

Explore **ASHEVILLE**  
Convention & Visitors Bureau

# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

March 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.

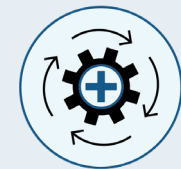
Support product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.



## 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

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

- Fly Markets: Launched digital out-of-home ads with a destination brand message in our active nonstop flight markets (NYC, Chicago, Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Dallas); campaign includes retargeting with our nonstop flight banners and driving users to our airport-specific landing pages
- eTarget: Deployed an email blast on March 29 promoting a 5-day itinerary, outdoor adventure, neighborhoods, summer travel and our food scene
- Organic Spa Content Partnership: Launched digital sponsorship, Wellness Travel Guide video sponsorship and eWellness newsletter banner ads

## **Collaborate with broader community leaders to ensure sustainable growth & alignment**

- Annual Sentiment Survey: Measured understanding and engagement of residents; the [full report](#) of results is available on AshevilleCVB.com
- Hospitality Outlook: Featured Adam Sacks, Phillip Woollcott, Mike Scavo, and William Norris who spoke about upcoming lodging projects and travel trends; 81 partners attended the March 9 webinar and [a recording is available](#)

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

- 48-Hour FAM: Hosted 13 qualified corporate, association, and third-party planners on March 22 – 25
- Double Incentive Offer: Booked 13 groups, representing 1,882 total room nights, since the incentive started in January

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

- Asheville Business Events Council: Met for second luncheon at The Montford; five new events in process, representing 2,840 total room nights
- Quarterly Director of Sales Meeting: Collaborative information-sharing with 16 hotel and other industry partners in preparation upcoming fiscal year
- Visit NC 365 Conference: Attended in Durham and announced that Asheville will host in 2023
- Independent Planner Education Conference: Conducted 25 one-on-one appointments and attended networking events in Las Vegas, NV
- Destinations International Sales & Services Summit: Attended the summit in Washington, DC, and learned anticipated trends for meetings industry

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

- Meeting-Specific Content: Contracted with Northstar media to produce and distribute three different meeting and convention videos, as well as a downloadable guide, in this fiscal year to increase awareness of Asheville as a meeting destination with an emphasis on sector alignment

# ENCOURAGE SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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

- Outside Magazine Partnership: Finalized digital custom content piece "[Asheville is for Green Adventures](#)" and brand ad and advertorial for May/June print issue
- AFAR Partnership: Launched sustainability banner ads on AFAR's [Travel for Good channel](#); the "Unpacked" Ethical Travel column has not yet debuted digitally but will be in coming weeks
- #RecreateResponsibly Kiosk Update: Changed wayfinding panels to replace the "Please Bear With Us" messaging and include responsible travel information; a QR code on the signage leads to the [Leave No Trace](#) section of ExploreAsheville.com



## Increase number of bookings that participate in community projects

- 48-Hour FAM: Demonstrated benefit of adding service project to meeting agendas by having FAM attendees volunteer with United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County to build textured hair kits for students of color at Asheville High School
- Social Responsibility Webpage: Digitized a list of [suggested community service projects](#) and organization contacts for meeting planners to reference

# ENGAGE & INVITE MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES

## **Extend a genuine invitation to diverse audiences**

- Black Asheville Experience: Created new "[Black Asheville Experience](#)" [landing page](#) focused on curated content for Black travelers.
- HospitableMe Training & Brand Audit: Hosted [HospitableMe](#) on March 30-31
  - Everyone Welcome: Hosted an 'Everyone Welcome' LGBTQ+ Diverse Audiences training for internal team and partners at Wortham Theater for the Performing Arts; a [recording of the session](#) is on AshevilleCVB.com
  - Brand Audit: Received feedback from HospitableMe after they conducted an audit to evaluate web and social content for LGBTQ+ messaging

