



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY

Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

THE YEAR AHEAD • 02.12.25

*Welcome*

# THE YEAR AHEAD:

The Road to Recovery and Revival

EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE

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Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority



# WHAT'S AHEAD?

- Welcome and Introduction
- County Commission Chair Welcome
- Mayoral Welcome
- President & CEO Report
- 2024 Explore Asheville Superstar Awards
- Panel Discussions
  - Sustainability & Resilience
  - Transportation Infrastructure
  - Economic Recovery & Creative Revival
- Networking Break
- Business Resource Mini-Session with James Shelton, Community Development Division Manager, City of Asheville

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# AMANDA EDWARDS

Buncombe County Commission Chair

EXPLORE  
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# ESTHER MANHEIMER

Mayor

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# PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

EXPLORE  
**ASHEVILLE**

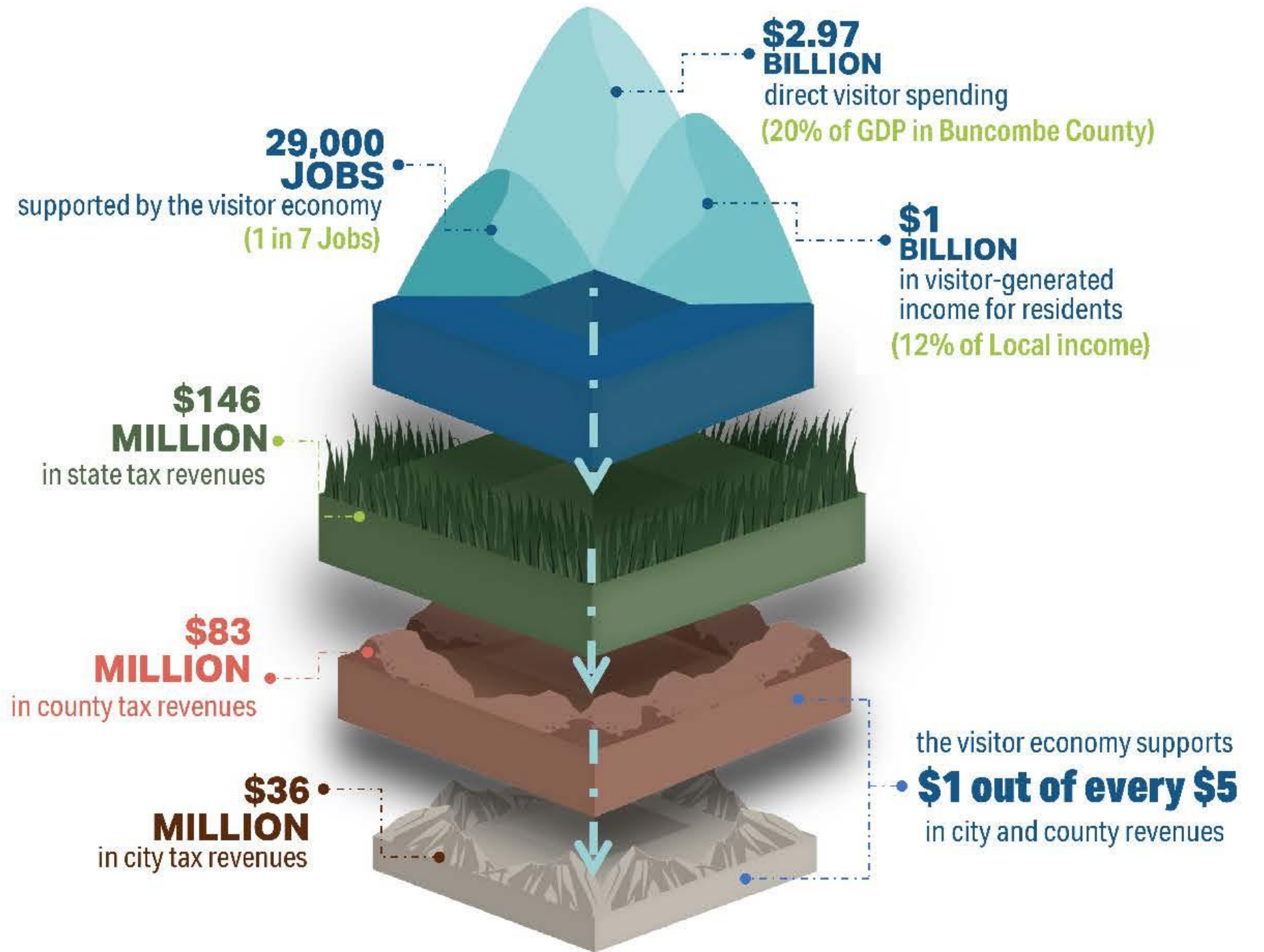
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# THE BENEFITS OF VISITORS IN ASHEVILLE & BUNCOMBE COUNTY RUN DEEP

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

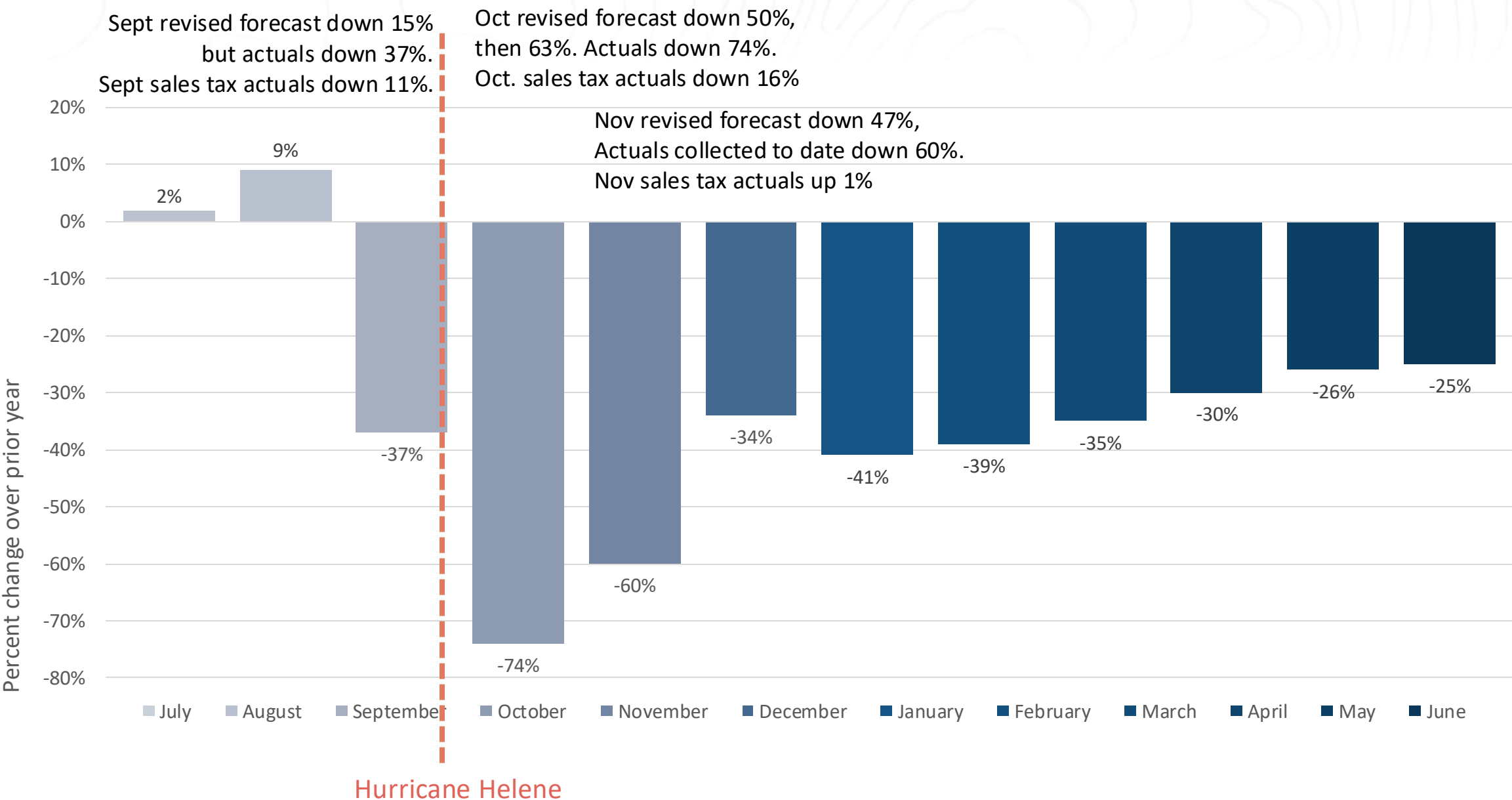
**\$265 Million**  
in state & local tax revenues are  
generated by the visitor economy.

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.



