

March 22, 2019

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report of February 2019 Activities

Asheville hosted its second consecutive Fed Cup on February 9 and 10. The event was sold out with 5,000 spectators per day and estimated economic impact of \$3.5 million.

The 7th Annual Hospitality Outlook was presented on February 22, with 91 Buncombe County lodging leaders and community stakeholders in attendance. Ninety-seven percent would recommend the Hospitality Outlook to others.

Our new agency, 360i, has hit the ground running, working with the Marla and Sarah to simultaneously learn the destination and plan spring media. The campaign will launch March 18.

We welcomed Daniel Bradley to the team on March 1. Daniel replaces Joe Weber as Sales Specialist as Joe moved into the Public Affairs department. Hannah Dosa begins work as our new Hospitality Coordinator on March 18 and Jennifer Kass-Green will be on board as Director of Finance on April 15.

Elizabeth White has been promoted from Web Manager to Director of Web and Analytics. A new Web Manager will report to Elizabeth.

FEBRUARY METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During February, the sales team posted 919 personal contacts (down 21%). February sales activities generated 80 sales leads (up 13%) and 41 convention bookings (up 17%), representing 5,425 rooms (down 20%). Eight months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 35 percent and room nights represented are down 9 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 19 group events in February (up 46%), with revenue of \$725,028 (up 100%). The services team assisted 19 groups (up 36%).
- The PR team landed 42 significant placements in February (up 31%), with 37 media touchpoints (up 19%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$3,976,063 with reach of over 2 million. Online placements added \$54,791 in value and reach of nearly 174 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 246,964 visits (down 3%), including 158,135 to the mobile site (up 4%). Our Facebook fan base total is 282,893 (up 5%) and video views totaled 13,909 (down 86%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 75 room nights (up 6%) with total room revenue of \$12,691 (up 35%).

- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 7,236 visitors (up 11%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$20,410,426 in January, an increase of 18.1 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 49.6 percent during January (up 6.5%). The average daily room rate was \$114.03 (up 1.9%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$56.56 (up 8.5%). Room demand increased 7.1 percent with 119,944 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 33 percent to total 86,506 in January.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Stephanie participated as a community advisor for the UNC Asheville speaker event featuring Bryan Stephenson.
- Stephanie attended the reception for County Manager Avril Pinder.
- Stephanie participated in the AIR board meeting and the airport board meeting.
- Stephanie participated in the NC Travel & Tourism Coalition executive and board meetings, the NC Travel Industry Association industry dinner, and the NC Travel & Tourism Board meeting in Raleigh.
- Stephanie provided an overview of tourism to the Sports Commission and provided a market update to the AB Tech Advisory Board.
- Stephanie presented to the Biltmore Leadership group.
- Marla attended the Asheville Downtown Association board meeting, issues discussion and Urban Trail Committee meetings.
- Dodie and Landis met with Kyle Thomas with Peach of Adventure. Kyle is launching an Asheville nonprofit that provides outdoor sports access, tours and equipment to people with disabilities.
- Staff volunteered throughout Fed Cup.
- Dianna attended the monthly Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission and Civic Center Commission meetings.
- Dianna and Stephanie attended the International Whitewater Hall of Fame and World River Center community presentation and reception post-site visit.
- Tina attended the Bob Lewis Ballpark Grand Opening.
- Carli attended SoCon Local Organizing Committee meetings.
- As a participating member, Pat attended the monthly meeting for the Local Living Economy sub-committee of the Downtown Commission.
- Pat attended the Arts Awareness Coalition's social at the Black Mountain College Museum + Art Center.
- Pat attended the African American Heritage Commission meeting.
- Pat, Stephanie and Marla attended the Asheville Downtown Association's Urban Speaker Series event, "Building Our City" with Kimber Lanning of Arizona Local First. Pat also joined Kimber Lanning, Councilman Brian Haynes and city staff members for a tour of downtown and lunch prior to the presentation.

- Stephanie, Glenn and Pat attended UNC Asheville's Master Plan Input Session.
- Stephanie, Glenn, Marla and Pat attended the Asheville Downtown Association's State of Downtown Luncheon.
- Pat attended a presentation, "Whose Story? Democratizing America's Collective Memory," at Lenoir-Ryne by Dr. Darin Waters, Associate Professor of History and Executive Director of Community Engagement at UNC Asheville.
- Glenn attended the Black Mountain Center for the Arts board meeting, serving as Chair.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: In February, key staff members from 360i came in for a weekend visit and a brand immersion day that featured requested presentations on the history of Asheville, as well as the brand, the creative evolution, and general information about Explore Asheville. Sarah Kilgore developed an expansive itinerary for the creative team that included on-the-ground experiences throughout Buncombe County.

