheville.

Emily Peele
--
Emily Peele
Brand + Culture Director || High Five Coffee
804.516.5200

From: Macon, Tamarie <tamarie@email.unc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:45 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley

<robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org;
terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; avril.pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA Board and County Commissioners:

My name is Dr. Tamarie Macon and I am a Buncombe County resident. In the current structure of the BCTDA, Buncombe County allows for-profit tourism business owners (the majority being hoteliers who do not pay a living wage to their employees) to control \$20 million of our community's tax dollars. The BCTDA is proposing that \$15 million of their budget be used to market for more tourism. This is the largest BCTDA marketing budget to date. Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, I believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations.

With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I join the Racial Justice Coalition in calling for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

An increase in marketing to grow tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable. Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities.

Some other points to consider:

- Investing in our Black residents benefits us all. As the majority of occupancy tax dollars are required by state law to go towards "advertising," a case can be made that investing in community healing and repair through Reparations is advertising.
- Tax revenue should be community controlled, rather than controlled by for-profit businesses with the goal of increasing profits. In its current form, the profits of tourism rely on underpaid labor and create negative environmental impacts.
- Tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level. For example, in October 2020, during the pandemic when their advertising was paused, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.
- The BCTDA's tourism marketing has accelerated gentrification and development, and therefore accelerated the displacement of Black people and damage to our natural environment. Taxes must be used to repair this damage, not to grow industry profits.

Thank you very much.

Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously. ~Prentis Hemphill

Tamarie Macon, PhD (she/her/hers)
Assistant Professor, Public Health Leadership Program
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
Director of Community Initiatives, MAHEC



125 Hendersonville Road Asheville, NC 28803
Phone: 828.348.3661 / Fax: 828.333.5474
https://sph.unc.edu/adv_profile/tamarie-macon-phd/ / Tamarie@email.unc.edu

From: Justin Reid <jlreid@alumni.unca.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:53 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Justin Reid Budget Public Comment

Dear Explore Asheville,

I am writing today to voice my opinion about today's budget hearing and the use of hotel tax funds for TDA marketing. As COVID-19 has recently shown, a city economy built around tourism is unsustainable, exploitative and dehumanizing for front line workers, and creates Dickensian style socioeconomic inequality where you will see rude wealthy tourists side by side with extreme homelessness and poverty. Not only do I support that \$15 million dollars be earmarked for reparations to Asheville's African American community and that the occupancy tax be repealed, I feel that an organization that is run by hotel owners that also directly manages the tax dollars that are taken from those same hotels is illegitimate. This kind of oligarchic arrangement is something out of a post Soviet right-wing dictatorship, not something that's supposed to be in the USA. Even though this is a city government forum, I urge everyone to support abolishing this corrupt institution that's turning Asheville into an aristocracy that no one other than Hoteliers and wealthy business owners are benefiting from. All tax dollars should belong to the community and point towards true economic democracy and autonomy in the workplace, not towards more gentrification that is killing the community and causes problems such as racist police violence.

Respectfully,

Justin Reid

From: Ellen Sizemore <ellen.sizemore@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:56 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Cc: County Commissioners and County Manager

Re: FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund

I am a nearly ten-year resident of Buncombe County. I understand you are bound by statute to spend money earned by the occupancy tax to attract tourists to Asheville. Tourism at current levels already is unsustainable, however, and increasingly contributes to long-standing inequities in our community. I support, at most, a *significant reduction* to the advertising budget, to support only those businesses that contribute public goods to the broader community (e.g. those offering living wages to all employees). *All* further expenditure on advertising for extractive businesses goes against the interests of Buncombe County's residents and accelerates community decay.

Control over moneys raised by the occupancy tax should devolve to County-level managers accountable to the public. If this change is not achieved, I will advocate to repeal the tax. The County agreed to join the City of Asheville in supporting reparations for Black residents who have long experienced the worst consequences as more and more extractive businesses have taken root in our city. Local, elected control of these funds can be one important step toward the County fulfilling its commitment. If we want to "advertise" Buncombe County, prioritize making it into a place where people of all backgrounds can flourish, and let the results speak for themselves.

Sincerely,

Ellen Sizemore
60 Mildred Avenue
Asheville, NC 28806

From: Rebekah Morrisson <morrisson.rebekah@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Brownie W. Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>;
alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <jasmine.beach-
ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Robert
Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org;
terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Hello,

I am requesting that County tourism tax revenue be allocated to support Reparations in our County. Tourism in this area, historically built upon the labor of Black people, has increased wealth for white community members and compounded the disadvantages Black folks in our area experience today.

Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations. With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I call for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

Tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level. For example, in October 2020, during the pandemic when their advertising was paused, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.