# BUNCOMBE COUNTY LODGING TAX

## Forecasts for FY25

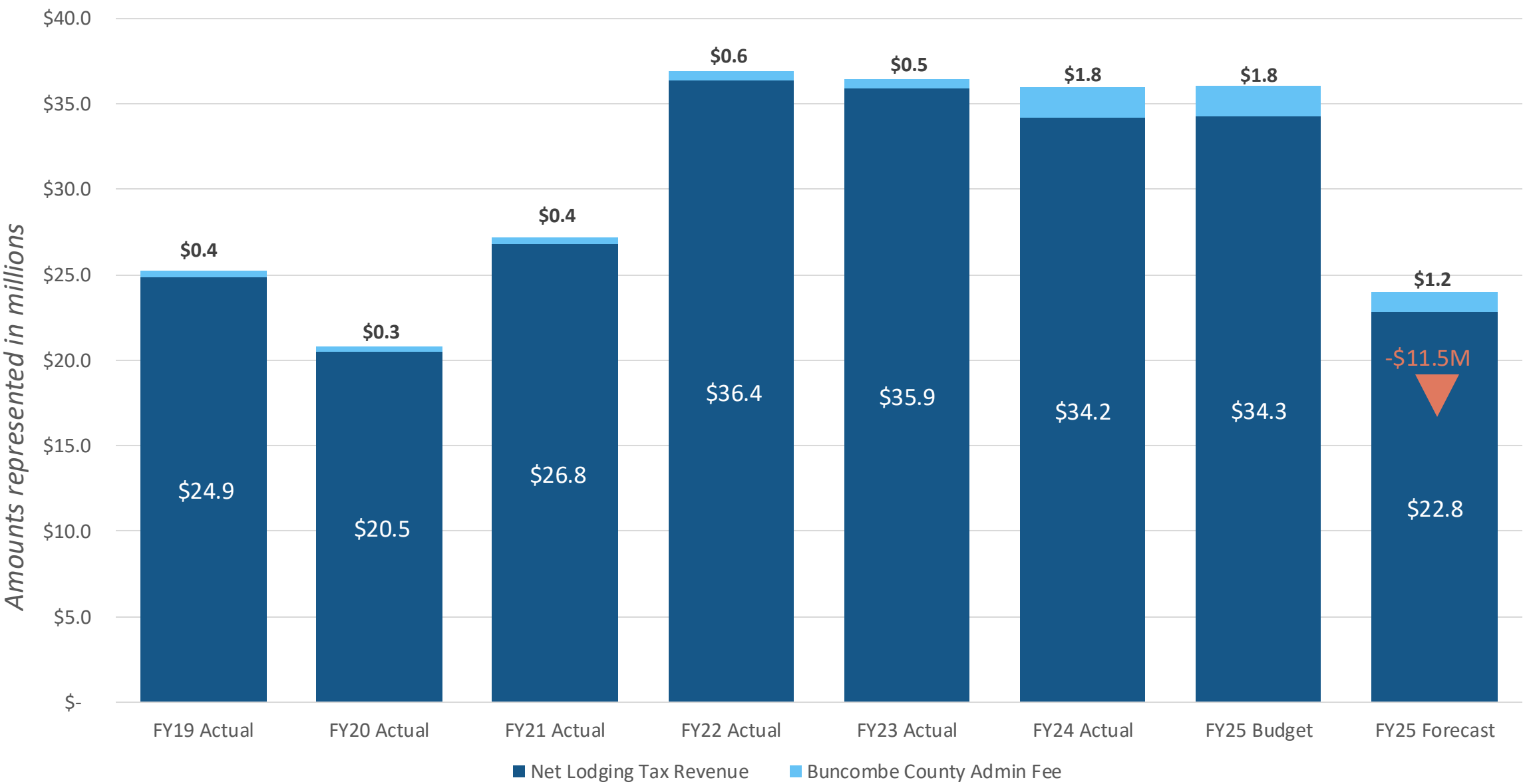


- The pace of recovery will depend on the timing of repairs to infrastructure including power and water systems, highways, and natural assets including the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- Additionally, there is a marketing and communication need to convey to potential guests that Asheville is open, accessible, and still an appealing place to visit.
- Quick action on these factors could accelerate economic recovery, including lodging tax revenue.

Source: BCTDA; Tourism Economics

# BUNCOMBE COUNTY LODGING TAX HISTORY

Based on lodging tax revenue in Buncombe County, FY19-FY25



- Revised forecast is approximately \$11.5M less than original FY25 net revenue budget.
- Lodging tax collections are forecast to decline 33% for FY25, to the lowest level since the pandemic in FY20.
- Year-over-year monthly declines in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Helene are expected to gradually lessen over the course of the fiscal year.

Source: BCTDA; Tourism Economics

# VISITOR SPENDING SUPPORTS

## A WIDE VARIETY OF LOCAL, INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES

\$3 billion in Buncombe County; 70% outside of lodging businesses



**LODGING**  
\$901M  
30%



**FOOD & BEVERAGE**  
\$787M  
27%



**REC / ENT**  
\$366M  
12%



**RETAIL**  
\$541M  
18%



**TRANSPORT**  
\$372M  
13%

# Q4 TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY REVENUE LOSS ESTIMATES

Will translate to lower revenues for local businesses, wages for workers, and tax revenues

---

70%

ESTIMATED DECLINE IN THE  
VISITOR ECONOMY IN Q4

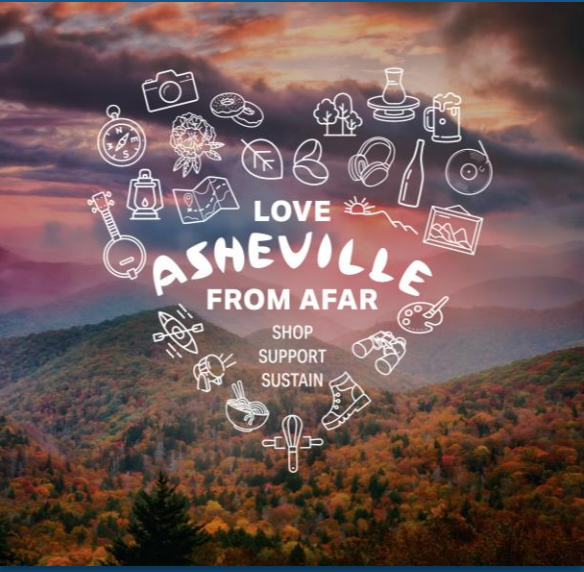
\$584

MILLION ESTIMATED IN LOST REVENUE FOR  
RESTAURANTS, BREWERIES, LODGING,  
RECREATION & ENGERMAINMENT, RETAIL SHOPS  
& ART GALLERIES TRANSPORTATION & TOUR  
PARTNERS



# HELPING HOW WE CAN, WHERE WE CAN

Stepping up and out for Asheville and Buncombe County



## Concert for Carolina

September 26  
Charlotte

## Love Asheville from Afar

December 6-29  
Atlanta  
[ExploreAsheville.com](https://ExploreAsheville.com)

## Soulshine Concert

November 24  
NYC

## Cooks for Carolina

November-December  
New Orleans

## Always Asheville Fund

\$1.5+ Million  
400+ Small Biz Grants  
[AlwaysAshevilleFund.com](https://AlwaysAshevilleFund.com)

# ASHEVILLE

NORTH CAROLINA

ERIC  
CHURCH  
*Carolina*



# ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS

# ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS





Breeze

Charleston  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
loves  
ASHEVILLE

Thank you, Breeze.