Spring Campaign:

During February, the agency continued its due diligence on spring media strategies prior to presentation of the plan and work began on refinements and production on refreshed creative that will carry through the updated positioning of "Let your spirit run free." Spring broadcast television will be in the following markets: Atlanta, Birmingham, Charleston, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Columbus, Greensboro, Huntsville, Knoxville, Nashville, Raleigh, and Washington D.C. Streaming video will be in all broadcast markets plus New York and Chicago, Tampa and Orlando. The campaign will have a strong digital presence in display, retargeting, paid search, and paid social, allowing for the opportunity to both hyper-target the audience clusters and reach potential visitors in their environment. Hyper-targeted digital will also run in Greenville and Spartanburg aimed at enticing overnight visitors. Audio advertising in the form of both terrestrial and online radio will complement mass awareness and touch on target passion points. Print advertising will be utilized for inspirational messaging in *Atlanta Magazine*, *Our State*, *Travel + Leisure* and *National Geographic Traveler*. Black Mountain print ads will run in *Our State*, *Blue Ridge Country*, and *Charlotte Magazine*.

Winter Campaign Results:

- Campaign generated 18,700 sessions to ExploreAsheville.com.
- Campaign traffic saw an average bounce rate of 52 percent and 2.17 pages per session.
- 18,641 sessions were generated by two traffic campaigns, which spent a total of \$7,800, an average of \$0.42 per session.
- The third campaign is the leads ad, which generated 1,838 travel guide requests. That campaign spent \$2,003, or an average of \$1.09 per lead.
- Ad impressions total 1.54 million.

Paid Search:

Paid search in February generated over 45,140 site visits from Google and Bing combined. Paid search also netted 6 hotel bookings in February, bringing our fiscal year-to-date total to 84 bookings and \$35k. Other highlights:

- Google click through rate has increased by 16 percent year-over-year
- Pages per visit was 3.30 for February
- Average time on site was 2:53 in February
- 558 Visitor Guide requests were generated by paid search in February

General Media Relations: The PR team logged 37 media touchpoints, initiated 36 targeted pitches and supported two media on the ground in Asheville in February. Story support included *Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, *Sunseeker* and *Conde Nast Traveler*. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *Frommer's*, *AAA Traveler Worldwide* and *Our State*, among others.

Spring Press Release:

The Explore Asheville PR team crafted a Spring Press Release in February, incorporating both partner news and iconic springtime adventures in Asheville. The release was distributed via MailChimp to 531 subscribers and media friends of Explore Asheville. Work was then performed using TrendKite to pinpoint outlets and writers who have previously covered “top destinations” for spring travel, with this targeted outreach totaling about 30 pitches.

Press Materials & Systems Updates:

During February, the team made progress on an overhaul of the Explore Asheville online news room that will incorporate strong visuals, update media intake features and provide key message-focused destination content, with a focus on trending news. After additional review and tweaks the site will soft launch later this month. Additionally, a new content piece was developed that will serve as a culinary scene overview/introduction and will be useful for press and web materials regarding Chow Chow. Explore Asheville is currently reviewing VIP media for potential site visit hosting for the culinary event. The team will also carry locally made, branded Chow Chow media gifts on upcoming media tours.

Separately, the PR team connected with new support staff at Cision to target efficiencies around clip reporting and use of the media database platform. Cision and TrendKite announced a merger, but it could be up to nine months before the platforms integrate.