Put those tax dollars into our community!

Rebekah Morrisson

From: Maria Baker <dscsmbhh@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: BCTDA budget

Hello, I would like to comment on the use of the hotel occupancy tax revenue.

I strongly believe that the revenue generated by the county tourism tax should be allocated to support Reparations in Buncombe County. However, it has come to my attention that \$15 million of the BCTDA budget is to be used to market for more tourism. This is unacceptable.

We have more than enough tourist dollars being spent in Asheville nowadays. We do not need additional marketing to bring more people here to visit. In fact, the sheer numbers of tourists detract from the atmosphere of this area.

I think the tax revenue should be controlled and used by the community, rather than by for-profit businesses. It is the purest form of advertising when a progressive city like Asheville invests money for the purpose of community healing and repair through Reparations, instead of towards capitalism.

Sincerely,
Maria Baker
Buncombe County resident

From: Cathy Scott <cathyscott1953@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:25 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear members of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority,

I am writing in support of the idea of utilizing funds that currently go to the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority instead be used, in substantial amount, to support Reparations in Buncombe County.

The logic of doing this lies in the fact that in the early 1960s, members of Asheville's business community, in league with civic leaders, was developing a Civic Redevelopment Project. When that Project met the Federal Urban Renewal program, it was a match made in heaven; a way to develop Asheville's tourism industry by declaring Asheville's Black neighborhoods blighted, removing same and investing in infrastructure and business attractive to tourism.

This is a history worth reviewing, and I hope you each have the opportunity to do that. You will then understand the logic of designating the funds that the tourism industry generates, go to the community which is owed compensation. Not only were homes of Black Ashevilleians destroyed, but so were businesses, institutions, churches, and relationships. Areas that some "officials and leaders" saw as blighted, residents experienced as vibrant and supportive communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this issues and I hope you will see a way forward to bring some resolution to the ongoing effects of our dismal history of racial discrimination in Asheville.

Sincerely,
Cathy Scott
53 Mount Olive Church Road
28804
Buncombe County

Ndiaye, Prsicilla. "Southside/East Riverside: Lost—In the Name of Progress." Crossroads: A Publication of the North Carolina Humanities Council 14, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 2010): 11.

Betsalel, Ken and Harry Harrison. "Re-Storying Community: Lessons from African American Stories of Urban Renewal in Asheville." Crossroads: A Publication of the North Carolina Humanities Council 14, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 2010): 7.

Griffin, Pat. "Stephens-Lee High School & the Stephens-Lee Alumni Association." Crossroads: A Publication of the North Carolina Humanities Council 14, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 2010): 9.

Jeter, Clara and Pat McAfee. "Stumptown: A Dramatic Disruption." Crossroads: A Publication of the North Carolina Humanities Council 14, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 2010): 13. Judson, Sarah M. "The Civil Rights Movement in WNC." Lecture, African Americans in WNC Conference, Asheville, North Carolina, October 24, 2014.

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"The world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love."
~ Rev. William Sloan Coffin

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land

as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”
~ Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

From: Kathryn Crawford <kac6189@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

To whom it may concern,

Upon hearing of the proposed advertising budget, I feel compelled to write this email, asking that the conversation might turn towards reconsidering where this money is going.

I believe there is an immense need for reparations, and that the money would be much more helpful being used to help the lower income residents of our city. I don't believe we need more advertising for tourism, we get a lot already. What has made this city enticing for a lot of people is the eclectic nature of Asheville; imagine how enticing it would be if we invested in those people who have invested in living here, but are struggling to afford to stay here.

That could be our biggest draw: a city that takes care of its residents and the people who need the most help. I hope that we can be that.

Thank you for your time.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sean G <seanmgaskell@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:30 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org; alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org; jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org; amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org; robert.pressly@buncombecounty.org; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org; avril.pinder@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear Buncombe County Commissioners,

My name is Sean Gaskell. I'm a resident of Asheville.

Today, I write to you all with deep concern regarding the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority FY22 Operating, Earned Revenue, and Tourism Product Development Fund budgets.

Tourism in Asheville and Buncombe County has exacerbated the systems of oppression that Black people continue to endure through systemic racism and the resulting residual trauma accumulated over multiple generations dating back to slavery. How about we instead put these tourism dollars towards the Black Ashevilleans and descendants of who have consequently lost homes and businesses resulting from urban renewal in the 60s-70s and present day gentrification that have been perpetuated by white folks like myself? As a seven year resident of Asheville, I recently learned that since the 1960s, 1000+ Black homeowners have been forced out/priced out of their homes due to urban renewal of the 60s and 70s, as well as the multitude of businesses that populated the Southside during that period, prior to white gentrification and rebranding of "South Slope".