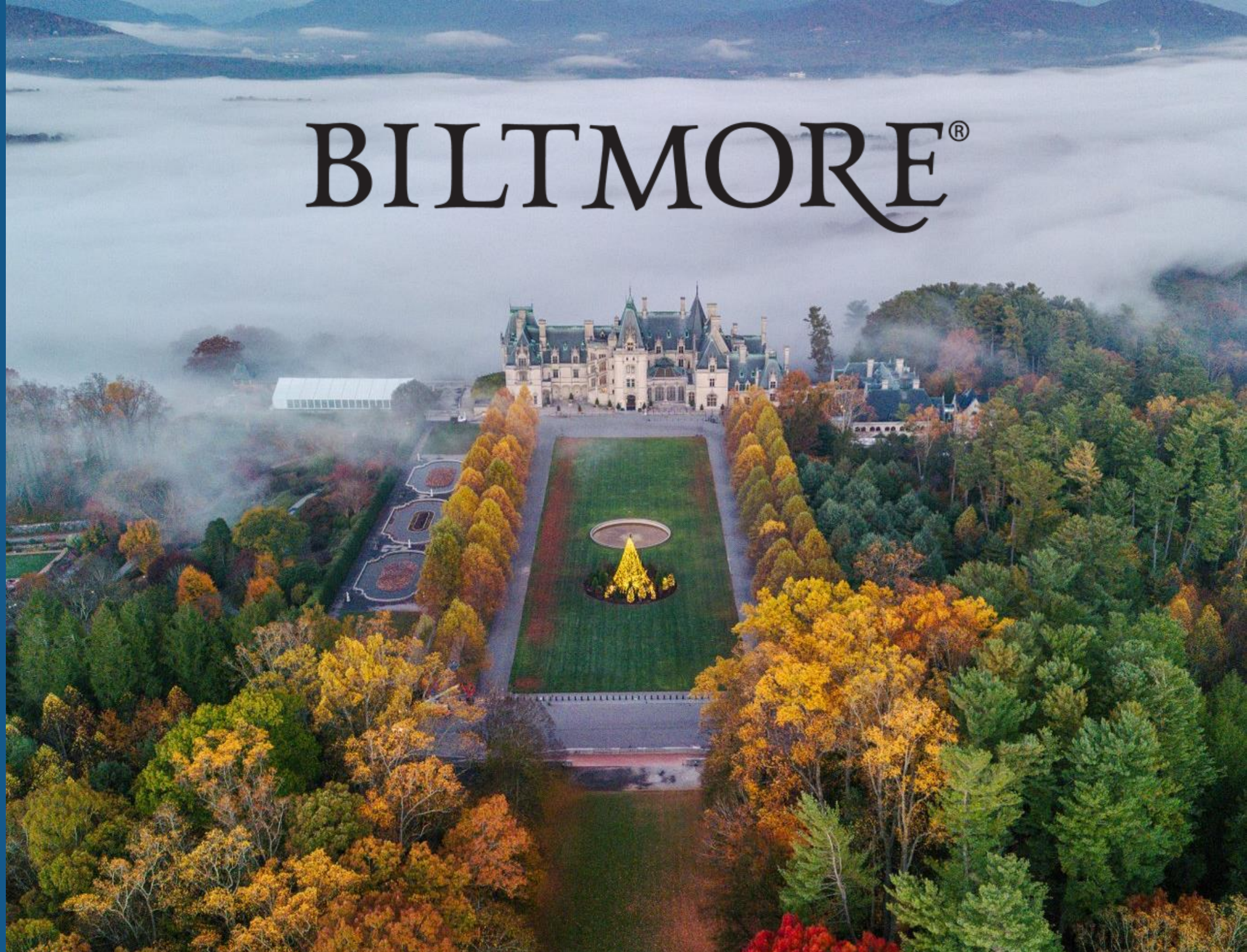
# ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS



# BILTMORE®



## ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS





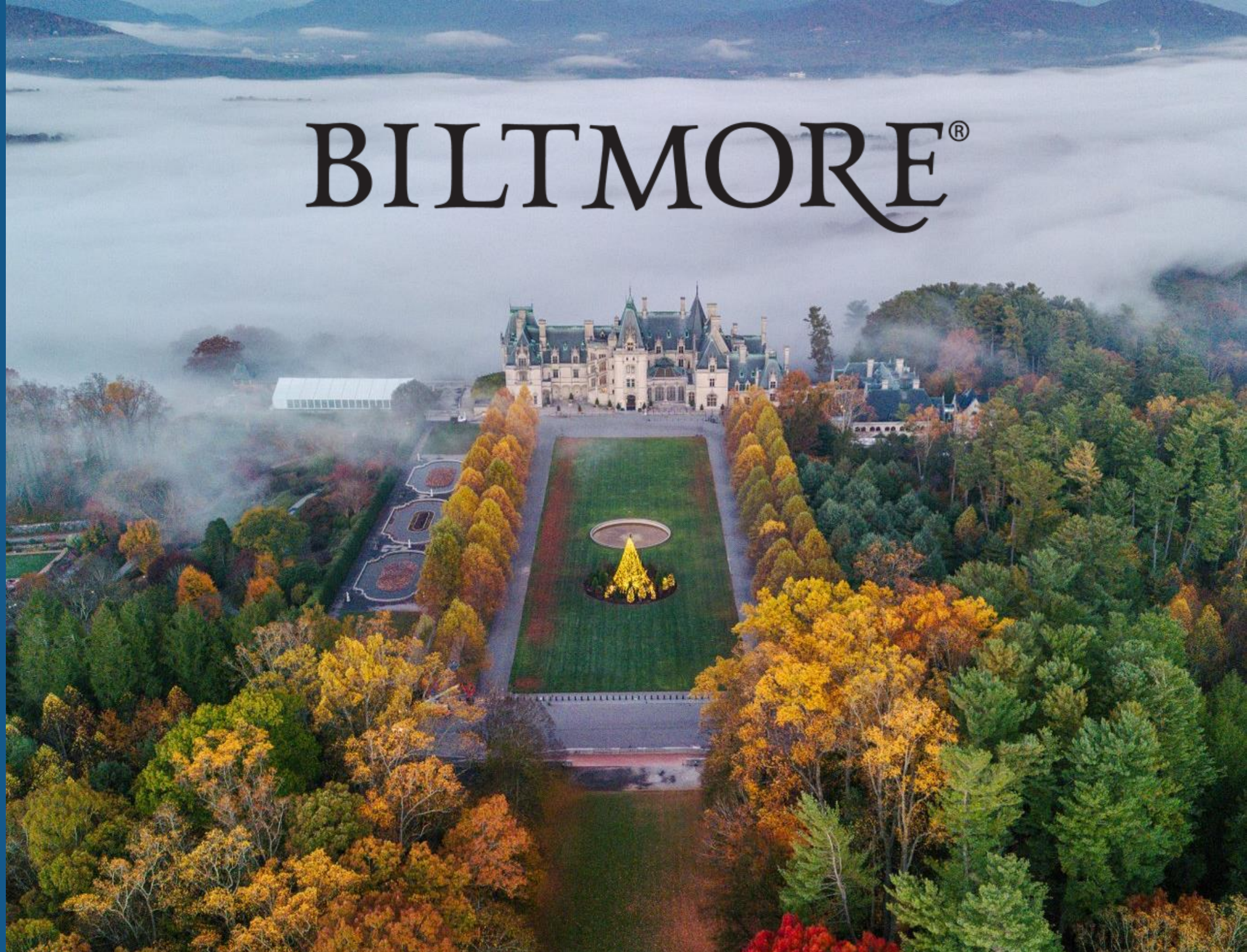




# BILTMORE®



## ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS



ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
AWARDS

RIVER ARTS  
DISTRICT  
ARTISTS












ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
AWARDS



# RIVER ARTS DISTRICT

## ARTISTS OPEN

RIVER ARTS DISTRICT



**ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
AWARDS**

504 *From the Crescent City to the Land of the Sky* 828

# COOKS FOR CAROLINA

NEW ORLEANS  ASHEVILLE









**ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
AWARDS**

504 *From the Crescent City to the Land of the Sky* 828

# COOKS FOR CAROLINA

NEW ORLEANS  ASHEVILLE





**ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
AWARDS**

NOVEMBER 24, 2024



**SOULSHINE**

A BENEFIT FOR  
HURRICANE RELIEF  
AND RECOVERY

**DAVE MATTHEWS BAND  
NATHANIEL RATELIFF  
& THE NIGHT SWEATS  
WARREN HAYNES BAND  
GOOSE**

FEATURING VERY SPECIAL GUESTS  
TREY ANASTASIO • MAVIS STAPLES  
ROBERT RANDOLPH • JOE RUSSO  
TROMBONE SHORTY • SUSAN TEDESCHI  
DEREK TRUCKS

**MADISON SQUARE GARDEN.**  
THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS ARENA™

SUPPORTED BY  
**newre**  
rhythm  
Powered by P











**ASHEVILLE  
SUPERSTAR  
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NOVEMBER 24, 2024



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# ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS



FEATURING

ANDRE  
**AGASSI**

ANDY  
**RODDICK**

JESSICA  
**PEGULA**  
Ranked #7 in the World

EMMA  
**NAVARRO**  
Ranked #8 in the World

PRESENTED BY

EXPLORE  
**ASHEVILLE**

POWERED BY  
Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2

AT THE HARRAH'S CHEROKEE CENTER - ASHEVILLE

WITH VERY SPECIAL GUEST CELEBRITIES:

**MICHAEL KOSTA**  
*a Host of The Daily Show*

**JEFF PROBST**  
*Host of CBS' Survivor*

**PETE WENTZ**  
*of Fall Out Boy*

**ESAI MORALES**  
*of Mission: Impossible*



100% OF NET PROCEEDS TO SUPPORT HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF EFFORTS THROUGH  
LOCAL NONPROFITS INCLUDING **ALWAYS ASHEVILLE FUND**, **ASHEVILLE AREA  
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**, AND **ASHEVILLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION**.





