

**Fiscal Year
2021-2022**

Buncombe County TDA
Annual Report



Explore **ASHEVILLE**
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Meet the Members of the BCTDA Board



Brenda Durden
Vice Chair
 Asheville Hotel Group
 County Appointed
 First hospitality job: Front
 desk agent



Matthew Lehman
Treasurer of the Nonprofit
 The Grand Bohemian Asheville
 City Appointed
 First hospitality job: Bartender



Andrew Celwyn
 Herbiary
 City Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 College dining hall



Michael Lusick
 FIRG Group, Inc.
 City Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Night auditor



Larry Crosby
 The Foundry Hotel
 City Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Banquet server



**Leah Wong
 Ashburn**
 Highland Brewing
 Company
 County Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Deli counter



Scott Patel
 Pure Hospitality
 County Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Front desk agent



HP Patel
 BCA Hotels
 County Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Laundry attendant



Sandra Kilgore
 Asheville City Council
 Ex-Officio Member



Robert Pressley
 Buncombe County Commission
 Ex-Officio Member

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is a public authority with a vital public purpose. Board members carry on a long legacy and important responsibility that started in 1983, inspiring economic prosperity in Asheville, Buncombe County, and Western North Carolina for nearly 40 years.

A Strong Recovery

A message from Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Together, Asheville and Buncombe County's tourism community navigated a dramatic recovery coming through some of the most challenging and unprecedented times in recent history.

- » Visitors spent \$2.6 billion in 2021, supporting a wide variety of locally owned businesses, from beloved restaurants and breweries to art galleries, shops, and tour providers. With the popularity of outdoor and drive destinations, Buncombe County surpassed Wake County in visitor spending, ranking only second in the state behind Mecklenburg County where visitors spent \$4.1 billion.
- » That spending supported \$915 million in workforce income for area residents and 27,000 total jobs, making up 14% of all jobs in Buncombe County. In fact, tourism is one of only two sectors in our region that pays higher wages than the North Carolina average.

While we at Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority serve as the official destination marketing and management organization for the region, we also have a responsibility to maintain our quality of life. To better understand all of our needs and priorities, we embarked on hundreds of listening sessions with community members and analyzed the strategic priorities of many community organizations. From those engagements, we crafted four strategic imperatives that align our efforts with broader community goals:

- » Delivering balanced recovery and sustainable growth;
- » Encouraging safe and responsible travel;
- » Engaging and inviting more diverse audiences, and
- » Promoting and supporting Asheville's creative spirit.

With a successful visitor economy, we must also recognize some of the challenges we face together. These strategic priorities not only help guide what we do, but how we go about doing this important work for a community in which we all live, work, play, pray, and learn.

This report marks the results of that recovery and the first full year on this collective journey. We hope you will spend some time reviewing our progress. Please share ideas of how we can create more opportunities for more to win through our efforts.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



Vic Isley
President & CEO
 Explore Asheville CVB
 Buncombe County TDA
 First hospitality job:
 Restaurant server



Kathleen Mosher
Board Chair
 The Biltmore Company
 Chamber Appointed
 First hospitality job:
 Marketing firm with
 hospitality clients

Victoria Isley Kathleen Mosher

The scope of our work at Explore Asheville is driven and shaped by our **four strategic imperatives:**



Delivering 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.



Encouraging 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.



Engaging & Inviting 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.



Promoting & Supporting 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.



What does it look like to be a part of the tourism community in Asheville? Meet five locals who go behind the scenes to showcase what they value about the visitor economy.



“We want to contribute back to the community from a sustainable tourism standpoint. We want our guests to come here and have the same Asheville experience that Joe and I enjoy. We want to share that with people.”

Shelton Steele and Joe Balcken
Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins



Strategic Imperatives in Action

Delivering Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth

A dynamic new component of the Explore Asheville website is highly visual and interactively spotlights the communities, towns, and neighborhoods outside of downtown Asheville. This has resulted in a 20 percent increase in visitation to this storytelling on our site.

Check out the West Asheville Spotlight



Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences

Explore Asheville invested more than \$1 million in marketing dollars with BIPOC-owned companies and platforms. Explore Asheville also offered a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion training track for community partners and staff.



Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel

What happens when a professional guide creates an epic outdoor adventure for a nature newbie? That's the premise behind Park2Park: Venturing Out, a video series on Outside TV and Places. Travel with episodes featuring Asheville people and places paired with an adventurer who takes them on a transformational experience. Explore Asheville pursued this exciting opportunity as part of our commitment to support the outdoor economy and our strategic imperative of Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel.