Significant Placements

1. *Best Products* | *"Things to do in Asheville That'll Appeal to Both Hipsters and Hippies"*
2. *Blue Ridge Country* | *"What's new in the Mountains in 2019"*
3. *CNN Travel* | *"Asheville: Where breweries come to play"*
4. *Flipkey Blog* | *"20 of the Top Places to Visit in the U.S. in 2019"*
5. *Forbes* | *"12 U.S. Destinations That Will Expand Your Mind"*
6. *Highline Autos* | *"The Antique Car Museum at Grovewood Village"*
7. *Matador Network* | *"How to use Asheville as your base for Great Smoky Mountains National Park"*
8. *Preservation Magazine* | *"Take a Hike on These 12 Urban Historic Trails"*
9. *Southern Kitchen* | *"How to Spend 24 Hours in Asheville, North Carolina"*
10. *Thrillist* | *"Where to Spend a Long Weekend in the Southeast This Winter"*
11. *Wedding Wire* | *"10 Incredible Wedding Venues in Asheville, North Carolina"*

Content Development Projects: The content team's work during the month of February focused on moving forward several projects, as well as expanding and optimizing existing content based to improve user experience.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of February, 18 new pieces of editorial content were added to the website. New blog posts included a round-up for Asheville Amadeus Festival events, a photo tour of the new Biltmore costume exhibit, the spring press release and four “things to do this weekend” posts. New stories included a detailed guide of what to see at the WNC Nature Center and round-ups of top events and things to do in nearby Black Mountain. Lastly, the

content team worked with keyword and usability research to create new, search-optimized copy for eight National and State Parks pages of the site, which will now better connect visitors to information about their trip.

- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 22,295 new page views, followed by What You Can't Miss in Asheville in 2019, which received 6,089 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- February saw 1,044 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 282,885.
- There were 19 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of February.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was the share of the "Top Spring Events in 2019" blog post. It has reached 31,576 people organically, generating 971 total reactions, including 48 comments. This was also the most engaging post this month, engaging 6.2 percent of users reached.

Foodtopia page

- February saw 22 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 24,997 likes.

Video:

- There were 6,990 new, organic YouTube views in February. The most popular video by organic views this month was the fall time lapse, which received 779 non-paid views. Return Again came in second with 736 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 13,909 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from YouTube. There have been 599,467 views of Explore Asheville content fiscal YTD (since July 1, 2018).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 5,211. Foodtopia accounts for 1,425 of those and Visit Asheville, 3,786.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 55,453 followers.
- There were 10 new posts in February. The most popular was a photo the Dome at Asheville Glamping. It has received 3,206 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,775 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,629 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 123,439 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In February, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 121,860 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 18.6 percent and a click-through rate of 3.3 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in February decreased 3.26 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was up 2.48 percent year-over-year in February. Social media traffic was up 49.0 percent year-over-year in February. Referral traffic was down 6.84 percent YOY, and traffic from e-newsletter clicks was up 6.7 percent YOY in February. Display ad traffic was down 94.29 percent since the winter campaign used paid social versus display ads, and paid search traffic was down 22.47 percent YOY in February.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In February, Simpleview and Explore Asheville staff continued 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, including Things to Do in Asheville This Weekend, 50 Things to Do in Asheville, the event calendar and the 2019 Fed Cup microsite.

Web Usability Study with Destination Analysts: The web and content teams completed an in-depth usability study that began several months ago as part of the preliminary work for a site refresh. The study included a heatmapping assessment that tracked the eye movements of 400 travelers and an interview component consisting of 20 hour-long interviews with leisure travelers recruited from key markets. The study identified several strengths of ExploreAsheville.com—its effectiveness as a comprehensive and inspirational tool—as well as several opportunities for improvement. Recommendations will be incorporated into the full website refresh in FY 2019-20.

Online Reservations: There were 39 orders for 75 room nights in February with a total of \$12,691 in booking revenue and \$565.00 commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in February were Ohio, Virginia, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina.

February 2018	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$12,691	\$9,432	34.54%	\$113,397	\$99,695	13.74%
Commission	\$565.00	\$448.83	25.88%	\$5,260.63	\$4,544.39	15.76%
Orders	39	46	-15.22%	438	393	11.45%
Room Nights	75	71	5.63%	703	615	14.31%

Visitor Guide: There were 3,479 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in February, a 60.8 percent increase over last year. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 25,824 travel guide requests.

Top 5 DMAs for February	# of Guides Requested	FY 2018-2019 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
NEW YORK	175	NEW YORK	1,219
ATLANTA	141	TAMPA-ST. PETE, SARASOTA	922
TAMPA-ST. PETE, SARASOTA	124	ATLANTA	878
WASHINGTON DC	121	WASHINGTON DC	773
ORLANDO-DAYTONA BCH-MELBRN	116	ORLANDO-DAYTONA BCH-MELBRN	765

Tourism Management and Investment Plan: The team worked on several communication and collateral elements for the Tourism Management and Investment Plan (TMIP) in advance of the February rollout. Assets included a press release, talking points, an edited FAQ and a TPDF timeline. Media interviews were coordinated with Explore Asheville leadership with the Asheville Citizen-Times and Mountain Xpress. The materials were also distributed to the local media ahead of the board meeting.