BILTMORE ALWAYS ASHEVILLE ingles

Presented by: **ASHEVILLE**

**ASHEVILLE SPORTS**  
ASHEVILLE REGIONAL SPORTS COMMISSION

Harrah's  
CHEROKEE  
CENTER  
ASHEVILLE

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO  
**JIM CURLEY**

ASHEVILLE





# ASHEVILLE SUPERSTAR AWARDS



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**AGASSI**

ANDY  
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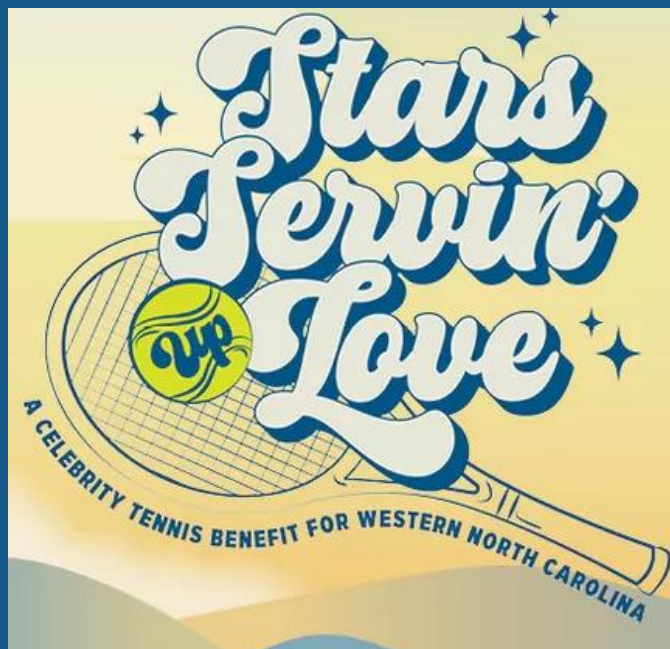
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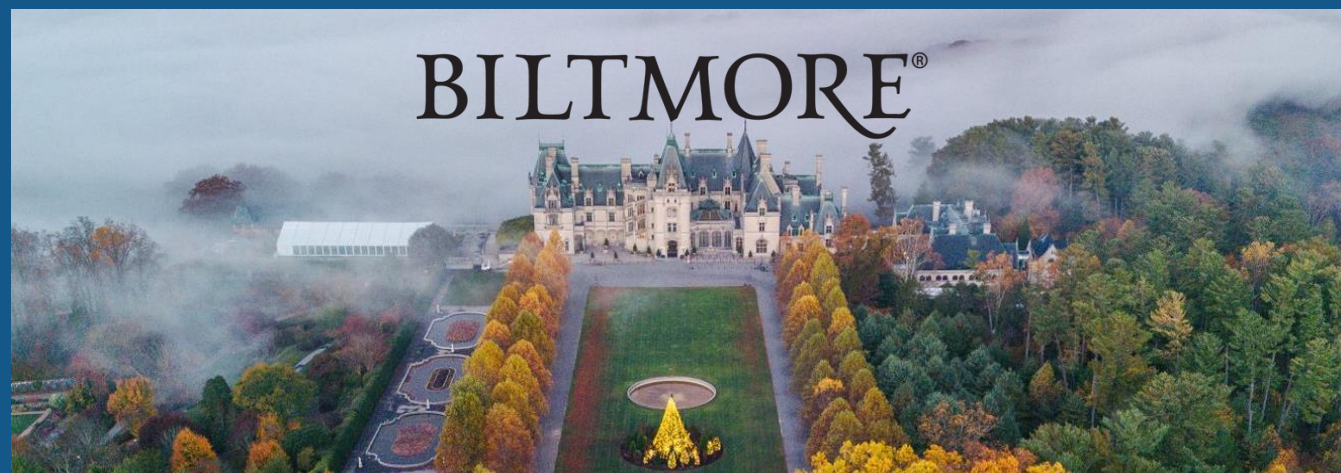
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504 From the Crescent City to the Land of the Sky 828

# COOKS FOR CAROLINA

NEW ORLEANS ♥ ASHEVILLE



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## OUR STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



Delivering Balanced &  
Sustainable Growth



Encouraging Safe &  
Responsible Travel



Engaging & Inviting More  
Diverse Audiences



Promoting & Supporting  
Asheville's Creative Spirit



# SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE



**Lisa Raleigh**  
Executive Director  
Riverlink



**Eddie Dewey**  
Founder  
Dewey Property Associates



**Eric Oberg**  
Sr. Director of Programs  
Rails to Trails Conservancy

Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) | Use code 3686 2989 to submit questions

San Clemente Beach Trail,  
CA





KAREN CRAGNOLIN PARK

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## Great River Trail, IL





# TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE



**Lew Bleiweis**  
President & CEO  
Greater Asheville Regional Airport



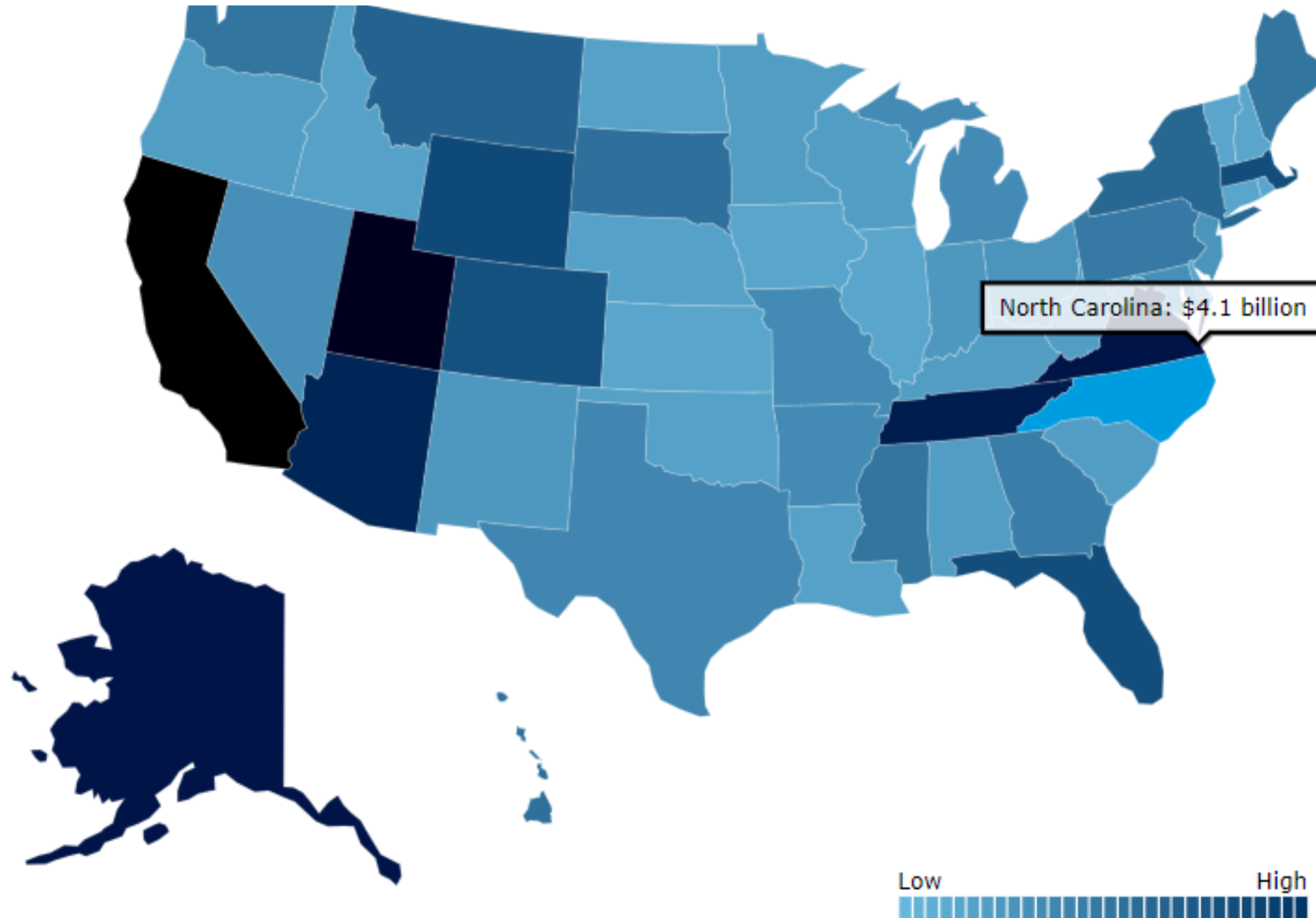
**Tim Anderson**  
Division Engineer  
NC Department of Transportation



