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**BUNCOMBE COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
GREENLIGHTS HISTORIC \$15.68 MILLION IN COMMUNITY PROJECTS
THROUGH ITS TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND IN 2022**

Half of community projects awarded slated to reach completion in 2023

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (Oct. 26, 2022) — The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) approved more than \$9 million of new investment in 10 community projects that will benefit residents and visitors. In addition to the \$6.64 million approved for two Buncombe County projects in the BCTDA's August meeting, Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) investments now total more than \$15.68 million in awards this year making it the most in the 20-year history of the fund. With today's decision, the authority has committed nearly \$60 million to 46 community tourism projects since the fund's inception.

The Tourism Product Development Fund is solely funded through an occupancy tax paid by visitors who stay overnight in Buncombe County in commercial lodging facilities including hotels, vacation rentals, and bed-and-breakfasts. Funding for the 2022 TPDF grant cycle was collected under the previous legislation that mandated TPDF receive 25% of the occupancy tax accumulated. Grant applicants are required to provide matching funds when applying for projects. The grant cycle included two phases involving written applications, presentations, and project site visits.

Following the guidelines and practice of the TPDF legislation, the Tourism Product Development Committee evaluated all projects and provided a recommendation, resulting in the BCTDA's approval of \$9.042 million to be invested in 10 community projects. These transformational projects reinforce Asheville's sense of place through the preservation of historical community assets, modernization of our cultural destinations, and enhancement of natural amenities.

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2022 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND INVESTMENTS

Applicant	Project	Investment
City of Asheville	Swannanoa River Greenway	\$2,300,000
City of Asheville	Coxe Avenue Green Street	\$1,950,000
City of Asheville	Asheville Muni Golf Course Revitalization Phase I	\$1,641,425
City of Asheville	WNC Nature Center – Gateway to the Southern Appalachians Enhancement	\$567,000
UNC Asheville Foundation	UNC Asheville Karl Straus Track – Renovation & Expansion	\$1,500,000
RiverLink, Inc.	Karen Cragolin Park – Greenway Phase	\$360,790
North Carolina Glass Center	Glass Center in Black Mountain	\$330,000
Asheville on Bikes	AVL Unpaved Phase I	\$188,355
Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS)	Museum Beautification Project	\$125,000
Wortham Center for the Performing Arts	The Wortham Center Phase II	\$80,000
SUBTOTAL		\$9,042,570
Buncombe County Government	Woodfin Greenway & Blueway	\$5,890,000
Buncombe County Government	Enka Recreation Destination	\$750,000
GRAND TOTAL		\$15,680,000

The 10 projects will enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors while demonstrating the ability to increase overnight visitors required by the state legislation. “We are grateful for the thoughtful community projects brought forward by municipal and nonprofit partners that reflect collective local goals and values,” said Vic Isley, president & CEO for Explore Asheville and the BCTDA. “The tourism development authority is proud to leverage these resources paid by visitors, expanding local partner capacity to produce new community assets, ultimately sharing the costs of visionary placemaking.”

MUNICIPAL PROJECTS MAKE UP THE LIONSHARE OF 2022 TPDF INVESTMENTS

The BCTDA greenlighted \$6.45 million of investment in projects proposed and prioritized by the City of Asheville, comprising 41% of total 2022 TPDF grants. The top three projects prioritized by the City Council were approved for their full request, while the fourth project, not set to be complete until 2026 was awarded at 65% of the funding request.

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1. \$1.64 million was dedicated to the first phase of revitalization for the Asheville Municipal Golf Course. Known as Muni, this course, designed in 1927 by famed architect Donald Ross, is on the National Register of Historic Places and home to the longest running African American golf tournament in the United States.
2. The largest investment, \$2.3 million, will leverage the City's 2016 bond and construct the first 1.3 miles of the Swannanoa River Greenway, a major east-west connector in the Buncombe County Greenway Master Plan.
3. The WNC Nature Center will receive \$567,000 to renovate current facilities and expand operations of this family-friendly attraction beloved by locals and visitors alike.
4. Lastly, BCTDA awarded \$1.95 million to actualize Coxe Avenue Green Street in accordance with the community developed South Slope Vision Plan. The transformation of Coxe Avenue includes streetscape improvements that enhance walkability such as wider sidewalks and pedestrian scale lighting, in addition to placemaking interventions such as gateway features and street furniture.

"This funding supports facilities and experiences that are valued by many of our residents," said Mayor Esther Manheimer. "These and future infrastructure and quality of life improvements are made possible through partnerships and collaboration, in this case between the City, County, and the TDA. I look forward to more such partnerships in our community."

