

November 28, 2018

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report of October Activities

Destination performance was strong in October. Using Smith Travel Research as an indicator, hotel room demand was up 4.6 percent compared to October 2017. Marketing efforts drove an 8 percent increase in website traffic, and sales leads were up 21 percent.

Stephanie, Marla and Sarah Kilgore visited four ad agencies on location as part of an agency review process. Three have been invited to Asheville for additional evaluation. A recommendation will be made at the December BCTDA meeting.

TPDF grants were awarded at the October BCTDA meeting, and the board approved a plan to pursue a long-term investment strategy. Positive media coverage was achieved with stories running October 31 and November 1.

Mayor Manheimer made claims that the city is subsidizing hotels, setting off a series of negative articles starting October 11. An op-ed under my byline ran on October 12. Soon thereafter, the Mayor announced plan for a meals tax to "pay for the costs of tourism." A revised tourism fact sheet has been distributed to our partner list of 1,500 and elected officials, as one of several efforts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of tourism for the local economy.

The CVB team volunteered for our fall service day at the Dr. John Wilson Community Garden in Black Mountain. The garden provides food for the local community through Bounty & Soul, an organization that hosts free food markets for those in need.

We received notification from the IRS granting an exemption from filing a Form 990.

OCTOBER METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During October, the sales team posted 1,184 personal contacts (down 4%). October sales activities generated 94 sales leads (up 21%) and 49 convention bookings (up 82%), representing 6,342 rooms (up 4%). Four months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 39 percent and room nights represented are down 6 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 64 group events in October (up 39%), with revenue of \$2,337,160 (up 124%). The services team assisted 65 groups (up 28%).
- The PR team landed 71 significant placements in October (up 13%), with 64 media touchpoints (down 65%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$515,837 with reach of over 6 million. Online placements added \$220,597 in value and reach of over 229 million.

- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 419,408 visits (up 8%), including 284,050 to the mobile site (up 15%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 1,666 (down 33%) and video views totaled 63,543 (down 67%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 114 room nights (up 87%) with total room revenue of \$18,540 (up 49%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 25,313 visitors (down 6%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,330 visitors (up 29%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$39,326,928 in September, an increase of 8.6 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 28.2 percent during September (down 1.8%). The average daily room rate was \$176.93 (up 7.6%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$138.42 (up 5.7%). Room demand increased 4.0 percent with 187,250 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 12.5 percent to total 89,445 in October.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Stephanie attended the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission retreat as vice chair.
- Stephanie attended the Asheville Airport board meeting.
- Stephanie and Pat attended the African Americans in WNC conference at UNC Asheville.
- Stephanie, Dodie, Marla, Cat and Landis did a hard hat tour of the forthcoming Foundry Hotel and John Fleer's new Benne on Eagle restaurant.
- Stephanie participated in two meetings with the Homestay stakeholders and presented an overview of tourism in Buncombe County at their meeting of 115 permit holders.
- Stephanie participated in the Executive Committee meeting of the Destinations International association in Washington DC.
- Stephanie and Marla attended the NC Travel & Tourism Coalition meeting in Raleigh.
- Stephanie and Pat attended the opening of the WNC Nature Center's new entrance and Stephanie made remarks.
- Stephanie and Pat attended an economic development announcement at the Farmer's Market.
- Dodie attended the Blue Ridge Mountain Host Annual Meeting held at the Explore Asheville offices for the second year in a row.
- Marla attended the monthly meeting of the Asheville Downtown Association.
- Dodie attended a conference planning retreat for the Public Relations Society of America 2019 conference in Philadelphia. It was announced that Dodie is moving into the leadership track for the organization and will chair the 2021 travel and tourism conference.
- The PR team is supporting local public relations practitioners looking to start a WNC PRSA chapter. Explore Asheville will present an overview of EACVB PR and host a social for regional students (PRSSA chapter) and locals interested in networking with other PR professionals.
- Stephanie represented the BCTDA's sponsorship and made remarks at the announcement of the 2019 Fed Cup, and the sales team was in attendance.
- CVB staff attended the opening of Biltmore's Amherst, the Hope Chest for Women's Annual Luncheon, and the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission's meeting.
- The sales team participated in the Explore Asheville CVB's Community Service Day in Black Mountain.