## **Promote minority owned businesses through group sales initiatives**

- Cultural Connections Group Activity Round-Up: Completed a resource for social groups that highlights activities and attractions that tell the story of Asheville's African American history

## **Increase outreach in recruiting diverse meetings and events**

- LGBT Meeting Professionals Association (LGBT MPA): Renewed membership at a level that gives us access to networking opportunities and messaging to their database of 1,100 planners

# PROMOTE & SUPPORT ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT

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

- Media Event Sponsorship: Attended "Samantha Brown's Places to Love" PBS series launch event in NYC on March 18, which took place in conjunction with the New York Travel & Adventure Show. [Event photos here.](#)
  - VIP Connections: As the first episode of the season, Asheville was tapped as the VIP event's headline sponsor. Fifty of the 130+ attendees were top tier travel media including *ABC News, Travel Channel, GMA, Today Show, Travel + Leisure, Fodor's, New York Times, CNN and Frommers.*
  - Asheville Spotlight: Makers from the episode were integrated into the event, including Eda Rhyme cocktails and Spicewalla appetizers. Raffle gifts included Jenny Pickens art and Alexa Rose music. Clips of the show ran on stage in addition to Brown's commentary on her favorite places.
- Food 52: Promoted Asheville's culinary scene via e-blast to Food52's email list; three more emails will be sent in April as part of our content partnership
- AVL Beer Week Microsite: Launched [new microsite](#) on ExploreAsheville.com in partnership with Asheville Brewer's Alliance to promote Asheville Beer Week, May 27 – June 5, 2022

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

- 48-Hour FAM: Incorporated creative experiences like a rooftop bar tour and candle-making experience into the schedule

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

- New Partners: Added four new listings to ExploreAsheville.com: [Anchor Fly](#), [Arras Vacation Rentals](#), [Bold Rock Hard Cider](#), and [Scenic Helicopter Tours](#)

# RUN A HEALTHY & EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

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

- E-newsletters, E-alerts: [9 sent in March](#); a total of 11,371 emails were delivered with open rates as high as 50% and an average of 43%
- Press Release: [Majority of Buncombe Residents Believe Tourism Is Beneficial to Community, Identify Some Concerns](#).
  - Resulting Coverage: Mountain Xpress: [Tourism survey reveals changing attitudes, longstanding issues](#) and [Local Matters](#) newsletter cover story
- Local News and BCTDA Coverage:
  - Mountain Xpress: [Woodfin celebrates the new Silver-Line Park with a ribbon cutting ceremony](#) mentioned BCTDA as major funder
  - AVL Today: In a [profile on Franny's Farmacy owner](#) Franny Tacy, she named Explore Asheville as among her top 3 “local leaders, influencers or movers + shakers” for “the important work of keeping the tourists coming”
  - Citizen Times: [Buncombe TDA adopts \\$40.8M 'revenue objective' for coming fiscal year, citing recovery](#) was picked up by AVL Today, Asheville News Online and Business North Carolina Daily Digest
  - Mountain Xpress: [Six-lane track unanimously approved for Memorial Stadium](#) mentioned BCTDA/TPDF as possible grantor for project
  - Citizen Times: [Asheville's 'foodtopia' brand continues to shape growth of local farming community](#) mentioned BCTDA as founder of the initiative
  - Zartico: [Against the Tide - Calm Before the Storm](#) mentioned Explore Asheville
  - Mountain Xpress: [City Council to discuss 'community cleanliness'](#) mentioned BCTDA associated with idea of Business Improvement District
- Local News and BCTDA Coverage (continued):
  - WLOS: [Gas prices could impact spring, summer tourism in the mountains](#) interviewed Vic
  - Citizen Times: [Buncombe adds \\$734K to West Asheville sports park AstroTurf budget, eyes 2022 project wrap](#) mentioned TPDF funding support; this story was also picked up by WNC Business Today.
  - Mountain Xpress: [Buncombe park turf replacement to cost extra \\$1.25M](#) mentioned TPDF funding support