



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES PROGRESS UPDATE

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EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

EXPLORE ASHEVILLE & BCTDA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority and Explore Asheville adopted strategic imperatives that are informing and guiding the direction of Explore Asheville's program of work and community investments going forward.

DELIVERING BALANCED & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	ENCOURAGING SAFE & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL	ENGAGING & INVITING MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCES	PROMOTING & SUPPORTING ASHEVILLE'S CREATIVE SPIRIT	RUNNING A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION
<p>Balancing resident and visitor needs, recognizing the necessary role that sustainable, long-term growth of travel has in achieving a healthy, collective economy.</p> <p>Focusing on the quality of each visit to our community – balancing growth across the seasons, business and leisure travel, and throughout Asheville and Buncombe County.</p>	<p>Engaging residents and visitors with shared values to care for and respect natural, cultural and human resources vital in delivering quality guest experiences.</p> <p>Collaborating with community organizations, local businesses and environmentally focused partners to support the sustainability and growth of our outdoor economy.</p>	<p>Extending a genuine invitation to BIPOC travelers and other diverse audiences including LGBTQ visitors – connecting them with local neighborhoods, businesses, and entrepreneurs – creating more opportunities for all to win.</p> <p>Supporting product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.</p>	<p>Sharing stories of creators and makers who help differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences and more.</p> <p>Supporting product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.</p>	<p>Investing in people, policies, and practices to serve our community with integrity within the organization's legislative requirements.</p>

Explore Asheville staff generates quarterly reports on progress made toward these strategic imperatives and relevant initiatives that support them.

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 2024 – MARCH 2024



MARKETING, CONTENT, & PR

Q3 INITIATIVES

Dodie Stephens
Vice President of Marketing

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ADRIAN AWARDS 2024

Always, Asheville storytelling foundation won HSMAI Bronze Adrian Award



A promotional graphic for the HSMAI Adrian Awards Celebration. It features the HSMAI logo (a stylized 'A' with three bars) and the text 'hsmai ADRIAN AWARDS CELEBRATION' in white on a pink-to-purple gradient background. Below, it says 'FEBRUARY 13, 2024' and 'NEW YORK MARRIOTT MARQUIS' in pink.



EXPLORE ASHEVILLE X AFAR CONTENT & MEDIA PROGRAM

Telling The Stories of Asheville from Those Who Know It The Best

- 350+ local POIs/experiences covered to date.
- 21 custom and editorial articles across print and digital, in addition to an in-market partner workshop.
- Interviewed and featured 10 local creators.

AFAR READER SURVEY

#1 most recalled ad
in the "Where to Go in 2024 Issue"

"Made me want to go to Asheville."

"After seeing this ad and other articles in regard to Asheville that your magazine had previously, I am now in the process of booking a trip to Asheville for the beginning of March."

Spring 2024 Custom Page content includes focus on "Innovative Asheville" with callouts of NOAA, EV charging stations, and Asheville Ideas Fest



STRATEGIC MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

Illuminating the area's knowledge capital and meeting amenities with editorial case studies and video



NEWS DESTINATION GUIDES PLANNING TIPS & TRENDS INCENTIVE PLANNING TOOLS EVENTS CALENDAR CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Supplied Content / Video Spotlight

Asheville Is an International Hub for Climate-Science Events

January 8, 2024

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY ASSETS

Editorial case studies and videos featuring interviews with meeting planners and local industry leaders.



DESTINATION FILMING

Four-day shoot in October 2023 with 11 interviews conducted.



CLIMATE SCIENCE Published January 8

FEATURING: 9th Annual Climate Adaptive Design Symposium

OUTDOOR INDUSTRY Published February 11

FEATURING: Adventure Travel Trade Association's AdventureELEVATE

WELLNESS Published April 3

FEATURING: Love Shine Play Yoga Festival

AUTOMOTIVE May launch



LOCAL CONTENT CREATOR INITIATIVE

Local Content Creators Increase Engagement Through Shortform Video Content

WHAT?