- Pat attended a meeting hosted by the City of Asheville with the Wall Street merchants' group to discuss business owner concerns and share parking and signage initiatives.
- Staff attended a hard tour of the Asheville Art Museum.
- Brit participated in an Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Orientation as a partner and networked with new members.
- Pat and Stephanie attended the "Sweet Dreams, Full Plates" wrap up party at MANNA FoodBank and helped coordinate Facebook Live coverage of the event on the Explore Asheville Facebook page.
- As chairman of the board for the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, Glenn attended the organization's board meeting.
- Glenn attended the Asheville Chamber of Commerce's second Futures Lab with "Futurist" Rebecca Ryan.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: The late summer/early fall "Harvest" campaign launched at the beginning of August and wrapped up on September 30. The campaign included broadcast television, streaming video ads and a national TV buy. The campaign was complemented by a strong digital presence, print and traditional and online radio. As of October 31st 109,188,044 impressions have been served that have garnered 129,556 ExploreAsheville.com sessions.

A "Falliday" and Holiday digital campaign seeks to creatively position and differentiate the pre-Thanksgiving holiday season from the traditional holiday period. Falliday components are set to run October 22-November 18 and Holiday will begin on November 20th and run through December 23rd. Tactics for this campaign include digital display, sponsored content, retargeting, and paid social.

Paid Search: Paid search in October generated over 76k site visits from Google and Bing combined. Paid search also netted 10 hotel bookings this month for nearly \$3,400. Other highlights:

- Sessions are up 25 percent year-over-year
- Bounce rate has improved by 10 percent year-over-year
- Click through rate has increased by 19 percent year-over-year
- Pages per visit was at 3.43 for October
- Average time on site was 3:08 in October
- 440 Visitor Guide Requests came through in October

Fall Marketing Efforts: A fall digital campaign was used with the aim of driving demand for fall. Launched in mid-September, the campaign ran through mid-October. The two-pronged strategic approach aimed to: 1) re-engage those who were exposed to Harvest advertising but have not yet booked and 2) prospect new audiences by broadening our geographic footprint and excluding those exposed to Harvest advertising.

Supplementing the fall paid effort, the PR team executed its Fall Media Tour October 1-5, visiting Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, Winston-Salem and Charlotte. The final schedule included 18 appointments, three of them being broadcast. In the wake of Hurricane Florence, messaging centered around Asheville's fall color forecast and autumn news from the destination. Highlights included appointments with journalists representing *Carolina Country*, *UNC-TV's NC Weekend*, *Our State*, *AAA Go Magazine*, *Charlotte Magazine*, *WBTV* (Charlotte), *WRAL-TV* (Raleigh) and *WXII-TV* (Winston-Salem).

The PR and content teams team also executed the 2018 Fall B-roll blitz, securing interest from 84 news outlets including both television news desks and meteorologists in drive markets as well as the farther-flung ad markets, daily newspapers, and national television outlets like *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show* and *The Weather Channel*. On social media channels, short-form edits of the b-roll video saw over 30,000 views and reached 74,000 people.

Throughout the month, the content team put together weekly fall color reports detailing where the color was brightest and highlighting top events and activities for the week ahead. The Color Report was shared to a highly engaged segment of e-newsletter subscribers, as well as through social media channels. The report page saw just shy of 50,000 pageviews in the month of October, —but looking at the full fall season (September 20-November 14), the page exceeded 72,000 pageviews, with half of visitors arriving through organic channels.

The team also created a new, interactive fall color map to illustrate the progression of color throughout the season and to capture search traffic from high volume keywords. The map has seen 25,000 pageviews in the first five weeks.

General Media Relations: The PR team logged 64 media touchpoints, initiated 122 targeted pitches and hosted 6 media on the ground in Asheville in October. Pitch numbers were especially high due to the Fall Media Tour and fall b-roll outreach. The supported site visits included media representing *Food & Wine*, *Matador* and *Rolling Stone*. Story support also included *UNC-TV's NC Weekend*, *Southern Living*, *Charlotte Parent*, *Food & Wine*, *USA Today*, *Nashville Lifestyles* and *The Weather Channel*. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *Johnny Jet*, *Preservation Magazine*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *Courier Magazine*, among others.

M&C/Group PR Support: Sarah finalized a media outreach plan for meetings and conventions/group public relations support that includes a plan/timeline for editorial calendar research, a new M&C story idea sheet, and TrendKite research to mine for new outlets and contacts. Sarah and Carli also pulled info/images on shopping in Asheville for *Courier Magazine* (the flagship publication of the National Tour Association).

