

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES PROGRESS UPDATE

Vic Isley President & CEO

Dodie Stephens Vice President of Marketing

Michael Kryzanek Vice President of Business Development

Penelope Whitman Vice President of Partnership & Destination Management

> Jennifer Kass-Green Vice President of Culture & Business Affairs





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	
 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. 	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.	J J J J J J J J J J J J J J J J J J J	Sharing stories of creators and makers who help differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences and more. Supporting product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.	F

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

RUNNING A HEALTHY & EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

Investing in people, policies, and practices to serve our community with integrity within the organization's legislative requirements.

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2024







MARKETING, CONTENT & PR Q4 INTIATIVES

Dodie Stephens Vice President of Marketing



MUSIC SCENE STORYTELLING PARTNERSHIP

Highlighted AVL Fest in partnership with Garden & Gun

Back Porch Sessions

Recorded six concerts featuring Asheville-based musicians set to perform at AVL Fest and showcased three unique venues, The Outpost, Wicked Weed Funkatorium, and Orange Peel.

Performers included:

- Town Mountain
- Tyler Ramsey
- Whitney Mongé

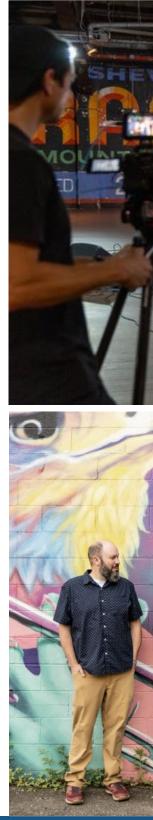
- Amanda Platt and the Honeycutters
- Alex Krugg Combo
- Toubab Krewe

Musicians Dinner Editorial: The Sounds of Asheville

The music editor of Garden & Gun interviewed five artists about the local music community. The transcript will appear online and in the magazine's August/September issue.



Mailed <u>vinyl</u> with press kit to top 20 national and international journalists covering music, artists and travel, including Paste, Rolling Stone and Pitchfork.





SPORTS DESTINATION MARKETING

Digital asset project to enhance sales and marketing

A project to build a comprehensive library of sporting event and facility assets kicked off in Q4 and will continue through September 2024. Assets will be used in a variety of sales and marketing materials to recruit future sporting events

Threshold360 Sport Facility Virtual Tours

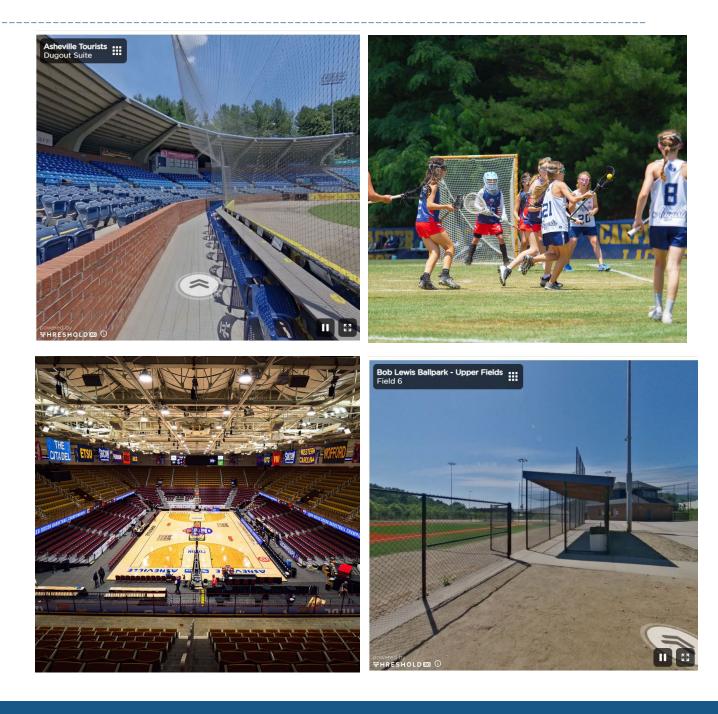
Explore Asheville has partnered with Threshold360 to capture highquality 360° virtual tours of 10 sport facilities that will be added to ExploreAsheville.com and will enhance sales efforts and the promotion of Asheville to sport event planners

Sport Facility and Venue Images

Capturing photos, including drone shots, of indoor and outdoor sport facilities located in Buncombe County.