Check out Park2Park: Venturing Out



Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

One of the ways Explore Asheville shines a spotlight on the heart of this community is through encouraging and assisting journalists, editors, and producers with editorial coverage. These efforts generated a cover feature in the June issue of Garden & Gun in which local musician Woody Platt was captured fly fishing.

"Asheville still manages to feel like its own pocket of personality, a city completely sure of its own identity as a place that supports dreamers – artisans, musicians, chefs, and nature lovers alike."

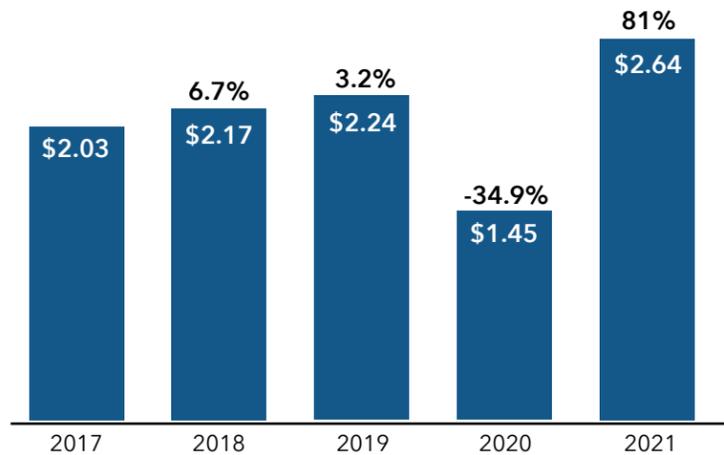
– local writer CJ Lotz

Visitor Contributions to Asheville and Buncombe County

With a rebound in travel confidence resulting from vaccines and easing restrictions, the travel and hospitality sector had a dramatic recovery in 2021. Visitor contributions to the local economy totaled \$2.6 billion in direct spending in a variety of local businesses, including food and beverage, retail, recreation and entertainment, transportation, and lodging.

Asheville visitor spending (in billions)

