

EXPLORE ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority



ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority Board Members



Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair
The Grand Bohemian Asheville
First Hospitality Job: Bartender
City Appointed



Elizabeth Putnam, Mosaic Lifestyle Realty
First Service Job: Sales Clerk
County Appointed



Larry Crosby, The Foundry Hotel
First Hospitality Job: Banquet Server
City Appointed



Kathleen Mosher, Biltmore
First Hospitality Job: Marketing Firm with Hospitality Clients
Chamber Appointed



Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
Asheville City Council
Ex-Officio Member



HP Patel, Treasurer of the Nonprofit BCA Hotels
First Hospitality Job: Laundry Attendant
County Appointed



Lucious Wilson, Wedge Brewery
First Hospitality Job: Busboy
City Appointed



Michael Lusick, FIRC Group, Inc.
First Hospitality Job: Night Auditor
City Appointed



Scott Patel, Pure Hospitality
First Hospitality Job: Front Desk Agent
County Appointed



Commissioner Terri Wells
Buncombe County Commission
Ex-Officio Member

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

Dear Partners and Friends,

For more than four decades, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) has had a long and proud legacy of investing in and building community. Our organization was created to generate economic development through travel and hospitality, both of which play a vital role in Asheville and Buncombe County.

We have the awesome job of shining a spotlight on and sharing stories about this deeply rooted and ever-evolving creative community every day.

While the lodging tax paid by visitors shoulders 100 percent of destination marketing and investment, 70 percent of their spending takes place in restaurants and breweries, retail shops, galleries, tour outfitters, and transportation providers throughout the county. In turn, visitor spending in our community supports wages for residents, and fuels property, sales, and income tax revenue for City and County governments to fund public services. This virtuous cycle is what makes travel such an economic powerhouse, job creator, and community builder for Asheville and Buncombe County.

Nearly 2,000 Explore Asheville partner businesses and organizations both serve and benefit from guests in our community. We are grateful for your partnership and role in delivering quality experiences and services to customers every

single day. A county of more than 270,000 residents can't solely support the creativity of our community without the expenditures of people from outside it.

Back in 1983, visitors spent more than \$82 million in Buncombe County businesses. Through investment and promotion over the years, that spending has grown 35 times to nearly \$3 billion in 2023.

This is important because visitor spending is our strongest export, benefiting local businesses and livelihoods. Three billion dollars equates to 20 percent of Buncombe County's annual economy.

This Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report reflects on our shared successes and accomplishments of the past year. The Business Development team worked with lodging partners to confirm more than 400 groups that spent \$50 million directly in our community. The authority increased our legacy of committed investments to \$96 million in 51 capital projects through ongoing strategic partnerships, from the transformative McCormick Field renovations to the long-awaited Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail.

We remain dedicated to the long-term sustainability and responsible growth of our community, with you and for you, powered by travel and hospitality.



Victoria Isley

Victoria Isley
President & CEO
Explore Asheville
BCTDA

First Hospitality Job: Restaurant Server



Brenda Durden

Brenda Durden
Asheville Hotel Group
BCTDA Board Chair

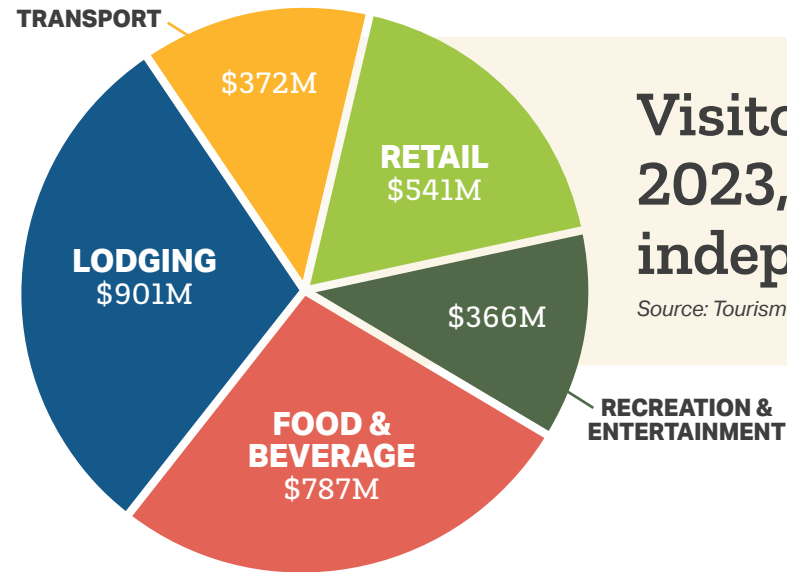
First Hospitality Job: Front Desk Agent

ALWAYS ASHEVILLE

OUR PROMISE TO CONVEY

"Asheville draws you in, nurtures and inspires. She grounds us and propels us to never stop creating who we are."