Significant Placements:

1. *Condé Nast Traveler* - "The Best Cities in the U.S., According to our Readers"
2. *Country Living* - "20 Ghost Tours Across America That Will Scare the Pants off of You"
3. *Next Avenue* - "Historic Hotels that Will Take You Back in Time"
4. *The Daily Meal* - "The Most Haunted Hotels in America"
5. *USA Today* - "Best fall-foliage day trips around the USA"
6. *Cosmopolitan* - "15 Terrifying and Real Haunted Hotels"
7. *Trip101* - "Travel Guide to Asheville, NC"
8. *Nomadic Matt* - "28 Best Places to Visit in the USA in 2018"
9. *AFAR* - "9 U.S. Restaurants With Awe-Inspiring Views"
10. *The Bark* - "Dog-Friendly Fall Travel Ideas"
11. *Inside the Magic* - "7 U.S. homes and hotels straight out of your favorite fairy tales"
12. *Washington Post* - "A Pinball Museum? There has to be a twist."
13. *Architectural Digest* - "The Most Beautiful Independent Store in Every State in America"
14. *Family Travel Magazine* - "Review of the Holiday Inn Asheville Biltmore East"
15. *Family Travel Magazine* - "Things to do with Kids in Asheville North Carolina"
16. *The Globe and Mail* - "Things you don't need to pack - but will make your trip a whole lot better"
17. *Daily Hive* - "8 gorgeous spots to see leaves changing colour in North America"
18. *INSIDER* - "The most gorgeous historic home in every US state"
19. *Red Tricycle* - "9 Amazing Road Trips to Take This Fall"

20. *Washington Post* - "The song of the spoon lady: Pain, perseverance and an unlikely journey to viral fame"
21. *Garden & Gun* - "What's New in Asheville"
22. *Food & Wine* - "Two New Restaurants to Open in Downtown Asheville's Forthcoming Hotel Arras"
23. *USA Today* - "The person giving you official travel advice may be an inmate"
24. *Johnny Jet* - "5 Reasons Asheville, NC, Is America's Greatest Fall Foliage Escape"
25. *Brides* - "The 10 Best Fall Foliage Destination Wedding Venues"

Content Development Projects: The content team worked on several projects in the month of October, with much focus on fall season content (see above).

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of October, 11 new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: a roundup of the best fall hikes, a story about Dickens in the Village, an announcement of Biltmore's 2019 costume exhibit, an announcement of Steep Canyon Rangers' January concert, the winter news release, the interactive fall color map, and five "things to do this weekend" posts. The team also posted six weekly fall color reports (through early November) and published updates to the Fed Cup landing page and Halloween blog posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 29,047 new pageviews, followed the Top 10 Ways to Experience Fall in Asheville, which received 14,781 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- October saw 1,666 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 279,222.
- There were 27 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in October.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a post with the fall color video we shot with Jared Kay of Amplified Media. It has reached 76,892 people organically, generating 1,775 total reactions, including 134 comments. This was also the most engaging post this month—it engaged 5 percent of users reached.
- The most popular paid Facebook post during the month of October was a post announcing the new Biltmore costume exhibition in 2019. The post has reached 49,957 people (38,229 organically), generating 1,525 reactions.

Foodtopia page

- October saw 22 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,116 likes.

Video:

- There were 14,985 new, organic YouTube views in October. The most popular video by organic views this month was the fall time lapse, which received 3,236 non-paid views. The 2018 Fall Color Report came in second with 1,580 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 63,543 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook.

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 5,069. Foodtopia accounts for 1,413 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,656.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 51,383 followers.
- There were 13 new posts in October. The most popular was a photo of a colorful series of trees on the Blue Ridge Parkway. It received 3,021 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,755 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,763 followers. We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

Asheville Traveler E-newsletter:

- Subscribers: We have 122,586 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In October, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 122,892 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 14.9 percent and a click-through rate of 3 percent. We sent four Fall Color Report emails this month. They were sent to an average of 13,787 subscribers and saw an average open rate of 38.8 percent and click-through rate of 13.8 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in October increased 8.25 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was down 0.52 percent year-over-year in October. Display advertising traffic was up 153.51 percent year-over-year in October. Referral traffic was up 32.17 percent year-over-year, and traffic from eNewsletter clicks were up 17.29 percent year-over-year in October. Social media traffic was down 32.57 percent year-over-year in October.