In 2021 visitor spending expanded 18 percent over 2019 levels

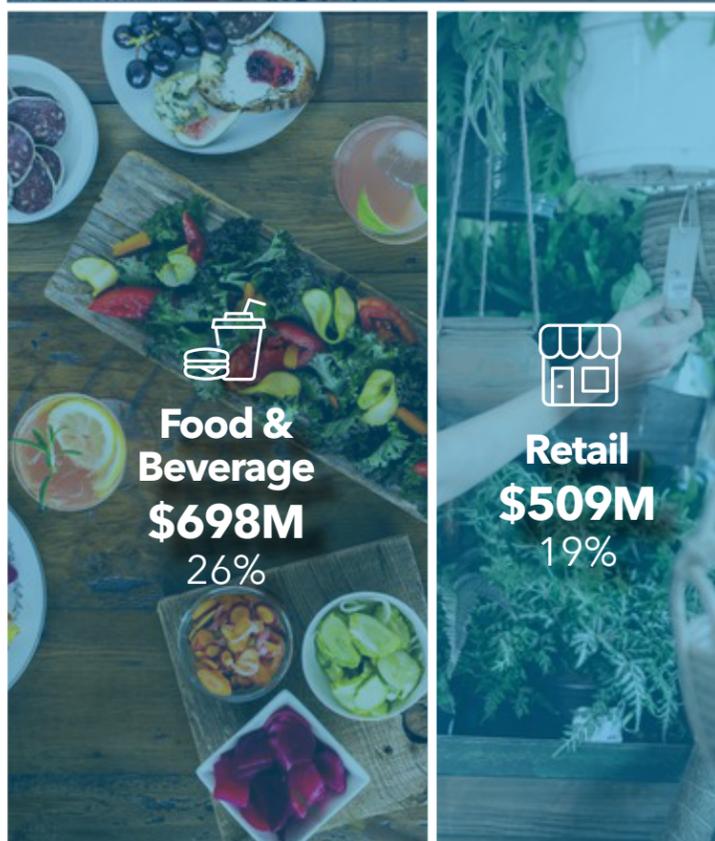


Source: Longwoods Int'l, Tourism Economics



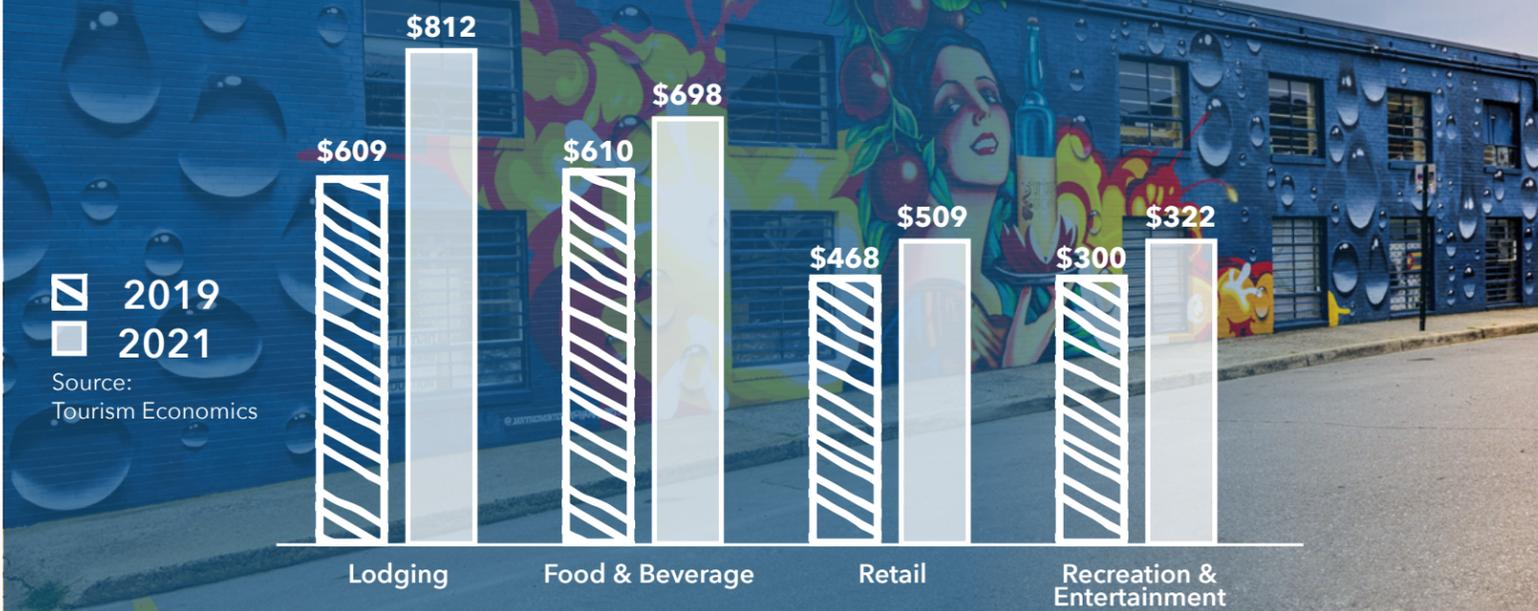
\$2.6 BILLION

Total Visitor Spending in 2021

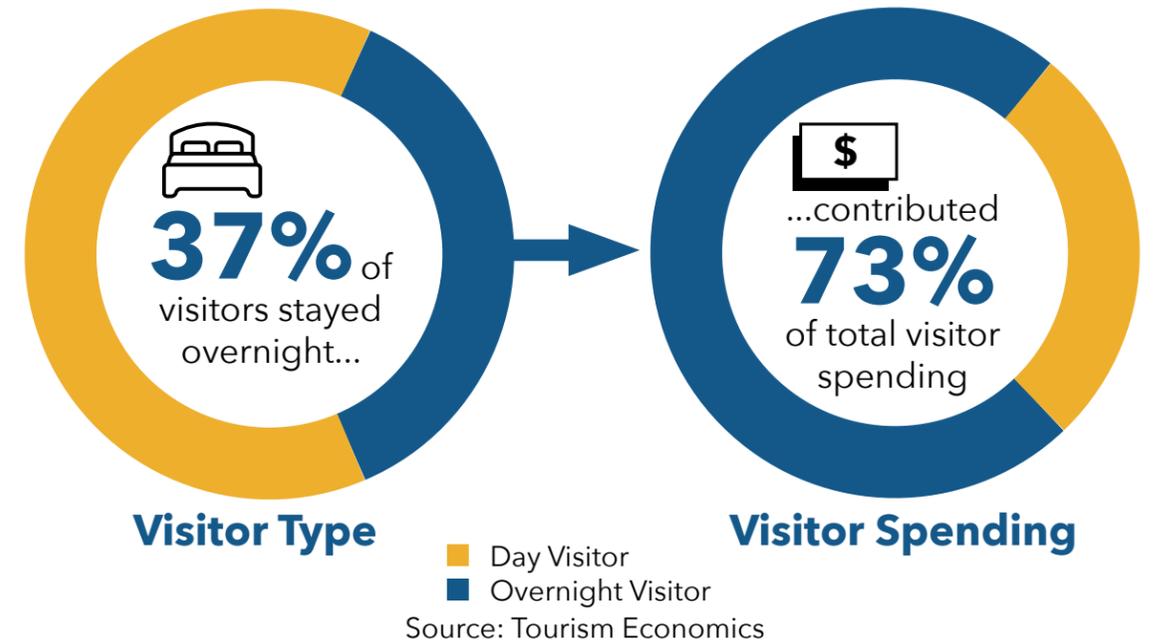


Source: Tourism Economics

Visitor Spending in Local Business Categories (in millions)



In 2021, Visitor Spending Exceeded 2019 Levels in Every Single Local Business Category



While overnight visitors make up 37 percent of visitor volume, they contribute a whopping 73 percent of total visitor spending. That equated to \$1.9 billion in 2021.

Although the occupancy tax paid by visitors who stay in Buncombe County hotels, vacation rentals, and bed-and-breakfast inns shoulders 100 percent of the destination marketing investments for our community, lodging partners garner just over 30 percent of direct visitor spending. Local businesses, restaurants and entertainment outlets reap 69 percent – the lion’s share of visitor spending rewards.

Visitor Contributions in Context



\$2.6B
spent in local
businesses

The \$2.6 billion in visitor spending means that nearly \$7.2 million was spent in local business EVERY DAY by visitors in Asheville and Buncombe County.



