

Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

May 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 with more details [here](#)) 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.

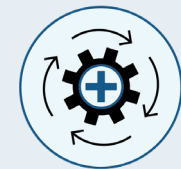
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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 & 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

- Tourism Product Development Fund: Hosted grant cycle [information session](#) on May 4 and 59 attended; ran public awareness campaign throughout May
 - Local Media Coverage: AVL Today mentioned on [May 2](#) and on [May 4](#)
- Sponsorships: Received four requests for quarterly deadline of May 15; granted funding to the following:
 - [Chow Chow](#): Asheville Culinary Festival series on June 23-26, August 4-7 and September 8-11
 - [Symphony in the Park](#): Asheville Symphony's public concert on August 28
 - [3rd Annual Record Fair](#): 103.3 Asheville FM's event on September 10

Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth & alignment

- Workforce Development: Launched video campaign as part of National Travel & Tourism Week to promote and celebrate the diverse jobs in tourism; premiered [compilation video](#) to attendees at Tourism Summit on May 18
 - Future of Travel Spotlights: [WNC Nature Center](#), [Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins](#), [Darrell Cassell Photography](#) and [Nest Boutique](#)

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

- Dispersal: Collaborated with local creator Rachel Pressley on [Instagram Reel](#) highlighting Fairview area, [Turgua Brewing](#) and [Bearwallow Mountain](#)
- Peter Greenberg: Supported "The Travel Detective" on future features:
 - Hidden Gems: Filmed at 13 local businesses for national TV show, Peter Greenberg's [Hidden Gems](#), that will air in January/February 2023
 - Eye on Travel: Interviewed three partners for [Eye on Travel](#) radio show

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

- Smart Meetings: Published custom advertorial in [May issue](#) (digital publication) and launched digital drivers
- [AdventureELEVATE](#): Attended two-day educational and networking conference by the Adventure Travel Trade Association in Eugene, OR
- [Prevue Inspired Events Summit](#): Attended summit in West Palm Beach, FL; conducted 25 one-on-one appointments
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI): Attended the [MPI – Carolinas Chapter Annual Meeting](#) in Cherokee, NC
- South Carolina Society of Association Executives (SCSAE): Attended [2022 Annual Conference](#) in Beaufort, SC
- Northstar Travel Group: Completed a 3.5-day destination video shoot with Northstar crew to co-produce two videos for the meeting planner audience featuring group activities, event venues and meeting hotels

Drive revenue in need periods through updated group sales strategy

- Third Party Incentive: Launched \$500 gift card incentive for third-party partners that close a piece of business of 50+ room nights or more between May 20 and June 30

ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- Outside: Developed [Find your Perfect Asheville Adventure Itinerary](#) quiz and promoted via social; received spotlight in Backpacker e-newsletter
- Nativo: Launched custom sustainability content “How to Recreate Responsibly in Asheville, North Carolina”
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - Seattle Times: [An eco-conscious family road trip through the Great Smoky Mountains](#)
 - Lonely Planet: [Best places to visit in North Carolina](#)

Encourage partners to embrace sustainable and responsible tourism practices

- [Sustainable Hotels Course](#): Alerted 179 lodging partners about Global Sustainable Travel Council training opportunity; 56% opened the email

Identify, qualify and engage purpose-driven companies for purposes of holding meetings here

- B Corp Relationships: Held follow-up meetings with two B Corp company connections made through [Outdoor Economy Conference](#) in April

Communicate safety information related to COVID-19 for partner use

- COVID Relief: Sent alerts on Business Recovery Grant Fund to partners on [May 2](#) (delivered: 1,826; open rate: 54%) and [May 26](#) (delivered: 1,832; open rate: 47%)

ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- [Tourism Summit 2022](#): Hosted The Future of Travel event, which included Foundations of Storytelling keynote by Stewart Colovin, MMGY Global Brand Strategy, and Black Travelers Diversity Training by NOMADNESS + Tourism RESET; 221 industry partners attended on May 18
 - Survey: Collected community feedback in advance via survey (promoted [May 3](#) and [May 6](#)); shared aggregate data during summit to guide session
 - Resources: [NOMADNESS/Tourism RESET toolkit](#)
- Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month: Celebrated by spotlighting AAPI-owned restaurants in an [Instagram Reel](#) collaboration with local content creator Erin McGrady of Authentic Asheville and Chef J Chong
- Nativo: Promoted historic [James Vester Miller Trail](#) in custom diversity article
- [Pride](#): Launched LGBTQ+ focused display banners on pride.com
- [HERapp](#): Launched community posts with custom content featuring 10+ LGBTQ Friendly Spaces in Asheville and A Romantic Week in the Asheville Area, direct message unit, interstitial and native units
- [Black Southern Belle](#): Launched custom content, native display unit and sidebar ads
- Earned Media Coverage
 - Eater Carolinas: [Chef Ashleigh Shanti Pops Up Across North Carolina Before Good Hot Fish Opens This Fall](#)