Destination Performance



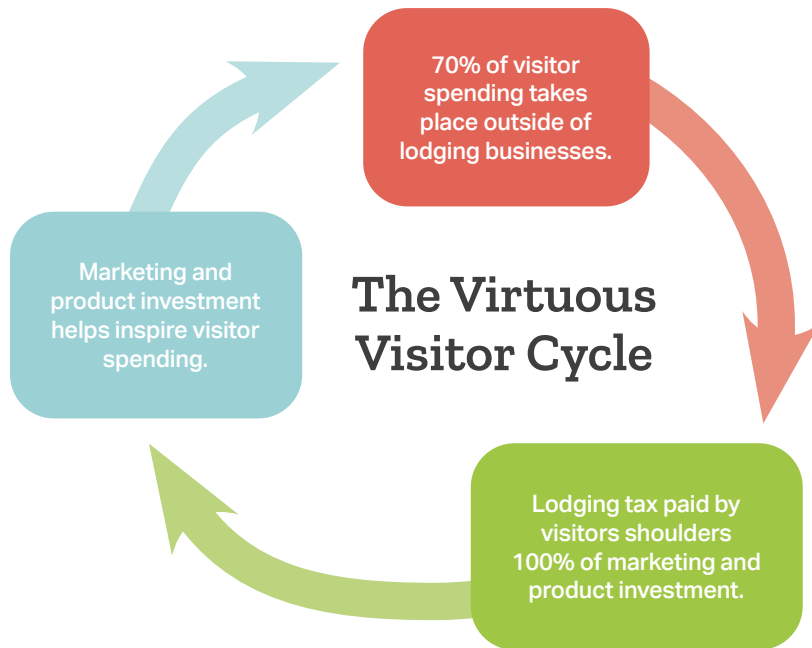
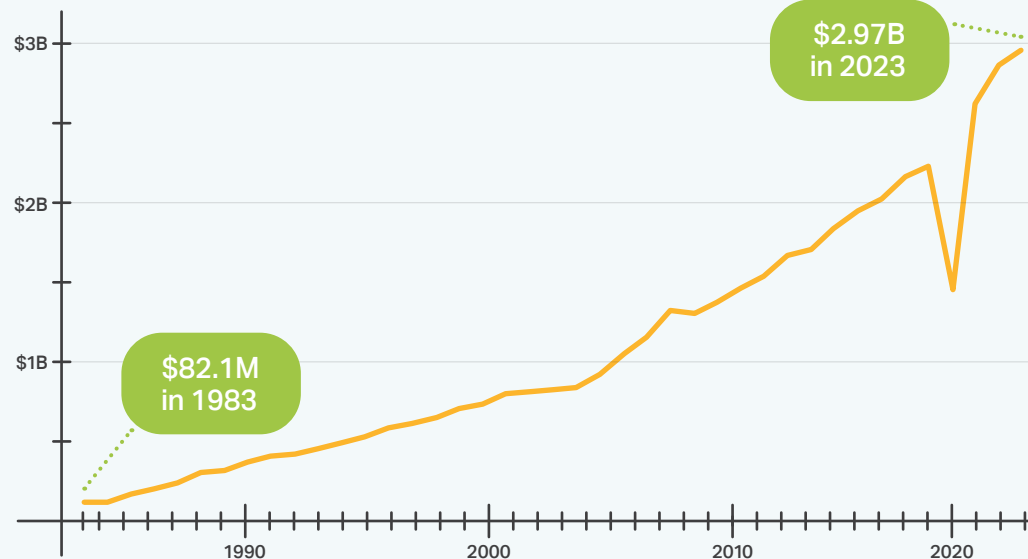
Visitors spent nearly **\$3 billion** in 2023, benefiting a wide variety of local, independent businesses.

Source: Tourism Economics, Explore Asheville

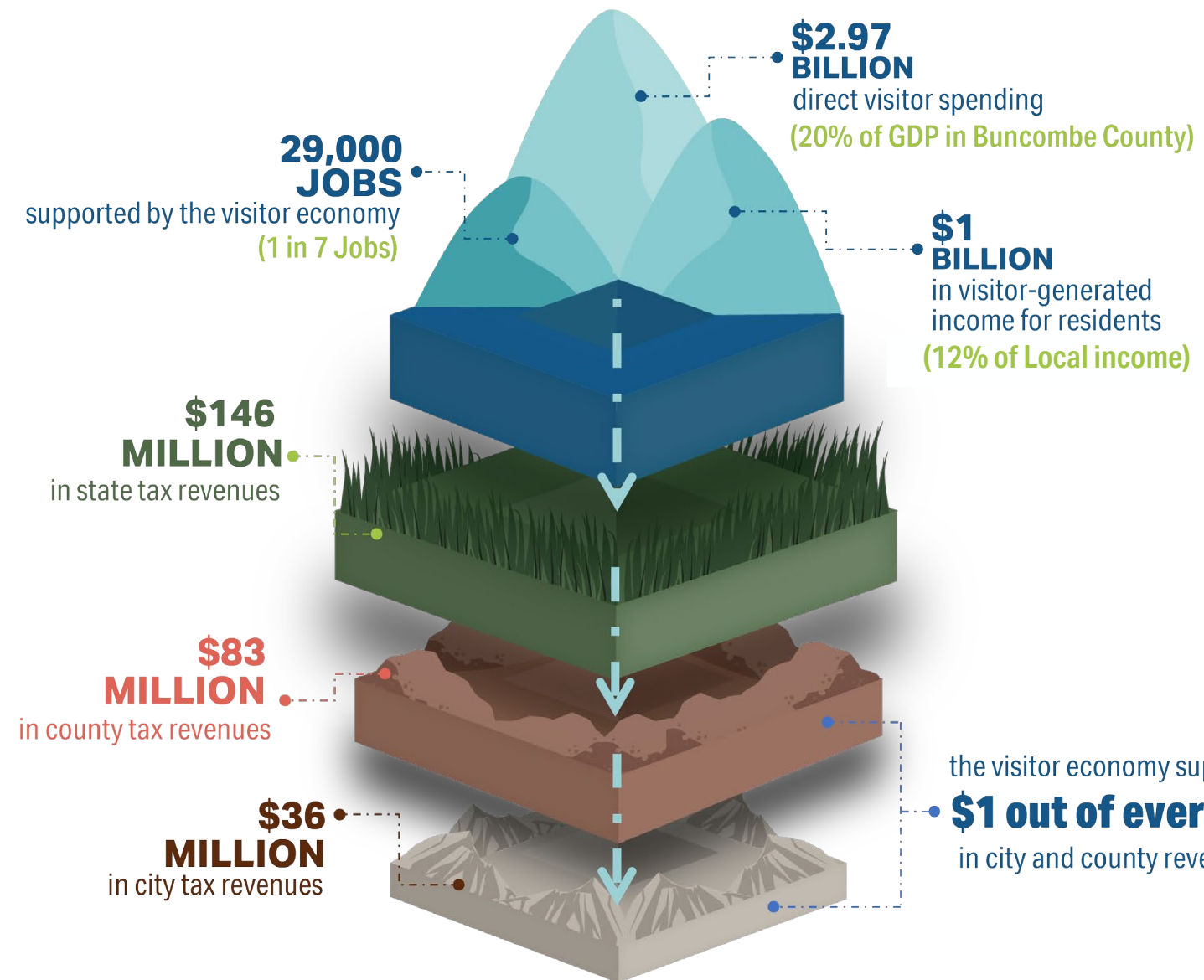
Visitor Contributions to the Local Economy

In 1983, visitors spent more than \$82 million in Buncombe County businesses. Through investment and promotion over the years, that spending has grown 35 times to nearly **\$3 billion** in 2023. Three billion dollars equates to 20% of Buncombe County's annual economy.