In addition to the \$6.64 million approved for two other projects in the BCTDA's August meeting, Tourism Product Development Fund investments now total more than \$15.68 million in awards this year. Percentage breakdown across municipal and nonprofit partners for 2022:

- City of Asheville: \$6.45 million (42%)
- Buncombe County Government: \$6.64 million (41%)
- Nonprofit Partners: \$2.58 million (17%)

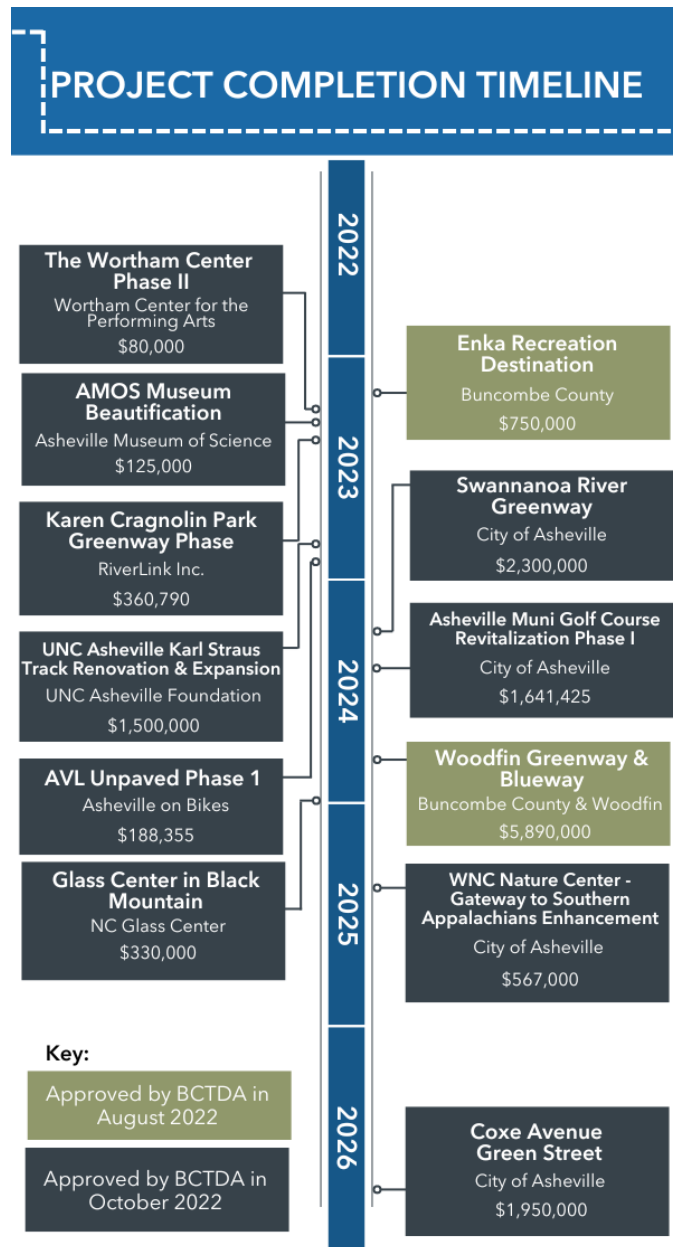
Recipients of the remaining \$2.58 million are advancing a series of community-driven projects that elevate the arts and sciences and expand our local portfolio of outdoor recreation experiences.

- The UNC Asheville Foundation will receive \$1.5 million to reconstruct an expanded Karl Straus Track, install new field equipment, and improve field conditions.
- RiverLink, Inc. was granted \$360,790 to develop the greenway phase of the new Karen Cragolin Park that will connect adjoining parks and serve as a link in the Wilma Dykeman Riverway.
- North Carolina Glass Center will receive \$330,000 to develop a new state-of-the art public glass studio and school in downtown Black Mountain, a sizeable addition to its original River Arts District location.
- Asheville on Bikes was awarded \$188,355 for the first phase of its 4.9-mile network of multi-use trails in urban Asheville, known as AVL Unpaved.
- Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS) will receive \$125,000 for a museum beautification project that expands exhibition space.
- The Wortham Center was awarded \$80,000 to grow the capacity of its facility to enable the simultaneous use of all three venues by local and touring production companies. Evening performances encourage additional overnight visitation.

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"Your \$1.5 million award to the Karl Straus Track Renovation Project helps us tremendously in modernizing and improving the track not just for our student-athletes, but everyone in the greater Asheville and Buncombe County area," stated Janet R. Cone, Director of Athletics. "Your support shows how we, as a community, can work together to help fulfill a need for first-class facilities in the mountains of North Carolina."

