



March 23, 2018

To: BCTDA  
From: Stephanie Pace Brown  
Subject: President's Report of February Activities

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We have wrapped up a first quarter full of exciting sports events including Gala Gymnastics, FedCup and Socon. The events have been visitation generators and have also contributed significant media reach and awareness of Asheville as a travel destination. Kudos to our sales team for their role in attracting these events to Asheville and to the entire Explore Asheville team for supporting the success of these events from promotion to logistics to volunteering.

### **MONTH AT A GLANCE**

- The winter advertising campaign concluded February 28. It reached 13 million and generated almost 11,000 clicks.
- The spring campaign launched mid-March.
- The FedCup sold out with 5,028 attendees each day of competition with several events leading up to the weekend. Significant national and international media reach was achieved.
- The Sales Team sponsored the entertainment for the Spirit of Hospitality Celebration in Washington DC and exhibited at Destination Showcase the following day.
- The Hospitality Outlook was held March 1 with 106 attendees including several elected leaders.

### **FEBRUARY METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS**

- During February, the sales team posted 1,159 personal contacts (up 22%). February sales activities generated 72 sales leads (down 1%) and 35 convention bookings (up 40%), representing 6,803 rooms (down 2%). Eight months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 13 percent and room nights represented are up 6 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 14 group events in February (up 27%), with revenue of \$363,413 (up 10%). The services team assisted 14 groups (flat).
- The PR team landed 32 significant placements in February (down 20%), with 31 media touchpoints (down 54%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$50,484 with reach of over 1.4 million. Online placements added \$528,579 in value and reach of over 386 million.

- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 255,287 visits (up 3%), including 152,517 to the mobile site (up 8%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 1,247 (down 14%) and video views totaled 100,575 (down 38%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 71 room nights (down 48%) with total room revenue of \$9,432 (down 50%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 6,539 visitors (down 21%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.

## **HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS**

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$17,255,229 in January, an increase of 12.6 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 47.1 percent during January (up 1.2%). The average daily room rate was \$111.03 (down 0.2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$52.25 (up 1%). Room demand increased 8.5 percent with 113,097 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 30 percent to total 64,931 in January.

## **MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Advertising:** The winter cozy campaign is winding down and will end on February 28<sup>th</sup>. As of February 18<sup>th</sup>, the campaign had served over 13 million impressions and had generated 10,954 clicks leading to 7,999 sessions on ExploreAsheville.com. Full campaign reporting will be available in mid-March. Additionally, Cat Kessler and Sarah Kilgore worked together to deploy an array of Facebook advertising surrounding the cozy winter messaging. The campaign included single-image ads, looping videos, image carousels and an article link. In all, the campaign resulted in more than 4,000 clicks back to the website, at an average cost of \$0.96 per click. The campaign reached more than 116,000 users, and also garnered 32,000 video views. Also, this month, the marketing team leaders attended a webinar on advanced Facebook Advertising techniques which they look forward to deploying in future campaigns.

**Spring Campaign:** The agency and marketing team are finishing up the spring campaign planning and are on track for an early March launch. The campaign landing page was developed and incorporated user-generated content for added authenticity. Spring broadcast television will be in the following markets: Atlanta, Raleigh, Charlotte, Charleston, Columbia, Nashville, Knoxville, Cincinnati, Greensboro, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Washington D.C., and West Palm Beach. In addition to broadcast, the campaign will have a strong digital presence throughout the Southeast in display, retargeting, paid search, and social media advertising. Digital creative is being finalized with a focus on messaging around “The Magic of Spring” in Asheville. Radio will extend the Asheville footprint in Atlanta, Raleigh, Charleston, Knoxville, and Washington D.C. by serving as a platform to keep Asheville top-of-mind and providing event driven messaging with specific reasons to visit. Print advertising will be utilized for inspirational messaging to a total circulation of 5.7 million people including publications such as *National Geographic Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Atlanta Magazine*. The campaign also features several integrated partnerships, including one with The Local Palate’s Southern Weekend which will broadcast in 63 television stations across 43 markets in the Southeast.