Source: Tourism Economics, Explore Asheville



The Benefits of Visitors in Asheville & Buncombe County Run Deep



The visitor economy supports local businesses and contributes to local government revenues.

\$265 Million in state and local tax revenues are generated by the visitor economy

Buncombe County households would need to pay an additional **\$2,600 in taxes** annually to replace the visitor-generated taxes received by state and local governments.

Source: Tourism Economics — Economic Impact of Visitors in Asheville and Buncombe County in 2023

the visitor economy supports **\$1 out of every \$5** in city and county revenues

FY24 By The Numbers

\$50M

DIRECT SPEND
BY GROUPS &
MEETINGS



415

EVENTS & GROUPS
BOOKED

Up 5.4% from FY23

83,140

GROUP ROOMS BOOKED

Up 9.7% from FY23

63

MEETING PLANNERS
HOSTED

1,088

LEADS ISSUED TO HOTEL
PARTNERS

Up 4% from FY23

5.3M

WEBSITE USERS

Up 1.4% from FY23

72M

WEBSITE SESSIONS

Up 1.2% from FY23

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA COVERAGE

Washington Post

Where to Travel in 2024, Without Crowds

New York Times

5 Hotels Where Fall Takes Center Stage

TODAY

5 Hidden Gem Destinations to Book for Your Next Summer Getaway

National Geographic

Interested in Foraging? Here are 6 Places to Start

Bloomberg

In Asheville, a Black Heritage Trail Ushers In a Whole New Economy

Southern Living

35 Best Things To Do In Asheville, North Carolina

FACEBOOK

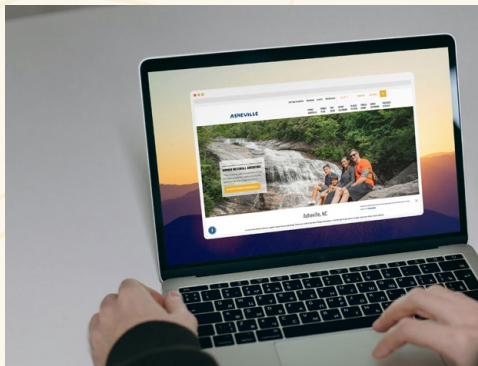
329K+ followers
139M+ impressions
1.1M+ engagements

INSTAGRAM

162K+ followers
27M+ impressions
630K+ engagements

TIKTOK

47K+ followers
2.9M+ views
68K+ engagements



Impact Events Strategically Aligned with Key Business Sectors

One way that Explore Asheville bolsters economic vitality is through our business development and group sales efforts.

In recent years, the authority has been doing this with more purpose and meaning. Explore Asheville partnered with the Asheville Economic Development Coalition and aligned proactive group sales efforts with targeted business sectors — such as outdoor products and advanced manufacturing — to use business travel as the front porch of economic development and help diversify our economy.

Here are several examples of how that is starting to bear fruit for our community at large:



WHEN
March 16-18,
2024

DIRECT SPEND
\$172,000

MARKET
Sports



WHEN
June 11-13, 2024

DIRECT SPEND
\$447,000

MARKET
Outdoor
Industry



WHEN
July 12-18, 2024

DIRECT SPEND
\$820,00

MARKET
Automotive/
Social



WHEN
July 22-26, 2024

DIRECT SPEND
\$200,000

MARKET
Climate &
Environment



WHEN
November 18-20,
2024

DIRECT SPEND
\$60,000

MARKET
Nonprofit Board
Meeting

BCTDA Investments Powered by Visitors



The BCTDA leverages visitor dollars to enhance Asheville's distinct character and quality of place, benefiting both residents and visitors through the **Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF)** and **Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund**.

Allocating one-third of the lodging tax from overnight stays, the organization funds strategic community projects in partnership with local government and nonprofits. These investments focus on preserving historical assets, revitalizing cultural venues, creating new experiences, and enhancing natural attractions.

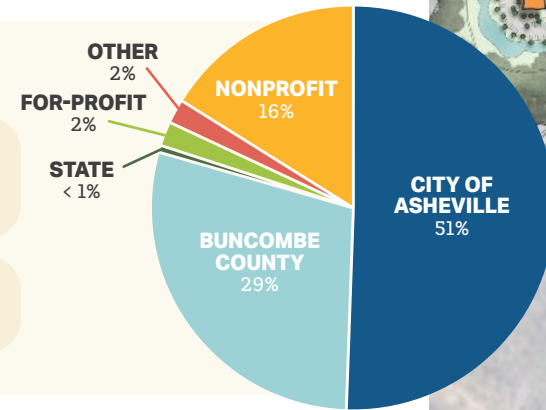
Since 2001, the authority has committed **\$96 million** to **51** community projects.

TPDF & LIFT FUND INVESTMENTS 2001-2024

79% TO CITY & COUNTY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

\$49M TO CITY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

\$27M TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



2023 TDPF Grant Cycle Recipients

In October 2023, the BCTDA approved **\$6.14 million** of new investment in three major tourism community projects. Including nearly \$23 million committed to McCormick Field in July, the authority invested more than \$29 million in TPDF awards in FY24, marking the largest annual investment since the fund's inception.