Sport Event Images and B-roll

Capturing photos and b-roll of real sporting events including lacrosse, dance, baseball, soccer and more.



WILDSAM DIGITAL GUIDE

Covering where to go, what to eat, and what makes Asheville unique

<u>Asheville</u> was the third destination featured in a new digital field guide series by Wildsam.

Custom editorial covers the breadth of Asheville area offerings, a webfriendly map with dozens of locations, restaurants, historic neighborhoods, shops, itinerary inspiration and curated local insights.

Two embedded advertorials drive traffic to ExploreAsheville.com.

Wildsam's story-driven approach has resulted in loyal followers:

- 1M+ printed guidebooks
- 1.6M digital readers
- 2.1M email subscribers
- 511K+ social followers



Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

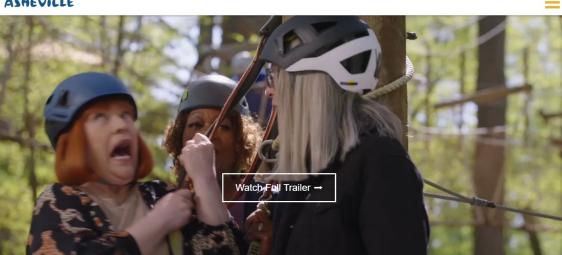
SUMMER CAMP PROMOTION Cinematic momentum for seasonal travel push

- Created a strong association for the rich legacy of summer • camps in the Blue Ridge Mountains to prompt summer travel by amplifying the Summer Camp movie release
- Experience Summer (Camp) Magic in Asheville landing page received 90.606 views
- Articles and corresponding social posts were geared at inspiring visitors to Relive Your Summer Camp Experience in Asheville and to explore Overnight Summer Camps In and Around Asheville and Where the Summer Camp stars visited

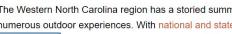
Additional campaign highlights:

- Movie Theatre Inventory Placement (6/3 6/30)
 - DC, NYC, Raleigh, Atlanta, Tampa
 - 47,376 Asheville :15s spots
 - 1,014,246 impressions
- Earned media in key markets 25.8M reach • and \$58.6K publicity value; samples:
 - Forbes
 - FOX Access Carolina
- Influencer partnership with @travelingblackwidow -14,496 reach to the 50+ demographic





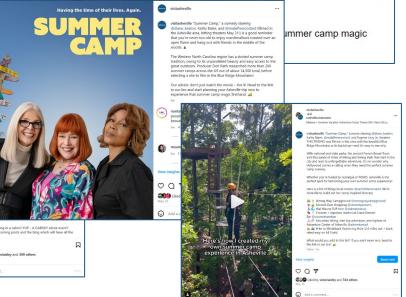
Experience Summer (Camp) Magic in Asheville

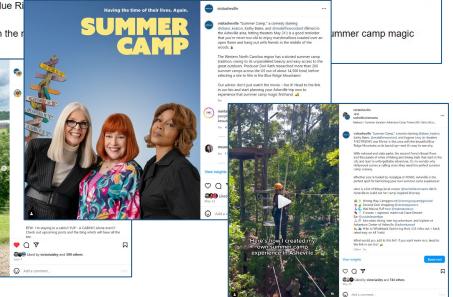


The Western North Carolina region has a storied summer camp tradition, owing to its unparalleled beauty numerous outdoor experiences. With national and state parks everywhere you turn, serene waterways like d thousands of miles of hiking and biking trails that start in the city and lead to unforgettable adventure, it's no plywood comes a-calling when they need the perfect summer camp backdrop!

> a comedy starring Diane Keaton, Kathy Bates, and Alfre Woodard is the latest camp movie to be filmed in the e, three childhood best friends who used to spend every summer together at camp reunite for a summer camp

