



Explore **ASHEVILLE**  
Convention & Visitors Bureau

# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

August 2022

# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS OVERVIEW

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) has charted a new course for tourism aligned with broader community priorities. This includes the adoption of [strategic imperatives](#) (outlined below) that are informing and guiding the direction of Explore Asheville's program of work and community investments going forward.

The [Monthly Highlights](#) report, released at the BCTDA Board meetings, provides a brief update of our progress toward these strategic imperatives. You can also find information from the discussions and presentations at [Buncombe County TDA meetings](#), in our [newsletters](#), at [partner events](#), and via other communication channels.



## Deliver Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth

Balance resident and visitor needs, recognizing the necessary role that sustainable, long-term growth of travel has in achieving a healthy, collective economy.

Focus on the quality of each visit to our community – balancing growth across the seasons, business and leisure travel, and throughout Asheville and Buncombe County.



## Encourage Safe & Responsible Travel

Engage residents and visitors with shared values to care for and respect natural, cultural and human resources vital in delivering quality guest experiences.

Collaborate with community organizations, local businesses and environmentally focused partners to support the sustainability and growth of our outdoor economy.



## Engage & Invite More Diverse Audiences

Extend a genuine invitation to Black travelers and other diverse audiences including LGBTQ visitors – connecting them with local neighborhoods, businesses and entrepreneurs – creating more opportunities for all to win.

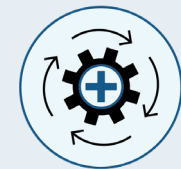
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



## Promote & Support Asheville's Creative Spirit

Share stories of creators and makers who help differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences and more.

Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



## Run a Healthy & Effective Organization

Invest in people, policies and practices to serve our community with integrity within the organization's legislative requirements.

# DELIVER BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## Balance quality of life for residents & experience for visitors through project investments

- Buncombe County Projects: [Greenlighted \\$6.64 million in additional TPDF funding](#) for Enka Recreation Destination and Woodfin Greenway & Blueway
- Festivals & Cultural Events: Held virtual info session and opened the [Festivals & Cultural Events Grant Cycle](#) on August 29 with applications being accepted through September 27
- Wayfinding Discussions: Conducted workshops with several districts on topic of dispersal that will inform future changes and improvements to pedestrian and vehicular signage

## Protect and evolve Asheville's brand to further differentiate from competing destinations and inspire higher quality visits

- Family Fun: Focused on family fun in [Top 10 parks & playgrounds](#) and [Family-Friendly Fall Guide](#) blogs
- Geofencing Campaign: Pushed creative spirit and responsible travel messages to music festival goers through a geofence campaign during Martha's Vineyard Beach Road Weekend (August 25-27)

## Improve quality of each visit by inspiring increased length of stay & dispersal

- Neighborhood Campaign: Published [new microsite for West Asheville](#) along with [promotional video](#) and new photo assets
- Site Visit: Created Black Mountain itinerary for Cele and Lynn Seldon of Atlanta Journal Constitution
- Earned Media Coverage:
  - The Points Guy: [The 8 best places to travel in September](#)
  - Cardinal & Pine: [Each of These 20 Indie Bookstores In North Carolina Has a Story to Tell](#)

## Accelerate proactive sales efforts to increase net new business to the destination

- 48-Hour FAM: Hosted largest ever FAM with 20 meeting planners August 23-26 and showcased all that Asheville has to offer for potential events
- Connect Marketplace: Conducted 30 one-on-one appointments with qualified meeting planners during [Connect Marketplace](#) (August 8-10)
- Incentive Video: Appealed to incentive trip planners through [video collaboration](#) with Northstar Meetings Group
  - Featured Interviews: Martha Howard of Biltmore, Lynn Grabey of Accents on Asheville, Craig Cupit of The Omni Grove Park Inn, Larry Crosby of The Foundry Hotel and Gar Ragland of Citizen Vinyl

## Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth & alignment

- National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH): Circulated NAEH survey to partners in collaboration with Asheville Chamber

# ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

## **Influence visitors to respect, protect and preserve natural, cultural and human resources**

- Responsible Hiking: Incorporated responsible travel messaging into [hiking features](#); directed people to [less-traveled trails](#) and [Hiking Trail Finder tool](#) with social media posts
- Eco-Friendly Inspiration: Shared [Top 10 Eco-Friendly Ways to Spend Fall in Asheville](#)
- Farm-Fresh Feature: Celebrated National Farmers Market Week by [spotlighting the area's tailgate markets](#)
- Sustainable Fall Travel Pitch: Distributed seasonal pitch to national media featuring sustainable and fulfilling experiences to connect with the natural world and the local community through local partners, including places to stay like Wrong Way River Cabins, back-to-the-land offerings and beyond farm-to-table dining
- Earned Media Coverage:
  - Travel + Leisure: [This North Carolina Mountain Destination Is Getting a Brand-new Campground With 16 Gorgeous A-frame Cabins](#)
  - US News Travel: [15 Top Hikes in Asheville, North Carolina](#)

# ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

## Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- Burton Street: Worked with Ricky Tejada to amplify Burton Street's history in [Past & Present: The Story of Burton Street in West Asheville](#)
- Girlfriends Getaway Guide: Published Shayla Martin's [Ultimate Guide to a Girlfriends Getaway in Asheville](#)
- Site Visit: Supported Katie Chang, Forbes journalist, who visited Asheville and plans upcoming coverage focused on untold stories, BIPOC and minority-owned businesses, including Wrong Way River Cabins, the West Asheville neighborhood including Neng Jr.'s and Leo's House of Thirst, etc.

## Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- LGBT Meeting Planners Association (LGBT MPA): Engaged with LGBT MPA during [networking event at Connect Marketplace](#)
- Soroptimist Site Visit: Met the organizer of the regional meeting of [Soroptimist](#), a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment

# PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

## Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Event Sponsorships: Sponsored and supported several events in August
  - Chow Chow (August 4-7)
  - 95<sup>th</sup> Mountain Dance Folk Festival (August 4-6)
  - Sourwood Festival (August 13-14)
  - Downtown After 5 (August 19)
  - LEAF Down by the River (August 20)
  - 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Come to Leicester Artists Studio Tour (August 20-21)
  - Asheville Symphony in the Park (August 28)
- F&B Accolades: Published "Asheville's Food & Beverage Scene Scores Big in 2022" [blog](#) to highlight recent food and beverage accolades, including James Beard Awards, Yelp & Esquire
- Fall Festivals & Events: Published new [Fall Festivals & Events Guide](#)
- Garden & Gun Event: East Fork, Explore Asheville and Garden & Gun hosted a dinner at Ginny's Supper Club in Harlem, featuring food by Ashleigh Shanti, music and spirits from Asheville
  - Media Connections: Along with 67 guests in attendance, Explore Asheville marketing team connected with media including Amy Virshup of the New York Times and Anne Banas of BBC Travel, as well as Caroline Bologne of the Huffington Post prior to the event
- Earned Media Coverage:
  - The Zoe Report: [Looking For An Easy Wellness Getaway? Try Asheville, North Carolina](#)
  - Forbes: [7 Places To Travel To This Autumn](#)

## Actively promote creative community and resources to groups and events

- [American Society of Association Executives \(ASAE\)](#): Attended tradeshow in Nashville and met with over 320 attendees interested in Asheville as a meetings destination
  - Local Flare: Replicated Gus Cutty's mural of Lionel Ritchie (on side of Orange Peel) [in backdrop for ASAE booth](#), served mocktails using Devil's Foot sodas and offered local Asheville products; partnered with Renaissance Downtown and McKibbon Properties

## Create opportunities for partners to learn about and support creative spirit

- Visitor Guide Distribution: Received and fulfilled 2,595 individual requests and 32 out-of-market orders, totaling 68 cases, or 3,400 visitor guides
- Partner Listings: Created 6 new free partner listings on ExploreAsheville.com and updated 38 listings
  - New Partner Outreach: Sent emails to 10 businesses
- Event Calendar: Posted 368 events to our online calendar
- Package & Deals: Added 5 packages and deals

# RUN A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

## Increase team performance and effectiveness

- New Hire: Welcomed Anne Mullins as VP of Destination Development & Community Engagement; she started August 22

## Prioritize individual professional development, trainings and team benefits

- United Way: Volunteered service hours with United Way of Buncombe County

## Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement

- Partner Opportunities: Outlined [opportunities for partners to collaborate](#) with the Explore Asheville Sales Team
- BCTDA Offsite Meeting: Held the August 31 BCTDA Board meeting in the community at Center for Craft, a beneficiary of TPDF funding, and had 15 in-person attendees in addition to board members and Explore Asheville staff

## Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement (continued)

- Local News & BCTDA/Explore Asheville Coverage:
  - US Open: On August 2, Explore Asheville was announced as the official tourism partner for the US Open in 2022.
    - WLOS: [Explore Asheville Signs on as Tourism Partner of the US Open](#)
    - Mountain Xpress: [Explore Asheville becomes official tourism partner of the 2022 US Open tennis tournament](#)
    - Initial announcement was also picked up by news aggregators including [MSN](#), [Asheville News Online](#) and [Barometer](#)
    - Citizen Times: [UPDATE: Asheville US Open official tourism sponsor; will cost \\$1.3M in tax dollars](#)
    - WLOS: [\\$1.3 million paid for Asheville advertisements during 2022 U.S. Open tournament](#)
    - News also posted on CVB website, partner Facebook and LinkedIn pages.
  - Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund:
    - Mountain Xpress: [Applications for Buncombe TDA grant funding for 2023 events open Aug. 29](#)
  - General:
    - WLOS: [Asheville tourism industry reports softening as once-booming hotels see fewer bookings](#)