- Buncombe County**
Enka Recreation Destination: Phase II
- City of Asheville**
Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville Upgrades
- Western NC Agriculture Center**
Equine Facility Modernization
- City of Asheville**
McCormick Field Centennial Restoration & Capital Improvements Project



Buncombe County
Ferry Road Community: Affordable Housing, Conservation, and Public Recreation

- City of Asheville**
- » Coxe Avenue Complete Street
 - » ExploreAsheville.com Arena Capital Maintenance
 - » Aston Park Tennis Center Court Rebuild Design

Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
Craggy Gardens Visitor Center Upgrades

Hood Huggers Foundation
Blue Note Junction: Phase I Construction

RiverLink
Gateway Park

Asheville Museum of Science
Museum Repair and Expansion Plan

Media Arts Project
Supernova Immersive Experience Project Design

Asheville Botanical Garden
Asheville Botanical Garden Renovation

Swannanoa Valley Fine Arts League
Red House Gallery and Studios

Black Wall Street AVL
Black Wall Street AVL Visitor Experience Upgrade

Legacy Investment from Tourism Fund

In the inaugural cycle of the Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund, the authority invested nearly **\$10 million** in **12** tourism-related community projects across Buncombe County.

The LIFT Fund extends the authority's investment capabilities to tourism-related capital projects that will increase patronage of lodging facilities and benefit the community at large.

2024 LIFT Fund Grant Cycle Recipients



Supporting Local Culture & Events through Grants & Partnerships

Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund

Contributing to the financial viability and long-term sustainability of festivals and cultural events, the Festivals & Cultural Events (F&CE) Support Fund seeks to stimulate new events and expand on existing ones that are enjoyed by residents and visitors.

This year alone, \$100,000 was invested in 25 festivals and cultural events. This is the first year that the lodging tax paid by visitors will support local festivals and events, enabled by a change in state legislation that shifts how these funds can be spent.

More than \$883,000 has been invested in festivals and cultural events since the creation of the support fund in 2016.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
ASAP Farm Tour

Asheville Brewers Alliance
AVL Beer Week

Asheville Celtic Group
Asheville Celtic Festival

Asheville Creative Arts
3rd Annual Lovely Asheville Fall Festival

Asheville Downtown Association
» Asheville Holiday Parade
» Downtown After 5
» Pritchard Park Culture & Art Summer Series

Asheville FM
5th Annual Asheville FM Record Fair

Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR)
Taste of Asheville

Asheville Makers Inc.
Maker Faire Asheville

Asheville Mardi Gras, Inc.
Asheville Mardi Gras Parade & Queen's Ball

Big Ivy Community Center
Big Ivy's Independence Day Celebration

Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
(Re)HAPPENING 12

Black Wall Street AVL
GRINDfest

Blue Ridge Pride
Blue Ridge Pride Festival

Buncombe County Recreation
Festival of Lights at Lake Julian

Center for Honeybee Research
Asheville HoneyFest

Connect Beyond Festival
Connect Beyond Festival

LEAF Global Arts
LEAF Festival "World Changers"

Organic Growers School
2024 Sow & Grow Fest

Southern Highland Craft Guild
Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands

Swannanoa Community Council
Groovin' on Grovemont

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County
Celebrating the History and Legacy of Juneteenth

Weaverville Business Association
Weaverville's Music on Main

YMI Cultural Center
Goombay

FY24 F&CE Support Fund Recipients



Event Sponsorships & Marketing Support

Explore Asheville provides financial and marketing support to Buncombe County-based nonprofits for events that enhance the visitor experience and quality of place for residents. In FY24, Explore Asheville supported 34 events with \$152,000 in sponsorships and more than \$167,000 in marketing support.



A-B Tech Foundation
Autumn in Asheville

AIGA Asheville
Asheville Design Weekend

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
ASAP Business of Farming Conference

Arts AVL
» Arts AVL Trolley
» 2023-24 Arts AVL Event Series

Asheville Art Museum
Community Day: The Art of Food

Asheville Creative Arts
2nd Annual Lovely Asheville Fall Festival

Asheville FM
» Voices: An Evening of Poetry, Literature, and Community
» 4th Annual Asheville FM Record Fair

Asheville Quilt Guild
Asheville Quilt Show

Asheville Symphony Society
» ALT ASO Series
» Asheville Symphony's 2024 Artist Residency: A Celebration of the Violin

Asheville Tennis Association
Asheville Open Tennis Championships

Aurora Studio & Gallery, Inc.
Zelda Fitzgerald Week

AVL Fest
AVL Fest

Black Mountain Center for the Arts
Art in Bloom

Chow Chow
Chow Chow Festival

East End/Valley Street Neighborhood Association Incorporated
East End/Valley Street Community Heritage Festival

Eliada Homes, Inc.
2023 Fall Festival & Corn Maze

Folk Heritage Committee
» Shindig on the Green Mountain
» Dance & Folk Festival

Leicester Artists
Come To Leicester Artists Studio Tour

Organic Growers School
2023 Sow & Grow Fest

Outdoor Business Alliance
Get in Gear Fest

Skyview Golf Association
Skyview Golf Tournament

Southern Highland Craft Guild
Southern Highland Craft Guild July Fair

Swannanoa Valley Museum
Swannanoa Valley Music Heritage Concert

TEDxAsheville
TEDxAsheville

The North Carolina Arboretum Society
» Winter Lights at the North Carolina Arboretum
» Bloom with a View

The Utopian Seed Project
Trial to Table Series

UNC Asheville
» Asheville Ideas Fest
» Our Turn to Play Scholarship Dinner

Weaving Rainbows Branch of Earth Path Education
Healing and Harvest Festival

FY24 Sponsored Events

Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

GOALS

- » Balancing resident and visitor needs, recognizing the necessary role that sustainable, long-term growth of travel has in achieving a healthy, collective economy
- » 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

Explore Asheville's strategic imperatives emerged from extensive community listening sessions and broader community goals that frame and guide our work

★ 10 Best Mountain Towns in the South — TRAVEL + LEISURE

Residents Agree Now More Than Ever That Tourism Is Beneficial to Their Community

Each year, Explore Asheville surveys Buncombe County residents for their perspectives on tourism. In the 2024 survey, a **vast majority (88%) of residents agreed that tourism benefits their community**, up four percent from last year.