't just watch the

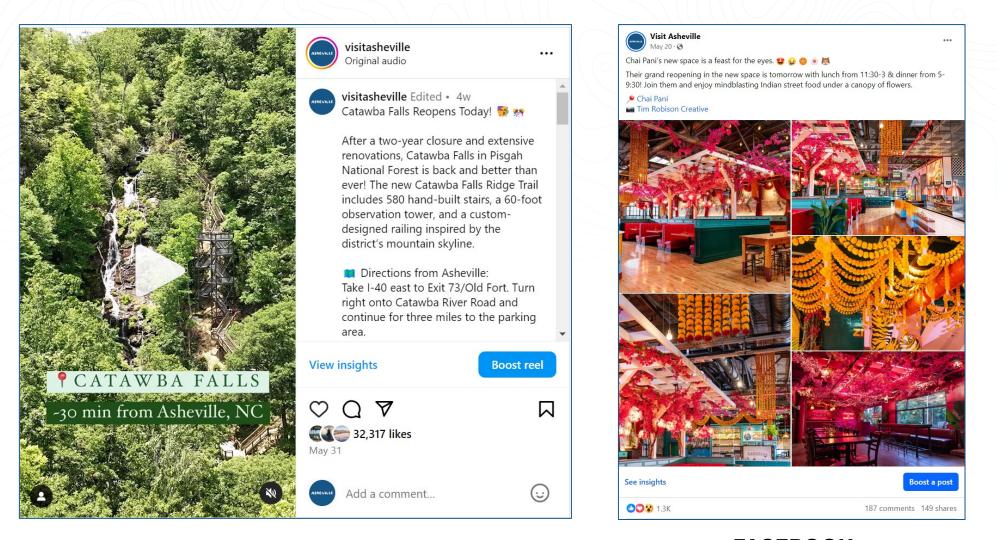




Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

TOP PERFORMING POSTS

Re-opening announcements received the most engagement across all platforms in Q4



INSTAGRAM Catawba Falls Re-Opening (Reel) 75,772 Engagements

FACEBOOK Chai Pani Re-Opening (Photo Set) 12,653 Engagements

Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares



▶ 856.5K 🏼 🔶 16.9K

More data

TIKTOK **Catawba Falls Re-Opening (Reel)** 51,691 Engagements

Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

NOTEWORTHY NEWS CLIPS Pitched stories that shine a spotlight on Asheville

848.8M Earned Media Reach

> \$1.6M **Publicity Value**

47 Hosted Media

28 Significant Team Placements

146 **Total Placements**

TRAVEL+ EISURE

An Iconic Asheville Building Is Now a Beautiful Boutique Hotel — and We Got a First Look



AFAR

7 Rooftop Bars with the Best Drinks (and Views) of Asheville



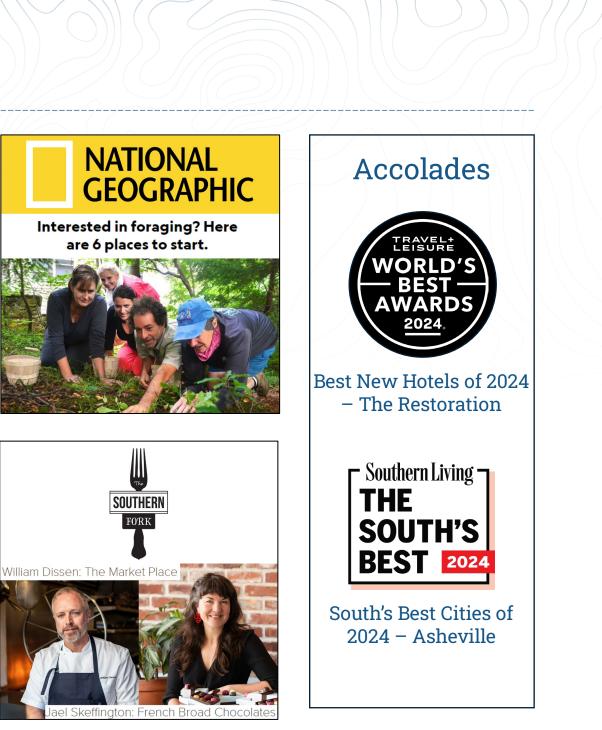


5 hidden gem destinations to book for your next summer getaway





are 6 places to start.