Community Engagement:

Chow Chow:

Dodie continued to provide support to Chow Chow through her role on the branding/marketing committee. Explore Asheville continues to be instrumental in developing assets and editorial outreach plans that will benefit destination marketing efforts and the festival. Explore Asheville is reviewing VIP media for potential site visit hosting. The Explore Asheville PR team will also carry locally made, branded Chow Chow media gifts on upcoming media tours while Elizabeth White continues to move ahead on the build-out of the Chow Chow website on the ExploreAsheville.com platform.

Spring Ad Campaign Outreach:

The team also worked on a press release/backgrounder to announce and provide context for the new 360i creative for any media attending the rollout presentation at the BCTDA board meeting.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 41 definite group bookings in February, up 17.1 percent from the prior year (29 meetings/conventions, 12 weddings, 0 group tours). The combined total definite room nights were 5,425 room nights, down 20.3 percent from the previous year. Eighty leads (68 for meeting/conventions, 7 for weddings, and 5 for motorcoach), representing 21,787 room nights, were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in February. Leads distributed were up 12.7 percent and rooms represented were up 31.5 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$962,016 (down 31.3%). Actualized revenue was \$725,028 (up 99.5%). Person-to-person outreach totaled 919 contacts, down 20.7 percent. Indirect outreach totaled 3,630, down 70.2 percent.

Accepting an offer from the CVB, Mr. Daniel Bradley will start as the new Group Sales & Services Specialist on March 1, 2019.

Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:

- Connie Holliday made sales calls in Florida in conjunction with attending the Luxury Meetings Summit (11 planners). During the visit she hosted a Helms Briscoe luncheon and met with independent and corporate planners. Connie secured two RFPs totaling 2,155 room nights during the trip.
- Beth McKinney exhibited at the Wedding Festivals Bridal Expo. Approximately 400 brides inquired about the CVB's wedding services.
- Beth attended Travel South Domestic Showcase in South Carolina, meeting with 41 coach planners and journalists. Biltmore and Asheville Outlets partnered with the CVB.
- Kathryn Dewey made sales calls in High Point/Raleigh/Cary and Greensboro, calling on 11 corporate and association planners.
- Twenty wedding guides were downloaded this month as compared to 18 guides last February.

Fed Cup 2019: Asheville again elevated its reputation as an international sporting location with the hosting of United States Tennis Association's Fed Cup, February 9-10, 2019. This was the first time in 12 years USTA repeated the host destination. Pitting the Australians against the United States' women's teams, more than 5,000 spectators per day attended the scheduled play. The event generated approximately \$3.5 million in total business spending. The Explore Asheville CVB was a sponsor of the event and provided sales, marketing, and operational support before and during the week-long festivities.

Spirit of Hospitality 2019: Explore Asheville was a supporting sponsor during Destination International's Spirit of Hospitality Celebration, receiving logo placement and acknowledgement in all-print and digital promotional channels. VIP tickets and seating were also received. More than 300 attendees came to the event. The CVB used this event as an opportunity to host two clients.

Destination Showcase followed the next day. Forty-five planners stopped by the booth to express interest in Asheville as a meeting destination. In addition to the show, Shawn completed four DC sales calls.

Global Pharmaceutical & Medical Summit 2019: Tina Porter exhibited at Global Pharmaceutical & Medical Summit in Philadelphia, along with industry partners AC Hotel and The Foundry. In attendance were approximately 150 senior meeting planners. Explore Asheville was also a network break host and, as such, received a 25-word company overview in the event brochure, logo displayed on the event brochure cover, reciprocal website links, pre-conference email content, post-convention attendee contact list and other items.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted two site visits in February, including two groups represented by one planner – 2020 Commercial Vehicle Solutions Network – 541 rooms and 2019 National Shooting Sports Foundation and the 2020 Supply and Equipment Foodservice Alliance – 1,385 room nights.