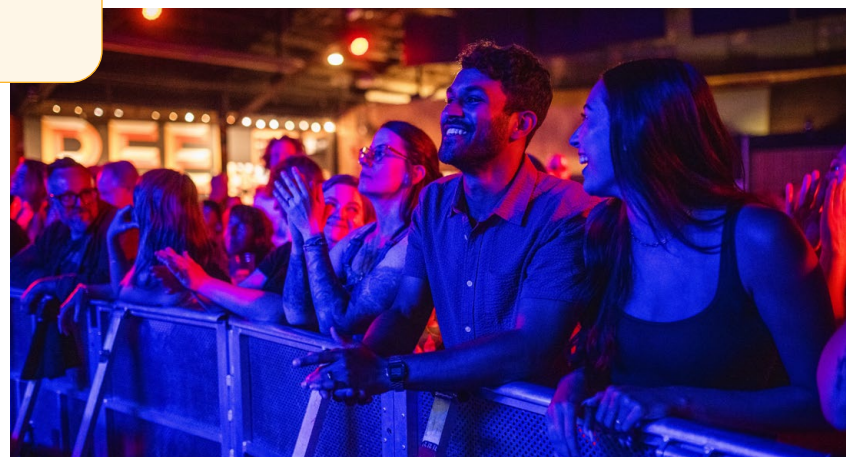
- » Nearly nine in 10 residents **believe tourism has a positive economic impact**, creating entrepreneurial opportunities and supporting independent businesses.

Buncombe County residents take great pride in their community, especially in its diversity and inclusivity, how the community rallies together, and its culture and character.

- » **Supporting local businesses is important** to nearly all Buncombe County residents, and most expect the same support from visitors to Asheville.

Natural greenspaces and protecting the environment are important aspects of Asheville for residents.

- » Results show that eight in 10 residents agree that the **visitor economy helps support these natural and cultural amenities.**



★ 30 Best Girls Trip Destinations for 2024 — GLAMOUR

Illuminated Asheville's knowledge capital and meeting amenities by featuring climate science, wellness, outdoors, and auto industry editorial case studies and videos through a NorthStar Meetings partnership

ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Hosted five familiarization trips (FAMS), providing meeting planners with a test drive of Asheville and connecting them to local artisans and authentic experiences



New App Boosts Visitor Engagement

In January 2024, Explore Asheville launched an app, providing an exciting new way to digitally explore Asheville and Buncombe County. The **Explore Asheville app** seamlessly compiles all partner listings on ExploreAsheville.com for food and beverage, lodging, events, walking tours, and more. From January to June 2024, the app received more than 3,000 downloads (exceeding industry benchmarks by ~11%) and more than 115,000 page views.



Scan the QR code to download and experience the Explore Asheville app



★ 9 Best Places to Work Remotely in the Fall — FORBES

Achieved a Bronze Adrian Award for the *Always, Asheville* storytelling foundation from the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)



Updated Downtown and Biltmore Village landing pages, differentiating our vibrant neighborhoods to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more throughout the county



Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel

GOALS

- » Engaging residents and visitors with shared values to care for and respect natural, cultural, and human resources vital in delivering quality guest experiences
- » Collaborating with community organizations, local businesses, and environmentally focused partners to support the sustainability and growth of our outdoor economy



★ **10th Best River for Tubing**
— USA TODAY 10 BEST READERS' CHOICE TRAVEL AWARDS 2024

★ **The 8 Best U.S. Destinations for Mindfulness and Meditation**
— STUDY BREAKS



Champions of Conservation Celebrates Local Environmental Advocates Nationally

In partnership with *Garden & Gun*, Explore Asheville recognized ten unsung scientists, advocates, and innovators who are helping to defend the South's imperiled ecosystems. This included two local pioneers: **Chris Smith of the Utopian Seed Project** and **JJ Apodaca of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy**.

In conjunction, Explore Asheville worked with *The Good Road* to shine a spotlight on Asheville's rich cultural heritage, vibrant food scene, and commitment to conservation. The episode featured **Wilma Dykeman's legacy**, Hood Huggers community revitalization work, and a farm-to-table dining experience with renowned chef John Flerer and bluegrass musician Woody Platt.

Scan the QR code to explore *Garden & Gun's Champions of Conservation* feature

Creating New Accessible and Trail Town Resources

The **Outdoor NC Trail Town Stewardship Program** is a designation program that recognizes communities throughout North Carolina for their diverse trail experiences and celebrates stewardship efforts that champion accessible outdoors, responsible visitation, and sustainable tourism. Asheville and Buncombe County were among 17 destinations invited to participate in this pilot program and are featured in *Outdoor NC's Trail Town Guide*. As part of this effort, Explore Asheville built a new **Responsible Travel** landing page and a forthcoming **Accessible Asheville** page.

Scan the QR code to explore the *Outdoor NC Trail Town Guide*

ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Connected three visiting groups to participate in community projects, bringing more purpose and meaning to our visitors



★ **The Most Romantic Getaways in the U.S.**
— THE KNOT



Attracted more than 350 sustainability-focused travel and hospitality professionals from over 40 countries to Asheville by hosting Adventure Travel Trade Association's AdventureELEVATE



Partnered with *Outside Magazine* to spotlight local gear builders in their Summer Gear Guide and at the Outside Festival, positioning Asheville as the largest outdoor economy east of the Mississippi River



Promoted Buncombe County's abundance of hiking, biking, walking, and horse trails for the 2023 Year of the Trail in collaboration with The Great Trails State Coalition and Visit NC