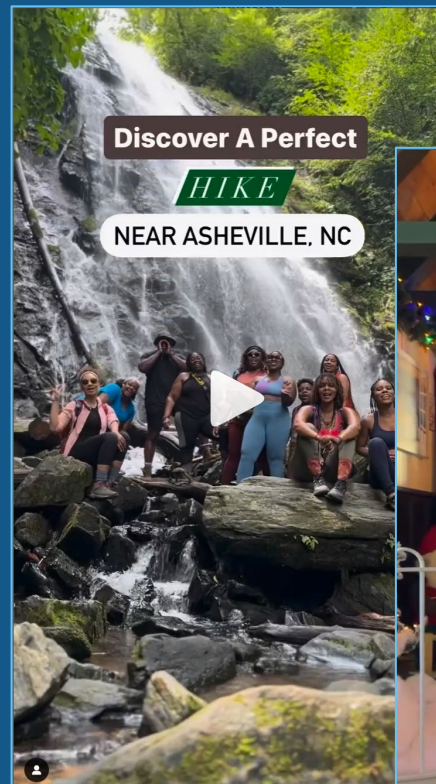
- Work with **10 local creators** to produce social-first shortform video content that depicts Asheville through diverse, first-person, follow-along journeys.

WHY?

- 66% percent of consumers say shortform video content is the most engaging content type. People watch, on average, 17 hours of online videos per week + people are 52% more likely to save and share video content than any other type.
- A diverse mix of creators means we can cover more places and showcase more perspectives.

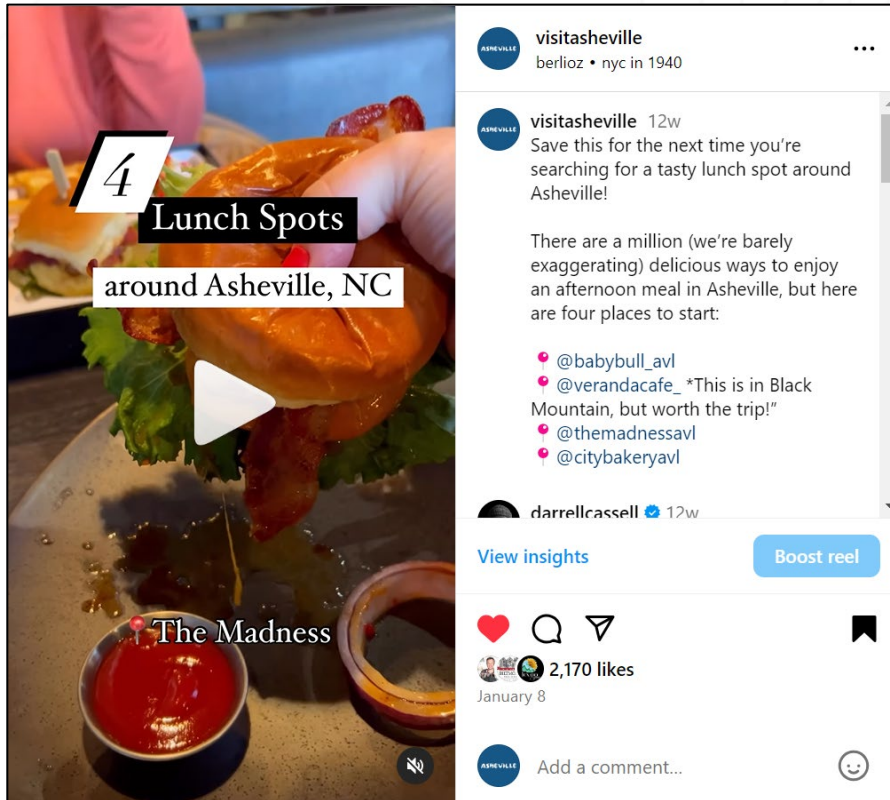
EARLY RESULTS

	Comments	Shares	Saves
8 Creator Reels	327 +124%	4,378 +206%	4,478 +490%
Top 8 Photo Posts	146	1,432	759