\$238M
state & local
taxes

Each household in Buncombe County would need to pay an additional \$2,261 in taxes to replace the visitor taxes received by state and local governments in 2021.



\$915M
workforce
income

The \$915 million in total workforce income generated by travel and hospitality is the equivalent of \$8,700 for every household in Buncombe County



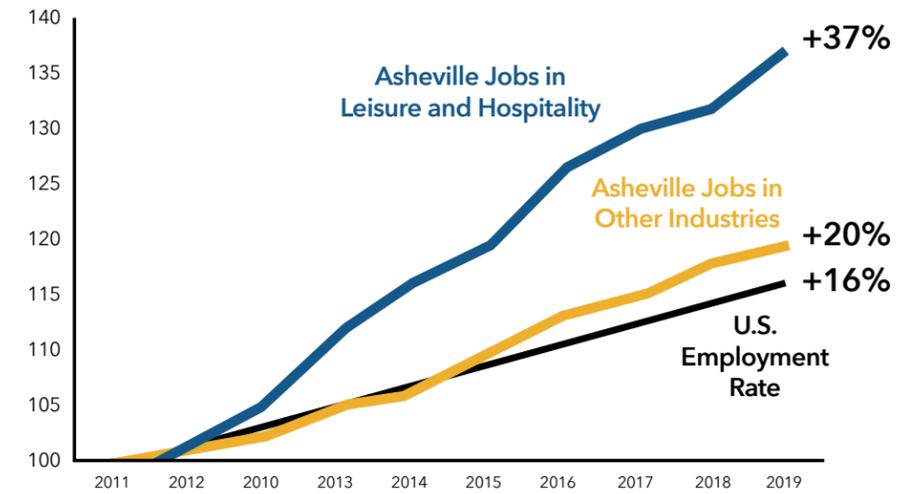
27,000
total
jobs

The number of jobs sustained by travel and hospitality (27,000) supports 14 percent of all jobs in Buncombe County.

Direct Employment Impacts

Leisure and hospitality employment has increased by 37 percent since 2010. Compared to a national gain of 20 percent over the same time period, our local economy would not be as dynamic without our travel and tourism sector, driven largely by visitors.

Leisure and Hospitality Jobs in Asheville MSA



Source: BLS

Leisure and Hospitality is one of two sectors in our region that pays **higher wages** than the **North Carolina average.**

Buncombe County Workers Directly Employed by Leisure and Hospitality Businesses



Source: Tourism Economics



“If you work in the animal field, you are also very closely related to the travel and hospitality field.”

