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## **ASHEVILLE'S TOP TOURISM OFFICIAL RESIGNS TO TAKE JOB IN TAMPA**

ASHEVILLE, NC (October 21, 2011) – Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Vice President and Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) Executive Director Kelly Miller resigned today to accept the position of president and CEO at Tampa Bay & Company, the official tourism promotion agency for that region. Miller has been with the CVB, a department of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, since 1999. During his tenure, overnight leisure visitation increased from 2.3 to 3.32 million visitors annually and hotel sales grew 82 percent, from \$93 to \$169 million.

In 2001, Miller worked with the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority and tourism leaders to enact the first-of-its-kind Tourism Product Development Fund which dedicates one percent of the hotel room occupancy tax to capital projects in the community that can enhance the economy by driving additional overnight visits. He served on the Asheville City Council from late 2008 through 2009 after being appointed to the seat vacated by the newly-elected Buncombe County Commissioner Holly Jones. Most recently, he worked extensively with community leaders to launch the Asheville-Buncombe Regional Sports Commission which was critical to securing the return of the Southern Conference in 2012.

“Kelly Miller has been instrumental in the success of Asheville’s meteoric rise as a vacation destination in the past decade. He is a collaborator and leader in this industry and has a knack for bringing people to the table to get things done,” said Ron Morin, vice president and managing director at the Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa and BCTDA chair. “While we will miss his leadership, we wish him well in Tampa.”

“In the short time that I have gotten to know Kelly, I have found him to be the consummate professional,” Asheville Chamber President and CEO Kit Cramer said. “The people of Tampa are lucky to get him. We’ll miss him here in Asheville, but look forward to building upon the legacy of organizational strength he leaves us.”

Miller will assume his new duties in Tampa January 3 where he will oversee a staff of nearly 50 and a budget of more than \$10 million.

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Cramer said the Chamber is working directly with BCTDA to outline the process for a search for Miller's replacement.

BCTDA is a quasi-governmental entity created by the 1983 room tax legislation. The BCTDA oversees tourism marketing, sales and product development efforts and the expenditure of Buncombe County's four percent hotel occupancy tax revenues. It contracts with the Convention & Visitors Bureau at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce to implement its program of work and manage the annual tourism budget of nearly \$7 million.

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