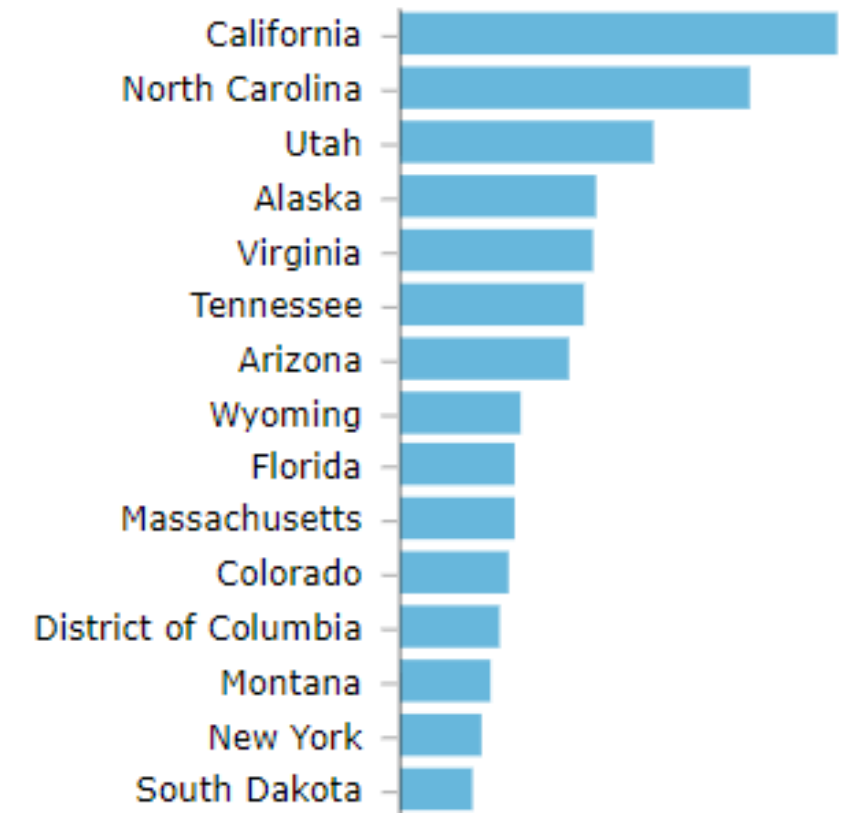
**Tracy Swartout**  
Superintendent  
Blue Ridge Parkway

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# Economic Impact of National Parks



Top 15 States by Economic Output







50+ Landslides

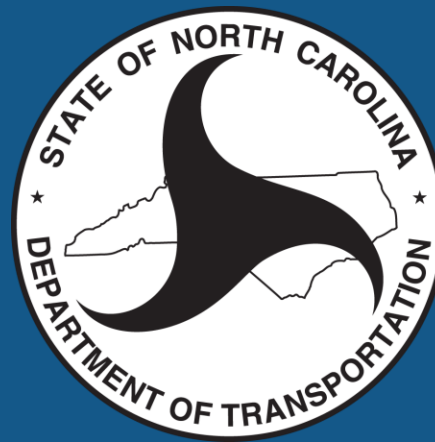


Linville Falls VC

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## I-40 Update



## I-40 Update

### Temporary Emergency Repairs

- Contract Cost: \$14 million total
- Soil nail wall stabilization and base stabilization of remnants of the East Bound Lanes to protect the remaining roadway.
- One Lane each direction with reduced speed limit of 40 mph.
- Anticipated completion **March 1** (dependent on weather)

### Permanent Emergency Repairs

#### **-CMGC- Contractor Manager, General Contract**

- Cost Estimate \$750 Million Dollars + Largest disaster project in process in the United States
- Date of Availability – February 24, 2025
- Completion Date = 2027-2028
- Millions of cubic yards of material to source and many retaining walls.