Paid search efforts: The combined Google and Bing search campaign generated more than 700 requests for the Asheville Visitor Guide, less than in January but more than the previous six months. Paid search in February generated over 57,000 site visits, an increase of over 10k sessions year-over-year. Average session duration and pages per session are also up year-over-year, by 10 percent and 4 percent respectively.

Advertising & Photography Survey: The content and advertising teams collaborated on a survey instrument designed to collect feedback on destination photography and advertising assets, as a follow up to the recent focus groups. The survey was disseminated to 116k email subscribers in the March Asheville Traveler e-newsletter, and it received 350 responses. The team is currently analyzing the survey results.

**General Media Relations:** February media relations included site visits, meetings, and group pitching, as well as International Media Marketplace (IMM) follow-up. Media site visits included media representing *Sunseeker*, *AAA Home & Away* and *WTVQ-TV* in Lexington. Additional touchpoints of note included *Travel Channel*, *Good Times Magazine* (Canada), *BBC*, *AFAR* and *Food & Wine*. In total, the team logged 31 meaningful media touchpoints, initiated 25 targeted story pitches and hosted two media on the ground in Asheville. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *Private Clubs* magazine and *The Buzz Magazines*, among others. In February, Landis developed a detailed pitching plan based on editorial calendars from 23 M & C publications. She also worked with Carli Adams to produce a “what’s new” press sheet for 2018 for use with meeting editors. Landis also provided Asheville insight and images to a *Courier* writer looking for group tours and experiences in the food and beverage scene.

North Carolina Beer Month 2018: In April 2018, Explore Asheville will again join forces with Visit North Carolina, the North Carolina Craft Brewers Guild, and other destinations across the state to celebrate North Carolina Beer Month, now in its sixth year. In preparation for upcoming promotional efforts around the celebration, the PR team conducted partner outreach for beer-related news, events and packages, compiled the information received (seven lodging packages and several events and news tidbits) and submitted it to Visit North Carolina for their first national push (including e-newsletters, a news release and additional media outreach leading up to April). Info was also provided to the content team for editorial plans to support the initiative.

Fed Cup: The United States kicked off its 2018 Fed Cup campaign as the defending champions by defeating the Netherlands, 3-1, in the World Group First Round in front of a sell-out crowd at the U.S. Cellular Center in Asheville, N.C. Thirty media outlets credentialed for the event and generated hundreds of media hits nationwide. Multiple storylines were generated from this tie, with significant local daily print coverage in *The Asheville Citizen-Times*. National outlets covering the tie in Asheville included *The Associated Press*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *ESPN.com*, *Deadspin*, and *AFP*. Photo wire services in attendance included *Associated Press*, *GettyImages*, and *EPA*.

### **Significant Placements**

1. *Alicia Tenise Blog* – “36 Hours in Asheville: A Travel Guide”
2. *Budget Travel* – “Hotel We Love: Windsor Boutique Hotel, Asheville, NC”
3. *Cheers to Traveling* – “A Couple’s Guide to Romantic Asheville, North Carolina”
4. *GQ* – “Asheville is the coolest city you’ve never been to”
5. *Food Network* – “Finding Foodtopia: The Best Things to Eat in Asheville, North Carolina”
6. *MSN* – “15 Booming Craft Beer Cities”
7. *MSN* – “Budget-friendly roadtrips”

8. *Our State* – “Black Mountain Photo Essay”
9. *Successful Meetings* – “Southern Destinations: High Impact on the Down Low”
10. *WUSA* – “4 Fun and family-friendly Spring Break destinations!”
11. *Travel Channel* – *Top 5 Pet-Friendly Towns*”
12. *Business Insider* – “*The 10 best Spring Break destinations for avoiding crowds*”

**Content Development Projects:** The content team continued to focus on winter content in the month of February, while also continuing work on upcoming initiatives like Summer of Glass.

Sports Content: The content team supported multiple EACVB departments and the ABRSC in the weeks leading up to Fed Cup and SoCon. Jason shot photos and video at Fed Cup events, including interviews with Team USA Captain Kathy Rinaldi, a USTA leader, and photos of the Williams sisters in practice. He also coordinated with Amplified Media to create a time lapse video to show the transformation of the U.S. Cellular Center. The video was featured in coverage by WLOS and will be utilized for venue promotion purposes moving forward. Jason also shot and edited fresh winter b-roll footage that was shared with the Tennis Channel and with ESPN producers for use in the Fed Cup and SoCon broadcasts.