Erin Oldread
WNC Nature Center

Power of Partnership

Explore Asheville collaborates with other community partners for the collective success of the community. As the primary financial investor in the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, Explore Asheville also partners with facilities such as Harrah's Cherokee Civic Center, which houses the Explore Asheville Arena.

Three shining examples of the power of partnership include:



Inaugural Asheville Championship

Explore Asheville signed on as the title sponsor of the four-team tournament, solidifying Asheville as the home of the newest season opener for top men's college basketball programs. Held in the shoulder season month of November, the tournament generated nearly \$500,000 in direct spending in its first year as well as national television exposure through ESPN networks. Explore Asheville has renewed its title sponsor commitment, securing the tournament for Asheville through 2024.

Southern Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Explore Asheville is a proud partner and supporter of the coveted SoCon Men's Basketball Championship, contributing to a five-year contract extension that ensures the event will take place in Asheville during the spring shoulder season of March. This tenured tournament generated nearly \$9.4 million in direct spending from teams, families, and fans.



Billie Jean King Cup

In spring 2022, Asheville became only the second city in the country to host the Billie Jean King Cup (formerly the Fed Cup) matches three times with a successful bid to the United States Tennis Association (USTA). With support of multiple community partners, including Explore Asheville, nearly \$10.8 million was generated to support local businesses.

Targeted Sales Efforts Focus on Need Periods

The Explore Asheville sales team focused its efforts on aligning sales with our strategic pillars by targeting outdoor products and advanced manufacturing meetings and events.

Meetings and events booked in the last year by the Explore Asheville sales team will generate \$72.8 million in direct spending for area businesses. The sales team succeeded in shifting group business outside of peak weekly time periods, with 11 percent of weekend meetings now taking place during the week.

\$72.8 MILLION

in direct spending from meetings and events booked by the Explore Asheville sales team

"My job as a wedding photographer is not only to take photos but to help couples find a spot in the area that really resonates with them."

Darrell Cassell
Wedding Photographer



Tourism Product Development Fund

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, through the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF), has invested more than **\$60 million** in support of 46 community projects since 2001. The fund is generated through the collection of occupancy taxes paid by visitors to the area. The TPDF supports community infrastructure projects that enhance Asheville's sense of place for residents and visitors.

Long before the pandemic, local hotel leaders as well as Buncombe County Commissioners and local delegates, advocated for a change in the allocation of occupancy tax, to increase funding for investment in community capital projects and reduce marketing funds for Asheville and Buncombe County.

A proposed bill filed June 1, 2022, by Senators Chuck Edwards, Warren Daniel, and Julie Mayfield ultimately passed and became law on July 1 through House Bill 1057. The three-quarters used for tourism promotion and one-quarter for community capital projects was shifted to a split of two-thirds/one-third, increasing funding for community capital projects.

Allocation of Lodging Tax Paid by Visitors in Hotels, Vacation Rentals, and Bed-and-Breakfasts dedicated to Community Projects



Woodfin Greenway & Blueway

The Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project includes five miles of greenway trails, Riverside Park and Silver-Line Park on the French Broad River, and a world-class Whitewater Wave feature, making it the largest funded project in the history of the TPDF at \$8.14 million.

The Whitewater Wave will be an environmentally sensitive world-class river wave – perfect for a broad range of kayakers and surfers with intermediate to advanced skills. Created from a carefully designed and engineered ledge feature made of natural rock and concrete, the feature will be installed in the riverbed. Additional TPDF investment in 2021 has made the following features possible:

- » Enhanced construction of the Whitewater Wave such as extensive fill removal to achieve a “no-rise” flood condition, increased erosion control measures and durable storm drain infrastructure, and increased height to create the in-stream Wave structure to accommodate bypass and proper river flow conditions;
- » Growth of Riverside Park’s footprint by 3.5 acres for a total of 8.6 acres; and
- » Expanded amenities include a viewing pavilion, terraced boulder seating, restrooms/changing rooms, 80+ parking spaces, a picnic shelter, play features, expanded boat launch and widened greenway section.

Silver-Line Park opened in early 2022. Riverside Park and the Wave are to be completed by the end of 2024.



Supporting Local Culture & Events

Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund Grants & Sponsorships

The Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund Grant Program was launched in 2016 by the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) and is designed to provide financial support for events that serve both the residents of Buncombe County and the visitors who travel to the Asheville area for the sense of authenticity and welcoming spirit that the destination exudes.