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Historic Structures



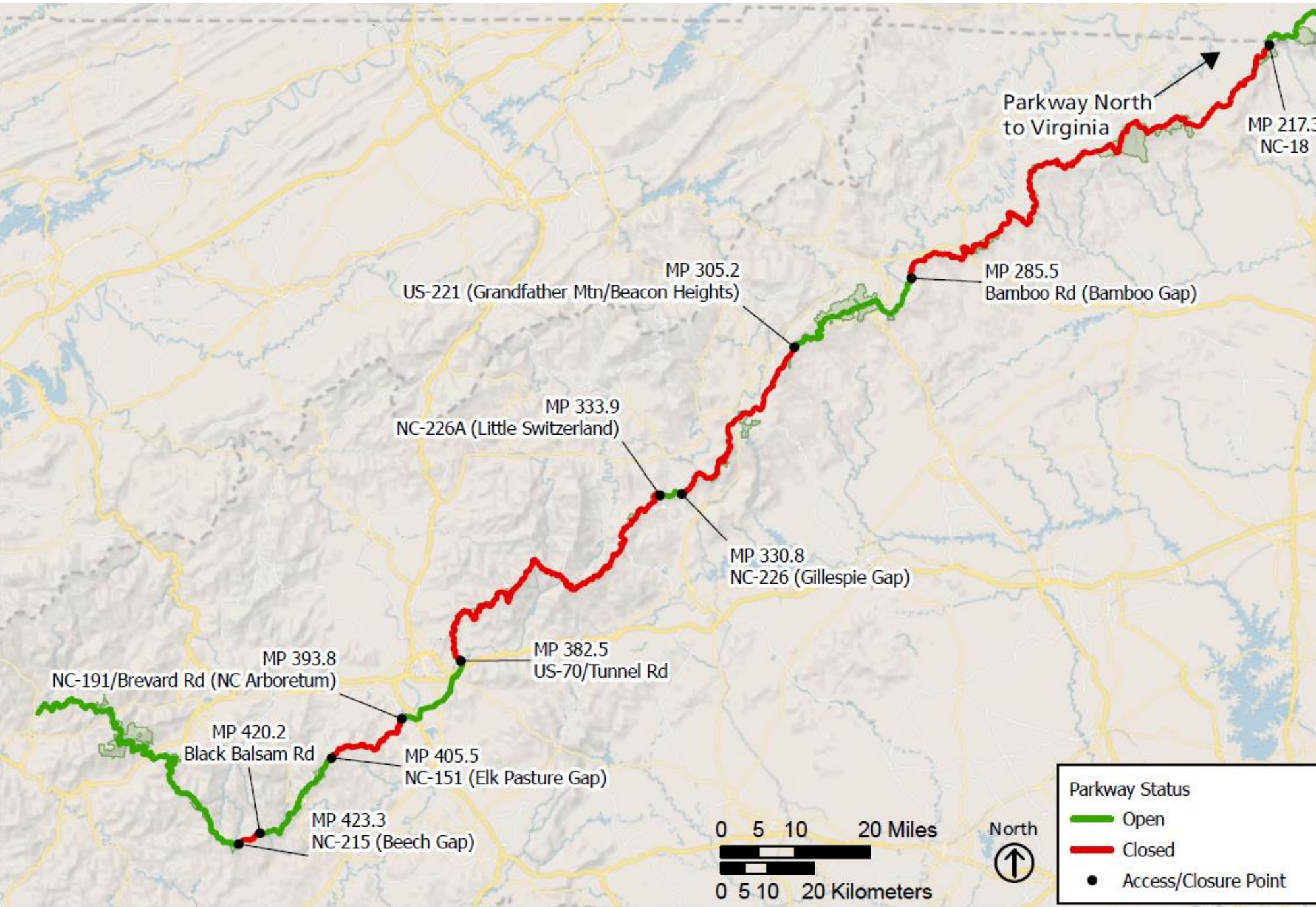
Picnic Areas &  
Campgrounds



Trails



# Current Road Status



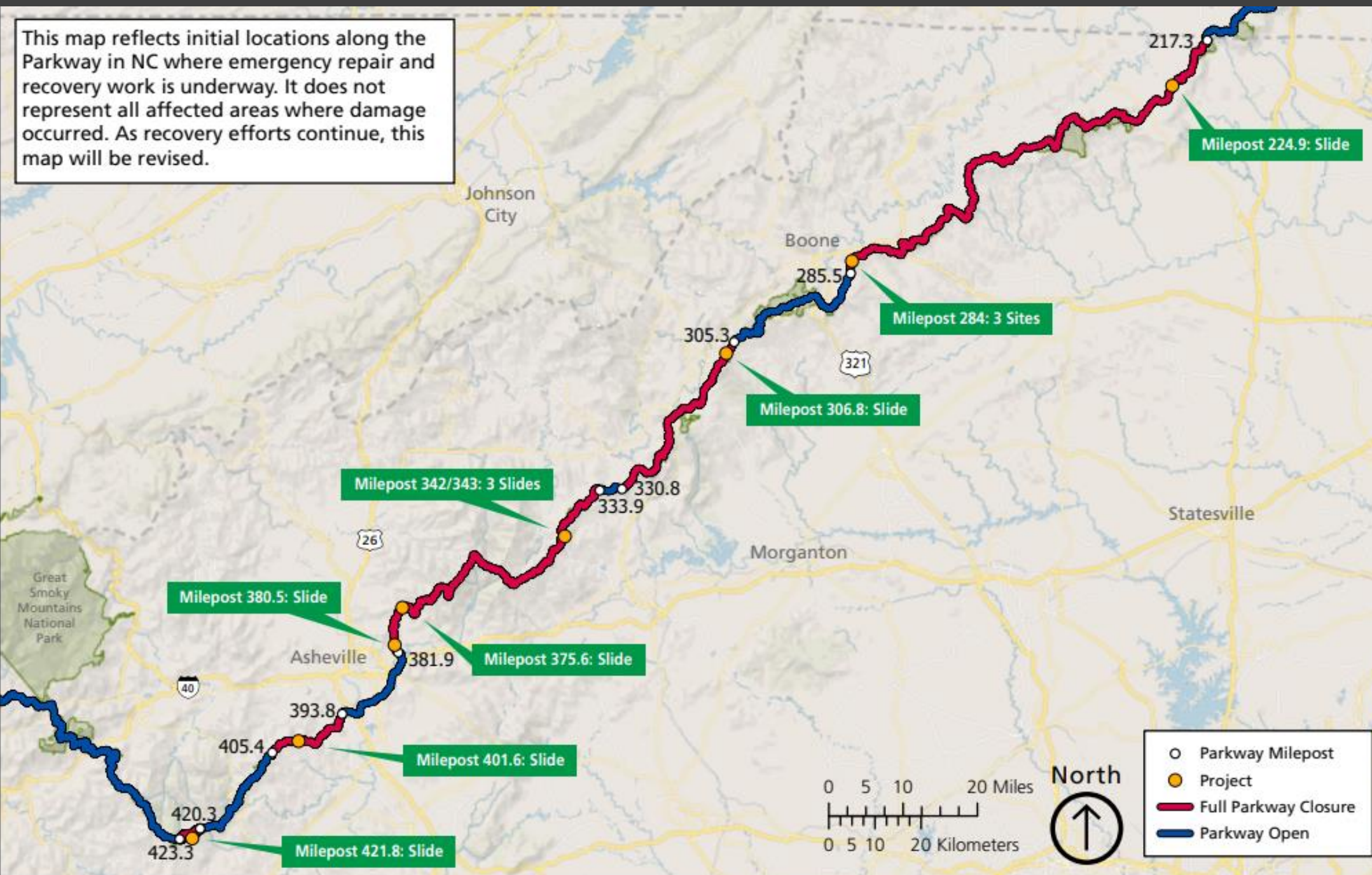
- 312 miles **open**
  - All of Virginia
- 157 miles **closed**
  - Some will open after slide repairs and debris removal

## Recovery work

- ERFO
  - Emergency stabilization and repair
  - Slides/Guardrails
  - Culverts/Debris
- Disaster Supplemental
  - Permanent slide repair
  - Historic Structures
  - Trails/bridges
  - Debris removal
  - Vistas, Dams, CGs, PAs



# What's Next?



- Construction underway
  - ERFO-funded
    - 8 locations
      - Stabilization
      - Culverts
      - Debris
      - Guardrails
- Disaster recovery
  - Funding in place
  - Project planning
  - More to come
- **Parkway will reopen!**

For Updates:



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## Helene Impacts

- In the aftermath of Helene, coordination efforts were impacted due to the needed focus of the local staff of both the Department and the COA on the recovery effort.
- While the recovery effort was and continues to be our immediate priority the long-term transportation needs that I-26 addresses are still critical to Asheville and WNC.
- Central Department Staff continued to work with the DB team to complete the O&R process on schedule.
- This was only possible due to the significant coordination effort and communication with local stakeholders



## **Result of I-26 O&R Process**

- Scope reductions, material changes, risk mitigations resulted in a successful completion of the O&R process
- Overall Savings to the Project are approximately \$125 Million dollars
  - \$63 Million in Bridge Reductions
  - \$26 Million in Miscellaneous Structures
  - \$24 Million in Paving
  - \$7 Million in Earthwork
- With these savings the Department is moving forward with the project on its original schedule with completion expected in 2031.





## **Next Steps**

- Additional Outreach
  - Updates to the project website reflecting the changes to the scope.
  - Public Project Update Meeting to be scheduled in the coming months.
- With the O&R Process complete and an agreement with the DB Team in place, design work on the project will commence
- Continued coordination with local stakeholders including the COA as we work toward final design
- The Department is continuing to evaluate the construction phasing and work zone traffic control for additional time and cost savings
- Estimated Project Schedule
  - ROW Acquisition – Fall of 2025
  - Utility Relocation – Spring of 2026
  - Construction – Fall of 2026

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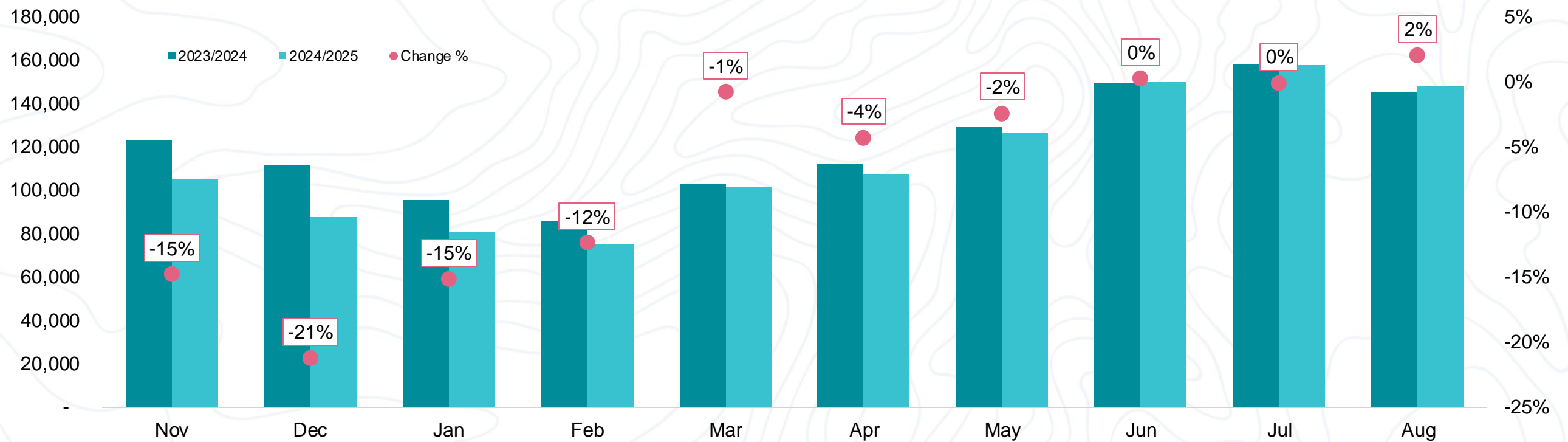


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Blue Ridge Parkway

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## ALL AIRLINES - SEAT CAPACITY IN AVL *By month: Current versus prior year*



# AVL FORWARD





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GALLERY  
MÉLANGE

GALLERY  
MÉLANGE  
OPENING  
RECEPTION

# RECOVERY & REVIVAL



Visit North Carolina

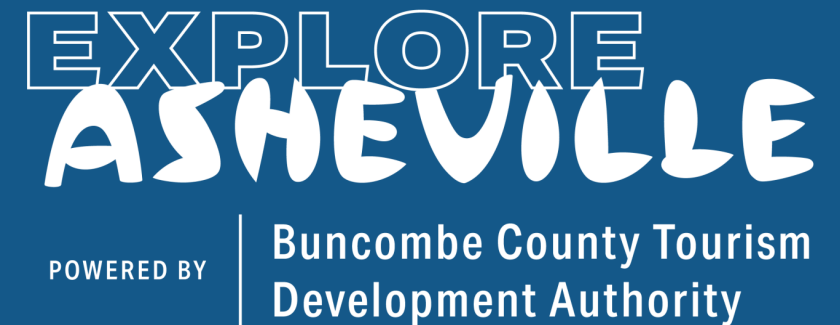
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**Walt Leger III**

