

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

MAY 2023

EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY

Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

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.



Delivering 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.



Encouraging 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.



Engaging & Inviting 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.

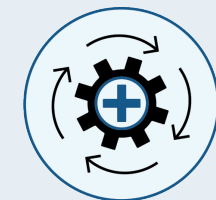
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



Promoting & Supporting 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.



Running a Healthy & Effective Organization

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



DELIVERING BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

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

- **Tourism Product Development Fund:** Closed Phase I applications on May 17; received 10 applications for committee to review that requested a combined total of \$18 million
- **Event Grants and Sponsorships:** Supported the following events through funding and cross-promotion
 - **2023 Distinguished Citizen Dinner Honoring Oscar Wong:** Daniel Boone Council Boy Scouts of America 8th annual event on May 3
 - **Get in Gear Fest:** Outdoor Gear Builders event on May 6
 - **Bloom with a View:** The North Carolina Arboretum Society event May 1-14
 - **Asheville Amadeus Festival 2023:** Asheville Symphony event May 11-20
 - **A Sonic Diaspora: Music of Life:** Music of Life: Asheville Choral Society event on May 20
 - **GRINDFest AVL:** Black Wall Street AVL event on May 26-28
 - **Pritchard Park Summer Series:** Asheville Downtown Association event series occurring weeknights May 30 through August 8
 - **Art in Bloom:** Black Mountain Center for the Arts 17th annual event

Protecting and evolving Asheville's brand to further differentiate from competing destinations

- **Press Coverage:** Earned the following media mentions in May
 - **New York Times:** [36 Hours in Asheville, N.C.: Things to Do and See](#) (result of Shayla Martin's 2022 visit and ongoing efforts to finalize the story)
 - **Smart Meetings:** [New Heights for Meetings and Incentives](#)
 - **World Bride:** [Getting Hitched In North Carolina](#) (result of Cari Wira Dineen's March visit)

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

- **AdventureELEVATE:** Attended Adventure Travel Trade Association's event in Portland, ME, and [announced that Asheville will be hosting this event June 10 - 14, 2024](#); next year's event has 350 people scheduled for attendance, including 30-40 media, and will include regionally-focused content and adventure opportunities, keynote speakers, educational panels, and media connections for the adventure travel community
- **HelmsBriscoe:** Attended the Annual Business Conference in Denver, CO, with 750 associates and held non-scheduled one-on-one appointments
- **IPW Tradeshow:** Attended U.S. Travel Association's International Pow Wow (IPW) in San Antonio, TX, and met with international tour operators, media, and marketing professionals from 60 different countries (5,000+ attended); conducted 42 scheduled appointments and joined educational workshops and networking events
- **Northstar Incentives Live:** Attended in St. Petersburg, FL, and conducted 20 one-on-one appointments with planners; more than 85 incentive planners attended the 3-day event, which included industry speakers, networking receptions, meals, and activities



ENCOURAGING SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- **Influencer Visits:** Hosted and provided itineraries for content creation and social sharing
 - **Chris Burkard:** Hosted photographer and outdoor enthusiast for marketing photo capture and social sharing to his 3.9M+ followers; Asheville's natural beauty and outdoor adventures were highlighted on Instagram in real time (sample [here](#))
- **Media Visits:** Hosted and provided itineraries for journalists to secure future coverage
 - **Jason Frye, Matador, The Points Guy, Our State:** Hosted reporter during Get in Gear Fest to cover Asheville's outdoor industry, including a bike riding excursion
- **Press Coverage:** Earned the following media mentions in May
 - **MSN:** [Where Are the Best Asheville Hiking Trails?](#) (result from Scott McConkey's March visit)
 - **Cardinal & Pine:** [21 Enchanting North Carolina Botanical Gardens to Put on Your Must-Visit List](#)
 - **La Noticia:** [Biltmore Blooms: el espectáculo floral más impresionante de Asheville](#)



ENGAGING & INVITING MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extending a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- **Affrilachian Gathering:** Co-hosted event on May 20 in Atlanta, GA, for 60 BIPOC travelers with NOMADNESS Travel Tribe; featured a coursed dinner and Q&A by James Beard Award finalist and chef Ashleigh Shanti
 - Social sharing reached a potential 683K audience (sample [post](#))
- **Essence Magazine:** Partnered on an advertorial [Plan your Mid-Week Trip to Asheville](#) that highlights places to stay, dine, and explore
- **Influencer Visits:** Hosted and provided itineraries for content creation and social sharing
 - **Asheville Beer Week and GRINDFest:** Hosted BIPOC content creators—Ale Sharpton ([@realalesharpton](#)), Black Beer Travelers ([@blackbeertravelers](#)), and Craft Beer Chris ([@thecraftbeerconnoisseur](#))—to promote Asheville Beer Week and GRINDFest
- **Press Coverage:** Earned the following media mentions in May
 - **Passport:** [Find Your Place In The Welcoming LGBTQ+ Community Of Asheville, NC](#)
 - **Black Bride:** [Escape to These Romantic Wedding Destinations – Your Happily Ever After Starts Here](#) (result of Candice David's April visit)
- **Spanish-speaking Traveler Content Initiative:** Began production of a Latinx brand video geared towards welcoming Spanish-speaking travelers to Asheville