The primary purposes of this fund are to:

- » Support and preserve cultural identity within Buncombe County;
- » Stimulate the creation of new or expansion of existing festivals and cultural events; and
- » Contribute to the financial viability and long-term sustainability of the area’s festivals and cultural events.

We helped shine a spotlight on Asheville’s creative spirit by supporting many community festivals and cultural events enjoyed by residents and visitors alike through more than \$180,000 in grants and sponsorships for events that took place in 2022.

Revenue earned through advertising sales and lodging reservations booked on ExploreAsheville.com made the Festivals and Cultural Events Support Fund possible.

Event Grants

- AVL Beer Week | Asheville Brewers Alliance
- Asheville Celtic Fest | Asheville Celtic Group Downtown After 5 | Asheville Downtown Association Asheville Holiday Parade | Asheville Downtown Association
- The Asheville Fringe Arts Festival | Asheville Fringe Society Asheville Makers Faire | Asheville Makers
- Asheville Mardi Gras Parade & Queen's Ball | Asheville Mardi Gras Asheville Quilt Show | Asheville Quilt Guild
- ALT ASO | Asheville Symphony Orchestra
- {Re}HAPPENING 10 | Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
- Sourwood Festival | Black Mountain Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
- GRINDfest 2022 | Black Wall Street AVL
- The Blue Ridge Pride Festival | Blue Ridge Pride Center, Inc.

- Lake Julian Festival of Lights | Buncombe County Recreation Services
- Hardlox Jewish Food & Heritage Festival | Congregation Beth HaTephila
- Connect Beyond Festival | Connect Beyond Festival
- Shindig on the Green and Mountain Dance & Folk Festival | Folk Heritage Committee
- Hola Asheville | Hola Carolina
- LEAF Downtown AVL | LEAF Global
- Come to Leicester Artists Studio Tour | Leicester Artists
- Winter Lights at the North Carolina Arboretum | North Carolina Arboretum
- 74th Annual Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands | Southern Highland Craft Guild
- CiderFest NC | WNC Green Building Council

Event Sponsorships

- Goombay Festival | YMI Cultural Center
- ASAP Farm Tour | Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)
- Symphony in the Park | Asheville Symphony
- Creative Sector Summit | Asheville Area Arts Council
- Under the Stars | Asheville Museum of Science
- Fall Breakfast Buzz Series | Leadership Asheville
- 8th African Americans in Western North Carolina & Southern Appalachia Conference | UNC-Asheville
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Celebration & Programs | MLK Association
- ASAP Business of Farming Conference | ASAP

- Asheville Restaurant Week | Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce AIR Passport | Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
- WNC Black Business Expo | Western North Carolina Minority Business Association
- 90th Annual Asheville Open Tennis Championships | Asheville Tennis Association
- Get in Gear Fest 2022 | Outdoor Gear Builders of Western North Carolina
- Skyview Golf Tournament | Skyview Golf Association
- Chow Chow | Asheville Culinary Festival
- 3rd Annual Record Fair | 103.3 Asheville FM Friends of Community Radio



Resident Perspectives on Travel & Tourism

Building upon a 2019 *Travel Intelligence* survey of Buncombe County residents, key insights from the 2022 study include:

Perceptions of tourism have improved

89% of residents believe visitors help support the number and variety of **independent businesses** here.

80% of residents say they **encourage friends and family to visit**.

76% of residents cite they are **proud of their community**.

In alignment with Explore Asheville's strategic priority to promote and support Asheville's creative spirit, **nearly 9 in 10 residents indicate sharing stories of Asheville's creative spirit is an important initiative.**

"I love styling people for Asheville and helping them have an experience here. Tourism is supporting our business, so we can have it for local girls."

Susan Stewart
Co-owner, Nest Boutique



Majority of Buncombe Residents Believe Tourism is Beneficial to Community

While residents agree tourism poses some challenges, **83 percent believe tourism is beneficial to the community** and **69 percent agree that the positives outweigh the negatives.**

Residents May Expect More from Visitors than They do of Themselves

Many residents may not fully understand the impact of tourism. This indicates there is an opportunity to educate residents about how taxes paid by visitors are used to benefit the community through capital investments resident enjoy today.

Residents Expressed Some Concerns about Tourism but are Largely Supportive of Explore Asheville's Destination Marketing and Management Efforts to Address Them

78 percent of residents cited concern that growing tourism could hurt the local vibe although this seems to be more a fear than a reality. Only 32 percent of residents agreed with the statement that area visitors detract from the local culture.