ExploreAsheville.com continues to outperform industry averages with 31 percent more total pages per visit, 42 percent longer visit duration, 31 percent more organic pages per visit, and 42 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of October.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In October, Simpleview and Explore Asheville staff continue to work on efforts to improve site conversion rates based on established goals and KPIs. Several pages continue to perform particularly well in driving organic traffic.

Online Reservations: There were 69 orders for 114 room nights in October with a total of \$18,540.43 in booking revenue and \$906.38 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in October were North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Ohio and Alabama.

Visitor Guide: The Explore Asheville team is working with SagaCity Media, the publishing partner, to wrap up production of the 2019 guide. A first draft of the guide will be delivered in late October.

There were 2,932 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in October, a 19.8 percent increase over last year. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 12,408 travel guide requests.

Asheville Culinary Festival

Explore Asheville provided the new culinary festival with a memorandum of understanding outlining the role Explore Asheville will play as a premiere sponsor and marketing partner. The team also prepared a website scope and timeline outline as the proposed host of the festival website. The documents provide clarity around content, web and media relations deliverables, as well as expectations for BCTDA/Explore Asheville recognition across festival channels and as the official source of travel info for attendees. Stephanie Brown and Dodie Stephens represent Explore Asheville on the festival board. Dodie also worked on the festival naming committee in a process to provide recommendations around the festival brand.

BCTDA Community Relations

- Crafted and submitted an opinion piece that presented a comprehensive view of the impact of tourism in response to comments conveyed in an article in the Asheville Citizen-Times. The op-ed under Stephanie's byline was published online and in print within 24 hours of the published story.
- Marketing/PR team also worked with leadership to draft and distribute a press release highlighting the 2018 TPDF recipients and announcing a hold on the 2019 TPDF cycle to create a process for long-term destination management planning and major works initiatives that support infrastructure and sustainability. Team facilitated media interviews in conjunction with the announcement.
- The team is identifying additional outreach opportunities in the community that will allow for additional conversation around tourism impacts and to highlight new tourism research. A comprehensive local media list with booking info and opportunity insights has been developed.
- Added value from IHeart media paved the way for a 30-day Tourism Builds Community ad campaign. The in-market bonus schedule included 85 x :30-second on-air commercials and 85 streaming commercials, Monday-Sunday 6am-9pm, spread equally across 99.9 KISS Country, Star 104.3, Rock 105.1, and 97.7 The Brew.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 49 definite group bookings in October, an 81.5 percent increase over the prior year. Of these group bookings, 33 were for meetings & conventions, nine were group tour, and seven were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 6,342 room nights, a 3.8 percent increase over the prior October. Ninety-four sales leads (74 for meetings & conventions, 14 for weddings, and six for motorcoach) representing 27,187 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in October. Leads distributed were up 20.5 percent while rooms represented were up 97.5 percent over the prior year. Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,043,861, a 19.9 percent decrease over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$2,337,160, a 123.9 percent increase over the prior year. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,184 contacts, a 3.5 percent decrease from the previous year. Indirect outreach totaled 13,751 contacts, a 92.2 percent increase over the prior year.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- IMEX America 2018 – Shawn Boone and Tina Porter, along with industry partners Accents on Asheville and Renaissance Asheville Hotel, participated in IMEX America, the premier annual trade event for corporate, association, and incentive planners. More than 100 planners came by the Explore Asheville booth, with 56 having scheduled appointments to discuss future meetings. Seven immediate RFPs representing 3,400+ rooms were received. More are expected. Since 2015, we have confirmed 3,471 room nights associated with IMEX, with an additional 1,923 rooms on tentative status (including the RFPs noted above).
- Staff hosted an IMEX America client event immediately following the close of Wednesday's marketplace with 30 planners in attendance.
- Connie Holliday conducted ten appointments in connection with Luxury Meetings in Nashville. Additional sales calls were made prior to the show with one RFP received.
- Beth McKinney attended Spotlight on the Mid-Atlantic to network and exhibit to the motorcoach market. Spotlight is a newer travel conference that focuses on itinerary collaborations through relationship building. Twenty-four tour operators and two group tour media contacts were in attendance.
- Connie attended South Carolina Society of Association Executives Bowling Tournament, meeting with area clients while in town. One client alone handled 12 associations.