AAA Initiatives: Leann Swims coordinated/executed two AAA Explore Asheville training webinars with a total attendance of 67 people. AAA Clubs and NC Welcome Center staff from across both the Southeast and the country attended. Presenting partners included The NC Arboretum, Biltmore, and Cambria and Haywood Park Hotels. The focus was Springtime in Asheville.

Leann Swims also coordinated/executed a Tennessee Sales Mission visiting nine AAA offices in Johnson City, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and the Nashville area. Presenting partners included Biltmore, LaZoom, The NC Arboretum, FIRC Group, McKibbin Hospitality, and Gray Line Trolley Tours. Staff met with approximately 50 AAA agents during the trip.

February bookings include (but not limited to):

- 2019 River Ruckus CrossFit – 250 rooms
- 2019 American Public Works Association NC Chapter – 10 rooms
- 2019 Winsight Outlook Leadership Conference – 311 rooms
- 2019 NC Association of Launderers and Cleaners Board Meeting – 25 rooms
- 2019 Society of American Foresters – Appalachian Chapter – 220 rooms
- 2019 NC Association of School Administrators – 54 rooms
- 2019 Highland Brewing Night Flight – 80 rooms
- 2019 National Council of State Boards of Nursing – 39 rooms
- 2019 NC Association for Property and Evidence – 210 rooms
- 2019 AAC Outdoor Track & Field Championships – 250 rooms

- 2019 National Park Service – 210 rooms
- 2019 Blue Ridge Parkway Association – 30 rooms
- 2020 Attorney Liability Assurance Additional Rooms – 193 rooms
- 2019 ABYSA – 45 rooms
- 2019 American Medical Writers - 46 rooms
- 2019 Mead Johnson Nutrition – 24 rooms
- 2019 Synnex Corporation – 24 rooms
- 2019 Verizon – 50 rooms
- 2020 Boston Consulting Group – 450 rooms

Group Sales Communications:

A new mailer was finalized to reach a broader base of meeting planners outside the team’s database and highlights Asheville’s continuing growth and assets for meeting planners. The goals of the mailer are to educate planners on key points that overcome barriers to considering Asheville and increase the number of planners that would add Asheville to their destination consideration list.

Mass Communications:

- An e-newsletter was sent to 1,797 Group Tour Operator clients in our database. Open Rate: 19 percent; Clicks: 73.
- An email was sent to 1,735 Texas-area planners promoting Explore Asheville’s attendance at Destination Showcase. Open Rate: 15 percent; Clicks: 91.

Social Media Channels:

- LinkedIn repost with content by Small Market Meetings – 322 views
- LinkedIn content post on where to take your incentive group – 404 views

Convention Service Highlights:

The Fed Cup tennis event in February was supported by numerous CVB staff volunteers in the week leading up to and during the event weekend. Welcome gifts were provided to Fed Cup VIPs and an information table was set up at the US Cellular Center. Carli Adams helped to organize the Hoops Against Hunger Hotel Challenge with SoCon team host hotels participating to collect the most food donations prior to the start of the event. This complemented Eblen Charities’ larger Hoops Against Hunger effort that is a part of the SoCon Championships each year. Welcome gifts were provided to the Southern Conference Winter Athletic Directors Meeting.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

- Contracts for the six projects awarded funding in the 2018 cycle are in development, and Pat has been meeting with the grantees to review contract terms and coordinating edit requests with the BCTDA’s attorney. The grantees are Buncombe County Recreation Services, Center for Craft, LEAF Community Arts, North Carolina Arboretum Society, and River Front Development Group. The Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation also received an award for improvements to the YMI Cultural Center. Leadership of the organization has since changed and the grantee notified staff that the YMI Cultural Center team will assume responsibility for project.

- As required in the TPDF Agreement, all grantees in active contract submitted their Annual Report in January except for two grantees. After receipt of all reports, Pat will provide a summary report to the BCTDA.

Partner Engagement and Events:

New Partners: Joe onboarded 10 new partners in January: Andy's Artful Furnishings, Asheville Adventures, Date Night Ride, Early Girl Eatery West, Fleetwood's, Hike Asheville, Inner Wild Yoga, Mangum Pottery, Outward Bound Professional, and Sugarcane Sewing Studios. Joe and Pat continue to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing as well as service the partners who request listings.