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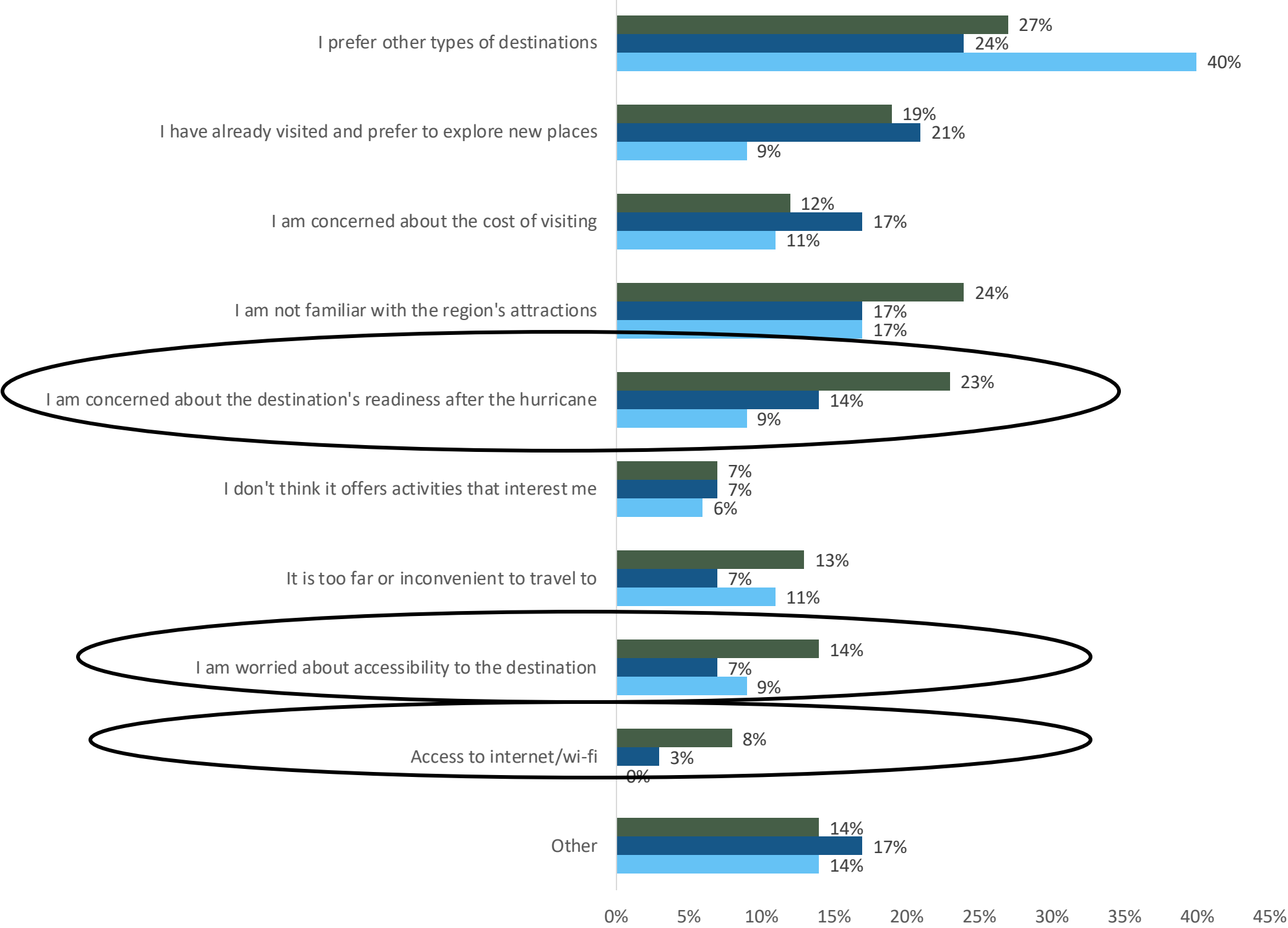


**Dodie Stephens**

VP of Marketing  
Explore Asheville, Buncombe County  
Tourism Development Authority

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# VISITOR SENTIMENT | REASONS FOR NOT VISITING THE MOUNTAIN REGION



# RECOVERY & REVIVAL



Visit North Carolina

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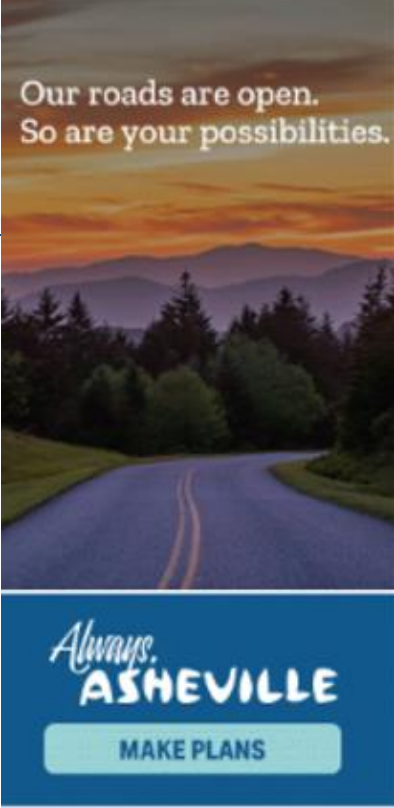
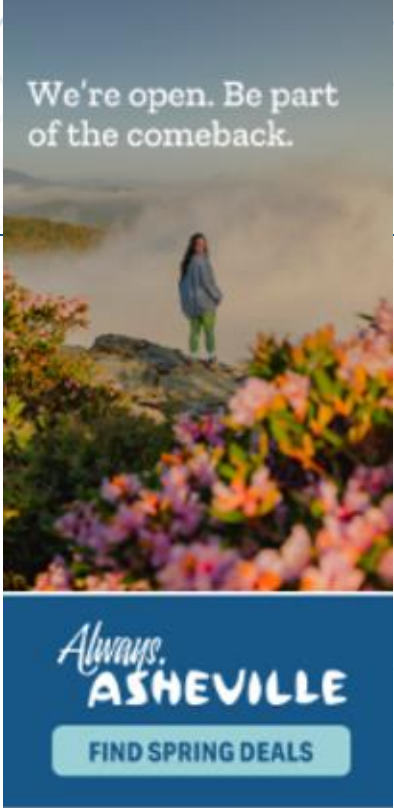
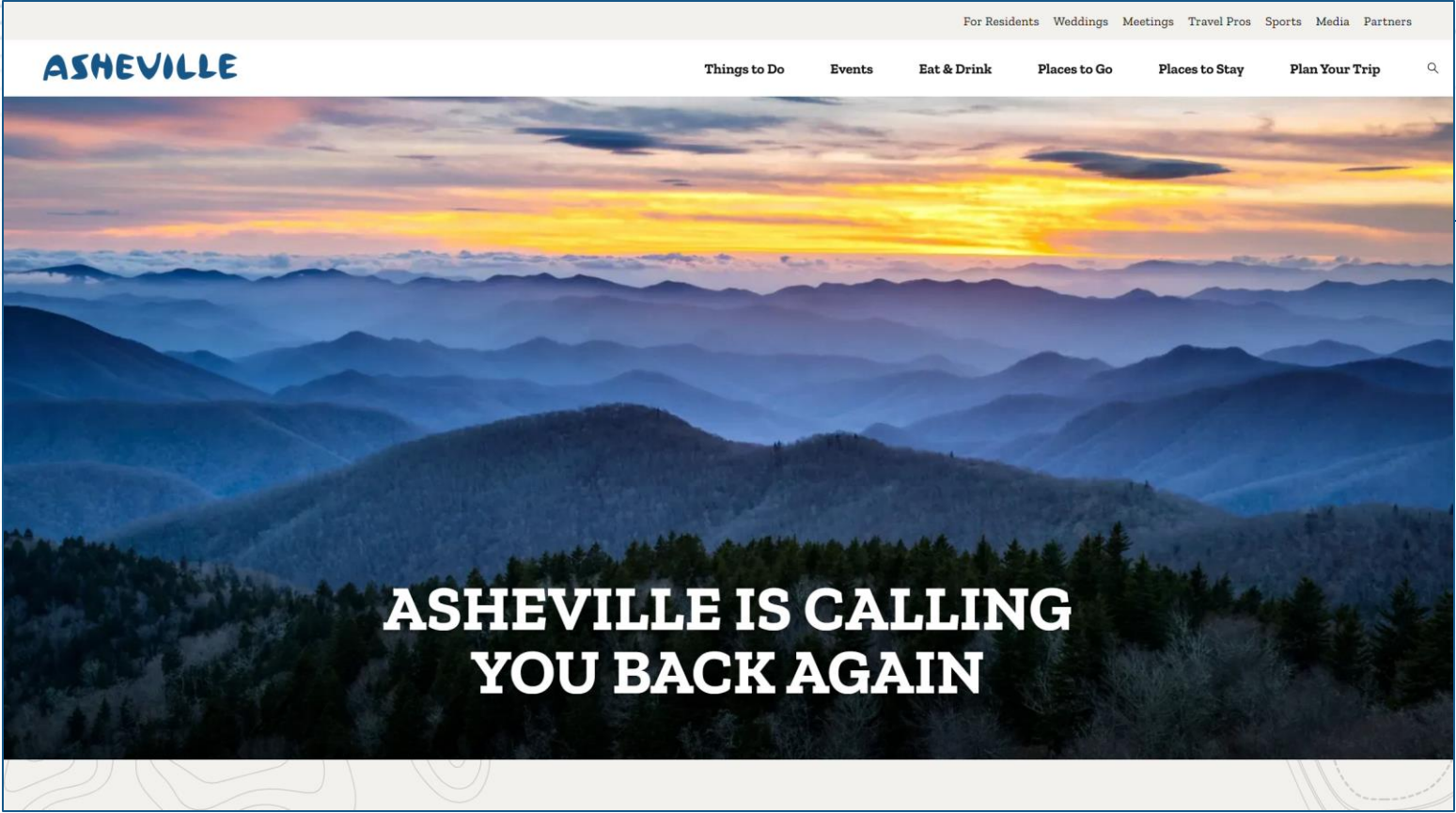
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“A mixture of genres, a hybrid of styles —  
all drawn together to stand out.  
And through it all, we are...”