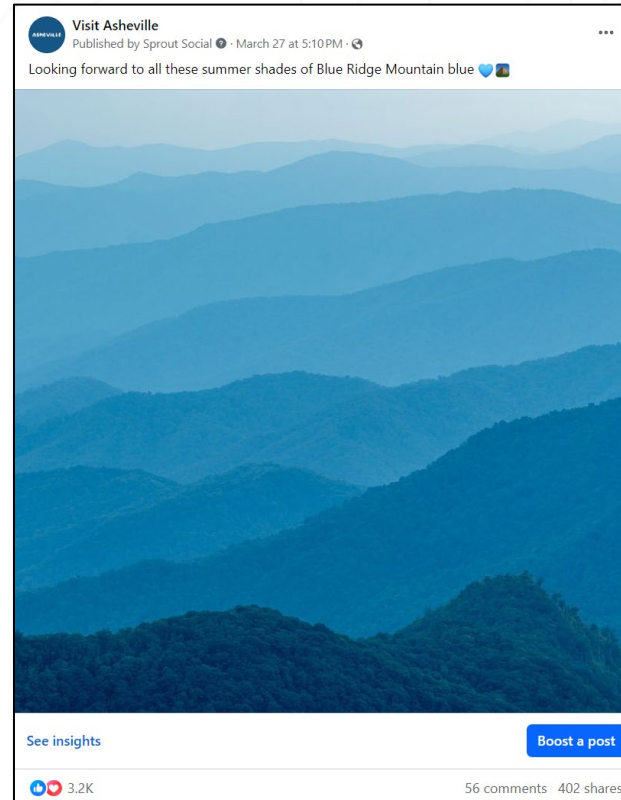


TOP PERFORMING POSTS

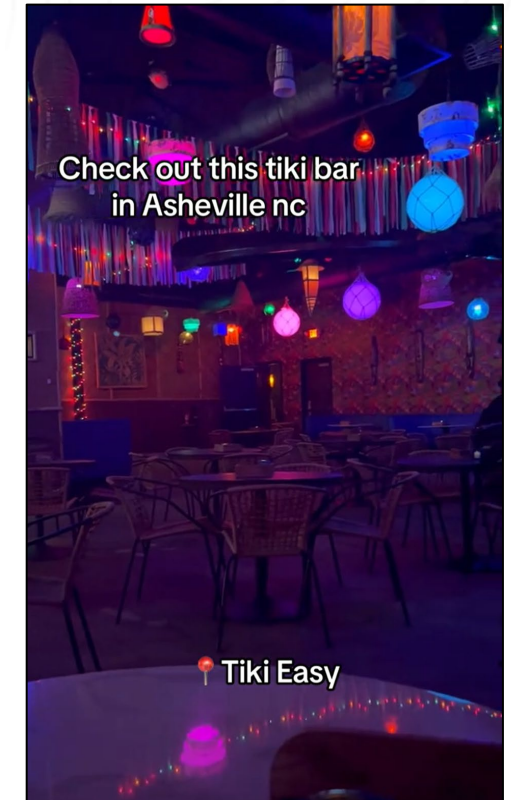
Most engaging content and format varies by social channel



INSTAGRAM: INSIDER INFO
4 Lunch Spots Around Asheville, NC (Reel)
5,295 Engagements



FACEBOOK: NATURE & BEAUTY
Blue Ridge Mountains (Photo)
5,737 Engagements



TIKTOK: NEW & NOTABLE
Tiki Easy (Reel)
957 Engagements

Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares

NOTEWORTHY NEWS CLIPS

Pitched stories that shine a spotlight on Asheville

1.25B

Earned Media Reach

\$2.25M

Publicity Value

6

Hosted Media

32

Significant Team Placements

79

Total Placements

Frommer's®

Asheville History: New Black Heritage Trail Honors a Rich Legacy



The Washington Post

BY THE WAY

Where to travel in 2024, without crowds



TRAVEL+LEISURE

This Southern U.S. City Recently Unveiled a 1-mile Black Heritage Trail That Passes Through 3 Historic Neighborhoods



Boston

MAGAZINE

A New England Traveler's Guide to Asheville, North Carolina



PRIDE

JOURNEYS

Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail Brings Focus to Black History in the Blue Ridge Mountains



Southern Living

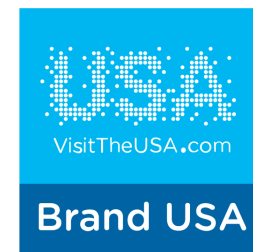
15 Best Places To Travel In The South This April



Accolades:



Food Destinations



Five U.S. Destinations to Watch In 2024



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Q3 INITIATIVES

Michael Kryzanek
Vice President Business Development

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CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Recruiting group and event business to our community

- Attended Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) in January seeking connections with planners for faith-based organizations
- Met with Christian Meeting & Conferences Association (CMCA) and became a sponsor of its annual meeting at Ridgecrest in March
- Results to date include two RFPs, one of 7,000 attendees with flexible dates and one for 2,000 attendees that requires 250 room nights



