

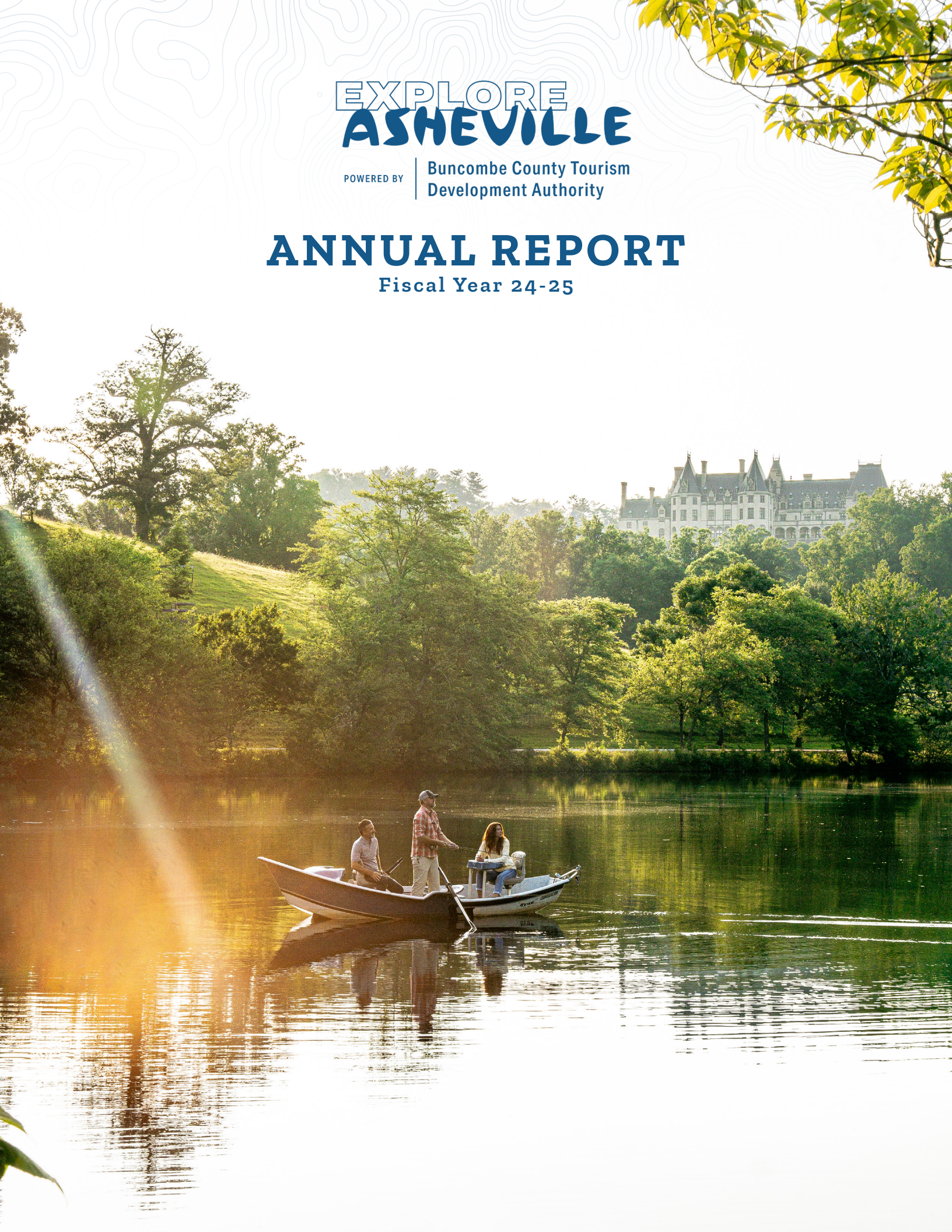
EXPLORE ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY

Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 24-25



Meet The Board

BUNCOMBE COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



MATTHEW LEHMAN
VICE CHAIR
Grand Bohemian Lodge Asheville
City Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Bartender



HP PATEL
TREASURER OF THE NON-PROFIT
BCA Hotels
County Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Laundry Attendant



