

BCTDA

2013-14

Annual Report

Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

Presented by the
Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau



Buncombe County Tourism Enjoys Record Performance in FY 2013-14

The 2013-14 fiscal year marked record-high performance for the Buncombe County tourism industry, with lodging sales totaling \$183 million – an increase of 11.7 percent. More than 1.8 million hotel rooms were sold (up 3.8%). Overnight guests patronized local businesses, supporting jobs and generating local taxes that save Buncombe County residents \$1,251 per household.

The Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB), under the direction of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), implements sales and marketing strategies that attract visitors and garner national recognition for the Asheville area as a top travel destination.

During FY 2013-14, the ACVB hosted networking and educational programs for the tourism industry, representing more than 1,200 partners working as “Team Asheville” to promote our mountain community and to connect visitors to life-enriching experiences.

The ACVB worked with industry partners to implement a sales and marketing program that helped the destination achieve record performance during the fiscal year.

Marketing & Public Relations: Building Brand Awareness and Attracting Leisure Visitors to the Asheville Area

Paid and editorial media reach continued to grow significantly during the 2013-14 fiscal year. The investments in paid advertising totaled \$3.3 million and was expanded to include two new broadcast markets – Charleston and Columbia, SC – reaching 131 million households.

The public relations team cultivated new relationships and worked with longtime journalism contacts, generating 437 story pitches. They hosted 100 journalists in Asheville during the year and had face-to-face meetings with more than 150 additional journalists during media missions to New York City, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville, Greenville, Knoxville, and the Tri-Cities.

In addition, the team earned more than one million impressions with the development of two cutting-edge, national award winning multi-media web projects: “The Science Behind Fall Color” and “Explorers of the Blue Ridge Parkway.”



- Placed 605 major media stories
- Generated \$4 million of publicity value for the Asheville area in print and broadcast editorial coverage
- Generated an editorial reach of more than 2.4 billion media impressions
- Extended social media reach with a jump in Facebook likes to 128,000 – an increase of 53%
- Generated 198,600 video views



Combined marketing and organic efforts drove a record 3.8 million visits to [ExploreAsheville.com](#).

Group Sales & Service: Attracting Group Business to the Asheville Area

Asheville was represented in key markets throughout the 2013-14 fiscal year. The group sales and service team attended 15 tradeshows and market places, implemented sales missions in target markets, and hosted familiarization tours such as the 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience, which brought 18 meeting planners to Asheville.

The team also hosted client events in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. The ACVB sponsored the Destination & Travel Foundation Dinner in Washington DC, giving Asheville high profile exposure to an audience of 1,000 industry leaders.

In addition, the team implemented a communications strategy and introduced new sales materials, including a meetings logo and tagline, fact sheets, and a video.



“I had never been to Asheville before and the Convention & Visitors Bureau did a great job of showing me properties that fit in with the needs of my organization while interspersing really fantastic activities that showcased what Asheville is all about.”

~ Robin Ginner, The Vibration Institute



- Person-to-person outreach totaled 8,586 (up 41%)
- Issued 607 sales leads (up 26%) totaling 128,000 room nights
- Booked 336 groups (up 34%) totaling 57,670 room nights and \$9.7 million in revenue

Watch the FY 2013-14 Annual Report video at: [AshevilleCVB.com](#)



Economic Impact of Tourism in Buncombe County

9.1 MILLION
people visited Buncombe County in 2012



including 3.1 MILLION overnight visitors

\$1.5 BILLION spent at local businesses
\$2.3 BILLION generated in total sales
(including indirect and induced impacts)

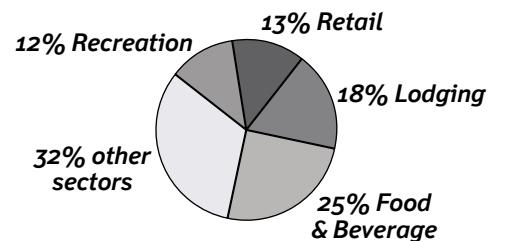
Tourism in the Asheville area generates
\$250 MILLION
in tax revenue.

\$59 MILLION
in local taxes are generated, including
\$13.7 million received by
the City of Asheville



Visitor spending reduces taxes in Buncombe County by \$1,251 per household.

23,000
jobs supported by visitor spending
(that's 1-in-7 jobs)



The unemployment rate in Buncombe County would be 18% without visitor spending.

Tourism Product Development Fund

The TPDF is funded with one percentage point of the occupancy tax and is a designated funding source for capital development projects that are expected to attract overnight visitors. The BCTDA is proud to be able to provide a source of funding for capital projects that not only grow the economy, but also build amenities that the community enjoys.

Since the fund's inception in 2001, there have been seven grant cycles, awarding a total of \$19,758,500 to 21 projects.

A TPDF Application Improvement Study was conducted in FY 2013-14, with the goals of simplifying the application process, lowering the barrier to entry for applicants, fostering transparency, and clarifying guidelines and criteria. Strategies for improvement were identified and were incorporated into the 2014 grant cycle.

The 2014 grant cycle marked the largest amount awarded since the Fund's inception in 2001. The BCTDA awarded five grants, totaling \$4,825,000, to five community projects:

- The **Enka Center Ballfields** project was awarded \$2 million to construct seven new ball fields and facilities in the Enka-Candler area that will enable the region to host traveling youth baseball and college softball tournaments and provide space for local youth sports.
- **Highland Brewing Company** will receive \$850,000 for expansion and improvements that will increase capacity, and include roof top access, event space and upgraded tour amenities.
- The City of Asheville was granted \$1.8 million for the **Riverfront Destination Development Project** for capital improvements along the French Broad River, including a network of visitor amenities including the Riverfront Arts and Culture Dispensary, pedestrian walkway connections, greenways, and boat ramps.
- **RiverLink** will receive \$25,000 to build a commercial-grade river access at the Pearson Bridge to facilitate usage of river experiences and activities.
- **The Collider**, a project of the Asheville-Buncombe Sustainable Community Initiatives, was awarded \$150,000 for the creation of a state-of-the-art business and conference facility in downtown which will host primarily mid-week corporate events and leverage growing demand for expertise from the nearby National Climatic Data Center.



UNC Asheville received \$500,000 for Sports Fields Lighting



\$50,000 grant for Pack Square Park Canopy



\$500,000 grant for new zipline at Navitat Canopy Adventures

Four projects completed in 2013-14:

- Renovations to the U.S. Cellular Center
- Lighting for Sports Fields at UNC Asheville
- Blue Ridge Experience at Navitat Canopy Adventures
- Pack Square Park Canopy