48-HOUR FAMILIARIZATION TOURS

Hosted three separate groups in the third quarter

- "Fams" are one of our highest ROI initiatives - Historically, 75%+ of attendees book one or multiple events in Asheville
- In January, the Independent Planner Education Conference (IPEC) was held in Greenville, SC
 - Leveraging the proximity, Explore Asheville invited attending planners for familiarization tours before and after the conference
 - Of the 20 total participants, six were from the West Coast
- In March, hosted eight additional qualified meeting professionals for a "test drive" of Asheville
- These efforts brought four new leads so far, totaling nearly 1,500 room nights



WEDDING INDUSTRY MIXER

Networked with vendors that provide group referrals

- Wedding groups are Asheville's second strongest source of business after sports groups
- Local vendors are our number one source for wedding leads
- Explore Asheville convened 67 community vendors on January 30 at The Radical Hotel to further connections in the industry



ASHEVILLE BUSINESS EVENTS COUNCIL (ABEC)

Engaging local stakeholders for networking and lead generation

Furthered efforts with ABEC, an ongoing collaboration with the Economic Development Commission (EDC) to utilize business travel and events as the front porch of traditional economic development.

Convened 25+ business leaders in February and encouraged support with recruiting boards and associations to meet in the community.

The quarterly meeting included a panel discussion regarding the power of bringing climate-centered conferences to Asheville. Panelists included:

- Jenny Dissen, NOAA National Centers for Environmental Studies,
- Clark Duncan, EDC
- Kathryn Dewey, Explore Asheville



SOCON BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT DIRECT SPENDING | MARCH 6 - 11

Source: Explore Asheville's Event Impact Calculator

- 2024 Tournament: \$5,110,342
 - 2023 Tournament: \$5,167,955
 - 2022 Tournament: \$4,406,304
-
- Explore Asheville is a sponsor of SoCon in partnership with ABRSC and the tourism development authority has invested significantly in capital improvements in the civic center to bring back SoCon over the years.