TIM ROSEBROCK
Biltmore
Chamber Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Dishwasher



HIMANSHU KARVIR
Virtelle Hospitality
County Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Front Desk Agent



LARRY CROSBY
Foundry Hotel
City Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Banquet Server



MICHAEL LUSICK
FIRC Group, Inc.
City Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Night Auditor



ELIZABETH PUTNAM
Mosaic Lifestyle Realty
County Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Sales Clerk



LUCIOUS WILSON
Wedge Brewing
City Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Busboy



**VICE MAYOR
ANTANETTE MOSLEY**
Asheville City Council
Ex-Officio Member



**COMMISSIONER
TERRI WELLS**
Buncombe County Commission
Ex-Officio Member

A MESSAGE FROM EXPLORE ASHEVILLE AND THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Since 1983, the Buncombe County Tourism Authority has served a vital public purpose by investing in and building community in Asheville and Western North Carolina. That certainly has taken on a deeper meaning this past year.

Like the rest of our community, Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority were heartbroken by the devastating personal, natural, and economic loss from Hurricane Helene endured by our region. However, we are heartened by the gumption, grit, and sense of community of people and place. We have also been lifted by the love and support from all corners of the country.

Throughout this past year, the heart of hospitality has been a beacon of light. Restaurants used their supplies to provide free meals for thousands of residents and first responders, while lodging operators, despite limited resources, provided shelter to first responders and displaced residents.

The authority's role is to shine a spotlight on this creative community, supporting economic vitality for small businesses and neighborhoods, while maintaining jobs for residents throughout Buncombe County. We continue to work closely with partners throughout the area to shorten our community's recovery timeline. By the fiscal year's end, more than 80% of our nearly 2,000 travel and hospitality partners were open.

While there is a long road to recovery, we have also made remarkable progress as a deeply-rooted and ever-evolving community. Together we are welcoming visitors back respectfully and with purpose to revitalize our creative community and economy. This annual report invites you to reflect on the unforgettable journey of the last year.