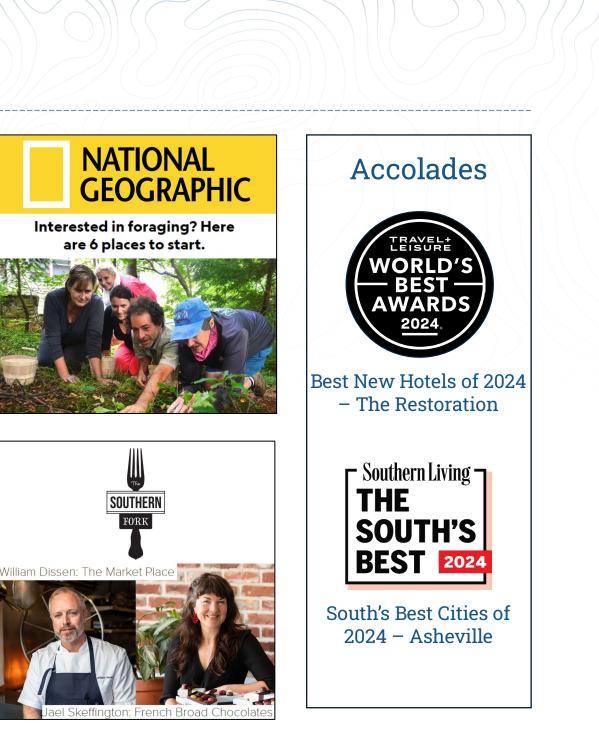




Have a "Summer Camp"-inspired adventure







EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences

ASHEVILLE BLACK CULTURAL HERITAGE TRAIL Multi-phased storytelling on Asheville's Black legacy

227.6M Earned Media Reach

> 428.2K **Publicity Value**

12 Hosted Media

13.3M

Potential Social Media Impressions (added value from press trip)

30 **Total Placements**

EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Year-long strategic PR campaign elevating Asheville's Black Cultural Heritage Trail used targeted media outreach and a press release, influencer engagements and a transformative group press trip that exceeded goals and activated 20+ BIPOC businesses.

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

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

Carolina, is now home to one of the few Black beritage trails in Appalachi



Bloomberg

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

For years, the western North Carolina city has been breaking tourism records. Now it's making sure that success benefits everybody.





The Washington Post

Where to travel in 2024, without crowds

destinations across Italy, Japan. Mexico and more to add to your travel wish list

Don't miss: The mile-long Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail, which encompasses three neighborhoods, introduces visitors to pillars of the community, such as Alderman Newton Shepard, a formerly enslaved man who in 1882 became the city's first Black person to win an election



ADVENTURE ELEVATE SHEVILLE, NC

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT **Q4 INTIATIVES**

Michael Kryzanek Vice President of Business Development



Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel

Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

ADVENTURE ELEVATE 2024

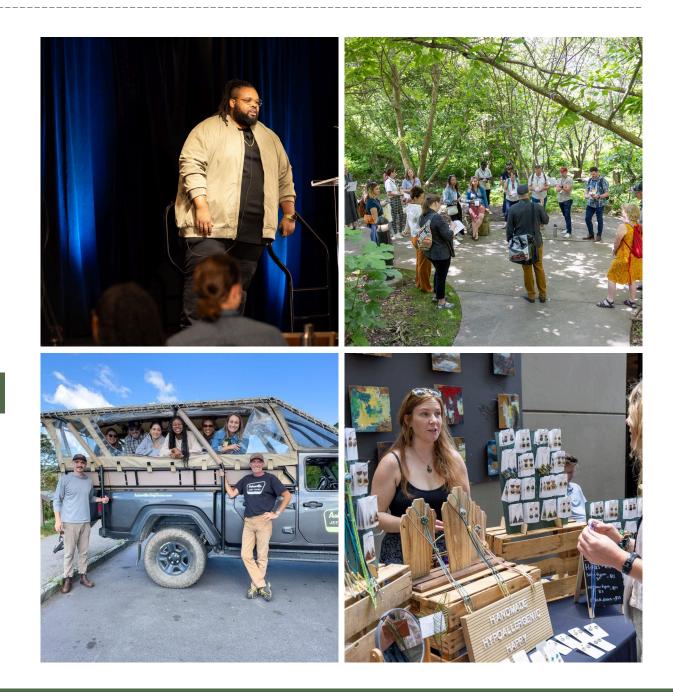
\$450,000 of direct spending in our community

- Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) hosted
 <u>AdventureELEVATE</u> for the first time in the Southeast in conjunction with Visit NC
- 350+ attendees, including travel buyers, tour operators, media, tourism boards and travel content creators, came from 40 countries
- Day of Adventure included ziplining, white water rafting, hiking adventures, and tours with Explore Asheville partners
- Opening reception at Highland Brewing
- Seminars held at the Renaissance Hotel Asheville

DESTINATION PROMOTION DURING THE CONFERENCE

PR team engaged 20+ media delegates from outlets such as Afar, Conde Nast Traveler, AARP, Ebony, Gear Junkie, Vancouver Sun, etc. with a welcome reception, ongoing networking and pitching during the media marketplace.