- Kathryn Dewey attended the Association Executives of North Carolina Fall Conference in Durham. Additional sales calls were made in the Raleigh and Durham areas.
- Kathryn conducted local sales calls with corporate and educational “connectors” to communicate the benefits of bringing their corporate and professional meetings “home” to meet in Asheville.
- Tina Porter attended TEAMS Conference in Louisville, K.Y., the world’s leading conference and expo for the sport-event industry, meeting with 14 sports event planners. Approximately 30 additional sports planners attended the NC Sports Association client event, hosted during the event.
- Dianna Pierce attended Visit NC’s international receptive operator sales mission to Orlando, Florida, calling on inbound international wholesalers along with other NC destinations.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted/coordinated three area site visits this month including 2019 Word of Faith Couples Retreat – 230 rooms, 2019 & 2020 meetings with National Emergency Number Association - 60 rooms and 750 rooms respectively, and 2021 Council of Engineering & Scientific Society – 345 rooms

A sampling of September bookings includes:

- 2019 American Institute of Architects South Atlantic Region Conference – 300
- 2019 North Carolina Association of Realtors Regional Executive Conference – 240 rooms
- 2019 Meeting Professional International Carolina Chapter – 250 rooms
- 2019 NC Association of Social Workers Certificate training – 80 rooms
- 2019 PIA Affiliate Managers’ Summer Conference – 115 rooms
- 2018 International House of Charlotte – 39 rooms
- 2020, 2021, 2020 Gulf Games – 480 rooms total – **February Group*
- 2019 Asheville Lacrosse Classic – 1,000 rooms
- 2019 SuMMit CrossFit Appalachian Games – 200 rooms
- 2019 NC Independent School Athletic Association – 300 rooms
- 2019 The Upledger Institute (2) - 70 rooms
- 2019 USTA Fed Cup – 531 rooms
- 2019 NC Business Association – 100 rooms
- 2019 Biltmore Volleyball Academy Hi Neighbor Tournament – 550 rooms
- 2019 Carolinas Council of Housing Redevelopment and Codes Officials – 160 rooms
- 2019 Southeastern Electric Exchange Section Meeting – 210 rooms
- 2018 NC DSNP Roadshow – 75 rooms

Seventeen wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month. This is down from the 22 requests received last October.

Group Sales Highlights

Carli Adams attended Digital Summit in Charlotte, a digital marketing education conference. She also hosted the local planning committee for Delta Kappa Gamma SE Regional Conference 2019 for lunch and city tour. A planning meeting with the Executive Director of the 2019 food festival was also held. Staff attended the monthly SoCon LOC meeting. A staffed information table was provided for the NC Local Government Information Systems Association’s Fall Conference and Explore Asheville staff welcomed the board members. A microsite for the 2019 Fed Cup event was updated in conjunction with the event announcement. Staff also met with Market Connections to review the proposed creative direction of a new campaign mailer and landing page focused on engaging new clients with plans for two mailers in coming months.

Media Coverage

- Staff provided information at the request of National Tour Association's publication, *Courier Magazine*, about Asheville's unique shopping for an article in the upcoming edition of the magazine.
- After working with the writer, Asheville was highlighted in The Meetings Magazine for Corporate & Incentive Travel Planners' online article, "Emerging Destinations: Why These Newly Discovered Meetings Cities Deserve a Second Thought"

IMEX Communications: Using the IMEX internal portal, the following emails were sent by Explore Asheville to solidify IMEX scheduled appointments. Exhibitors are allowed one eblast weekly leading up to the event:

- Eblast 3 – 1,380 buyers received our messaging
- Eblast 4 – 1,525 buyers received our messaging
- Final – 1,672 buyers received our messaging

Mass Communications

- An e-newsletter was sent to 11,350 meeting planners in our database. Open rate: 14 percent; Click to Open Ratio: 27 percent.
- An e-newsletter was sent to 1,780 group tour planners in our database. Open rate: 18 percent; Click to Open Ratio: 12 percent.
- An email was sent to 647 Financial & Incentive Conference Planners association members introducing Explore Asheville services and staff member. Open rate: 21 percent; Click to Open Ratio: 33 percent.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

The TPDF Committee conducted site visits on October 8 and 9 for seven of the eight projects remaining in Phase II of the 2018 grants cycle including Asheville Museum of Science, Buncombe County Recreation Services, Center for Craft, Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, LEAF Community Arts, North Carolina Arboretum Society, and River Front Development Group.