Promoting minority owned businesses | Increasing diversity of partner network

- **Diversity Designations:** Updated business tags so that partners can now self-identify as Asian Pacific, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ+, Native American, Subcontinent Asian, Veteran and Woman-owned via their Extranet account; website listings can be filtered by the criteria



PROMOTING & SUPPORTING ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevating Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- **Asheville Beer Week:** Published and maintained the Asheville Beer Week microsite and cross-promoted events
- **Press Coverage:** Earned the following media mentions in May
 - **The Washington Post:** [The latest hot food destination is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains](#)
 - **Veranda:** [These Are the 12 Best Spa Resorts in the U.S.](#)
 - **Parade:** [20+ Must-See Destinations for Book Lovers To Transport You to a Whole Different World](#)
 - **MSN:** [Kickstart Your Day With These Top Asheville Coffee Shops](#) (result of Scott McConkey's March visit)
 - **Cardinal & Pine:** [16 NC Trails That Take You To Something Awesome](#)
 - **NW Georgia Living:** [Wanderlust – Asheville, North Carolina](#)
 - **North Virginia Magazine:** (result of Erica Moody's February visit)
 - [In Asheville, Find Outdoor Adventures, Great Art, and Craft Breweries](#)
 - [Taste the Tang of North Carolina Barbecue](#)
 - **Travel Lemming:**
 - [50 Best Things to Do in the USA This Summer \(2023\)](#)
 - [18 Best Breweries in Asheville in 2023 \(By a Local\)](#)

Actively promoting creative community and resources to groups and events

- **Co-Branded Gifts :** Added two new sustainable co-branded gifts to our group servicing inventory: [Eagle's Nest Outfitters \(ENO\)](#) Earth Bags (reusable tote) and [Pirani](#) Tumblers

Creating opportunities for partners to learn about and support creative spirit

- **New Partner Spotlights:** Highlighted recently added partners in monthly e-newsletter to expose partners to other tourism-related businesses in our community, May's features included [Asheville Outdoor Experiences](#), [Banjoe Vacations](#), [Board & Brush Creative Studio Asheville](#), [City Brew Tours Asheville](#), [Damn Good Beer Bus](#), [Dogwood Cottage Bakery](#), [KidCycle Club](#), [Leche Photography](#), [Narayani Gaia- Energy Healing](#), [Serenity Sound Healing of Asheville](#), [The Flat Iron Hotel](#), [The RailYard Blk Mtn](#), [The Times Bar and Coffee Shop](#), [The Whale::A Craft Beer Collective](#), [The Whale Outpost](#)



RUNNING A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

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

- **Biltmore Village FAM trip:** Met with Oby Morgan from Biltmore Village Business Association at Well-Bred Bakery, met with owners and participated in a race at the Track, toured the Grand Bohemian, toured historic Biltmore Village, spoke with employees/owners at Andaz, Provisions Mercantile, and Finch
- **Visitor Guide Distribution:** Received and fulfilled 2,283 individual requests and 25 out-of-market orders, totaling 54 cases, or 2,700 guides; 27 local partners ordered 184 cases of visitor guides, or 9,200 guides
- **ExploreAsheville.com**
 - **New Partner Outreach:** Sent emails to 30 businesses
 - **Partner Meetings:** 7 in-person partner sessions/site visits
 - **Partner Listings:** Created 11 new free partner listings and updated 72 partner listings
 - **Partner One-on-Ones:** Held 9 partner support meetings
 - **Event Calendar:** 438 events created or reviewed and approved to our online calendar
 - **Package & Deals:** Added 5 package and deals

Focusing on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement

- **Explore Asheville Open House:** Hosted 113 guests at the Explore Asheville office for an open house, providing a chance for partners to meet with staff, mingle, and network; showcased music from Connor Law and Taylor Pierson, tarot readings from Asheville Wellness Tours, poems by Ryan Ashley, catering from Sage & Spice, beverages from Metro Wines, and craft cocktails made by Chemist Spirits (see [event photos](#) by Ricky Tejeda and Jessica Montanez)

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

- **E-Newsletters, E-Alerts:** Engaged partners through one press release, one partner alert, and two newsletters; partner communications in May resulted in a 2% increase in click rate
- **Local News & BCTDA / Explore Asheville Coverage:**
 - **General:**
 - Mountain Xpress: [Keep Asheville weird: businesses try to maintain uniqueness amid city's rapid growth](#)
 - AVL Watchdog: [Down Town, Part 9: An old idea—the Business Improvement District—gets new life](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: [Explore Asheville wins bid to host 2024 Adventure Travel Trade Association conference](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: [BCTDA seeks to waive part of penalty for bed and breakfast's missing taxes](#)
 - **Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission**
 - Citizen Times: [Asheville council discuss homelessness count, Craven St. bridge garbage, sports commission](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: [Council to hear update on TDA takeover of Sports Commission](#)
 - AVL Watchdog: [Opinion: TDA's move to absorb Sports Commission sure looks like a power grab](#)
 - **Sponsorships, Festivals & Cultural Events**
 - WLOS: [AVLFest resurrects Asheville's music festival scene](#)
 - The Cherokee One Feather: [Asheville Symphony to hold educational concert at Harrah's Cherokee Center](#)