# ALWAYS ASHEVILLE



*Always.*  
**ASHEVILLE**  
BE PART OF THE COMEBACK



# RECOVERY & REVIVAL



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VP of Marketing  
VisitNC



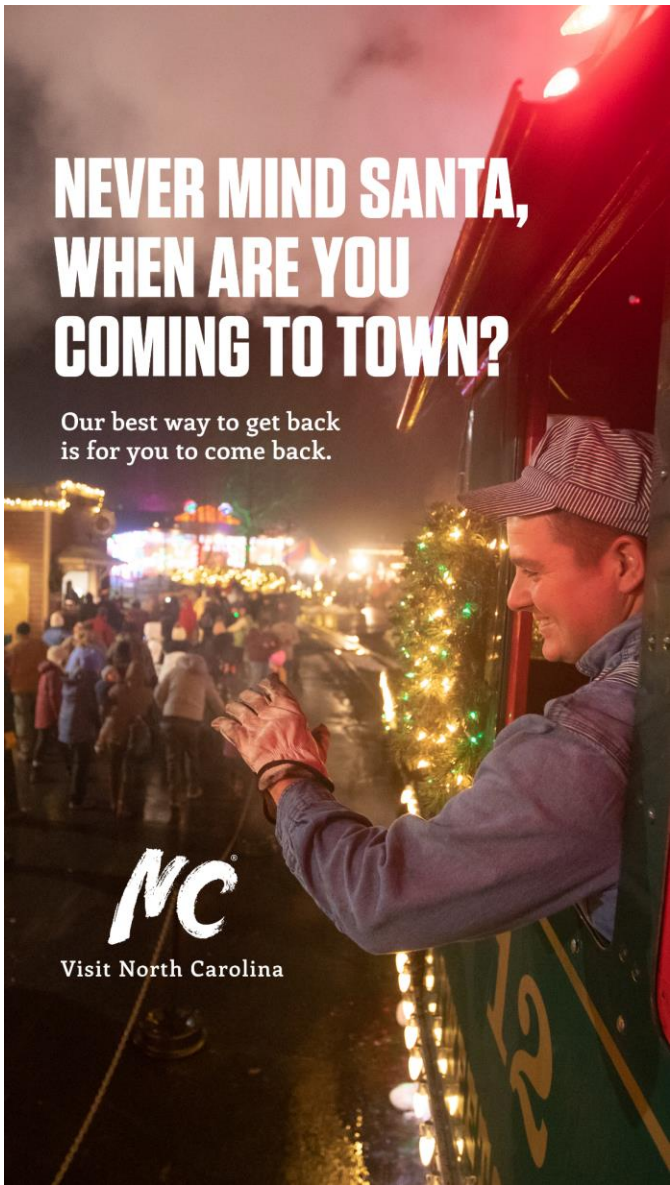
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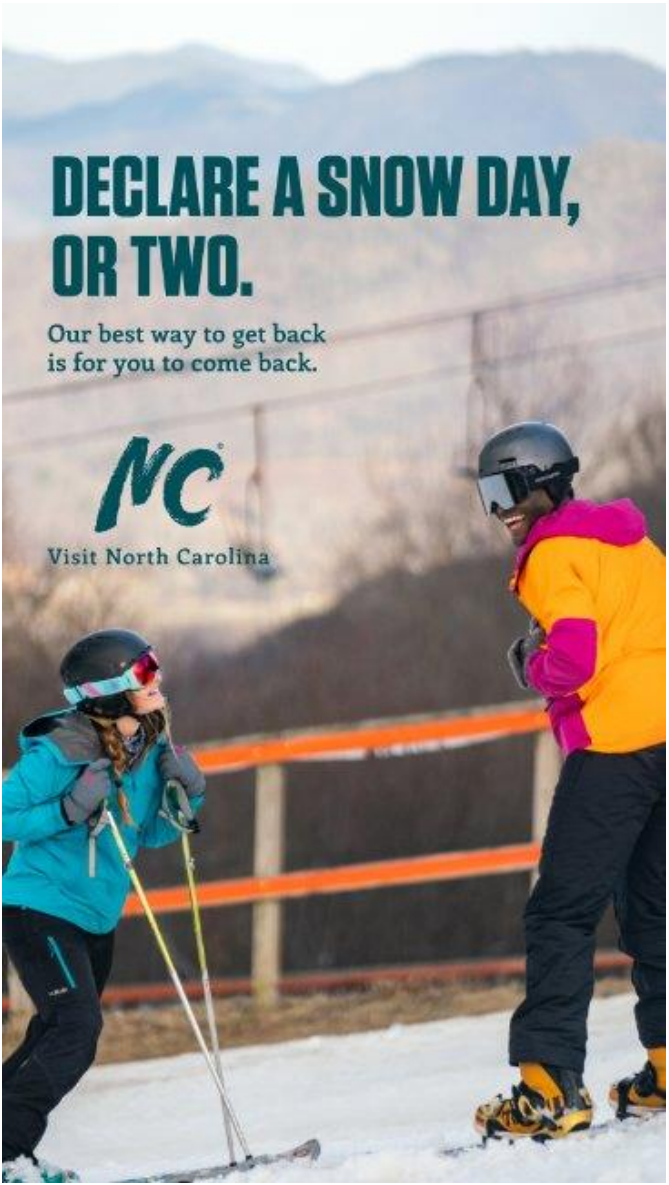
# RECOVERY MARKETING CAMPAIGN | CREATIVE



Holidays



Holidays



Winter



Spring



# RECOVERY & REVIVAL



Visit North Carolina

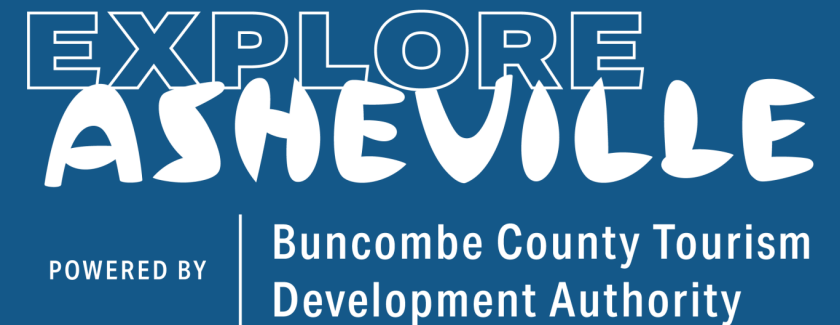
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# STRATEGIC GROUPS COMING IN H1 2025

Attracting groups and conferences as the front porch of economic development



## Women's Gymnastics Competition

January 17-19, 2025  
\$1.38 million  
632 roomnights  
Returning in 2026  
Sports



## NC State Indoor Championships and Junior Olympic Archery 2025

January 31 – February 2, 2025  
\$307,000  
170 roomnights  
Sports



## Stars Servin' Up Love

February 2, 2025  
\$321,000  
750 roomnights  
Sports | Benefit



## Tanger 2025 All Team Meeting

February 24-27, 2025  
\$456,000  
785 roomnights  
Retail



## Lifestyle Medicine Workshop 2025

April 1-6, 2025  
\$187,000  
535 roomnights  
Health/Wellness



# SOUTHERN CONFERENCE PARTNERSHIP

Explore Asheville expands relationship with SoCon



- Southern Conference Men and Women’s Basketball Championships
- ExploreAsheville.com Arena, which the TDA has invested \$7 million in capital improvements
- March 7 – 10, 2025
- Direct Spend: \$9,868,000
- Roomnights: 3,000
- Expanded partnership between Explore Asheville and SoCon includes

New Business Leader Forum

SoCon Symposium



- Southern Conference Wrestling Championship
- UNC Asheville’s Kimmel Arena
- March 7 – 8, 2025
- Direct Spend: \$388,000
- Roomnights: 180



# STRATEGIC GROUPS COMING IN H1 2025

Attracting groups and conferences as the front porch of economic development



**James Beard  
Foundation Chef  
Action Summit**

April 6-8, 2025  
\$206,000  
350 roomnights  
Food & Beverage  
Climate & Environment

**Big Path Capital  
Momentum Summit**

April 20-23, 2025  
\$220,000  
230 roomnights  
Entrepreneurship &  
Investment

**2025 BSC Men's and  
Women's Outdoor  
Track Championship**

May 11-15, 2025  
\$146,000  
480 roomnights  
Sports

**Annual Conference**

May 22-27, 2025  
\$241,000  
600 roomnights  
Five Different Hotels  
Health/Wellness

**Supply Chain 2025  
Event**

June 20-25, 2025  
\$590,000  
790 roomnights  
Retail

# GOING IN TOGETHER: MARKET STRATEGY NOW

*Always,*  
**ASHEVILLE**  
BE PART OF THE COMEBACK



## LEGEND

- Explore Asheville
- Non-stop Flight
- Visit NC

# RECOVERY & REVIVAL



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VisitNC



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THANK YOU!

@VISITASHEVILLE

EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

# ASHEVILLE

NORTH CAROLINA

ERIC  
CHURCH  
*Carolina*