Video: Jason continued to capture cozy winter video content this month, focusing on more partners that fit the theme and, also, have their own shareable “wow”-factor. Shoots included Jargon, Flora, Little Jumbo, The French Broad Chocolate Lounge, and The Chocolate Fetish. The Chocolate Fetish video was rolled out just days before Valentine’s Day and had the largest reach of any Visit Asheville Facebook post in the month of February with a reach of more than 49,000 users. Cat also worked on a new Foodtopian profile and video—this one with the head chef at White Labs.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of February, seven new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: A photo tour of the new Titanic exhibit at Biltmore, a pitch for the #CozyAsheville seasonal hashtag, a round-up of big Biltmore events for the year, and four “Things to Do This Weekend” posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 29,181 new page views, followed by What You Can’t Miss in Asheville in 2018, which received 7,546 page views.

**Social Media Stats:**

Facebook:

*Visit Asheville* page

- February saw 1,247 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 269,209.
- There were 30 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of February.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a video Jason produced on The Chocolate Fetish. The video reached 49,406 people organically, generating 1,233 total reactions, and 140 comments.
- The most popular paid post this month was a share of a boomerang video meme that Cat produced with the tagline, “Why wait for Spring Break?” It reached 25,301 users in total (12,782 of those organically), generating 552 total reactions, 35 comments and 48 shares.
- The most engaging post this month was a share of the GQ article on Asheville. It engaged 8.2 percent of the 27,608 users reached.

### *Foodtopia page*

- February saw 39 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,361 likes.
- There were 4 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of February.
- The most popular post — a share of the link announcing Asheville's James Beard Award finalists — reached 3,510 people, generating 105 reactions.

### Video:

- There were 9,937 new, organic YouTube views in February. The most popular video by organic views this month was the Spirit of Asheville, which received 1,652 non-paid views. Sammy Visits Asheville came in second with 1,274 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 100,575 views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 1745,543 views of Explore Asheville content YTD (since July 1, 2017).

### Pinterest:

The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,709. Foodtopia accounts for 1,383 of those. Explore Asheville – 3,326.

### Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 44,423 followers.
- There were 14 new posts in January. The most popular was a picture of a sunset from The Omni Grove Park Inn Sunset Terrace. It received 2,636 engagements (likes and comments).

### Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,228 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,950 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 119,877 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In February, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 120,791 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 17.6 percent and a click-through rate of 3.2 percent.

**ExploreAsheville.com:** In February, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 6.9 percent year-over-year, which includes a 4.4 percent increase in organic user sessions and a 24.7 percent increase in paid search user sessions. Mobile and tablet visits in February increased by 14.7 percent year-over-year. Referral traffic from the monthly Asheville Traveler email newsletter increased by 13.9 percent year-over-year in February. Direct traffic to the site was up 17.7 percent year-over-year in February.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In February, Simpleview continued its conversion rate optimization efforts on ExploreAsheville.com and worked with staff on a variety of split tests to increase site engagement, conversions and booking engine. Also, of note:

- The Outdoors Adventure section was up 23 percent for the month with 8,011 organic visits.
- The Hiking page was the 5th highest landing page with 3,630 visits, 5.12 average pages per session and a 0:04:59 average session duration.

- The 50 Things to Do in Asheville blog post was the 2nd highest landing page for organic traffic in February with 18,643 visits, 3.06 pages per session and an average session duration of 0:03:50, up 97 percent year-over-year.
- The top event detail for February was the 23rd Bluegrass First Class Festival with 1,984 organic visits.
- The top listing detail for February was the Adventure Center of Asheville with 7,807 organic visits.

ExploreAsheville.com continues to outperform industry averages with 27 percent more total pages per visit, 36 percent longer visit duration, 33 percent more organic pages per visit, and 45 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of February.

**Online Reservations:** There were 46 orders for 71 room nights in February with a total of \$9,432.45 in booking revenue and \$448.83 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in February were North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Virginia.