Keynote speaker, influencer and Nat Geo host Jeff Jenkins engaged in a content partnership promoting the destination.



Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

US TRAVEL ASSOCIATION'S IPW

- The leading inbound global travel show
- Held May 5-8 in Los Angeles
- 5,700 attendees representing 70 countries
- 42 scheduled appointments and another 10 walk-ups
- Three attendees stopped to say they were attending AdventureELEVATE
- Numerous OTAs wanting to add Asheville for their FIT & Fly/Drive clientele
- Met with a group tour company from the UK with seven departures that include two nights in Asheville



Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

HOTEL SECTOR MEETING

Increasing visibility and support of outlying hotel properties

- Hosted 20+ hotel partner attendees representing properties from areas around I-26/I-40W and Tunnel Road/I-40E
- Discussion topics included:
 - Airstream Ventures presentation by Alan Verlander and Lane
 Teitlebaum
 - Hotel sector performance compared to downtown and Biltmore Village sector performance
 - Partnering to increase motorcoach, wedding, SMERF and government business



Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

Q4 GROUP & EVENT DEVELOPMENT

Benefitted businesses in our community



9.3 % increase in leads over Q4 FY23 7.2 % increase in room nights over Q4 FY23



PARTNERSHIP & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT **Q4 INTIATIVES**

Penelope Whitman Vice President of Partnership & Destination Management



2024 EXPLORE ASHEVILLE PARTNER SURVEY

- Fielded survey December 2023 March 2024 to all active Explore Asheville partners
- 178 responses received from wide variety of partners categories and geographic regions around the county
- Outdoor attractions/activities and food and beverage were perceived highest destination assets
- Workforce availability and sporting events were perceived lowest rated destination assets
- Most responded that the generation of business demand is needed throughout the year, and that excess demand is not an issue during any part of the year Driving business during the shoulder season was cited as the greatest need
- Many respondents felt houselessness and perceived public safety concerns were the biggest risks to the success of their organizations, with economic vitality and resident sentiment following.

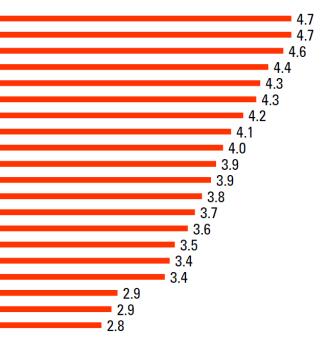
Outdoor attractions/activities Food and beverage Local makers and artisans Number and variety of small/ locally-owned businesses Unique culture and personality The arts Attractions and activities Concerts and performing arts Entrepreneur cultur Unique neighborhoods Being welcoming to diverse audiences Parks/public gathering spaces Festivals Family-friendly attractions/activities Signage and wayfinding Commercial air accessibility Workforce talent Transportation services Workforce availability Sporting events



The following are characteristics and assets that contribute to great places to visit and live. Please rate them according to how strong they are in Asheville and Buncombe County, where 1 is not a strength and 5 is a very significant strength.

Average respondent rating of all Asheville destination assets (1-5 scale)

Average Rating



2024 EXPLORE ASHEVILLE PARTNER SURVEY CONT.

Based on feedback provided by the 2024 Partner Survey, we are implementing the following:

Partner Survey Findings	What We're Doing
43% of respondents cited attending one or fewer partner events, indicating a lack of availability to attend events taking place Tuesday-Thursday	Hosting five of six FY25 tentpole partner events on Monday to a majority of partners
Sporting events cited as lowest ranked destination asset	Explore Asheville has expanded digital sports assets, revamping page on exploreasheville.com to showcase breadth of venues a host and has hired a director of sports, film & entertainment to a and events
Workforce availability, 2nd lowest ranked destination asset	Explore Asheville has begun a Workforce Development program at educating and inspiring the next generation of travel & tourism
Educating visitors about places to visit beyond downtown Asheville cited as a need	Working with intention of partnering with more widespread and audience by increasing partner network 7.6%
Networking and small business-related partner events cited as need by partners in reference to Explore Asheville events	New events programming, such as New Partner Breakfasts and Hours, aimed at small and new business networking, collaboratin sharing
More than 50% of respondents do not use or do not know how to use the Explore Asheville Event Calendar	An improved event submission experience is launching in Septe website; our partnership team will be sharing tutorials and provid help partners transition to new platform

