



Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

September 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.

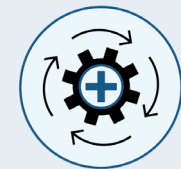
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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

- Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF): Continued TPDF Committee's Phase II review with 14 project presentations on September 29-30
- Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund: Received 21 grant applications for the September 27 deadline

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

- [Fall Itineraries](#): Curated seasonal trip ideas for Asheville's neighborhoods and nearby towns, including West Asheville, Downtown, River Arts District, Biltmore Village, Black Mountain, Fairview and Weaverville
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - FamiliesLoveTravel.com: Asheville got recommended for family visits between late September and mid-October to see the leaves at their peak in the list of [23 Best Places To See Fall Colors In The US For Families](#)
 - Forbes: [10 Reasons To Plan A Trip To Asheville, North Carolina, This Fall](#) amplified tips shared in the [Fall 2022 What's New + Travel Tips](#) release

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

- US Open: Worked with the United States Tennis Association (USTA) to become the [official tourism partner for the 2022 US Open](#)

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

- Destination Southeast: Conducted 30 one-on-ones at a tradeshow with more than 300 meeting planners in Daytona, FL, on September 12; sponsored a lunch with a presentation and provided local art and gifts to planners
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - Meetings Today: [The Latest Developments and Renovations in Key North Carolina Cities \(2022\)](#) mentioned anticipated hotel openings, local lodging partners and popular tour operators and venues

ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- Fall Content: Kicked off leaf-peeping season with support from area experts
 - Fall Color Forecast: Featured Dr. Neufeld, "Fall Color Guy" and professor of plant eco-physiology, in the fall color forecast [press release](#); distributed to media and received 99% delivery and 55% open rate in initial 48 hours
 - Fall Color Hunters: Introduced six area photographers/content creators, [Reggie Tidwell](#), [Jared Kay](#), [Luke Sutton](#), [Leslie Restivo](#), [Kat Dellinger](#) and [Rachel Pressley](#), who will help capture the foliage and share insights

Identify, qualify and engage purpose-driven companies to hold meetings here

- Environmental Events: Toured [The Collider's meeting space](#) and plan to leverage relationship with CASE Consultants International to recruit climate and environmental events to our area and to support ongoing programming

Encourage partners to embrace sustainable and responsible tourism practices

- B-Corp Training: Sales Managers attended a webinar put on by B-Corp companies delving into how corporations can reduce their carbon footprint

ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- NOMADNESS Fest: Attended [NOMADNESS Fest](#) on September 9-11 in Newark, NJ, to meet with BIPOC influencers, writers and content creators; many connections made were with influencers who have more than 50K Instagram followers
 - Connections: [Colby Holiday](#), [Shakeemah Smith](#), [Vanessa Karel](#), [Gaby Beckford](#), [Cameron Lee](#), [Martinque Lewis](#), [Francesca Murray](#), [Phil Calvert](#), [Sergio Rosario Diaz](#) and [Victoria Walker](#)
- Site Visits: Curated itineraries for diverse influencers and writers
 - Alysse Dalessandro ([@readytostare](#)): Visited September 7-11, promoted several partners on [Instagram Stories](#) and plans to post a blog
 - [Freelancer Joey Skaldany](#): Visited in mid-September and secured upcoming coverage in Thrillist, Sleep.com and TODAY.com
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - Vacationer: [What's New This Fall in Asheville?](#) article featured LGBTQ+ storylines; Vacationer has a reach of 420,000 LGBTQ+ travelers around the world each month

Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- NC College Campus Tour: Met with representatives from Visit NC, Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham and Winston-Salem who are interested in collaborating to produce a College Campus Tour itinerary

PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Event Grants and Sponsorships: Supported several events in September
 - [YMI Goombay Festival](#): September 2-4
 - [Chow Chow | Festival Weekend #3](#): September 8-11
 - [AMOS Under the Stars](#): September 15
 - [Asheville Downtown After 5](#): September 16
 - [ASAP Farm Tour](#): September 17-18
 - [Blue Ridge Pride Festival](#): September 24
 - [Asheville Quilt Show](#): September 30-October 2
 - [AIGA Asheville Design Weekend](#): September 30-October 2
- Food and Beverage Features: Hosted editors from Southern Living, The Local Palate, and Atlanta Journal Constitution in partnership with Chow Chow during the third festival weekend and anticipate coverage
- Arts & Culture Cooperative: Convened museum, cultural venue and institution leaders to learn about existing challenges, to exchange details about current programming and to explore opportunities for collaboration

Create opportunities for partners to learn about and support creative spirit

- BCTDA Annual Meeting: Hosted more than 200 partners at DoubleTree-Biltmore on September 22; the program included a President & CEO report, a keynote by Professor Wendy Smith on Both/And leadership, a storytelling foundation update from Stewart Colovin of MMGY Global and the William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award Ceremony
 - William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award: Honored the late [Wilma Dykeman](#) with the [William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award](#)
 - Reception Entertainment: Featured spins from [DJ Mad Mike](#), advice from [The Booth Fairy](#), a build-your-own-bouquet activity with [Never Ending Flower Farm](#) and a book signing with [keynote Wendy Smith](#)
 - Local Coverage:
 - Mountain Xpress: [Wilma Dykeman honored with William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award by Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: [TDA discusses tourism 'paradox' at annual meeting](#)

RUN A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

Demonstrate organizational commitment to local, diverse creators, makers & vendors

- Visitor Guide Distribution: Received and fulfilled 1,633 individual requests and 22 out-of-market orders, totaling 184 cases, or 9,200 guides; 21 local partners ordered 55 cases of visitor guides, or 2,750 guides
- ExploreAsheville.com
 - Partner Listings: Created 7 new free partner listings and updated 20 listings
 - New Partner Outreach: Sent emails to 32 businesses
 - Event Calendar: Posted 344 events to our online calendar
 - Package & Deals: Added 7 packages and deals
- Black Mountain Staff Familiarization: Explored businesses in Black Mountain and learned about a variety of programs offered to groups, visitors and locals

Increase team performance and effectiveness

- New Hires: Welcomed five new employees to the team in September: Penelope Whitman, Destination Development Manager; Tiffany Thacker, Director of Grants; Shawn Boone, Senior Sales Manager; Emily Crosby, Group Services Manager; and Joshua Runkles, Office Assistant

Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement

- President & CEO Presentations: Addressed groups, including Asheville Independent Restaurants Member Owners, UNCA Leadership Asheville Seniors and Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce, about visitor contributions to the local economy

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

- Local News & BCTDA/Explore Asheville Coverage
 - General
 - Citizen Times: [Hundreds more hotel rooms on the horizon. Is there development slowdown or stoppage soon?](#)
 - WLOS: [Declining tourism rates spark concerns among some leaders, business owners in Asheville](#)
 - Citizen Times: [Boyle column: Yep, the TDA will continue spending millions on advertising](#)
 - Tourism Product Development Fund
 - Mountain Xpress: [Green in brief: Woodfin Greenway & Blueway gets \\$5.9M TDA boost](#)
 - Citizen Times: [TDA invests \\$5.9M more in Woodfin 'Wave' project, \\$750k in Enka Rec Park](#)
 - Citizen Times: [Woodfin's Riverside Park, Whitewater Wave project fully funded, 90% designed](#)
 - US Open Sponsorship
 - Citizen Times: [TDA expenses at U.S. Open included \\$70K on catering, koozies, décor](#)
 - Asheville Watchdog: [Luxury Suites, Perks for Local V.I.P.s in \\$1.3 Million US Open Deal](#)