Engaging & Inviting Diverse Audiences

GOALS

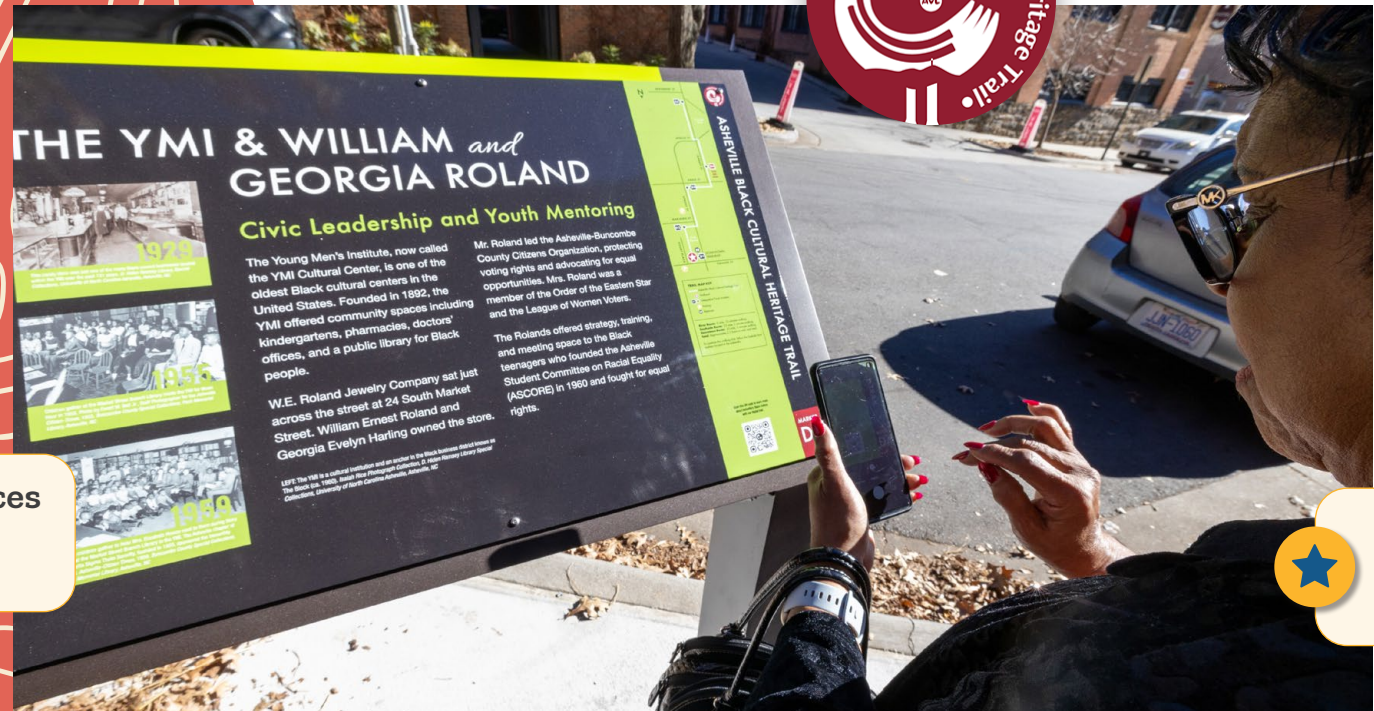
- » Extending a genuine invitation to Black travelers and other diverse audiences including LGBTQIA+ visitors — connecting them with local neighborhoods, businesses, and entrepreneurs — creating more opportunities for all to win
- » Supporting product development, placemaking, and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community

★ **20 Friendliest Places in the South**
— SOUTHERN LIVING

Honoring Asheville's Black Heritage on an Immersive Trail

In December 2023, a significant project was unveiled in Asheville, celebrating the dignity, humanity, and agency of Black people from all backgrounds who built resilient communities and fostered social change.

Between 2018 and 2023, Explore Asheville funded and managed the creation of the **Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail** in partnership with River Front Development Group and a 19-member community advisory group. The self-guided interpretive trail comprises 14 stops and 20 panels spread across three historically significant Black neighborhoods.



★ **Safest LGBTQ-Friendly Cities in the U.S.**
— WEALTH OF GEEKS

This project was underpinned by a year-long strategic PR campaign to elevate recognition of Asheville's Black cultural heritage. A dozen national journalists and select influencers attended a BIPOC media press trip to experience more than 20 BIPOC businesses, resulting in earned placements, including in *Travel + Leisure*, *Frommers*, and *Bloomberg* coverage.

Phase II of this project, launched in 2024, invites local BIPOC creatives to enhance the trail with public art.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail

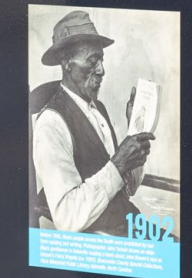
★ **Best Babymoon Destinations for a Peaceful and Accommodating Trip**
— TRAVEL NOIRE

ASHEVILLE'S BLACK NEWSPAPERS



From the Colored Enterprise to The Urban News

For centuries, White-owned newspapers were the only published source of news and opinions in the United States. White journalists often encouraged violence toward free and enslaved Black people, including lynchings. Following emancipation, White newspapers often called for the seizure of Black wealth and property.



America's first Black newspaper, *Free Journal*, published in 1827, reported on civic and business life. It also advocated for Black people's rights. Asheville's *Colored Enterprise*, published by Thomas Leatherwood, featured news and opinions by and for Black readers. Black-owned newspapers in Asheville included *The Church Advocate*, *Freedom's Advocate*, and *The Urban News*.

ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Earned staff-wide Unity Blaze Certifications from Black Folks Camp Too, enhancing staff understanding of the challenges faced by underrepresented communities and developing the necessary skills to welcome everyone to the great outdoors



Convened a quarterly LGBTQIA+ working group, resulting in increased Pride engagement and the creation of You Are Welcome Here window clings



Onboarded 41 diversely owned businesses, marking a 25% increase from last fiscal year



Created new Black Asheville Experience and Bienvenidos a Asheville landing pages and refreshed the LGBTQIA+ landing page to value and honor Asheville's diverse non-majority-owned businesses and creatives



Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

GOALS

- » Sharing stories of creators and makers who differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences, and more
- » Supporting product development, placemaking, and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community



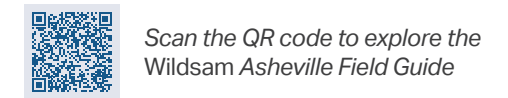
Cinematic Momentum for Seasonal Travel Boosts

Explore Asheville positioned Asheville and Buncombe County as a summer camp and winter wonderland destination by gaining cinematic momentum in two films on the big and small screens. An integrated marketing campaign partnership with Hallmark amplified *A Biltmore Christmas* movie, highlighting historic and iconic Blue Ridge holiday experiences. The *Summer Camp* movie promotion shed light on the storied summer camp tradition in the Blue Ridge Mountains, creating articles and corresponding social media posts inspiring visitors to relive their summer camp experiences and to explore where the movie stars visited.