accommodate

ng the sports landing and capabilities to attract new groups

am, aimed sm workforce

d diverse business

d Partner Happy ting, and information

tember with our new viding assistance to

OUTDOOR NC TRAIL TOWN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Elevating visitor experiences, prioritizing resident quality of life, stewarding place

Pilot statewide program included Explore Asheville and 17 other destinations in NC willing to deepen their stewardship ethos, promote responsible visitation and inclusive, accessible travel via coaching and toolkits.

As a result:

- Built new Responsible Tourism landing page .
- Building new Accessible Asheville landing page to assist visitors in finding accessible accommodations and experiences
- Created content for the Trail Town Visitor Guide, a ٠ digital resource showcasing a selection of diverse trails to be published August and distributed by Visit NC

ASHEVILLE TO DO



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Inspire: Increasing BC Youth Awareness and Aspirations in Travel and Hospitality Industry

Encouraging future careers in travel and hospitality with our inaugural high school internship program, launching summer 2025.

Program Kick-Off and Research:

- Partnered with Robyn Pass, National Board-certified Teacher and Career Academy Advocate with the Erwin High School Hospitality Camp, June 17-20.
- Filled gaps in camp schedule and organized experiences at 12 Bones, French Broad Chocolate, Taco Billy, and Well Played for fifteen 9-12 grade students to engage with partners and learn about our industry.
- Provided a guided tour of the Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail.
- Created Hospitality Camp graduation gift bags with local products and visitor guides to support partners and expose the students to locally made items.



Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel Running a Healthy & Effective Organization **NEW PARTNER EVENTS** Earth Day & Heroes of Hospitality

Explore Asheville Travel & Tourism Earth Day Clean Up:

- More than 100 travel and tourism partners, community members, and friends gathered for an Earth Day clean up at five locations throughout Asheville.
- We picked up 460 pounds of trash, preventing it from washing into local streams/rivers.

Explore Asheville Heroes of Hospitality Awards:

- Inaugural industry event recognized local professionals who provide excellent hospitality and customer service.
- Convened 130 partners to celebrate 33 nominees and 6 winners as well as the inaugural round of LIFT fund recipients.
- Winners include:
 - 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 Grove Park Inn
 - Ryan Jackson: Customer Host, FOX-N-OTTER Escape Rooms



Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

LEGACY INVESTMENT FROM TOURISM (LIFT) FUND

Twelve tourism-related capital projects awarded in inaugural cycle

- In April 2024, the BCTDA approved investing nearly \$10 million in 12 tourism-related capital projects through the inaugural cycle of the LIFT Fund – the most awards made in a single capital project grant cycle
- These investments will support the maintenance and design of tourism-related capital projects, project administration, enhancement of natural resources, and expansion of necessary infrastructure
- 77% of available funds were committed to City- or Countyowned projects

2024 LIFT Fund Investments

Grantee	Project	Award Amount
Buncombe County	Ferry Road Community	\$4,000,000
City of Asheville	Aston Park Tennis Center Court Rebuild Design	\$40,000
City of Asheville	Coxe Avenue Complete Street	\$2,983,890
City of Asheville	ExploreAsheville.com Arena Capital Maintenance	\$675,000
Asheville Museum of Science	Museum Repair and Expansion Plan	\$250,000
Black Wall Street AVL	Black Wall Street AVL Visitor Experience Upgrade	\$77,500
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation	Craggy Gardens Visitor Center & Picnic Area	\$750,000
Hood Huggers Foundation	Blue Note Junction (Phase 1 Construction)	\$500,000
Media Arts Project (MAP)	Supernova Immersive Experience Project Design	\$200,000
RiverLink	Gateway Park	\$270,018
Swannanoa Valley Fine Arts League	Red House Gallery and Studios	\$92,495
Asheville Botanical Garden	Asheville Botanical Garden Renovations	\$150,000
TOTAL		\$9,988,903

Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth

EVENT GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS

Support for local festival & cultural events through grants and sponsorships

Explore Asheville/BCTDA supported the following events in FY24 Q4:

- Asheville Makers Inc. Maker Faire Asheville
- Asheville Downtown Association Downtown After 5
- Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center {Re}HAPPENING 12
- The Utopian Seed Project Trial to Table Series
- UNCA Our Turn to Play Scholarship Dinner
- The North Carolina Arboretum Society Bloom with a View
- Asheville Downtown Association Pritchard Park Summer Culture & Art Series
- Asheville Brewers Alliance AVL Beer Week
- Swannanoa Valley Museum Swannanoa Valley Music Heritage Concert
- Black Wall Street AVL GRINDfest
- Black Mountain Center for the Arts Art in Bloom
- Center for Honeybee Research Asheville HoneyFest
- Connect Beyond Festival Connect Beyond Festival
- Weaverville Business Association Weaverville's Music on Main
- UNCA Asheville Ideas Fest
- The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County - "Celebrating the History and Legacy of Juneteenth"
- Asheville FM Voices; An Evening of Poetry, Literature, and Community

\$72K

Grants & Sponsorships





17 Events

Running a Healthy & Effective Organization

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Onboarded 44 local businesses as Explore Asheville partners

- Explore Asheville onboarded 44 local businesses as new partners in Q4, ranging from hostels and breweries to galleries and farms.
- In FY24, Explore Asheville partnered with 140 new businesses in Asheville and Buncombe County, expanding our partner network by 7.6%.
- 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 Partners

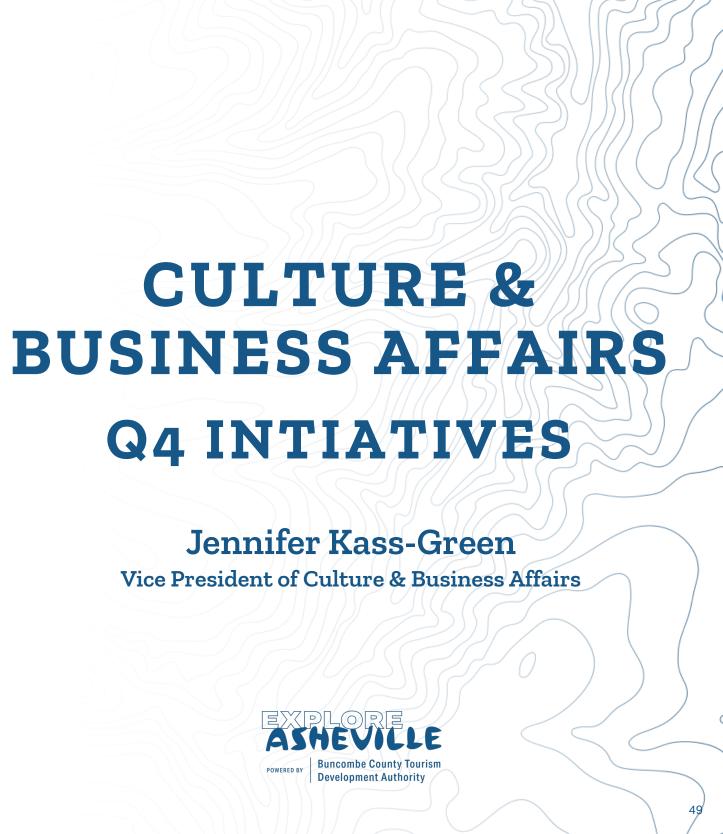
- Biltmore Village
- Black Mountain
- Downtown
- East Asheville
- Leicester
- North Asheville
- River Arts District
- South Asheville
- West Asheville

Business Categories

- Food & Drink
- Food Adventures
- Transportation
- Meetings/Event providers
- Photographers
- Attractions
- Arts/Cultural
- Guides/Outfitters
- Venues/Co-working







ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES New Team Member | Staff Retention Rate

New Team Member:



Kayla Speis Social Media Manager

FY24 Staff Retention Rate:

