

Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

June 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.

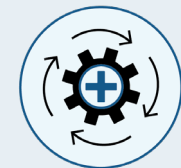
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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

Drive revenue in need periods through updated group sales strategy

- Roomnights Goal Achieved: Exceeded the goal of 65,000 contracted room nights for FY21-22 representing more than \$72 million in direct spending
- Third-Party Incentive: Contracted seven meetings as a result of the promotion that offered a \$500 gift card to third-party partners that closed a piece of business of 50+ room nights between May 20 and June 30

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

- [Professional Convention Management Association \(PCMA\) EduCon](#): Attended conference featuring more than 500 event professionals in New Orleans, LA; participated in educational sessions including DEI & sustainability conversation starters
- [ConferenceDirect Annual Partner Meeting](#): Attended meeting in San Francisco, CA; had appointments with ConferenceDirect associates and networked at various events
- [Smart Meetings Mid-Atlantic](#): Attended two-day regional experience in Washington, DC, and met with 12 meeting planners
- [Meeting Professionals International \(MPI\) World Education Congress](#): Attended in San Francisco, CA

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

- Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Grant Cycle: Committee reviewed 23 Phase 1 submissions and notified applicants of their request status on June 29

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

- AVL to BOS: Executed JetBlue Boston Inaugural Flight FAM influencer engagements with TV host and content creator [Derek Zagami](#) and lifestyle personality [Dominic L'Heureux](#)
- Scenic Imagery: Conducted video and photo shoot with agency for shots containing mountains and vistas; scenes included Craggy Gardens, Graybeard Overlook, Never Ending Flower Farm, Addison Farms Vineyard, Looking Glass Creamery, mountain biking, fly fishing and kayaking
- Asheville Ideas Fest (AIF): Provided the event promotional support, including paid social ads for The New Yorker and Garden & Gun; deployed event-specific email via Bitter Southerner to their audience
 - Local AIF Coverage:
 - UNCA Press Release: [Asheville Ideas Fest Celebrates the Closing of its Inaugural 2022 Event](#)
 - The Laurel of Asheville: [Inaugural Asheville Ideas Fest Happens June 14-18](#)
 - Citizen Times "Answer Man" Column: [Is Asheville Ideas Fest 'exceedingly peculiar'?](#)
 - Explore Asheville also recognized in a full-page AIF thank you ad in the Sunday Asheville Citizen Times on June 26

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

- Farm Heritage Trail: Published [new blog](#) on the Farm Heritage Trail in coordination with Buncombe County Soil & Water Department

ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- The Food Principle: Hosted pre-production visit for Jim Kane of The Food Principle, a new PBS travel docuseries focused on conservation, connection and community
- Nature Photography Day: Created new [Instagram Reel](#) for National Nature Photography Day featuring photo tips from Show & Tale Creative, WNC Photo Tours, Asheville Photo Tours; included Leave No Trace messaging
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - RV Trader: [10 Best Mountain Towns for Summer Camping](#)

Increase the number of bookings that participate in community projects

- Service Project Outreach Success: Booked first service project as a result of outreach completed earlier this year; Professional Engineers of North Carolina agreed to be photographed and filmed for CSR marketing materials while conducting group service stream clean-up project with Asheville Greenworks

ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- [Black Travel Expo](#): Attended the 2022 expo in Atlanta alongside more than 2,500 travelers and thought leaders
- [Appalachian Pride Brunch](#): Networked during event celebrating LGBTQ+ Americans in the South, featuring conversations on identity and equality
- [Midwest Husbands](#): Provided David Harris of Midwest Husbands with welcome bag highlighting local artisans
- LGBTQ+: Created [a new blog](#) highlighting local Pride Month happenings
- Hola Carolina: Sponsored event through the Festivals & Cultural Events fund

Increase diversity of partner network

- [Black Wall Street AVL](#): Provided keynote on Explore Asheville's strategy and positioning, including supporting the BIPOC businesses, owners and networks in attendance

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

- African American Heritage Trail (AAHT): Continued AAHT Advisory Committee feedback sessions focused on story topics, themes, and perspectives that may become part of the trail

Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- LGBT Meeting Professionals Association: Attended a networking event at Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) EduCon

PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Ready Set Jet Set: Hosted Haley Sanger of [@ReadySetJetSet](#) (136K Instagram followers) to showcase 20 local makers and spaces through a curated 6-day itinerary and welcome amenities as part of paid influencer partnership
- Wellness Writer: Hosted freelancer Natalia Lusinski for a wellness-focused experience
- River Arts District: Launched three new ["Meet the Artists" profiles](#) for Andrea Kulish, Nadine Charlsen and Silver River Chairs on the RAD landing page
- Fathom: Profiled [Chef Ashleigh Shanti](#) in custom Food Tales article
- Chemist Spirits: Amplified selection of Chemist Spirits as official gin of 2022 Daytime Emmy Awards through social media, web content and a commercial that aired on CBS during the show and was followed by CTV retargeting ads
- Earned Media Coverage:
 - Chicago Journal & Topics: [A Stately Estate: Vanderbilt's Biltmore – 'America's Largest Home' – Magnificent At Every Turn.](#)

Actively promote creative community and resources to groups and events

- Northstar Brand Shoot: Featured partners from Asheville Wellness Tours, Citizen Vinyl, Asheville Coffee Tours, and Twisty Maple/Luxury Pop-up Picnic in Northstar Sales branding shoot
- Group Marketing Assets: Video footage was captured at Gordon Foods Winners Circle Trip to support an upcoming Northstar Media Group video project promoting Asheville to incentive planners. Footage of the welcome dinner at The Omni Grove Park Inn, group tours of many artists' studios in River Arts District and the downtown dine-around were captured. The Gordon Foods meeting planner will also be interviewed by Northstar to support the incentive video

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

- New Partners: Added 12 new accounts to ExploreAsheville.com: [AVL Music](#), [History Walking Tour](#), [Citron Gallery](#), [Edible Asheville Farm Tours](#), [Eileen's, Eldr](#), [Hoppy Trees Beer and Spritz Bar](#), [Hyatt Place Asheville Airport](#), [James Vester Miller Historic Walking Trail](#), [Mikasa AVL](#), [Modelface Comedy & Events](#), [Sam's Pop Shop](#), and [Urban Exhale Massage Spa](#).

RUN A HEALTHY & EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

- **Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement**
- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [6 sent in June](#); delivered a total of 7,719 with open rates as high as 79% and an average of 52%
- Local News & BCTDA/Explore Asheville coverage:
 - Asheville Citizen Times: [Buncombe TDA passes \\$30.6M operating budget, awaits state tweak to distribution formula](#) – Cover story resulting from BCTDA meeting also picked up by Business North Carolina's Daily Digest, WNC Business Today, and iHeart Radio
 - Media Advisory for BCTDA meeting resulted in coverage in Mountain Xpress, AVL Today, Asheville Online News and attendance by Asheville Citizen Times and Sunshine Request
 - Citizen Times: [Bill to change local tourism distribution formula entered in Raleigh](#) – also picked up by Business NC Daily Digest, Yahoo News, AVL Today, WNC Business Today and a variety of other outlets including OurCommunityNow.com, SloMoMotorSports.com, NewsNow.co.uk, as well as on social media
 - WLOS: [Bill filed to change hotel occupancy tax allocations in Buncombe County](#) – also picked up by Asheville News Online and posted on NewsBreak.com, [Reddit](#), and social media
 - Smoky Mountain News: [Buncombe TDA bill would bolster community spending](#)

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

- [AVL Today](#): Explore Asheville Summer Social mentioned in roundup of local summer events
- Business Wire: [JetBlue Begins Summer Seasonal Service to Asheville from Boston](#) (Isley quoted)
- Citizen Times: [What to know about WNC Nature Center](#) mentioned TPDF as potential funding source
- Buncombe County Commissioners: [Annual BCTDA report](#) presented at the June 21 meeting. [Recording of presentation](#) (0:56:35 - 1:06:30)
 - County Press Release: [Commissioners Issue Gun Violence Awareness Proclamation, Get TDA & Economic Coalition Updates, & More](#)
 - Mountain Xpress: Coverage of presentation found within [this story](#)
- Mountain Xpress: [Mountain BizWorks' Catalyst Cohort program champions entrepreneurs of color](#) – Cover story featured partner Neomi Negrón of Buggy Pops, who mentioned learning of the services of Explore Asheville via this program

Prioritize individual professional development, trainings and team benefits

- Wellness: Encouraging staff to finish FY22 on a healthy note, the wellness team hosted a Lunch & Learn with holistic counselor Sally Ekaireb