★ **5th Best Beer City**
— USA TODAY 10 BEST READERS CHOICE TRAVEL AWARD

Inspiring Cultural Discovery in New Curated Field Guide

Wildsam is known for its story-driven field guides to cities, national parks, and iconic destinations. The *Wildsam Asheville Field Guide* features an editorial covering Asheville's wide range of offerings, 64 partners, a one-day itinerary, and a section dedicated to the local art and craft scene. Asheville's custom digital guide is only the second *Wildsam* has launched.



Launched a local content creator initiative to support 10 local creators in producing social-first, short-form video content that depicts diverse, first-person, follow-along journeys through Asheville



Landed a *CBS Mornings Surprise Trip* where correspondent David Begnaud interviewed Taste Diner Owner and Executive Chef Steven Goff, illustrating the creative and kind spirit of our community



Amplified Asheville's music scene through a Back Porch Concert series featuring six local artists at three music venues in collaboration with AVL Fest and *Garden & Gun*



Showcased local businesses and talent through 22 activations at our partner events

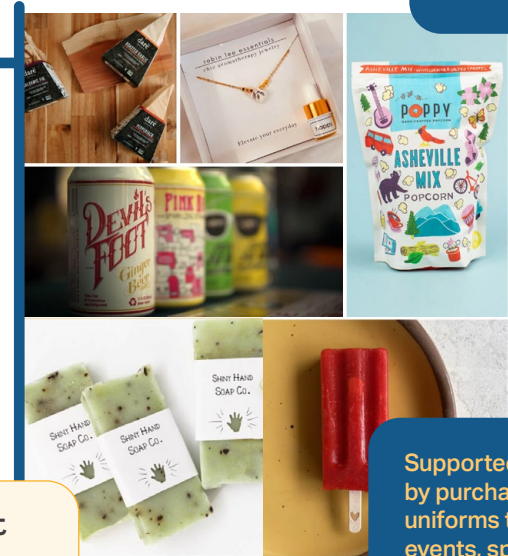


Supported local businesses Twin Denim and Astral by purchasing locally made apparel and gear for staff uniforms to wear at national trade shows and partner events, spotlighting the talent of our destination



Spotlighting One-of-a-kind Gifts from the Asheville Creative Community

The *Welcome Bag Gift Guide* introduces visitors to Asheville's vibrant creative community. Meeting planners can choose from a curated selection of local visual art, specialty foods and beverages, outdoor gear, tableware, and other unique products to provide to their visiting meetings and groups. These distinctive local gifts honor Asheville's creative community, talented artisans, and businesses.



★ **Outstanding Restaurant and Best Chef: Southeast 2024 Semifinalists**
— JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION

Fostering Connections within our Industry

Summer Social JULY 2023

More than 270 community partners joined us for an evening of networking and engagement at The Restoration Hotel and The Draftsman Bar + Lounge. Through the generous **donations made by hospitality partners**, Explore Asheville gathered more than \$400 worth of art supplies for Buncombe County elementary and middle schools.



The Year Ahead JANUARY 2024

More than 300 community and industry partners attended The Year Ahead, the first partner event of 2024 at the recently opened 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 and hospitality industry. Attendees heard about the latest investments awarded through the TPDF, while partners and community members provided updates on annual plans as part of four panel discussions.



Travel & Hospitality Earth Day Cleanup APRIL 2024

More than 100 travel and tourism partners, community members, and friends gathered for the inaugural Travel & Hospitality Earth Day Cleanup in five districts throughout Asheville. Partnering with **Asheville GreenWorks** and **RiverLink**, the travel and hospitality community removed more than **460 pounds of trash** from the streets, local waterways, and greenways.



Annual Meeting SEPTEMBER 2023

The Annual Meeting celebrated the 40-year-long commitment to community investment, highlighting economic growth and the important role of travel and hospitality in our community's past and future.

Nearly 275 local leaders, travel and hospitality partners, and community members attended the 2023 BCTDA Annual Meeting at the Wortham Center for Performing Arts. **Richard Florida** provided a thoughtful keynote on the future of city centers, cultivating community relationships, and understanding the vital roles of cities as places of connection for residents, workers, and visitors. **Matthew Bacoate, Jr.** was honored as the 2023 **William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award** recipient.



Hospitality Outlook MARCH 2024

One hundred and fifteen 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.

The 2024 Heroes of Hospitality span the travel and hospitality industry and included:

- » **David Teafatiller** Guide - Hike Bike Kayak Asheville
- » **Marco Gaspar** Chef de Partie - The Lobster Trap
- » **Marsha Furness** Assistant Manager - Talloni, A Shoe Salon
- » **Maura Juarez** Housekeeper - Virtelle Hospitality
- » **Ralford McIntosh** Banquet Server - Omni The Grove Park Inn
- » **Ryan Jackson** Customer Host - FOX-N-OTTER Escape Rooms



Recognizing Heroes of Hospitality MAY 2024

The inaugural Explore Asheville Heroes of Hospitality Awards Luncheon celebrated **33 individuals nominated** for their exemplary service and dedication as ambassadors of Asheville and Buncombe County. Six winners were selected. One hundred and sixty partners joined to recognize the nominees and the **inaugural round of LIFT fund recipients** during an awards luncheon at the Omni Grove Park Inn.

Each recipient received a \$500 gift card and a handcrafted, engraved award made locally by Asheville artist Asher Holman at Small Batch Glass, recognizing their invaluable contributions to the hospitality industry and our community.

Expanding our Partner Network

Warm Welcome to 140 New Partners

Approximately 1,900 businesses and organizations are partners of Explore Asheville.