TICKET SALES BY CITY

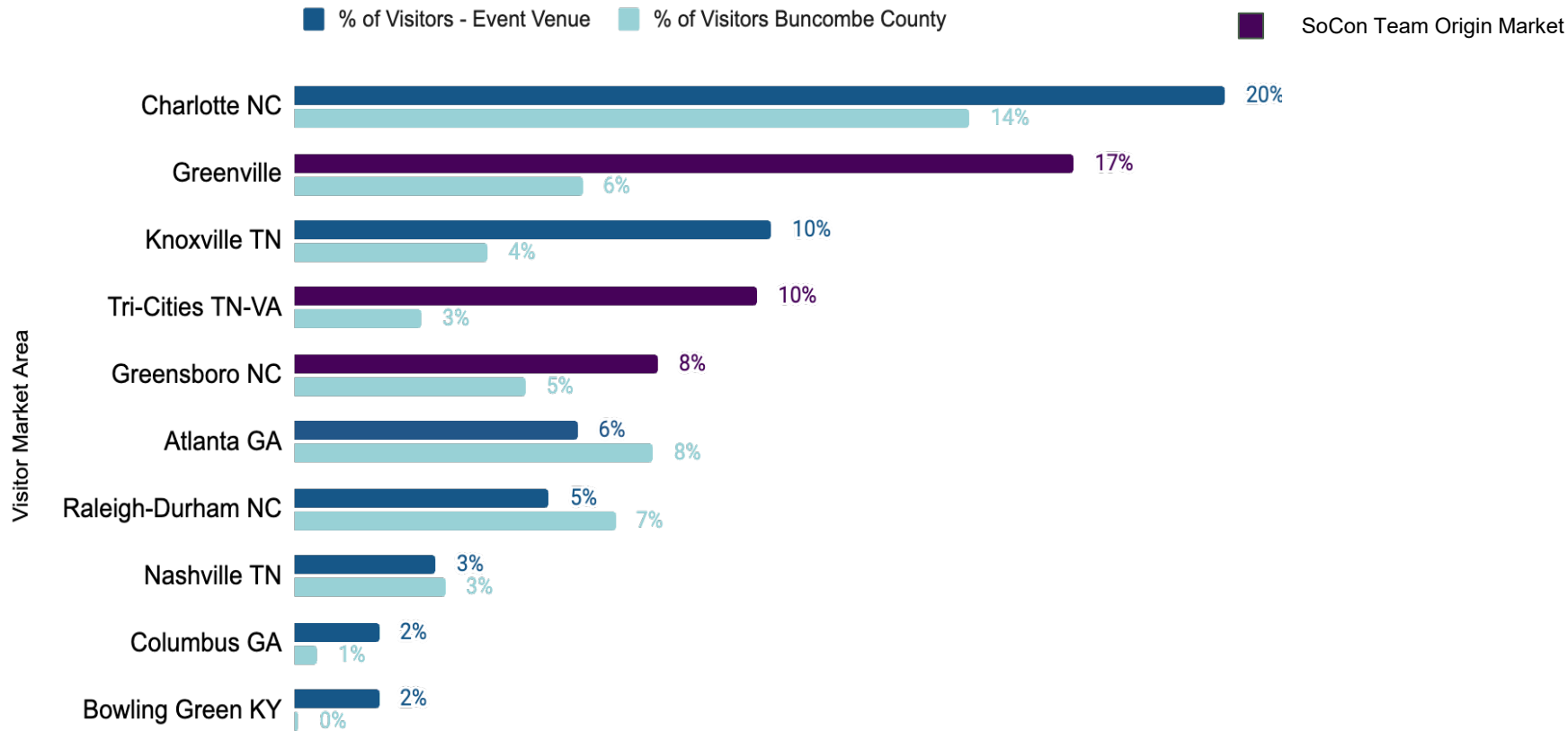
SoCon Basketball

- Approximately one in three tickets sold to the SoCon Basketball Tournament is to people who live in the city of Asheville.
- Six out of ten tickets are sold to people from the same city as SoCon universities (bolded in the chart).
- Doing well in the tournament doesn't always indicate that the university will be the top city for ticket sales- in 2022 University of Tennessee at Chattanooga won the tournament however was 9th in order of ticket purchasers.
- Source: Harrah's Cherokee Center- Asheville

2024	2023	2022
Asheville (33%)	Asheville (34%)	Asheville (33%)
Greenville	Greenville	Greenville
Johnson City	Spartanburg	Spartanburg
Spartanburg	Macon	Macon
Homewood	Homewood	Johnson City
Charleston	Charleston	Lexington
Greensboro	Cullowhee	Greensboro
Chattanooga	Greensboro	Charleston
Lexington	Johnson City	Chattanooga
Macon	Chattanooga	Cullowhee
Cullowhee	Lexington	Homewood
Weaverville	Arden	Weaverville
Kingsport	Hendersonville	Fletcher
Fairview	Weaverville	Greer
Jonesborough	Simpsonville	Hendersonville
Tournament Winner	Runner Up	Final Four

TOP ORIGIN MARKETS - 2024

Top out of state markets included the Greenville, Tri-Cities, Atlanta, Nashville, Columbus and Bowling Green DMAs.



Samford won the 2024 tournament- however their home market (Birmingham AL) was not on the top 10 origin list

Source: Zartico geolocation data. March 7-11, 2024. Top 10 origin markets for Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville and Buncombe County overall.

Q3 GROUP & EVENT DEVELOPMENT

Benefitted businesses in our community

41
GROUPS/EVENTS
OCCURRED
IN OUR COMMUNITY



\$11.3 million direct spending
9,400 room nights

138
GROUPS/EVENTS
BOOKED
FOR FUTURE VISITS



\$14.0 million in direct spending
19,900 room nights

336
LEADS GENERATED
FOR POTENTIAL
GROUPS/EVENTS;
95,100 ROOM NIGHTS



13% increase in leads over Q3 FY23
33% increase in room nights over Q3
FY23



PARTNERSHIP & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT Q3 INITIATIVES

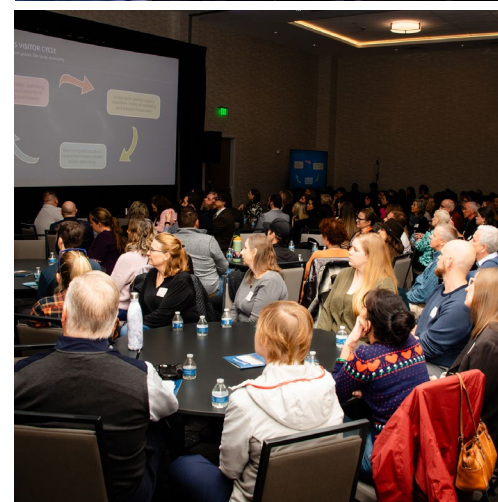
Penelope Whitman
Vice President of Partnership & Destination Management

