



Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Convention & Visitors Bureau

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

November - December 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.



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.

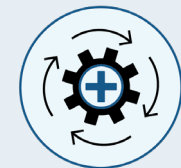
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



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

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

- Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF): Celebrated [YMI Cultural Center groundbreaking](#) on November 17 and [North Carolina Glass Center – Black Mountain location groundbreaking](#) ceremony on December 1
- Events Grants and Sponsorships: Supported the following events in November and December through funding and cross-promotion
 - [North Carolina Arboretum Winter Lights](#): November 18 - December 31
 - [Asheville Downtown Association Holiday Parade](#): November 19
 - [Lake Julian Festival of Lights](#): December 2 – December 23

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

- [Hidden Gems of Asheville](#): Continued partnership with Peter Greenberg who shared Asheville to 48K+ [social media](#) followers and 33K+ [YouTube](#) subscribers; a long-form video is expected to air on PBS in spring 2023
- Asheville Championship: Sponsored basketball tournament on November 11 and November 13 at Harrah's Cherokee Center; aired a commercial on ESPN and hosted [sports influencer Tate Frazier](#) on a tour between games
- Industry Recognition: Explore Asheville earned the following accolades:
 - [Award of Excellence](#): Honored by Corporate & Incentive Travel magazine as a CVB that offers superior service and support
 - Prevue Meetings: Named one of the [Best U.S. Destinations for Meetings & Conventions](#) (under 500,000 population)
 - Smart Meetings: Received [Platinum Choice Award](#) as top venue and destination partner, as nominated and voted on by meeting professionals

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

- “What’s New in 2023”: Developed and distributed [press release](#) and [blog](#) on upcoming and impactful openings in Asheville; sent release to over 400 top-tier travel media and distributed via [PR Newswire](#)
- Thrillist Social Takeover and Giveaway: Highlighted Asheville businesses to Thrillist’s Instagram audience of over 865K followers; featured content from reporter [Joey Skladany’s visit](#) and the [in-feed trip giveaway](#) was the outlet’s most successful to date with almost 500 comment entries
- Media Coverage: Earned features in the following articles:
 - *New York Post*: [Art, nature and tropical sun: Try out these alternative winter holiday trips](#)
 - KTLA: Broadcast segment on *Travel +Leisure* article [50 Best Places to Travel in 2023](#)
 - *The Points Guy*: [The 17 best honeymoon destinations in the US](#)
 - *The Zoe Report*: [The Most Buzz-Worthy Hotel Openings For 2023](#)

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

- Weaverville Campaign: Published new [promotional video](#) and [microsite](#) for the Town of Weaverville and distributed via e-newsletter and social media

DELIVERING BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH (CONTINUED)

Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth & alignment

- West and South Hotel Partners Meeting: Convened 17 sales directors and general managers from West and South Buncombe County at the Holiday Inn Biltmore West; received updates from NCDOT on Interstate 26 project status and discussed opportunities to attract more government, sports, wedding, reunion, and motorcoach groups

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

- November 48-Hour FAM: Hosted a three-day visit for 16 seasoned meeting planners from across the country (as far as Seattle, WA)
 - Site Visits: Toured 12 hotels and provided planners the opportunity to experience numerous attractions, venues, and points of interest
 - Itinerary: Highlighted the city's creative culture, vast variety of fine cuisine, and most unique recreational activities
- SITE-Global: Attended conference in Chicago, IL; SITE is a professional association of 2,500 members located across the globe that seek to advance the business case for incentive travel and motivational experiences
- Tennessee Society of Association Executives (TNSAE): Attended annual [tradeshow and bootcamp](#) in Knoxville; conducted 23 appointments with planners
- [National Tour Association's Travel Exchange](#): Attended conference in Reno/Tahoe, NV, and completed 30 one-on-one appointments with tour operators from across North America

Accelerate proactive sales efforts to increase net new business to the destination (continued)