The committee met on October 26 to determine final funding recommendations; and the BCTDA voted at the October board meeting to fund the following projects as per the committee's recommendations:

| Organization | Project | Amount Requested | Committee Recommendation |
|---|--|-------------------------|--|
| Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS) | AMOS Public Entrance Beautification | \$75,000 | \$0 |
| Buncombe County Recreation Services | Enka Recreation Destination | \$6,000,000 | \$6,000,000 |
| Center for Craft, Creativity & Design | Center for Craft - National Craft Innovation Hub | \$975,000 | \$975,000 |
| Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, CDC | Historic African American Business District - YMI Cultural Center Improvements | \$930,577 | \$800,000 |
| LEAF Community Arts (LEAF) | LEAF Global Arts Center | \$705,000 | \$705,000 |
| North Carolina Arboretum Society | The North Carolina Arboretum - Garden Lighting and Parking Enhancements | \$905,000 | \$905,000 |
| River Front Development Group | African-American Heritage and Cultural District - Museum at Stephens-Lee Community Center & Heritage Trail | \$550,000 | \$100,000* plus Heritage Trail support |
| Wild Food Foundation | Tourism and Event Center | \$300,000 | \$0 |
| TOTAL | | \$10,440,577 | \$9,485,000 |

* A waiver is recommended to disregard the guideline for matching funds, and the Heritage Trail will be supported through the Wayfinding Program.

TPDF Committee Chair Robert Foster also presented a committee recommendation to suspend the 2019 grant cycle to allow for a thorough review of major works projects. The BCTDA voted to support this recommendation and will contract with PGAV on this process.

Pat also presented a proposal to the BCTDA at the October meeting for incorporating the development of the African-American Heritage Trail into the CVB's regular content development and Wayfinding system work scope. The project would entail working with the River Front Development Group as lead advisors, creating a stakeholder group, overseeing the design, development, and installation of the trail markers as well as creating online assets to promote the trail upon completion. Pat will commence this process immediately.

The Asheville Art Museum submitted a request for fund disbursement. To date, the project is over two-thirds complete and \$1 million of the \$1.5 million grant has been disbursed to the grantee.

Major Works Update: An advisory committee is being established consisting of past TPDF Committee members to serve as a workgroup to assist in future Major Works project assessments.

Partner Engagement:

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted the October CVB 101 orientation with six industry partners in attendance, including staff from Monte Vista Hotel, Nan K. Chase Freelance, Farm at Green Heron Pond, Focal Point Coworking, Courtyard Asheville Airport, and Land of the Sky Event Venue.

Brit and Pat also hosted two additional on-site Explore Asheville 101 Orientations – the first for the River Arts District Artists (10 members attended), and the second in partnership with the Asheville Area Arts Council (2 members attended).

Upcoming Events: Planning is underway for a series of Partner Educational Forums in November focused on helping businesses improve their listings on Google platforms.

Explore Asheville CVB Holiday Party: Planning is under way for the annual holiday party to be held at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel on Thursday, December 6. We will be presenting our 6th Annual CVB SuperStar Awards to recognize and honor partners for outstanding contributions and support throughout the year

New Partners: Brit created seven new partner accounts in October – Nantahala Brewing Asheville Outpost, Peter Roux Studio and Gallery, Bill George Fine Art, Blomkraft Studio, Level 42 Gallery and Studio, and Bernadette St. Pierre-George. The public affairs team continues to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing as well as service the partners who request listings. And Brit maintains regularly scheduled communications to Music Venue partners to ensure they are submitting their events to the Live Music Calendar.

Projects & Community Outreach: Pat continues focusing on the final steps of the Wayfinding Assessment project with MERJE. Final budget and program update recommendations are expected in October.

Brit continues working with SagaCity, preparing partner listing content for the 2019 Official Asheville Visitor Guide and organizing a proofing process with marketing staff.

Brit and Pat also redesigned and updated the Explore Asheville CVB overview presentation that Stephanie uses when speaking to the public about our work and impact.

Community Service Day: Pat organized a community service day for the team readying the Dr. John Wilson Community Garden in Black Mountain for the winter season. The garden is a source of food for the local community through Bounty & Soul's efforts, an organization that hosts free food markets throughout the week for those in need. Diana McCall, of the Town of Black Mountain's Recreation & Parks Department, directed the team.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Administration: BCTDA (non-profit) received a letter on October 5 containing a superseding tax-exemption letter for BCTDA that indicates we are exempt from filing Form 990. This was anticipated when we originally filed for tax exempt status, but the IRS processed it in error. It has taken over six months for the IRS to correct this finding.

New employee Audrey Wells (Marketing and PR Assistant) was onboarded and Connie Holliday (Senior Sales Manager) completed her 90-day introductory period, becoming eligible for employee benefits.