



Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

January 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.

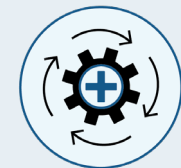
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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.

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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

- Winter Wellness Campaign: Featured nearly 30 winter packages or deals from area partners in [“Winter Refresh” campaign](#)
 - Promotion: Elements include mixture of paid and organic social, website pop-ups and email campaigns
- [National Plan for Vacation Day](#): Celebrated Jan. 25 by encouraging travelers to plan their vacation to Asheville and sign up to receive a free Visitor Guide
 - Promotion: Deployed creative across email, ExploreAsheville.com, and social, including paid Facebook lead generation campaign
 - Results: Generated nearly 2,400 Visitor Guide requests (paid & organic)
- Atlas Obscura Partnership: Launched [Off The Beaten Path](#) itinerary and [River Arts District pin drop video](#) with Atlas Obscura and are being promoted through their social channels; they also promoted the [Biltmore Hidden Passages video](#) that performed extraordinarily well in our last campaign
- Fairview Microsite Page: Published [Fairview microsite webpage](#) on ExploreAsheville.com along with [promotional video](#)
- Interactive Map: Published [interactive map](#) on ExploreAsheville.com homepage and [Neighborhoods/Towns landing page](#) to further support dispersal and assist with visitor orientation
- Staff FAM: Toured West Asheville on Jan. 28 and met with owners/managers of the [WNC Farmers Market](#), [Engadine Cabins & Inn](#), [Haywood Common](#), [Melona](#), [Garden Party](#), [Bagatelle](#), [Flora](#), and [Jargon](#) to increase staff awareness of area and partners

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

- International Media Marketplace (IMM): Attended TravMedia’s IMM in NYC; conducted 30+ multi-pillar pitch appointments with top travel journalists, editors and influencers
 - Pitches: Winter wellness, new tours and places to stay, Black Mountain College, evolving districts featuring RAD and Black Wall Street, BIPOC chefs and entrepreneurs, Cherokee culture connections, Olmstead’s 200th and a newly created BIPOC storylines press sheet
- Most Loved Destinations Accolade: Asheville was #30 on Tourism Sentiment Index’s list of [The 100 Most Loved Destinations Around the World for 2021](#)

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

- American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace: Held 50 appointments with tour operators across North America at the trade show in Grapevine, TX
- Financial & Insurance Conference Professionals (FICP): Attended the Winter Symposium in New York
- North Carolina Sports Association: Attended virtual membership meeting
- South Carolina Society of Association Executives (SCSAE): Represented by six hotel partners at the trade show in Columbia, SC
- Wedding Festivals: Exhibited at the trade show in Asheville with 400+ brides

Drive revenue in need periods through updated group sales strategy

- [Incentive Program](#): Revised program to incentivize smaller group meetings (50-99 contracted rooms) and added a limited-time bonus offer with doubled incentive amounts for mid-week and January – March group business

ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- Pledge for the Wild (PFTW): Received coverage by The Laurel of Asheville of Asheville for being the first city in the eastern US to join PFTW coalition in [Explore Asheville Joins Pledge for the Wild Coalition](#) and [Editor's Letter](#)
- [Best Roadside Waterfalls Near Asheville](#): Published Instagram Reel produced by local content creator Nathaniel Flowers focused on winter roadside waterfalls and responsible recreation
 - Results: Generated over 116K views, 8,188 likes and 188 comments
- Sustainable Storylines: Issued a [call for sustainability news](#) from partners; submissions will be included in spring media pitches

ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

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

- [James Vester Miller Trail](#): Published a digital version of Andrea Clark's walking trail that spotlights nine buildings crafted by her grandfather, James Vester Miller, a master brickmason; printed brochures are available at the YMI Cultural Center and Asheville Chamber.
- African American Heritage Trail (AAHT): Established 18-person Advisory Committee to guide trail's development includes representation from Asheville's African American Heritage Commission, Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Asheville and Buncombe County, Black Wall Street AVL, and YMI Cultural Center.
 - AAHT Advisory Committee Members: Shana Adams, Matthew Bacoate, Andrea Clarke, Claude Coleman, Jr., Katie Cornell, Clifford W Cotton II, Tiffany DeBellott, Debra Flack-Weaver, Joseph Fox, Traci Freeze, Aaron Griffin Sr, J Hackett, Demetra Harris, Dewana Little, Georgia M Shannon, Tarah Singh, Anne Chesky Smith, and Sarah Williams

