

Thank you to the Black Travel Alliance for calling upon our organization and our industry to join you in this vital analysis. We take this call to action and the long-term responsibility for meaningful change very seriously.

Explore Asheville recognizes that we have a lot of work to do to support the Black community, address inequities and become a more welcoming destination for Black travelers.

We are committed to acting as allies in a world where Black Lives Matter and appreciate the scope of that challenge.

EMPLOYMENT

There are currently 0 Black employees on Explore Asheville's staff of 25.

CONFERENCES & TRADESHOWS

Black representation (number and percentage) on speaker panels, workshops, sessions, etc. in 2019:

The focus of Explore Asheville as a destination marketing organization does not include the organization of conferences or trade shows. Explore Asheville does sponsor and support community programs, sessions and speakers—see below.

PAID ADVERTISING/MARKETING

Black representation (number and percentage) in TV, radio, print and digital channels including social media in 2019:

PAID ADVERTISING/MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

- Of the people in our 2019 advertising campaign, 23% are Black (29 people).
- 12% of the people in our Visitor Guide are Black (20 people).

SOCIAL:

- Facebook: 20% of organic posts featured Black people (20 people) in 2019. 29.5% featured people of color.
- Instagram: 5% of posts featured Black people (1 person) in 2019. 25% featured people of color.
- YouTube: 21% of those represented in 2019 YouTube videos were Black people (11 people).

PRESS

Black representation (number and percentage) on media/press trips in 2019:

In 2019, facilitated media site visits included zero Black people. The total number of press trips for people of color was 22%. In 2020, the Asheville team worked with *Travel Noire* on a press visit and two feature stories.

PHILANTHROPY & COMMUNITY BUILDING

Charitable contributions and support (i.e. mentorship and intern programs, etc.) to Black charities and community groups:

The Tourism Product Development Fund supported four Black heritage projects. In recognition of the inequitable access to capital, matching funds requirements were waived for Black-led organizations and 100% of the funding was provided for these projects. Funding commitments through this program were granted in 2018 with work commencing or openings in 2019. **Total investment to date: \$1.65 million.**

- **YMI Cultural Center | \$800,000**

Originally the Young Men's Institute, the YMI was built by Black craftsmen who helped construct and furnish the Biltmore House. The YMI opened in 1893 and quickly became the center of cultural, commercial and religious life for local Black people. Over the course of the next century it housed a kindergarten, gymnasium, public library, corner drugstore, funeral parlor, doctor's office and also offered a place of worship for congregations without a church. The YMI Cultural Center building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and includes a meetings and events space and gallery. The YMI received an \$800,000 grant for facility renovations, improvements and preservation.

- **African American Heritage Museum at Stephens-Lee Community Center | \$100,000**

A \$100,000 grant was awarded to the River Front Development Group, a local community development nonprofit organization, to provide funding to upfit and preserve historical archives at the Stephens-Lee Recreation Center (formerly Stephens-Lee High School) as well as to assist in developing additional exhibitions that honor the history of the Stephens-Lee High School Alumni and the broader Black community. Known as the "Castle on the Hill," the Stephens-Lee High School opened in Asheville in 1923 and was the only high school for Black students in the region for 40 years.

- **African American Heritage Trail | \$50,000 to date for phase one community engagement process and commitment to fund future phases of story development, design and installation.** Also in coordination with the River Front Development Group, Explore Asheville has dedicated staff support and funding for the development of this project, the vision of which is to document Black heritage in the community and create experiences in which these stories can be shared in collaboration with the community. Additionally, the completed trail markers will be maintained in perpetuity by the BCTDA. Community engagement is the first phase of the project and has included:

- **A special event and presentation called "Telling the Whole Story" by Dina Bailey,** who shared lessons on telling more inclusive community stories based on her direct experience working with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center among other experiences. **\$5,000**
- **Sponsorship of "African Americans in WNC and Southern Appalachia Conference"** and participation by contracted project team members on a panel discussion called **"Black Lens on Tourism."** **\$1,000**
- **Development of an online survey to capture community hopes and fears surrounding the trail.**
- A series of **Listening Session focus group calls and live workshops** for the public to provide input on the development of the heritage trail project including how people

perceive Asheville, the stories they felt should be included in the trail and who the target audience should be.

- **LEAF Global Arts Center on The Block | \$705,000**

LEAF Global Arts Center in the historic Del Cardo building on Eagle Street, an historic Black business district, features educational experiences rooted in music, art, community, culture and history. The center features an interactive world map where visitors can explore a wide range of cultural art forms, an international immersion room to transport visitors across the globe through a sensory experience and a global sound underground to encourage experimentation with unique musical instruments from around the world. A virtual reality minitheater, intimate performance stage and studio, interactive artist workstations and exhibits dedicated to preserving the history of the Block and Del Cardo are highlights of the Center.

Community Events

- Asheville Downtown Association's Urban Speaker Series | **\$5,000**
- Leadership Asheville Series | **\$1,000**
 - "What is a Connected Community?"
 - "What are we Doing Now to Connect Community?"
 - "What is Our Vision for a Connected Community?"
- East End Valley Street Neighborhood Association Heritage Festival | **\$1,000**
- Blue Ridge Pride Festival | **\$5,000**
- Hola Asheville | **\$5,000**
- Chow Chow | **\$100,000** (events included Appalachian Soul Food: A Celebration of the Block at the YMI Cultural Center; Brown in the South; Women on the Urban Trail; and Cherry Bomb's "The Future of Food" Live Podcast Panel)

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