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Orientation on February 13, which included representatives from Asheville Radio Museum, Asheville Rooftop Bar Tours, Biltmore Estate, Daidala Ciders, Hike Asheville Inc, PONG AVL, River Row Flats, Sweet Biscuit Inn, and Walk with Me Tours.

Hospitality Outlook 2019: The public affairs team organized the 7th Annual Hospitality Outlook on February 22, with 91 Buncombe County lodging leaders and community stakeholders in attendance. The event included a detailed report on market performance and forecast for the coming year. Explore Asheville President & CEO Stephanie Brown reported on CVB updates and initiatives that lay the groundwork for 2019. Bennjin Lao, Business Development Executive for STR, shared expert insights and data that combines hotel and short-term rental data for Buncombe County. The team issued a survey to attendees to evaluate the quality of the event. Of those who attended, 42 completed a post-event survey. Sixty-nine percent of responders found the information presented to be highly relevant and 28 percent found the information to be mostly relevant. 57 percent were highly satisfied with the value of the program and 38 percent were mostly satisfied. Ninety-seven percent would recommend the Hospitality Outlook to others.

Partner Forum "What's New in 2019": Planning is underway for a Partner Forum on Wednesday, March 27. Forum content will include a presentation by the PR team as well as a news share by partners in attendance. Two sessions will be held – morning and afternoon – for the convenience of partner schedules.

Tourism Week Summit 2019: Planning is underway for the third annual Summit to be held in May.

Projects: Pat and Glenn continue to manage the process of maintaining and updating the Wayfinding system signage. Geograph began the first of two scheduled installations in late February which included public parking signage on the College Street and Sears Alley garages.

Pat and Joe participated in the Visitor Guide kick-off meetings to begin planning for partner listings in the 2020 guide.

CRM Audit: Joe continues to work on a multi-month auditing process for Explore Asheville's customer relationship management (CRM) database that will work in tandem with the Marketing team goals for ExploreAsheville.com following a website usability study.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Administration: Glenn completed termination tasks for Brit Martin, Data Specialist, who's last day was January 2.

Glenn set the meeting calendar for interviews with three Hospitality Coordinator candidates and four Director of Finance candidates. Glenn joined Stephanie in interviewing the three Hospitality Coordinator candidates.

Glenn continued to meet with Drew Pollick with Craft HR Solutions to strengthen the HR Department, continue recruiting the new Marketing Analyst and Director of Finance positions, and strengthen the onboarding process for new staff.

Wayfinding Signage: Glenn and Pat met Greg Freudiger of Geograph at the Sears Alley Garage (Coxe Avenue) to discuss the placement of two Wayfinding Signs with locations that were less than ideal. Options were discussed with the decision to involve the County and City officials who can make final decisions on placement within road rights-of-way.

Sponsorship Grants Program: Glenn processed Sponsorship funding for: Asheville WordFest, Asheville Mini Makers Faire and Xpand Fest.

Workforce Development: On February 11, Glenn attended a Job Fair for Hospitality and Tourism Management students at Clemson University. He was there to recruit a summer intern. Glenn was joined by Liz Russo, representing McKibbon Properties.

On February 27, Glenn attended the "Hospitality and Tourism – Transportation Workshop," hosted by the Chamber. The discussion looked at ways transportation can assist employers in our industry with recruitment and retention of staff. The discussion included expanding hours to meet our 24/7 work schedule and making connections to the surrounding Counties to be able attract workers outside Buncombe County.

Records and Communication Retention Schedule: Glenn met with Jason Woolf of WNC Archives to discuss the State's requirements for retaining documents and communication originating out of the BCTDA (Explore Asheville). The meeting cleared the way for us to establish a summary protocol to which staff will adhere, but more importantly determined that we are not required to maintain a retention schedule at the level required of local governments.

Archiving BCTDA Historic Documents and Materials: Glenn contacted Heather South at WNC Archives about obtaining a part-time archivist to review all historic documents and materials stored on site and in two storage rooms we have on the business campus in a separate building. After a meeting on February 20, Will Morgan, a student at UNC-Asheville, who is completing his master's in public history, accepted the task and began the very detailed work of organizing in chronological order and by subject matter the 30+ years of documents amassed by the BCTDA. Ultimately, all materials will be stored in clearly labeled bankers boxes on rolling shelves. There will be an accompanying document that clearly details where any document or piece of information is stored, much like a library's archive room.