Our partners make Asheville and Buncombe County a top desired destination, and we are proud to shine a spotlight on the local artists, restaurants, tour providers, retail shops, and other attractions that make this place so special.

after/glow
Alexander and Lehnert Fine Jewelry
All Day Darling
Appalachian Beer Spa and Massage Lounge Taproom
Asheville Bed and Breakfast Association
Asheville Canoe House
Asheville Crafted Edge
Asheville Holistic Acupuncture
Asheville Hopper by XInt Rides
Asheville Truffle Experience
Asheville Wedding Planners
Asheville Weddings and Events AvantStay
Ayurprana Listening Room
Bad Manners Coffee
Bee Thai Kitchen
Beradu
Bon Paul and Sharky's Hostel
Bonesteel Films
Botiwalla
Camilla Calnan Photography
Cane Creek Cycling Components
Chickadee Photo Booth
Cultivated Cocktails Distillery and Tavern
Daphne's Catering Co. by Twisted Laurel
Diamond Brand Gear
Diatribre Brewing Company
Drip Sauna
Durrant Farms
Earth River Records
El Patio de Guajiro
Elder Dragon Coffee Shop
Embassy Suites by Hilton Asheville Downtown

Epic Cycles Asheville
Ernest
Eulogy at Burial Beer Co.
Exhale Holistic Wellness
Firelight at Shope Creek
Foundation Studios
Gaea
Gallery Mélange
Gemelli
Giddy Sweet and Savory
Golden Hour
Greater AVL Transportation
GreenFlash Watersports
Haywood Famous
Hemlock Restoration Initiative
High Five Coffee Shop - Rankin
High Five Coffee Shop - Riverside
Highpoint Photography
Holiday Inn Express Asheville - Woodfin
Holly's Mobile Bar
Honey and the Hive
Hot Zone Party Fire Engine
J Chong Eats
Jaime Byrd Contemporary Art
JCV Properties
Jeffrey
Jessica Schaeffer, Harp
Juan and Emily Photography
Kasa Downtown Asheville
Katherine Alexander Fine Jewelry
Kevin Andrew Gallery + Studio
Kota Kai Coffee Library
La Cuisine
Lazy Tiger Hostel
Leo's Italian Social
Little Louie's
Lott House

Luminosa
Mean Mandy's Food Truck
Mehfil
Mission Pizza Asheville
Mountain Nah
MountainTrue's French Broad Paddle Trail
Nerd Dungeon
On the Wing Gallery
Pad Thai Asheville
Paulieboy Enterprises
Peri Social House
Poseidon Spa
Pro 16 Productions
Professional Party Rentals
Rachel McIntosh Photography
Regina's Westside
Rent this Rod Outfitters
River Row Flats
Sage and Spice Catering
Salt Face Mule Brewing Co.
ScalarWave Wellness
Scavenger Hunt Walking Tours
Scenic Hotel at Biltmore Village
Seeds of Satya
Simon Anthony Photography
Small Batch Glass
Smokee's Pizza
Smoky Mountain Soul Adventures
Sohum Mountain Healing Resort
Soprana Rooftop
Stephanie Ellis Jewelry
Sweet Plantain Grill
Taco Boy Biltmore Park
Taco Boy West Asheville
Terra Nova Beer Co. - Swannanoa
The Argot Room

The Czar Gallery
The Dolly Llama
The Draftsman Bar and Lounge
The Exchange
The Farm A Gathering Place
The Flat Iron Rooftop
The Gallery at Plays in Mud Pottery
The Gem Drop Shop
The Gorge Zipline
The Gourmet Chip Company
The Inn at Amaris Farms
The Low Down
The Market by Sage and Spice
The Nerd Dungeon
The Never Ending Flower Farm
The Observatory
The Radical
The River Arts District Brewing Company
The Sweet Escape
The Tiki Easy Bar
Tiki Easy
TinCan Pizzeria
Twisty Maple
Ultimate Ice Cream-Downtown
Valhalla Indoor Axe Throwing Asheville
Verde Villa Sanctuary and Healing Center
VIRTUE Boutique
Voodoo Brewing Co. - Asheville
Wall Street Market
Wine and Roses
Yalla
Zelda Dearest
ZimZoom Photo Booth Asheville
Zowie Entertainment



Meet the Explore Asheville Team

EXECUTIVE TEAM



Vic Isley
(She/Her)
President & CEO



Julia Simpson
(She/Her) Manager,
Executive & Strategy

CULTURE & BUSINESS AFFAIRS



Jennifer Kass-Green
(She/Her) Vice President of
Culture & Business Affairs



Glenn Ramey
(She/Her) Human
Resources Manager



Josh Jones
(He/Him) Systems &
Operations Manager

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Michael Kryzaneck
(He/Him) Vice President
of Business Development



Connie Nuckolls Holliday
(She/Her)
Director of Sales

MARKETING



Dodie Stephens
(She/Her) Vice
President of Marketing



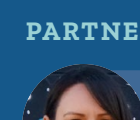
Holly (Oakley) Watts
(She/Her) Creative
Services Coordinator



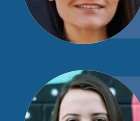
Mickey Poandl
(He/They/Them)
PR Manager



David Thompson
(He/Him) Digital
Communications Manager



Tiffany Thacker
(She/Her)
Director of Grants



McKenzie Provost
(She/Her) Partnership
Engagement Manager



Nick Kepley
(They/He) Director
of Marketing



Luisa Yen
(She/Her) Director
of Public Relations



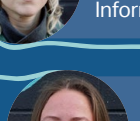
Sha'Linda Pruitt
(She/Her)
PR Coordinator



Elizabeth White
(She/Her)
Web Manager



Ashley Greenstein
(She/Her) Public
Information Manager



Shelby Pearsall
(She/Her) Partnership
Coordinator



Carli Adams
(She/Her) Group
Marketing Manager



Cass Herrington
(She/Her)
PR Manager



Emilie Soffe
(She/Her) Director
of Content



Kayla Speis
(She/Her) Social
Media Manager



Kimberly Puryear
(She/Her) Destination
Project Manager



Shawn Boone
(He/Him) Senior
Sales Manager



Tina Porter
(She/Her) Senior
Sales Manager



Emily Crosby
(She/Her) Group
Service Manager



Ali Wainright
(She/Her) Group
Sales Coordinator



Kathryn Dewey
(She/Her)
Sales Manager



Khal Khoury
(He/Him)
Sales Manager



John Dawson
(He/Him) Group
Service Coordinator



Mia Brown
(She/Her) Sales &
Marketing Assistant

[EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM](https://www.exploreasheville.com)

(828) 258-6109

27 COLLEGE PLACE
ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

ALWAYS
ASHEVILLE