**Visitor Guide:** In February the Explore Asheville team met with the Visitor Guide publisher, SagaCity Media, for a 2019 kick off planning meeting. In the meeting the teams reviewed areas of opportunity for 2019, brainstormed editorial ideas, and discussed overall approach to new imagery. The teams agreed to streamline/reorganize some of the listing sections to ensure optimal usability for the consumer.

Visitor Guide Requests

There were 2,163 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in February, a 28.9 percent decrease from last February. Year-to-date, there are 17,465 travel guide requests, a 4.9 percent increase from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are:

Top 5 DMAs for February 2018	# of Guides Requested	FY 2017-2018 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
New York	101	New York	777
Atlanta	71	Tampa – St Pete	614
Davenport-Rock Island-Moline	68	Atlanta	613
Chicago	63	Washington, DC	535
Orlando-Daytona	63	Philadelphia	516

**GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE**

Group sales reported 35 definite group bookings in February, up 40 percent from the prior year (18 meetings/conventions, 12 weddings, five group tours). The combined total definite room nights were 6,803 room nights, down 2 percent from the previous year. Seventy-two leads (48 for meeting/conventions, 16 for weddings and eight for motorcoach) representing 17,796 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in February. Leads distributed were down 1 percent and rooms represented were up 4 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,400,622 (down 14%). Actualized revenue was \$363,413 (up 9.6%). Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,159 contacts, up 22 percent. Indirect outreach totaled 12,172, up 595 percent.

### **Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:**

- Carla McGlynn made sales calls in DC in conjunction with Destination International's Spirit of Hospitality Celebration and Destination Showcase (more below). Two RFPs were received from these calls. Carla also attended the DC Chapter of Professional Convention Managers Association's Monthly Education Meeting while there.
- Carli Adams attended the SCSAE trade show in Columbia, meeting with 35 planners. Industry partners participating in the tradeshow were Biltmore Farms Hotels, Grand Bohemian, Crowne Plaza Tennis & Golf Resort, and Biltmore.
- Beth McKinney exhibited at the Wedding Festivals Bridal Expo. Approximately 400 people stopped to inquire about the CVB's wedding services. In addition, Beth taught a 15-minute workshop on how to incorporate the essence of Asheville into a couple's wedding planning. Approximately 75 people attended this workshop.
- Carla attended Global Medical Meetings 2018 in Philadelphia along with industry partner AC Hotel. There were 160 planners in attendance, 50 of whom came by the booth during the trade show and expressed an interest in Asheville as a future meeting destination.
- Eighteen wedding guides were downloaded this February as compared to 28 in February 2017.

**Fed Cup 2018:** Asheville elevated its reputation as an international sporting location with the hosting of United States Tennis Association's Fed Cup February 11-12. Pitting the Netherland's 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. 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 2018:** In the continued effort to place Asheville in a national competitive set, Explore Asheville sponsored the entertainment during Destination International's sold-out Spirit of Hospitality Celebration held at the corporate headquarters of National Geographic. Stephanie played a leading role in the evening's activities as the host of the award's portion of the event. More than 300 attendees enjoyed a taste of Asheville's music scene with a performance by Abby the Spoon Lady and Chris Rodrigues, the hit of the evening. Three DC based clients attended as Explore Asheville's guests. Sponsorship benefits included a website link on all promotional materials sent about the event, recognition in all digital and print assets and looped promotional video playing throughout the evening.

Destination Showcase followed the next day. Sixty planners stopped by the booth and expressed interest in Asheville as a meeting destination. Two RFPs were received during the trade show.

**Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:** The team hosted seven site visits in March. Included were 2018 Bristol Myer Squibb – 275 rooms; 2019 Appalachian State Conference – 200 rooms; 2019 National Small College Enrollment Conference – 425 rooms; 2019 Neuroscience Education Institute—1,220 rooms; 2019 Extra Storage Space - 520 rooms; 2019 NC Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Regional Meeting – 80 rooms; 2018 Jupiter Legend Motor Coach Series – 400 rooms.

**AAA Initiatives:** Leann Swims coordinated/executed two AAA Explore Asheville training webinars with a total attendance of 91 people. AAA Clubs and NC Welcome Center staff from across both the Southeast and the country attended. Presenting partners included Wildwater/Adventure Center, Biltmore, and Comfort Suites Outlet Center. The focus was Springtime in Asheville.