- [AENC](#): Attended the Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) annual tradeshow in Raleigh, NC, which hosted 234 meeting planner and associate executives
 - [Great Outdoors Theme](#): Showcased Asheville Wellness Tours essential oils at booth and provided two Eagle Nest Outfitters chairs as raffle prizes
- Northstar Meetings Group: Sent a targeted email "Host an inspired meeting in Asheville, NC" to 10,400 meeting planners, and 47% opened it
- Connect-DC: Attended in Washington D.C. and hosted a total of 17 one-on-one appointments with planners
- AdventureELEVATE: Prospected with Adventure Travel Trade Association about 2024 conference being hosted in Asheville; the annual three-day education and networking conference brings together thought leaders and practitioners from the adventure travel community

ENCOURAGING SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- [Top Adventure Town](#): Awarded by Blue Ridge Outdoors as a Top Adventure Town in the Large Town category based on quick access to wilderness and big city culture scene
- Monocle Magazine: Spotlights Asheville as a leader in green city living and an oasis for outdoor enthusiasts in the “Adventure Capitalist” advertorial in the [November 2022 issue](#)
- Winter Hikes: Encouraged outdoor recreation during the winter season with blog [5 Great Winter Hikes Near Asheville](#)

Increase number of bookings that participate in community projects

- Voluntourism: Published [voluntourism blog](#) as part of #GivingTuesday to encourage both group and leisure travelers to give back when visiting
- Corporate Social Responsibility: Sponsored volunteer projects during [SITE Southeast Education Summit](#) in Louisville, KY; demonstrated the benefit of supporting nonprofits to the incentive travel professionals in attendance

ENGAGING & INVITING MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- Indigenous and Native Culture News: During National Native American Heritage Month, distributed a [press release](#) about Asheville's indigenous cultural offerings and history that also recapped the Indigenous Walls Project
 - Resulting Coverage:
 - *The Points Guy*: [Why you should check out a modern Indigenous art exhibition the next time you travel](#)
 - *Indian Country Today*: [Intertribal artists descend on Asheville, North Carolina for Indigenous Walls Project event](#)
 - *Indian Gaming*: [Intertribal Artists Gather for Indigenous Walls Project Event in Asheville](#)
 - *NewsBreak*: [Intertribal artists descend on Asheville, North Carolina for Indigenous Walls Project event](#)
- Content Translations: Developed Spanish versions of What's New in 2023 press release and [Top Holiday Lights in Asheville](#) blog

Increase diversity of partner network

- Asian-owned Eateries: Collaborated with Authentic Asheville on a [locals guide to Asian-owned restaurants](#)
- Latinx Food Scene: Spotlighted [20 Latinx-owned restaurants and food spots](#); the list is also available [in Spanish](#)

Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- *The Group Travel Leader*: Secured feature of YMI Cultural Center in [2023 African American Heritage Guide](#) in the November/December issue

PROMOTING & SUPPORTING ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Garden & Gun: Facilitated "Spirit of Asheville" event by Garden & Gun on November 13 – 15 and served as lead sponsor and host of the "Made in the South Awards" on November 15
 - Local Winners: Biscuit Head won in the food category and Poppy Popcorn was runner-up in the same category; both received coverage from [TODAY](#), [Asheville Citizen-Times](#), [Holy City Sinner](#) and [AVL Today](#)
- Holiday Pitching: Distributed the holiday season press release to top media and via [PR Newswire](#), resulting in the following coverage:
 - TODAY Show: Jacqui Gifford, editor in chief of Travel + Leisure, hosted a live segment on the TODAY Show naming Asheville as a top holiday destination; two million viewers watched, generating \$76,000 in broadcast media value and \$9,900 in online media value
 - TODAY: [Top holiday travel tips, deals and destinations for 2022](#)
 - Cardinal & Pine: [11 Funky Places to Stay in North Carolina This Holiday Season](#)
 - Wandertoath: [12 Amazing Christmas Destinations in the USA](#)
 - Thrillist: [Gingerbread Yoda and Skydiving Santas Highlight This Year's Quirkiest Christmas Events](#)
 - Cardinal & Pine: [Have This Celebrity NC Chef Make A Meal Just for You, and Other NC-Centric Holiday Gifts This Year](#)
 - Getting On Travel: [Christmas at Biltmore Adds Sparkle to Holidays](#)
 - qcexclusive.com: [North Carolina Christmas Vacation: The Most Festive Destinations](#)
 - Foodgressing: [Blue Ridge Mountains Asheville: Holiday Events 2022](#)
 - *Savateur*: [These Festive Christmas Hotels Will Make Your Holiday Season Unforgettable](#) (also shared on [MSN](#))

Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits (continued)

- Holiday Gift Guide: Launched the 2022 [online Holiday Gift Guide](#), featuring more than 60 local products from some of Asheville's top creatives, makers and craftspeople; cross-promoted the list throughout the gifting season
- Featured Festivities: Blogged about ways to celebrate the holiday season
 - [Festive Happenings for your Holiday Getaway](#)
 - [8 Places to see Holiday Lights Holiday Lights in Asheville, NC](#)
 - [New Years Eve Events in Asheville](#)
- Additional Earned Media and Accolades: Received mentions in the following:
 - *Travel + Leisure*: [The 50 Best Places to Travel in 2023](#)
 - *Conde Nast Traveler*: [The Most Dog-Friendly Vacations in the United States](#) (also shared on [MSN](#))
 - *Men's Journal*: [Beer of the Week: Best Brews You Can Drink Right Now](#)
 - *Forbes*: [Put North Carolina On Your 2023 Travel List With These Seven Stylish Mountain Hotels](#)

RUNNING A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

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

- Visitor Guide Distribution: Through November-December, received and fulfilled 2,549 individual requests and 70 out-of-market orders, totaling 128 cases, or 6,400 guides; 62 local partners ordered 176 cases, or 8,800 guides
- ExploreAsheville.com
 - Partner Listings: Created 25 new free partner listings and updated 80 partner listings
 - New Partner Outreach: Sent emails to 94 businesses
 - Partner One-on-Ones: Held 9 partner support meetings
 - Event Calendar: Posted 564 events to our online calendar
 - Package & Deals: Added 20 packages and deals

Increase team performance and effectiveness

- New Hires: Welcomed three new employees to the team in November: McKenzie Provost, Partner Events Coordinator; Mia Brown, Sales & Marketing Assistant; and Cass Herrington, PR Manager
- DMAP: Earned [reaccreditation with distinction](#) through Destination International's Destination Management Accreditation Program (DMAP)

Focus on events and communications strategy to increase community engagement

- President & CEO Presentations: Addressed Asheville Independent Restaurants Association, Asheville Chamber Annual Growth Breakfast, Rotary Club, and Deerfield Retirement Community on various topics

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

- Annual Report: Published the [FY21-22 Annual Report](#) on AshevilleCVB.com
- E-Newsletters, E-Alerts: [5 sent in November](#); delivered to a total of 7,451 with open rates as high as 49% and an average of 43%
- E-Newsletters, E-Alerts: [5 sent in December](#); delivered to a total of 7,345 with open rates as high as 52% (5% increase from November) and an average of 47% (4% increase from November)
- Local News & BCTDA/ Explore Asheville Coverage
 - General
 - WLOS: [Vacation rental inventory eclipses that of hotels for the first time in Buncombe County history](#)
 - Spectrum News: [Fast Growing Utilization at Asheville Regional Airport](#)
 - Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF)
 - City of Asheville: [City of Asheville announces projects funded by BCTDA Tourism Product Development Fund](#)
 - WLOS: [Pressure on to reach financing plan for \\$30 million in McCormick Field renovations](#)
 - Citizen Times: [Asheville Tourists owner: '2023 will be the last season if we don't do something'](#)
 - AVL Watchdog: [Squeeze Play: Baseball's Tourists Say Taxpayers Must Pitch in \\$30M or it's Game Over](#)
 - WLOS | [Under construction: \\$21.5M grant to fund new terminal at Asheville Regional Airport](#)
 - AVL Watchdog | [Should we let minor league baseball die in Asheville](#)
 - WLOS | ['It's a community asset': Asheville Councilwoman responds to McCormick Field deadline](#)