



Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

February 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.

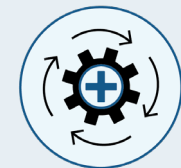
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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 & Efficient Organization

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

DELIVER BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

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

- Organic Spa Magazine: As part of our content partnership, developed a 4-page advertorial for the March/April Wellness Travel Guide that highlights the area's thriving wellness culture, dispersal and sustainability; more than 25 partners are featured
- [River Arts District Business Association \(RADBA\)](#): Attended RADBA meeting on Feb.22; connected with 17 community members and RAD leaders

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

- Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Updates:
 - TPDF Committee Appointments: BCTDA voted to appoint four new members.
 - TPDF Projects: Presented annual updates for all active projects to the BCTDA; the BCTDA assigned two project amendment requests for the Enka Recreation Destination and the Asheville Community Theatre to the TPDF Committee for assessment
- Sponsorship: Quarterly sponsorship request deadline was Feb. 15, and two sponsorships were approved:
 - [Get In Gear Fest](#): Outdoor Gear Builders of Western North Carolina event on April 22 - 24 at Camp Rockmont in Black Mountain
 - [90th Annual Asheville Open Tennis Championships](#): Asheville Tennis Association event on July 5 - 10 & July 22 - 24 at Aston Park

Review and update Wayfinding pedestrian signage to increase dispersal out of the downtown core

- Pedestrian Signage Audit: Hosted kick-off meeting with [MERJE design](#)

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

- Visitor Profiles: Updated visitor profiles based on Experian data analysis and modeling

Drive revenue in need periods through updated group sales strategy

- Double Incentive Offer: Sent e-blast to 7,000+ meeting planners to promote the double incentive offer launched in January
 - Results: Two RFPs instantly received for 435 and 525 room nights

Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth & alignment

- Tourism Study: Completed Resident Perspectives on Tourism Study

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

- Sports Express: Conducted 25 one-on-one appointments with sports organizers at the trade show in Tucson, AZ
- Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Domestic Showcase: Partnered with Biltmore and took appointments with 36 tour operators at the trade show in Virginia Beach, VA
- Society for Incentive Travel Executives Southeast (SITE SE): Attended the Annual Kickoff event in Atlanta, GA
- Monocle Magazine: Direct mail to 792 new prospects of the "Asheville On the Rise" publication and information about the Double Incentive offer

ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- Earned Media Coverage:
 - HGTV.com: [10+ Great Things to Do in Asheville, North Carolina](#) guide, an update to a previous story including Biltmore sustainability legacy, highlighted places to eat, stay and enjoy the natural beauty of Asheville
- Soon-to-Launch Content Partnerships:
 - Outside Magazine: “Asheville is for Green Adventurers” custom content piece launching in March issue with complementary digital components
 - AFAR: Finalized first full-page print advertorial as part of our sponsorship of the Ethical Traveler column to debut in the March/April “Earth” issue

Sponsor and attend outdoor industry events promoting unique outdoor assets

- Wilderness Education Association: Sponsored, exhibited, and spoke at [International Conference on Leadership](#) Feb. 9-11 in Black Mountain

Communicate safety information related to COVID-19 for partner use

- [COVID Resource Page](#): Page on AshevilleCVB.com continues to be updated with removal of mask mandate and COVID relief opportunities

ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- Black History Month Content Campaign: Launched a video series celebrating four Black leaders in the Asheville community as part of Black History Month; individuals included [Matthew Bacoate](#), [Black Wall Street AVL](#) (J Hackett & Bruce Waller), [Andrea Clark](#) and [Dr. Oralene Simmons](#)
 - Distribution: Content was shared via Explore Asheville Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels, as well as featured in Asheville Traveler E-newsletter and Explore Asheville local stakeholder E-newsletter
- [BIPOC Stories Press Kit](#): Developed a press sheet to further amplify the voices of BIPOC people in our community; pitches include The Block, Black Wall Street AVL, BIPOC chefs, 7 Clans Brewing, historical trails and more
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - Country Magazine: "The Art of Resilience" highlighted The Block, Hood Huggers, Noir Collective, YMI, Peace Garden and Triangle Park
 - AFAR: [Why the Block Is Asheville's Must-Visit Neighborhood](#)
 - Passports & Grub: [The Perfect Three-Day Weekend in Asheville](#).

Develop and invest in community projects that attract and engage diverse audiences

- African American Heritage Trail (AAHT): Hosted a project orientation with [AAHT Advisory Committee](#); developed plan for gathering input on story topics, themes and perspectives
 - Press release: [Local Residents Join Advisory Committee for Asheville's African American Heritage Trail](#)

Increase diversity of partner network

- Community Engagement: Sponsored Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's [Business of Farming Conference](#); participated in the "Cultivating Community" and "Cultivating Diverse, Welcoming, and Inclusive Market Spaces" workshops
- Sankofa Market: Met with Nnweyna Smith, founder of the Sankofa Market, a pop-up market featuring Black-owned vendors
- Upcoming Partner Events:
 - ["Everyone Welcome" LGBTQ+ Diversity Training](#): Extended invites to inclusive hospitality training led by [HospitableMe](#) for March 30 at Wortham Center for the Performing Arts
 - [Tourism Summit](#): Confirmed for May 18 at The Omni Grove Park Inn with Stewart Colovin as keynote on Asheville storytelling and Evita Robinson from Nomadness presenting "Black Travelers Diversity Training"

PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Southeastern Wildlife Exposition (SEWE): Launched geofencing campaign with a creative spirit and outdoors message to reach attendees of SEWE Feb. 17-20 in Charleston, SC; post-event retargeting will also be activated

Increase partner appreciation and usage of Explore Asheville's assets and resources to further amplify Asheville's distinctive creative spirit

- New Partners: Three new partners were added to ExploreAsheville.com: [Montford Moppets](#), [Peace Market Gardens](#), and [Ronda W. Cassada Basketry](#)

RUN A HEALTHY & EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

Communicate regularly to stakeholders about TDA/CVB actions, pillars and progress, events

- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [8 sent in February](#), including two special alerts on the Hospitality Outlook; a total of 11,225 emails were delivered with open rates as high as 56% and an average of 46%
- Local News and BCTDA Coverage:
 - Asheville Citizen Times: [The future of Asheville's Memorial Stadium: Can tourism and community needs coexist?](#) included coverage related to TPDF
 - WLOS: ['Nobody wants the Tourists to leave': Required upgrades to McCormick Field need funding](#) included coverage related to TPDF
 - Greensboro News & Record: [NC culture center celebrating 129 years with \\$5M renovations](#), an article on YMI, included coverage related to TPDF
 - Asheville Downtown Association's newsletter included content from the [February CVB Newsletter](#) sent on Feb. 8 on Explore Asheville's focus on Black History Month; this was subsequently picked up by Asheville.com
 - The Laurel of Asheville: Provided support and connections for this profile story [Oralene Simmons Reflects on the Integration of Mars Hill College](#), which was also picked up by Asheville News Online
 - AVL Today: [Knowledge is Power](#) mentioned Explore Asheville in a roundup of community information resources
- BCTDA Board Meeting: Media Advisory resulted in announcements in Mountain Xpress and AVL Today and meeting attendance from Asheville Citizen Times, WLOS-TV, Blue Ridge Public Radio, Sunshine Request, and Ashvegas

Improve budget planning process

- BCTDA Finance Committee: Organized initial meeting for early March to discuss and establish FY23 revenue objective recommendation
- Pillar Alignment: To prioritize integrating the strategic pillars into the FY23 budget planning process, each of the five pillar workgroups met to strategize ideas and initiatives in advance of the March departmental budget retreats