Responsible Tourism

An overwhelming

94%

of residents agreed that encouraging visitors to practice responsible tourism was most important in helping to manage visitors and community.

Citing traffic and parking challenges, nearly three-quarters of residents agreed with Explore Asheville's strategies of dispersal of visitors throughout the county and throughout the year to deliver balanced and sustainable growth.



Read the report

Wilma Dykeman Honored Posthumously with William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award

Established over two decades ago, the William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award recognizes those who make a significant contribution to the travel and hospitality sector in Asheville and Buncombe County, providing exceptional leadership in making the community a special place to live and visit.

The award was created in tribute to the late William Amherst Vanderbilt Cecil for his championing Biltmore's preservation and success as well as his leadership in the tourism sector in Buncombe County.

This year's recipient is an Asheville native, the late Wilma Dykeman. Dykeman epitomized the qualities of such leadership through her many accomplishments as an environmental pathfinder, as well as an extraordinary writer, novelist, journalist, biographer, historian, and essayist. Dykeman was a world-class speaker, a compelling teacher community leader, and a role model for women to forge their own path.

She was also an avid and curious traveler. On the benefits of travel, she said, "For the seeker...the power of place is what we discover and fold into our memory to enrich the rest of our lives."

Dykeman demonstrated a both/and vision in her understanding that the environment and the economy do not have to be at odds. Instead, she suggested a virtuous cycle where a culture of clean water and environmental integrity attracts business and generates economic vitality.

As such, the Tourism Product Development Funds (TPDF) invested in the Wilma Dykeman Greenway along the French Broad River make the river more accessible for residents and visitors alike. The \$7.1 million TPDF investments through occupancy tax dollars in the Riverfront Destination Development project, were combined with city, state and federal department of transportation dollars, allowing for significant improvements in the River Arts District.

It is an honor to celebrate the legacy of Wilma Dykeman with this investment and award.



Watch the Video
Dedication to
Wilma Dykeman



Creating Opportunities for More to Win

Since destination promotion is entirely funded by lodging taxes paid by visitors who stay in our community, any qualified tourism-related business can benefit from the sales and marketing efforts of Explore Asheville at no charge. For example, signing up for a listing on ExploreAsheville.com puts your business in front of 7 million unique visitor sessions annually. We welcome the more than 80 new partners who joined our community network in the last year.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>All Souls Grotto
 Anchor Fly, LLC
 Arcadian Ave
 Arras Vacation Rentals
 Asheville Art Out
 Asheville Coffee Tours
 Asheville Hemp Farms
 Asheville Jeep Tours
 Asheville Plein Air Art Experience
 Asheville Proper
 Asheville Threads
 Asheville Urban Art Photo Tours
 AVL Music History Walking Tour
 Bear's Smokehouse - South Asheville
 Beer City Brewery Tours
 Bespoke Experiences, LLC
 Black Mountain Ale Trail
 Bliss Your Soul
 Bold Rock Hard Cider
 Buggy Pops
 Burning Sage Yoga
 Buxton Chicken Palace
 Cedar Rock Adventures
 Cellarest Beer Project
 Cielo Catering
 Circa 29
 Citron Gallery
 Comfort and Wellness Massage
 Dalton Distillery
 Dog and Pony Show
 Douglas Ellington House LLC
 Dragon Phoenix
 East Acupuncture Wellness Boutique
 Edible Asheville Farm Tours
 Eileen's
 Eldr
 Elevation Lofts Hotel
 Embrace the Space Between
 Foothills Food Truck at Hi-Wire
 Biltmore Village
 Found 'Em Kayak Fishing Guides
 Ful Flow Yoga
 Getaway River Bar
 Handmade on Haywood</p> | <p>Harvest Pizzeria
 Healed Skin and Candle Co.
 Herschel's
 Highland Brewing Downtown Taproom
 Hoppy Trees Beer and Spritz Bar
 Hyatt Place Asheville Airport
 James Vester Miller Historic Walking Trail
 Julieta Fumberg Creative
 Lumen Concierge LLC
 Madam Clutterbucket's
 Neurodiverse Universe
 Marquee Asheville
 Melting Pot Social
 Mikasa AVL
 Milly's Tayse of Di Island, LLC
 Modelface Comedy and Events
 Montford Moppets
 On The Inside Lingerie
 Peace Gardens & Market
 Pete Key Properties
 Provisions Mercantile
 Provisions Mercantile Biltmore Village
 Recline and Unwind Social Spa
 Rite of Passage
 River Raves
 Ronda W Cassada Basketry
 Russell and Armstrong Gallery
 Ryan Ashley The Poet
 Sam's Pop Shop
 Scenic Helicopter Tours
 Sugar and Snow Gelato
 Susan Stowell Bridal Couture Services
 Sweeten Creek Brewing
 The Aventine
 The S&W Market
 The Track at Asheville
 Ukiah Japanese Smokehouse
 Urban Exhale Massage Spa
 Vinnie's Neighborhood Italian – South Asheville</p> |
|---|---|