The BCTDA prioritized primarily shovel-ready projects that will be accessible to the community as early as next year.



Total investment of 15.68 Million approved & recommended from TPDF funds collected through FY22

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2022 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND INVESTMENTS

Swannanoa River Greenway

The City of Asheville is set to build out the 1.3-mile first phase of the Swannanoa River Greenway starting at Glendale Avenue and Thompson Street then heading east. This spine greenway demands a wide width and amenities such as benches, trashcans, night lighting, and signage. This project leverages the 2016 bond to complete a major east-west connector in the Buncombe County Greenway Master Plan in addition to the greater Hellbender Regional Trail and Fonta Flora State Trail.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$2,300,000

Coxe Avenue Green Street

The City of Asheville's placemaking project will make Coxe Avenue the most walkable street in central Asheville. Through the addition of new public spaces, wider sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, wayfinding, gateway features, and site-specific street furniture, the street will support increased opportunities for public interaction and healthy lifestyles. This project leverages City funds that are appropriated for new stormwater systems and green infrastructure improvements to reduce and support infill development.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$1,950,000

Asheville Muni Golf Course – Revitalization Phase I

The City of Asheville is revitalizing a Donald Ross designed course listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The project includes stormwater remediation, irrigation water retention, and updates to the greens, fairways, and bunkers. Muni is home to the oldest African American golf tournament in the United States and is important to both the community and visitors of Asheville.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$1,641,425

UNC Asheville Foundation Karl Straus Track – Renovation & Expansion

The UNC Asheville Foundation is executing significant renovation and expansion of the university's track facility. This includes the removal of the existing track, construction of a new track surface, installation of pole vault boxes, long jump and triple jump pits, a steeplechase pit and barrier, shot put areas, hammer and discus throw areas plus a safety net system, re-grading the existing natural grass area inside the track, restructuring the drainage system, and adding new sod. This project will enable the university to host new sports events for a variety of age ranges and school groups, which will lead to additional visitation and nights spent in Asheville. Ultimately these improvements renew a popular venue for campus and community use while driving economic development through sports tourism.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$1,500,000

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WNC Nature Center – Gateway to the Southern Appalachians Enhancement

The West North Carolina (WNC) Nature Center will be improving their facilities through a series of renovations that will increase financial stability and make more space for the animals. This includes expanding its domestic farming, increasing operating hours for after-hours events and additional space for event rental opportunities. The WNC Nature Center is an important family attraction for the community and visitors.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$567,000

Karen Cragolin Park – Greenway Phase

RiverLink, Inc. is developing the greenway phase of a new park that will connect adjoining parks and serve as a link in the Wilma Dykeman Riverway. This phase includes the creation of a new path with accompanying landscape plantings and wetlands, in addition to educational signage. This project serves as an important contributing asset to existing riverfront activities that have previously received TPDF investment.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$360,790

Glass Center in Black Mountain

North Carolina Glass Center is developing a new, state-of-the-art public glass studio and school in downtown Black Mountain. The facility includes installation of ancillary building services for ventilation, plumbing, and heating to create a hot glass studio, a flame shop, and a gallery space. This project will allow the North Carolina Glass Center to serve more people with intensive, multi-day classes, workshop spaces, demonstrations, and galleries. The new glass center supports Buncombe County's creative spirit and encourages visitor dispersal.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$330,000

AVL Unpaved – Phase I

Asheville on Bikes' new network of multi-use trails will add three new signature natural surface trail hubs and connectors in underutilized spaces throughout urban Asheville. The additional 4.9 miles of multi-use pathways leverage existing investments to Buncombe County's greenway network. Overall, AVL Unpaved enhances Asheville's outdoor recreation reputation while addressing competitive threats.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$188,355

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Museum Beautification Project

Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS) will be making multiple capital infrastructure improvements that enable expanded museum spaces, including interchangeable wall content and paneling. This project enhances Asheville's appeal as a family destination and serves as an important downtown anchor attraction.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$125,000

The Wortham Center – Phase II

The Wortham Center for the Performing Arts is expanding capacity of the organization by enabling the use of all three of its venues at the same time. The Tina McGuire Theatre will receive leg extensions for risers, a lighting and sound system, and curtain tracks. Similarly, improvements to the Henry LaBrun Studio will include lighting and sound infrastructure as well as curtain tracks to enable dividing the space into two venues. The nighttime arts events resulting from this project promote and support Asheville's creative spirit in addition to generating incremental room nights.

TPDF Grant Investment: \$80,000

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