February bookings include (but not limited to):

- 2018 American Medical Writers - 46 rooms
- 2018 Asheville Yoga Festival – 170 rooms
- 2018 Big South Health Summit – 100 rooms
- 2018 Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association Boys – 1250 rooms
- 2018 Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association Girls – 1325 rooms
- 2018 BSH Home Appliance Corporation – 20 rooms
- 2019 Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium – 115 rooms (48-Hour Attendee)
- 2019 NC Writers Network – 150 rooms
- 2018 Current Powered by GA – 80 rooms
- 2018 Big South Men's Basketball Championship – 710 rooms
- 2019 Winsight – 280 rooms
- 2018 Bristol-Myers Squibb – 90 rooms

#### **Group Sales Communications**

Group Sales PR efforts kicked off in February and an updated 2018 press sheet was sent to 20 meetings and group tour publications. Two new articles were published on the Meeting Planner section of ExploreAsheville.com – “What’s New for 2018” and “8 Reasons to Work with the Explore Asheville CVB”.

#### **Media Coverage:**

- Landis Taylor organized a media site visit at the request of two visiting writers with *Leisure Group Travel* magazine. Landis and Carli Adams met with the writers while they were in town.
- Staff responded to a request from a writer with Courier magazine about culinary activities for groups.
- Asheville was the headlining destination in a Successful Meetings’ article “Southern Destinations: High Impact Meetings on the Down Low”. Staff had provided information to the writer.
- Asheville was again the headlining destination in a Going on Faith article “Mountain Retreats”. The CVB team helped the writer on this article as well.

#### **Mass Communications:**

- An email was sent to 1,006 D.C. area clients in advance of Destination Showcase in D.C. Open rate: 21 percent; Click to Open Ratio: 16 percent
- An invitation to a client event hosted by Explore Asheville was sent to 120 Philadelphia area clients. Open rate: 22 percent; Click to Open ratio: 23 percent
- An e-newsletter was sent to 10,954 meeting planner clients. Open rate: 15 percent; Click to Open ratio: 25 percent

**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 Feb 15-28. This complemented Eblen Charities' larger Hoops Against Hunger effort that is a part of the SoCon Championships each year.

**Departmental Activities:** Dianna and Beth hosted a business development meeting with five representatives from Jupiter Legend, a Chinese inbound receptive operator, to talk through future business opportunities. The team held its annual department planning retreat, met with various hotel partners, attended meetings with representatives from UNC Asheville, Bob Lewis Park, and ABYSA. Staff attended the brand reveal at Highland Brewery and the draw ceremony for Fed Cup. Team members toured Homewood Suites. Staff attended the monthly Asheville Buncombe Sports Commission and SoCon Local Organizing Committee meetings.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### **Tourism Product Development Efforts:**

TPDF projects in active contract submitted their annual reports in January. Pat compiled the information and presented a summary to the BCTDA at the February meeting. The report is on file with Explore Asheville CVB. The 2018 cycle was also announced at the board meeting and will commence with an Information Session for potential applicants on April 11. Pat has been meeting with several prospective applicants to review the application process.

The Enka Youth Sports Association hosted an Open House at the Enka Sports Complex on February 20. The event included a TPDF check presentation ceremony. The ballfields were completed in December; and the new concession is expected to complete in April 2018. The Center's first tournament, the USA Softball Super 80 show case, is scheduled for July 2018.

Pat is working through contract development and amendments with recent TPDF award recipients - City of Asheville Riverfront Redevelopment project, Buncombe County Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project, and the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center Expansion project.

In response to the challenge to the Haywood Street Congregation fresco project award received from the Freedom from Religion organization, the BCTDA consulted with its attorney and announced at the February 28 board meeting that it will defer any additional action on the pending grant, and will work with its attorney to review the complex legal and policy questions that have arisen in the wake of recent legal action stemming from the award of the \$72,500 grant for the creation of a fresco. Additionally, the BCTDA and the TPDF committee will undergo a process to review guidelines that could assist in navigating its legislative obligation in awarding funds and the potential for legal questions that could be raised in projects that could have similar connections. On March 1, Haywood Street Congregation withdrew their request for funding.