These inadequacies are not unique to Asheville and Buncombe County. This is a prime example of how white privilege and white capital is utilized, consciously and subconsciously, to uphold systems of oppression throughout the country and the world.

It is time to turn the page. Investment in reparations will be a positive step forward. A specific dollar amount to mend the results of systemic racism is incalculable considering the pain, loss and trauma that black folks have endured. That said, reparations is a step we must take.

Most of the revenue for these budgets of concern comes from occupancy tax income. In the current structure of the BCTDA, Buncombe County allows for-profit tourism business owners (the majority being hoteliers who do not pay a living wage to their employees) to control \$20 million of our community's tax dollars. The BCTDA is proposing that \$15 million of their budget be used to market for more tourism. This is the largest BCTDA marketing budget to date. Rather than spending \$15 million to market our community as a commodity, I believe that these tax dollars would be better spent directly investing in our community through Reparations.

With millions of tax dollars on the table, what our community needs is for that money to go to direct financial investment through Reparations. If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I call for the County Commissioners to repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

I would like the BCTDA to know that an increase in marketing to grow tourism beyond its already-unsustainable levels is unacceptable. Any tax dollars generated by tourism should be used to address the long history of harm done by this industry, which was built using enslaved labor; played a significant role in urban renewal and gentrification; and is exacerbating today's racial inequities.

Some other points to consider:

- Investing in our Black residents benefits us all. As the majority of occupancy tax dollars are required by state law to go towards "advertising," a case can be made that investing in community healing and repair through Reparations is advertising.
- Tax revenue should be community controlled, rather than controlled by for-profit businesses with the goal of increasing profits. In its current form, the profits of tourism rely on underpaid labor and create negative environmental impacts.
- Tax-funded tourism marketing isn't needed at this point and will instead continue increasing the amount of tourism past what is already an unsustainable level. For example, in October 2020, during the pandemic when their advertising was paused, the BCTDA reported \$53 million in room sales, a 6% increase over October 2019. It was an all-time record.
- The BCTDA's tourism marketing has accelerated gentrification and development, and therefore accelerated the displacement of Black people and damage to our natural environment. Taxes must be used to repair this damage, not to grow industry profits.

Please take this to heart. Through compassion, empathy and action, we can be a better serving and more inclusive community for those who live here.

Thank you.

Sean

From: Miranda Norlin <mirandanorlin@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:31 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Cc: Al Whitesides <alfred.whitesides@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <amanda.edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Avril Pinder <Avril.Pinder@buncombecounty.org>; Brownie Newman <brownie.newman@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach Ferrara <jasmine.beach-ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Robert Pressley <robert.pressley@buncombecounty.org>; parker.sloan@buncombecounty.org; terri.wells@buncombecounty.org
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Dear BCTDA and County Commissioners,

I fully support the Racial Justice Coalition's call to spend money that comes from taxes on tourism to actually benefit the people living in Buncombe County rather than to benefit for-profit hotels and corporations by using that money for advertising.

We DO NOT NEED more people to come to Asheville. The word is out. It'd been out for years. The fact that the number of people coming to Asheville DURING A PANDEMIC, when advertising had been put on hold, INCREASED, is abundant evidence that that advertising is not necessary.

And yet unsurprisingly, when tax funds are given into the control of private, for-profit parties, rather than into the control of the community, that money will always be spent to make more money with no regard for the harm that profit is built on.

The funds currently assigned to marketing should instead go directly towards reparations and a process that is controlled by Black people in Buncombe County. Hotels and the tourism industry have accelerated gentrification, and therefore directly contributed to harm to the Black community in Asheville for which reparations are necessary.

If this can't happen because of state restrictions, or the Board's reluctance to redirect its funds, I ask that the County Commissioners repeal the occupancy tax until those revenues can be community controlled.

Thanks for your time,
Miranda Norlin

From: BeLoved Asheville <belovedasheville@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:49 PM
To: Reply @ Explore Asheville <Reply@exploreasheville.com>
Subject: Budget Public Comment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the BCTDA public budget.

We call on the BCTDA, as a member of our Asheville and Buncombe County community with deep responsibility for the well being of our community, to support community health and vitality through reparations for our African American community, to supporting workers and working families, and for caring for the most vulnerable in our community through policies that end poverty, increase affordable housing and create equity and opportunity for all in our community. This must be tied specifically to resources via the BCTDA budget.

*Ponkho Bermejo, Carmen Ramos-Kennedy, Adrienne Sigmon & Amy Cantrell
BeLoved Asheville Team*



Home, health, and opportunity for all in our community!

www.belovedasheville.com

828-571-0766