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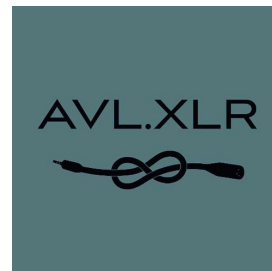
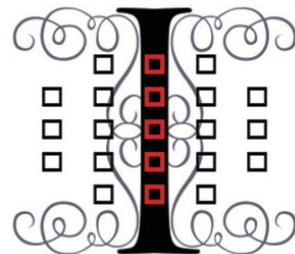
THE YEAR AHEAD

Partner event honors Superstars and TPDF Grantees, and panel gives insight on what's to come in 2024

- More than 300 community and industry partners attended the first partner event of 2024 at the new Embassy Suites Hotel by Hilton Asheville Downtown
- The 11th annual [Asheville Superstar Awards](#) were presented to J Chong, Jack Benton, Reggie Tidwell, Chief Mike Lamb, and Sheriff Quinten Miller for their outstanding impact on the travel & hospitality industry.
- Attendees heard about the latest investments awarded through the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF).
- Partners and community members provided updates on what's to come this year as part of four panel discussions.
- Partners enjoyed local music, a photobooth experience, tours of the new hotel, plus local food and craft beverages provided by Embassy Suites' E'Terie
- Talented event vendors included: Indulge Images, DJ Phantom Pantone and DJ Mereset, and the Embassy Suites Hotel.



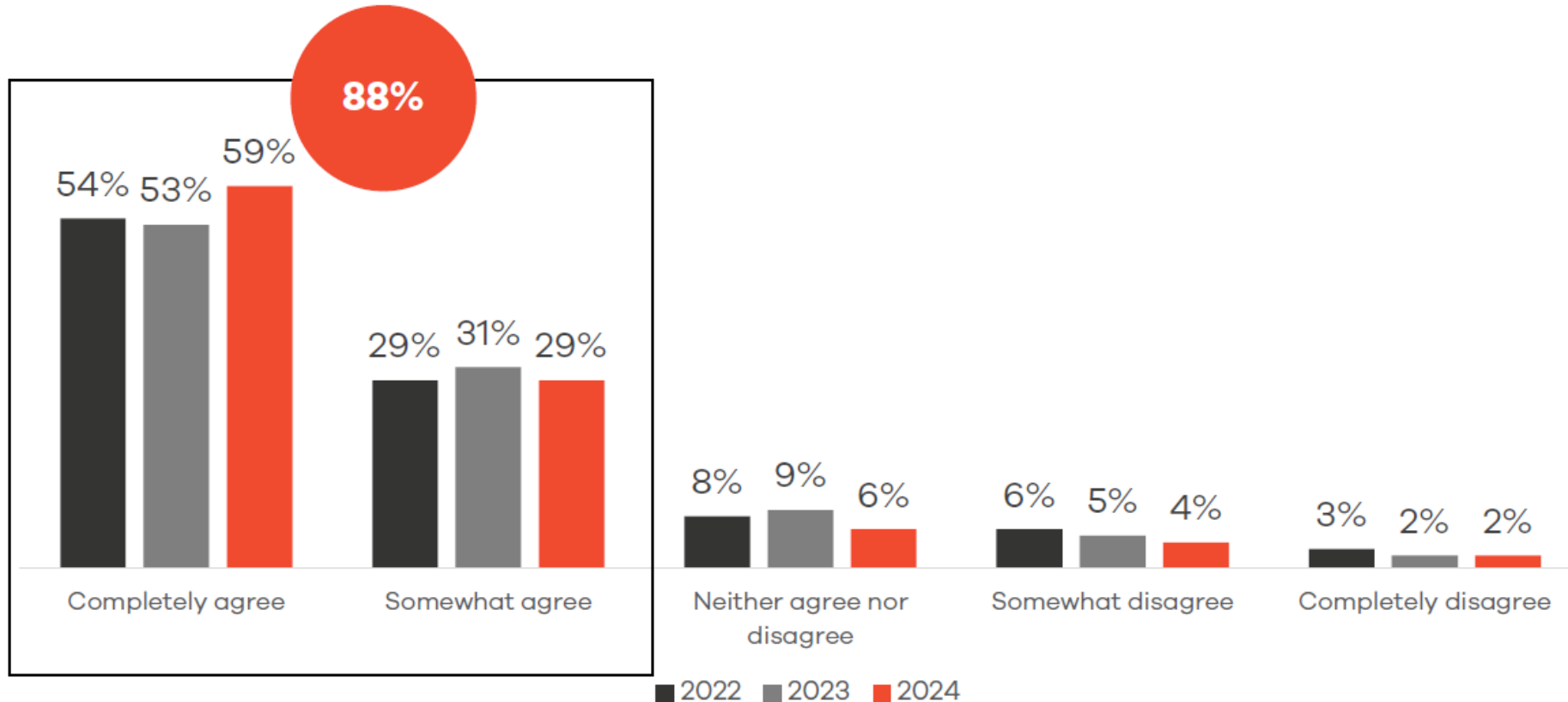
FEATURED PARTNERS:



MMGY 2024 RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM SURVEY

88% of Residents Believe that Tourism is Beneficial to Community

Tourism is beneficial to my community.



MMGY 2024 RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM SURVEY

88% of Residents Believe that Tourism is Beneficial to the Community

Key Insight ^{no.}1

Residents agree even more so than previous years that tourism is beneficial to community. Nearly nine in 10 residents believe tourism has a positive economic impact including creating entrepreneurial opportunities and support for independent businesses.

Key Insight ^{no.}2

Asheville residents take great pride in their community, emphasizing diversity and inclusion, how the community rallies together and the culture and character of Asheville.

Key Insight ^{no.}3

While parking and traffic congestion problems remain the primary concerns for Asheville residents, the impact of short-term rentals on housing options for year-round residents has increased.

Key Insight ^{no.}4

Natural greenspaces and protecting the environment are important aspects of Asheville for residents, and 8 in 10 agree the visitor economy helps supports these natural and cultural amenities.

Key Insight ^{no.}5

Supporting local businesses is important to Asheville residents, and most expect the same of visitors to Asheville.

Key Insight ^{no.}6

There is continued opportunity to educate visitors about how taxes paid by visitors are used to benefit residents.

Key Insight ^{no.}7

While Asheville city residents agree that tourism has an overall positive economic impact, they also are more likely to highlight the challenges that impact their day-to-day life, such as parking supply problems and traffic congestion.

Key Insight ^{no.}8

Length of residency has an impact on the view of tourism, with newer residents more likely to see tourism as beneficial to the community.

HOSPITALITY OUTLOOK

Tourism Economics provides market-specific outlook on lodging and visitor spending at partner event

- 115 travel and hospitality industry partners gathered at the AC Hotel Asheville Downtown for the 2024 Hospitality Outlook.
- Travis Napper, director of destination partnerships at Tourism Economics, provided an 18-month outlook on visitor spending and a lodging forecast in the context of regional and national markets.
- Hospitality Outlook vendors included: Smash Events Catering + Floral, Juan Diego Reyes Photography, AC Hotel and Capella on 9.



FEATURED PARTNERS:



JUAN DIEGO REYES



EVENT GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS

Support for local festival & cultural events through grants and sponsorships

Explore Asheville/BCTDA supported the following events in FY24 Q3:

- Arts AVL Trolley
- Taste of Asheville
- Asheville Mardi Gras Parade and Queen's Ball
- Asheville Celtic Festival
- ASAP Business of Farming Conference
- Zelda Fitzgerald Week
- Asheville Symphony's 2024 Artist Residency: A Celebration of the Violin
- TEDxAsheville

\$38.9K

Grants &
Sponsorships



8

Events

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Onboarded 31 local businesses as Explore Asheville partners

- Explore Asheville onboarded 31 local businesses as new partners in Q3, ranging from wedding vendors and farms to galleries and food trucks.
- Through these partnerships, Explore Asheville staff can connect incoming visitors and group travelers to the variety of experiences in Asheville and Buncombe County.



WHAT & WHERE

Regions of new businesses:

- River Arts District
- Downtown
- Fairview
- East Asheville
- Biltmore Village
- Woodfin
- Weaverville
- West Asheville
- South Asheville

Types of new businesses:

- Food & Drink
- Food
- Adventures
- Transportation
- Music Venues
- Attractions
- Arts/Cultural
- Tours
- Lodging
- Catering
- Farms
- Retail



CULTURE & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Q3 INITIATIVES

Jennifer Kass-Green

Vice President of Culture & Business Affairs

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ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

New Team Member

Sarajane Case

Marketing Manager



ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

Fired-Up! Culture