## **Partner Engagement:**

**Hospitality Outlook – March 1:** The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Hospitality Outlook will be held on March 1 at the Holiday Inn Biltmore West. Chad Church, Vice President of Client Services for STR, Inc., will present a detailed report on market performance and forecast for the coming year, and include expert insights on short-term rental data for Buncombe County. 106 attendees RSVP's for the informative lunch meeting, including lodging leaders, sales staff, elected officials, and CVB staff.

**Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation – February 14:** Fourteen partners attended the monthly orientation session including staff from Hood Huggers International, Design Driven Studio, Hidden River Events, Biltmore Farms Hotels, Holiday Inn Biltmore East, Navitat, Asheville Farm to Table Tours, Asheville Outlets, Asheville Mall, and Organic Growers School. Separately, Brit conducted one-on-one extranet trainings with three partners including De La Terra Skincare & Spa, Hidden River Events, and Holiday Inn Biltmore East.

**New Partners:** Brit created seven new partner accounts in February – Benjamin T Warner DJ and Musician, Izzy's Coffee House, Grey Eagle Taqueria, Open Hearts Art Center, Burgerworx-Downtown, Burgerworx-South, and High Rock Rentals.

**Projects & Community Outreach:** Pat is working closely with MERJE and members of city and county staff to develop Wayfinding signage for municipally owned and managed surface parking lots in downtown. Ten surface lots were identified to receive the signage; and a signage plan for the new Coxe Avenue garage is in development. Additionally, Pat is working with MERJE on the assessment of the county-wide Wayfinding Program to identify gaps in the system and planning for new assets.

The public affairs team continues to work with the Summer of Glass organizing committee to provide CVB support to the partners planning events and activities around the Chihuly exhibit at Biltmore later this year. Support included the review of over 60 artists and organizations to determine account eligibility; and an extranet training session is being scheduled in March for participating Summer of Glass contacts.

Pat & Brit also attended the Official Asheville Visitor Guide kick-off meeting with SagaCity to review future processes and logistics in preparation for the 2019 guide.

Brit, as the liaison for Buncombe County tourism listings on VisitNC.com, is assisting with listing updates in preparation for the redesign of VisitNC.com's website.

Pat attended the Asheville City Council Annual Retreat and the State of Downtown Luncheon.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES**

**Building:** Continued refining the key card system by meeting with Edwards Equipment at Martin Lewis Real Estate to discuss the system, educate Martin Lewis on utilizing it and adding the south exterior hallway entrance to the system. Later in the month, Glenn reviewed all access locations with Edwards Equipment to address holes in the metal door frames and gaps in the walls with exterior card readers. Edwards agreed to repair all areas of concern.

PBI will come by on February 27 to meet with staff interested in a stand-up work option in their office. Two primary opportunities are under consideration; a rising desk top, and rising monitor arms. PBI will provide us with a list of hardware and associated costs before a final decision is made.

Administration: On February 19, Glenn met with Kelly Rose with Aflac to discuss new value-added benefits available to staff in the coming fiscal year election cycle. The two plans under discussion are EZShield, which provides identity protection, and Financial and Legal Fitness, which provides support in those areas. The next day, Glenn met with a representative from IDShield and LegalShield to discuss similar coverage offered by Aflac.

Glenn met with representatives from ISA to begin discussions on the health benefits package for FY18/19.

Glenn worked to support Marla in her initial candidate interviews for the Business Intelligence Manager. Glenn, Stephanie, and Marla met with Dustin Clark, BIM Manager at Buncombe County to consider ways to refine the job description to attract a higher quality candidate.

**Workforce Development:**

Glenn Cox attended Goodwill's Business Advisory Committee to discuss hosting a future meeting at Explore Asheville with a focus on workforce development using a panel of lodging industry leaders and workforce providers.

On February 13, the Workforce Development Committee met to address two items. Marie Eller, Coordinator of Human Resources Development at AB Tech joined us to discuss their Guest Services training manuals provided by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. AB Tech teaches a Level 1 (Making Connections) and Level 2 (Golden Opportunities) course. The committee then agreed to submit a letter to Nathan Ramsey at the Mountain Areas Workforce Development Board requesting funding for a Hospitality & Tourism Industry Outreach Coordinator for workforce recruitment and retention. The letter was written and submitted on February 15.