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

- [African American Heritage Trail \(AAHT\)](#): Gathered feedback on story topics, themes and perspectives at AAHT Advisory Committee meeting on May 5
- [GRINDfest](#): Supported Black Wall Street AVL's 4-day festival celebrating Black business and entrepreneurship with sponsorship and promotion

Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- [PFLAG](#): Met with the PFLAG National to discuss a possible event for the Asheville area; met with the new president of the [Asheville chapter](#)
- [Connect Sports](#): Attended three-day trade show in Puerto Rico and conducted 30 one-on-ones; joined LGBTQ+ Sports Summit and reception

PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- [The Story of Art in America](#): Produced video for Amazon Prime TV series on May 5-6; featured artists Alex Bernstein, Steven Forbes-deSoule, Jenny Pickens and Brian Boggs
- eTarget: Deployed email focused on the River Arts District, live music, food culture and the South Slope Mural Trail
- Nativo: Launched "Local Artists Shine on Asheville's South Slope Mural Trail" custom content
- Sake Festival: Published [Instagram Reel](#) featuring Ben's Tune-up and the [American Craft Sake Festival](#) as part of AVL Beer Week promotion; amplified attendance of Japanese Consul General Kazuyuki Takeuchi
- [Mother's Day Ideas](#): Showcased several ways to celebrate moms from pure relaxation to mountain adventure
- [Summer Guide](#): Curated list of seasonal things to do, places to eat, outdoor activities, concerts and other entertainment; [highlighted area's top festivals](#)
- [Downtown After 5](#): Supported Asheville Downtown Association's summer concert series with sponsorship and promotion

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

- New Partners: Added 10 new accounts to ExploreAsheville.com [Asheville Jeep Tours](#), [Asheville Plein Air Art Experience](#), [Buggy Pops](#), [Cedar Rock Adventures](#), [Comfort and Wellness Massage](#), [Getaway River Bar](#), [Handmade on Haywood](#), [Julieta Fumberg Creative](#), [Recline & Unwind Social Spa](#) and [Rite of Passage](#)

RUN A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

Increase team performance and effectiveness

- Simpleview Sessions: Conducted comprehensive CRM/CMS trainings to ensure all staff members are well equipped to utilize the software

Prioritize individual professional development, trainings and team benefits

- Monthly Wellness Initiatives:
 - Chamber Challenge: Eight team members participated in the 5k on May 6
 - Stretch Breaks: Offered five guided sessions to staff in the month of May
- Volunteer Time Off (VTO) Ideas: Kris Dionne, Associate Director of Donor Engagement & Business Partnerships, shared an overview of the United Way's programs and volunteer opportunities at the May all-team meeting

Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement

- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [8 sent in May](#); delivered a total of 12,307 with open rates as high as 56% and an average of 47%
- Local News & BCTDA/Explore Asheville coverage:
 - Accolades: Notified of the following:
 - Business NC: Vic Isley, as well as several other partners, listed on [2022 Power List](#) among North Carolina's most influential leaders
 - New World Report: Explore Asheville recognized with a [NC Business Award](#), winning the Excellence Award in Community Business Development 2022
 - [Trazee Travel](#): Asheville is #1 Favorite Foodie City for 5th straight year

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

- Local News & BCTDA/Explore Asheville coverage (continued):
 - Occupancy Tax mentions:
 - Asheville Citizen Times: [After Buncombe's hotel tax budget balloons, commissioners call for reformed legislation](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: [Commissioners approve \\$4.9M for pre-K expansion, affordable housing](#)
 - WLOS: [Hotel tax revenue allocations could soon change in Buncombe Co. as leaders push for reform](#)
 - Tourism Product Development Fund mentions:
 - WLOS: [City leaders seek up to \\$7.8M in tourism grants to fund big projects around Asheville](#); article picked up by [MSN](#), Asheville News Online, [Reddit](#) and social media
 - Citizen Times: [Asheville's Muni golf course, greenways, WNC nature center might see \\$7.8M in TDA funding](#); article picked up by WNC Business Today, Wopopular.com and social media; [Mountain Xpress](#) (similar coverage)
 - Citizen Times: [Memorial Day weekend kicks off summer tourism season, longer wait at Asheville restaurants](#)