



Explore **ASHEVILLE**  
Convention & Visitors Bureau

# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

November - December 2021

# DELIVER BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## Improve quality of each visit by inspiring increased length of stay and dispersal

- [Five Days, Five Festive Ways](#): Created Blog with five distinct 5-day itineraries for foodies, for adventurers, for shopaholics, for families, and for holiday lovers
- [2021 Holiday News and Winter Wellness](#): Multi-pillar press release included “Under-the-radar Towns with Over-the-top Charm” section aimed at dispersing seasonal visitation to Black Mountain and Leicester
  - Email Distribution Results: Sent pitch to 574 contacts; 40% opened, 6% clicked; 21 responded to indicate interest, which is 3.6%
  - Resulting Media: StyleBlueprint.com [“3 Carolina Towns That Transform Into Magical Holiday Wonderlands”](#)
- [What’s New: 22 Transformational Stories, Culture Adventures & Self-Care Escapes for Blue Ridge Travelers in 2022](#): Multi-pillar press release cataloged news items for the year ahead. Sent targeted pitches to culinary, outdoor and wellness media. Developed robust list of diverse media voices to increase depth and inclusivity of outreach.
  - Email Distribution Results: Pitch was sent to 452 contacts; 57% opened
  - [22 New Experiences in 2022](#): Published supplemental consumer blog post highlighting this year’s top 22 experiences
- Visitor Guide: Finalized 2022 Official Asheville Visitor Guide; emphasized longer stays and dispersal throughout the area
  - Monthly Deliveries: Partner deliveries will start in late January via our distribution partner Mountain Xpress



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

- 48-Hour FAM: 10 qualified corporate, association, and third-party planners came Nov. 16-19; nine of which had never been to Asheville before
  - New Business: One lead for Feb. 2022 mid-week received so far.
- IMEX America: More than 80 appointments and additional walk-up traffic during the conference in Las Vegas, NV Nov. 8-12; team hosted an event for more than 30 clients and participating industry partners.
  - New Business: 12 leads collected for business beginning as soon as spring 2022.
- Travel South International: Held 36 appointments with international buyers and tour operators during the trade show in New Orleans, LA
- Meetings Today Live: Held 22 appointments at the trade show in Tucson, AZ; attended several networking events
- Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC): Exhibited at this trade show in Raleigh, NC with five hotel partners; collected 55 business cards
- Holiday Showcase: More than 100 attendees stopped by the booth at the trade show in Chicago, IL where we exhibited alongside Kimpton Hotel Arras
- Engage Summit: Connected with more than 300 destination wedding innovators and suppliers in Nassau
- Society of Incentive Travel Executives Southeast (SITE SE): Received award for “Experience of the Year” at the annual summit in Savannah, GA for the SITE SE meeting hosted at The Foundry Hotel last December

# DELIVER BALANCED RECOVERY & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH (CONTINUED)

## Drive revenue in need periods through updated group sales strategy

- Self-Directed FAM: Offering special meeting planner hotel rates for Dec. 2021-April 2022 to encourage independent visits to Asheville; seven meeting planners have made reservations at six different hotels so far

## Balance quality of life for residents and experience for visitors through project investments

- Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) grant cycle to open in 2022:
  - Announced in the [Nov. 17 Tourism Community Update](#) and issued [open call for candidates](#) to fill four open vacancies on the TPDF Committee
    - Resulting Media: Grant cycle announcement covered by [Business North Carolina Daily Digest](#), [Mountain Xpress](#), [AVL Today](#), [Guide Global](#), [Asheville Citizen Times](#) (2)(3), [MSN](#), WLOS-TV, iHeartRadio, [Business North Carolina](#) (p. 28), [Mountain Xpress Local Matters newsletter](#)
- Sponsorships: Approved three funding requests for upcoming quarter
  - [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast](#): MLK Association's 41<sup>st</sup> annual commemoration event on Jan. 15
  - [Asheville Restaurant Week](#): Asheville Chamber event on Jan. 18-24
  - [ASAP Business of Farming Conference](#): Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's event on Feb. 26

## Review and update Wayfinding pedestrian signage to increase dispersal out of the downtown core

- Kiosk Updates: Updated interpretive panels on kiosks to highlight surrounding attractions, culture and history

## Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth and alignment

- Community Meetings: Held quarterly meetings with County Manager, City Manager, UNC-Asheville Chancellor and Chamber CEO
- Thrive Asheville: Shared tourism data and context with Thrive cohort

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

- [Asheville on the Rise](#): Monocle digital feature and printed guide spotlighted the area's culture, music venues, outdoor economy, craft brewing industry, innovative food scene, start-up businesses, heritage, and hotels

# ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- [2021 Top Adventure Towns](#): Recognized by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine readers as one of the best hubs for outdoor recreation in the Blue Ridge
  - Top Honors: Asheville pictured on cover image and on [social](#) channels; [Facebook live](#) announcement included Pledge for the Wild call to action
- [Pledge for the Wild Fundraiser](#): Raised \$1,060 for Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation through Pledge for the Wild using a raffle and giveaway of Asheville Championship co-branded whitewater kayak from local manufacturer Liquidlogic
- [Lunch Rocks Trail Video](#): In collaboration with [Blue Ridge Hiking Co.](#), produced third (and final) trails series video focused on responsible recreation, dispersal, and accessibility

## Encourage partners to embrace sustainable and responsible tourism practices

- [Leave No Trace Toolkit](#): Released information, assets, program logos, and LNT Seven Principles icons on AshevilleCVB.com for partners to download and use to spread the word about responsible recreation to their audiences
- Sustainable Tourism Panel: Spoke at Asheville Area Arts Council Creative Sector Summit [Panel on Sustainable Tourism](#)

## Increase number of bookings that participate in community projects

- Service Projects Pitch: Contacted planners of Nov. 2021-Aug. 2022 events and suggested addition of a service project to the meetings' agendas
  - Email Distribution Results: Contacted 48 planners; 72% opened
- 48-Hour FAM: Demonstrated benefit of adding service project to meeting agendas by having FAM attendees help pack 600 envelopes of seeds for Asheville-based nonprofit [Seed Programs International](#)

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

- [Tourism Cares Auction](#): Created sustainable-focused travel package for fundraising event promoted on international platform including lodging at the Element, dinner at Posana, a Flying Bike Tour and a WNC Photo Tour

# ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

## Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences

- Pitched diversified storylines resulting in media coverage:
  - Fortune.com: [A haven from the Jim Crow South finds a modern purpose](#)
  - National Trust for Historic Preservation (Savingplaces.com): [A New Song for Rabbit's Motel](#)
  - Passport Magazine (LGBTQ+ author): [Traveling With Pets](#)
- Hannukah Feature: In collaboration with Asheville Jewish Community Center, published latke (potato pancake) recipe [video](#) and [blog](#); latkes are a traditional Jewish dish served during Hannukah celebrations
- Diversified Image Library: Conducted holiday photoshoot at Omni Grove Park Inn to further build out image library featuring diverse models

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

- [African American Heritage Trail \(AAHT\)](#): Issued [call for volunteers](#) for AAHT Advisory Committee between Nov. 15-Dec. 10; with the support of Aisha Adams of Equity over Everything, 17 community members were selected to guide project development

## Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events

- [LGBT Meeting Professionals Association](#): After connecting during IMEX, joined at a membership level that gives us access to networking opportunities and messaging to their database of 1,100 meeting planners

## Promote minority owned businesses through group sales initiatives

- 48-Hour FAM: Showcased four minority-owned businesses through purchasing experiences or product for attendees

## Increase diversity of partner network

- Black Wall Street AVL Mixer: Hosted an event at the Element Hotel on Dec. 6 to build relationships with the [Black Wall Street](#) business group members

# PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

## Elevate Asheville's creative experiences to differentiate and inspire visits

- Garden & Gun Partnership Launch: Sponsored [12<sup>th</sup> Annual "Made in the South" Awards](#) event on Nov. 3 in Charleston, SC; the magazine announced the next celebration in fall 2022 will take place in Asheville
  - Press Release: [Garden & Gun Collaboration Shines Spotlight On Asheville's Creative Spirit](#)
  - Resulting Media: [Mountain Xpress](#) featured the partnership news
- [Chuck's Big Adventure](#): Weeklong series aired on WTHR NBC Indy morning show on week of Nov. 15; PR team provided multi-pillar story support
  - Features Included: The Biltmore, NC Arboretum, Folk Art Center, LaZoom Tours, Ryan Ashley The Poet, Black Mountain, etc.
- [Holiday Gift Guide](#): Curated a collection of 80 local offerings from Buncombe County artists and makers; selections were categorized as handcrafted wares, artisan food & beverage, outdoors & wellness, or art & craft to appeal to a range of audiences and purchasers, including deep links to online shopping where possible to encourage more sales
  - "12 Days of Asheville" Instagram Story: Social media campaign series to spotlighted 80 local artists and makers participating in digital guide
    - Campaign Results: Generated 54,105 user sessions to ExploreAsheville.com and 36,301 external clicks to partners' websites
- [Holiday Hidden Gems Reel](#): In collaboration with Atlanta-based influencers, The Cork Bros, produced Instagram Reel that highlights under-the-radar holiday experiences in Asheville, Weaverville and Black Mountain

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

- Weaverville Arts Spotlight: Shared [Instagram Story series](#) on six Weaverville artists as part of [Weaverville Arts Safari](#) event promotion
- [Samantha Brown's Places to Love](#): Partnered with Samantha Brown and the Emmy-winning crew of PBS travel series "Places to Love" in celebrating our community's creative spirit, cultural depth and natural beauty. As the premiere episode of Season 5, the Asheville show will air Jan. 8 on North Carolina PBS stations and continues there and on stations nationwide

## Actively promote creative community and resources to groups and events

- 48-Hour FAM: Schedule included creative experiences like glassblowing, an art mural and brewery tour, a comedy bus tour, candle-making, and unique wellness activities found in Asheville
- Group Sales Holiday Card: Featured an original print by local artist [Cindy Lou Chenard](#) and a New Year's message.

# PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

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

- [“Packaging Matchmaker” Partner Salon](#): 35 tourism community partners attended the event on Nov. 10 to learn how to leverage Explore Asheville's marketing and publicity resources. Event included locally procured coffee and snacks from [Bean Werks](#) and [Chill Cereal Bar](#)
- Partner Updates: 15 new partners were added to ExploreAsheville.com including [All Souls Grotto](#), [Asheville Proper](#), [Asheville Threads](#), [Black Mountain Ale Trail](#), [Madam Clutterbucket's Neurodiverse Universe](#), [Provisions Mercantile](#), [Provisions Mercantile Biltmore Village](#), [Vinnie's Neighborhood South Asheville](#), [Beer City Brewery Tours](#), [Cielo Catering](#), [Bear's Smokehouse BBQ South Asheville](#), [Dalton Distillery](#), [Sweeten Creek](#), [On the Inside Lingerie](#), and [Sugar & Snow Gelato](#)

## Create opportunities for partners to learn about and support creative spirit

- [2021 Explore Asheville Holiday Party](#): 223 members of the tourism community attended on Dec. 8; several local businesses were featured:
  - Venue: [Center For Craft](#)
  - Caterer: [Celine and Company](#)
  - Entertainers: [Ryan Ashley the Poet](#) and [DJ Molly Parti](#).
  - Activity Station Sponsors: [LEAF Global Arts Center](#), [Sew Co.](#), and [Asheville Art Museum](#)
  - Vendors: [Noir Collective AVL](#) and [WNC Farmers Market](#)
  - Charity: [WNC Toys for Tots](#) (Received 58 toys and \$150+ in donations)
  - [2021 CVB Superstars Awardees](#): Fletcher Tove (Buncombe County); Nikki Stewart (The Foundry Hotel); J Smilanic (WNC Photo Tours); Bruce Waller and J Hackett (Grind AVL & Black Wall Street); and Alexandria Ravenel (Noir Collective)

# RUN A HEALTHY & EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

## Increase team performance and effectiveness

- Stella Awards: Explore Asheville staff recognized as Silver Winner in [Best CVB/DMO in the Southeast](#) category of the 2021 Northstar Meetings Group industry Stella Awards
- Explore Asheville Values: Core values and definitions of the behaviors that will demonstrate how we are living them were developed and adopted.
  - Core values include:
    - Innovate & Evolve – We seek out new ideas and are open to change.
    - Leadership & Collaboration – We focus on the truly important priorities to make the most positive impact.
    - Equity & Empathy – We respect and embrace differences recognizing real progress requires inclusion.

## Increase communication and document access for BCTDA board members

- Board Portal Demos: Conducted introductory calls with five software companies

## Communicate regularly to stakeholders about TDA/CVB actions, pillars and progress, events

- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [6 sent in November](#) (total of 10,916 emails) with open rates as high as 40% and an average of 34%.
- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [8 sent in December](#) (total of 12,122 emails) with open rates as high as 43% and an average of 41%.
  - Included alerts [\(1\)\(2\)](#) on new COVID relief grants of up to \$500,000 available for hospitality and other businesses
- Local News and BCTDA Coverage:
  - Asheville Citizen Times: [Annual hotel sales hit \\$275M, vacation rentals up 110% despite pandemic: TDA annual report](#)
  - Asheville Citizen Times: [Asheville, Buncombe monthly hotel, Airbnb sales expected to top record \\$65M despite COVID](#) (This story was also picked up by [MSN Money](#) and Business North Carolina's Daily Digest.)
  - Asheville Citizen Times: [Asheville area hotel, lodging sales break another record](#)
  - WLOS-TV: [Buncombe continues to be hot spot for visitors; lodging brings in \\$65 million in a month](#)
  - Reuters: [Soaring U.S. business starts in pandemic show new normal evolving](#)
  - Asheville Citizen Times: [Leaf peepers give Blue Ridge Parkway, WNC tourism strong October](#)
  - Business North Carolina: [Travel and Tourism: Back to Work and Play](#)
  - Business North Carolina: [Asheville Tourism Rebounds](#) (p. 23)