Increase diversity of partner network

- Database Diversity Stats: Began collecting and documenting diversity stats in Simpleview database; added new categories and encouraged partners to update listings to self-identify as BIPOC-owned, women-owned, or LGBTQ+-owned (if applicable)

PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- National Beer Can Appreciation Day: Launched [Instagram Story series](#) to highlight seven local artists who design packaging for area breweries
- [RAD Artists Spotlights](#): Incorporated profiles widget on River Arts District (RAD) neighborhood webpage to showcase talent and drive studio visits
- Garden & Gun Partnership: December 2021/January 2022 print edition included a double-page spread "Tale of Two Artists", which featured Asheville chef Rankin Gaines of Capella on 9 and woodworker Anneliese Gormley of Spoon + Hook and highlights their recommendations

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

- Partner Updates: A new partner was added to ExploreAsheville.com - [Foothills Food Truck at Hi-Wire Biltmore Village](#)
- ["Get Group Ready" Partner Salon](#): 83 tourism community partners attended the virtual event on Jan. 19 to learn strategies for attracting group business and tips on how to optimize offerings for groups; panelists included Nicole Will, Asheville Wellness Tours; Melissa Murray, Mosaix Group; Kyle Samples, LaZoom Tours

Tale of Two Artists

A HOMEOWNER CHEF AND A WOODWORKING TRANSPLANT CHOOSE ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA AS THE BACKDROP FOR THEIR CREATIVITY.

In Asheville, artistry can be found everywhere in the vibrant creative community, and, of course, but also in the striking culinary scene, surrounding scenic beauty, walkable districts, and welcoming neighbors. The city has a magnetic pull, attracting scores of visual artists, budding performers, craft brewers, and more each year. For those who were born here, however, it's a confirmation that the city is a worthy place to nurture creative dreams. Chef Rankin Gaines, born in the Midwest, moved to Asheville to be a family care coordinator. He found a job at the local brewery, but he wanted to do more. He found his first job at the local brewery, but he wanted to do more. He found his first job at the local brewery, but he wanted to do more.

Capella boasts a Spanish tapas-style menu, but when it comes to craft, the gratification is in the ingredients. "The dishes are made with local, seasonal ingredients," Gaines says. "It's not just about the food, it's about the experience. It's about the people you're eating with." Gaines is a chef at Capella, a restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina. He is a chef at Capella, a restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina. He is a chef at Capella, a restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina.

Anneliese Gormley is a woodworker at Spoon + Hook, a workshop in Asheville, North Carolina. She is a woodworker at Spoon + Hook, a workshop in Asheville, North Carolina. She is a woodworker at Spoon + Hook, a workshop in Asheville, North Carolina.

Partnership with Explore Asheville

An Artist's View of Asheville

Quick Bites

Dinner

Drinks

Shopping

Life Made

Outdoors



RUN A HEALTHY & EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

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

- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [6 sent in January](#) (total of 10,420 emails) with open rates as high as 53% and an average of 44%
- Media Coverage:
 - Spectrum 1 News: [Asheville's tourism rebounded in 2021, along with growth of new residents](#)
 - Asheville Citizen Times: [Hotel sales, vacation rentals continue to boom in Buncombe County](#). Story also picked up by AVL Today and Asheville News Online and promoted in social media
 - WLOS-TV: [2 years after start of pandemic, Asheville hotels are booming, new data shows](#) Story also used in daily newsletter. Similar story on WYFF-TV/Greenville (link not available)
 - Business North Carolina Daily Digest: [Buncombe hotel, lodging continue to soar](#)
- ADA Policies: Processed public records request regarding Explore Asheville's policies and procedures related to Americans with Disabilities Act

Improve employee wellness

- Wellness Team: Formed a 6-member cross-departmental wellness team
 - Objective: Support the overall wellness of our team members by offering collective encouragement and opportunities to improve work-life balance, physical health, and mental health.
 - Monthly Focus: Different wellness focuses are planned for each month for the rest of FY22; January's fitness challenge resulted in 18 staff members logging in 10 or more 30-minute workouts between Jan. 8-31