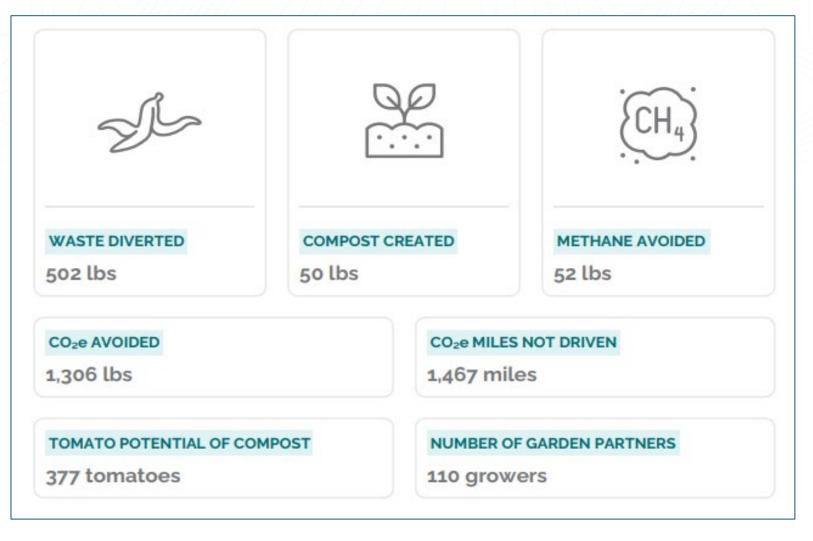
91%

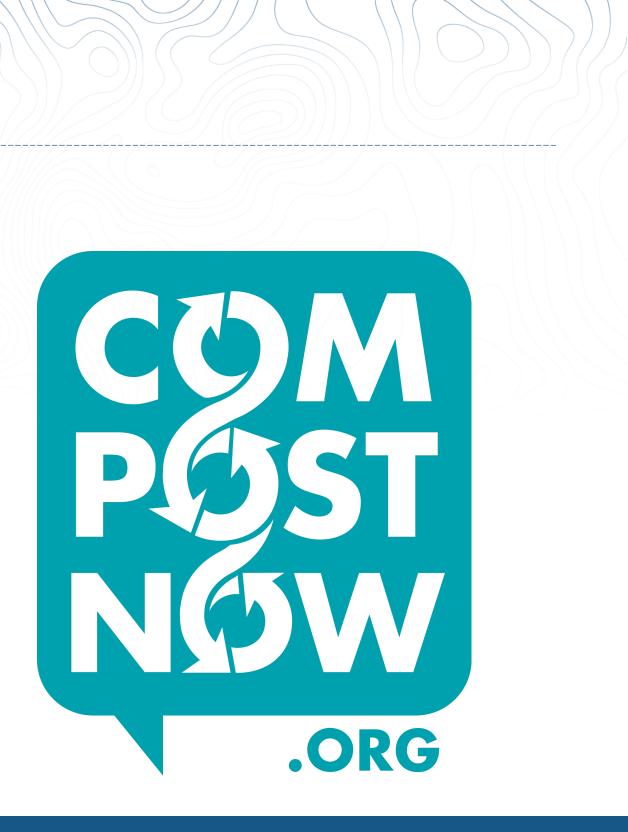
EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM



COMPOSTING EFFORTS FY24 Impact Report from CompostNow

Since Explore Asheville became a member Sept. 2023:





VOLUNTEER TIME OFF (VTO)

Total Volunteer Hours + Organizations in FY24

- Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
- Asheville Greenworks
- Asheville Open
- AVLFest
- Bountiful Cities
- Buncombe County Schools
- Equal Plates Project
- George Washington Carver Edible Park
- Habitat for Humanity
- LPGA Amateur Golf Association
- NC Craft Beverage Museum
- Rebuild Jones Park
- RiverLink
- Skyview Golf Association
- Southern Conference
- The Blood Connection
- United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County

176.5

Hours Volunteered





17 Non-Profit Organizations

Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences

Running a Healthy & Effective Organization

UNITY BLAZE CERTIFICATION TRAINING Partnership with Black Folks Camp Too

- Unity Blaze Certification course completed by all team members in May.
 - Provided by Black Folks Camp Too, a company founded by a seasoned outdoor industry executive dedicated to making the outdoors an enjoyable place for all.
 - Aims to deepen understanding of the challenges faced by underrepresented communities and develop the skills to welcome everyone to the great outdoors.
- Founder and President Earl B. Hunter, Jr. delivered on-site team-wide training on May 8.
- Ongoing partnership with Black Folks Camp Too will build on these skills to reach more customers and create a more inclusive outdoor industry

Black Folks