CVB Superstars

Every year, Explore Asheville honors community leaders who go above and beyond in helping us all promote Asheville and Buncombe County as a destination. This year's superstars include:



**Alexandria Ravenel,
Noir Collective**

- » Co-Founder, Noir Collective AVL LLC, a boutique shop and art gallery by and for Black entrepreneurs located on The Block
- » Equity Director, YMI Cultural Arts Center
- » Collaborator with Building Bridges of Asheville



**Bruce Waller & J Hackett,
Grind AVL + Black Wall Street**

- » Co-Owners of Grind LLC, a River Arts District coffee shop and organizers of GRINDfest, a celebration of Black business and entrepreneurship during Juneteenth weekend
- » Organizers of Black Wall Street AVL business networking group and founders of the new Black Wall Street AVL location in the River Arts District, which will be home to dozens of Black-owned businesses



**Fletcher Tove,
Buncombe County**

- » Serves in a top leadership role in guiding Buncombe County's response to the pandemic as Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and Safety & Security Officer for Buncombe County Health & Human Services
- » Has worked closely with Explore Asheville in helping partners understand how to keep their employees and guests safe and in compliance with public health guidelines and mandates



**J Smilanic,
WNC Photo Tours**

- » Founder of an initiative called Protect Pisgah, through which members of the public can join him in a monthly trash clean-up followed by a free, three-hour photo tour with lessons for the participants through his business, WNC Photo Tours
- » The initiative is also a means of educating participants about the principles of Leave No Trace – holding each other accountable when enjoying the forest



**Nikki Stewart,
The Foundry Hotel**

- » While Director of Sales at the Foundry Hotel, partnered with Explore Asheville to successfully host a safe meeting with 70 attendees - even before vaccines were available
- » Recognized by the Explore Asheville team for being "quick to respond," "going the extra mile," "creative," and "always saying 'Yes!'"

Meet the Explore Asheville Team

Executive Team



VIC ISLEY
President
& CEO



JULIA SIMPSON
Manager, Executive
& Strategy



JENNIFER KASS-GREEN
Vice President of Culture
& Business Affairs



JOSH JONES
Systems & Operations
Manager



GLENN RAMEY
Human Resources
Coordinator



JOSHUA RUNKLES
Office Assistant

Culture & Business Affairs

Partnership & Destination Management



PENELOPE WHITMAN
Vice President of Partnership
and Destination Management



TIFFANY THACKER
Director of Grants



ASHLEY GREENSTEIN
Public Information
Manager



MCKENZIE PROVOST
Events & Engagement
Coordinator



CHARLIE REED
Community
Engagement Assistant

Business Development



MIKE KRYZANEK
Vice President of
Business Development



CONNIE HOLLIDAY
Director of Sales



TINA PORTER
Senior Sales Manager



SHAWN BOONE
Senior Sales Manager



KATHRYN DEWEY
Sales Manager



BETH MCKINNEY
Sales Manager



EMILY CROSBY
Group Services
Manager



KHAL KHOURY
Group Sales
Coordinator



JOHN DAWSON
Group Services
Coordinator



MIA BROWN
Sales & Marketing
Assistant

Marketing



MARLA TAMBELLINI
Senior Vice President
of Marketing



JAY TUSA
Director of Marketing



WHITNEY SMITH
Director of Content



LUISA YEN
Director of Public
Relations



CARLI ADAMS
Group Marketing
Manager



MICKEY POANDL
Public Relations
Manager



CASS HERRINGTON
Public Relations
Manager



SHA'LINDA PRUITT
Public Relations
Coordinator



MAGGIE GREGG
Public Relations
Coordinator



HOLLY WATTS
Marketing
Coordinator