Victoria Isley

Brenda Durden



VIC ISLEY
PRESIDENT & CEO
Explore Asheville
BCTDA

First Hospitality Job:
Restaurant Server



BRENDA DURDEN
BOARD CHAIR
Asheville Hotel Group
County Appointed

First Hospitality Job:
Front Desk Agent

EXPLORE ASHEVILLE'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



Delivering Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth



Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel



Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences

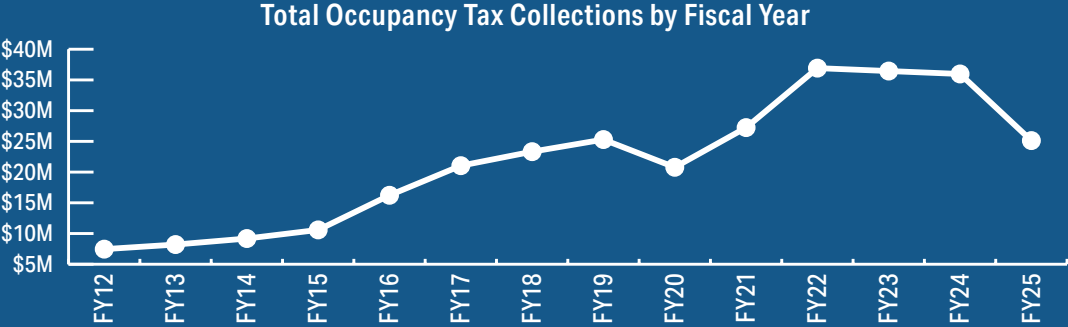


Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

DESTINATION PERFORMANCE

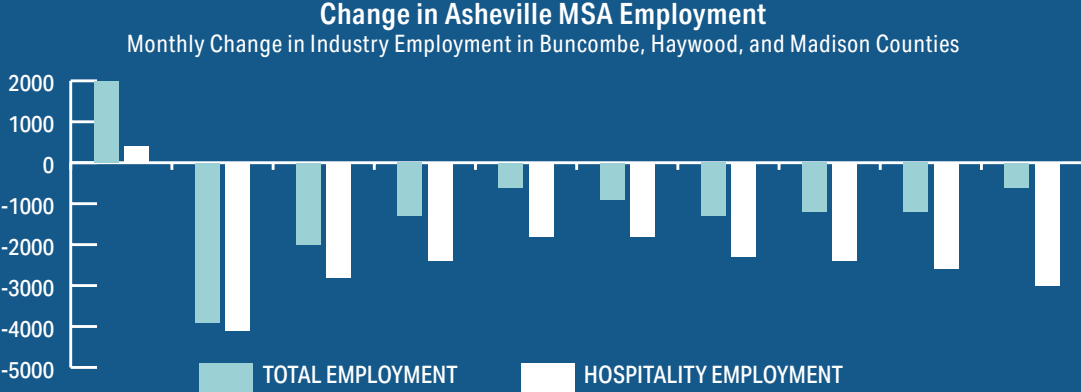
Total Occupancy Tax Collection

Lodging tax collections have expanded over time due to legislative tax increases and the inclusion of vacation rentals. Lodging occupancy is a leading indicator of destination performance and visitor spending in our community. Collections peaked at the height of post-pandemic travel before decreasing exponentially following Hurricane Helene.



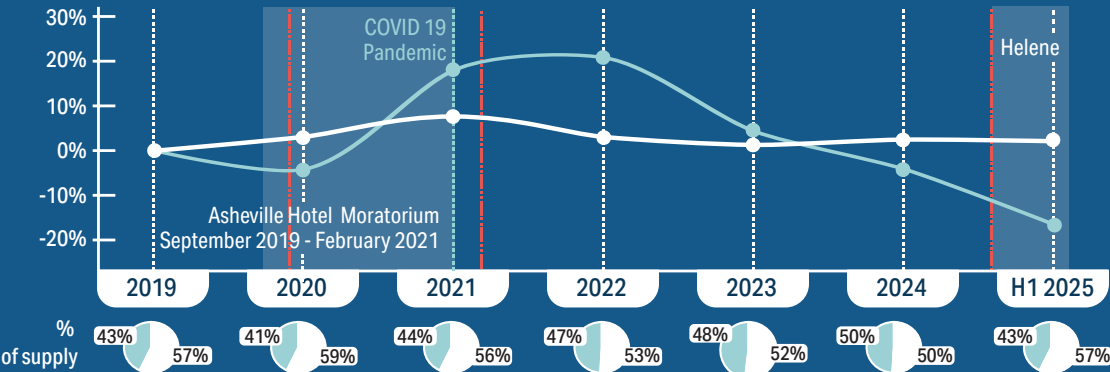
Hurricane Helene Impacts Hospitality Employment

The original damage estimate for the region was close to \$60 billion; however, when factoring in economic losses, the total cost is significantly higher. In terms of human capital, the hospitality sector experienced the most significant impact from October to June, representing the majority of job losses and unemployment claims in the MSA.



Vacation Rentals Market Shifts

During the Asheville City Council's hotel moratorium and the pandemic, vacation rentals surged, comprising half of the lodging supply in 2023. However, over-saturation led many to exit the market, a trend accelerated by Helene.



Visitors spent **\$2.65 billion** in 2024, benefiting a wide variety of local, independent businesses.

The majority of visitor spending, nearly 70%, takes place outside of lodging facilities and in local businesses.



Since 2001, the BCTDA has committed more than \$98 million in 51 community projects.



The authority invests one-third of lodging tax revenue in tourism-related capital projects through the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) and the Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund, improving cultural venues, outdoor amenities, and community assets that serve both residents and visitors.

In FY25, the authority expedited \$2.65 million in TPDF support for two sports facilities critical to the county's sports tourism economy:
John B. Lewis Soccer Complex - Restoration (\$2,155,000)
Bob Lewis Ballpark - Parking Improvements (\$500,000)

Fy 25 BY THE NUMBERS

**\$67.4
MILLION**

Direct spending by
meetings & groups

(35% increase from FY24)

477

Events & groups
booked

(15% increase from FY24)

115,393

Group rooms booked

(39% increase from FY24)

Significant Media Coverage

Smithsonian Magazine |

*This Little-Known Civil Rights
Activist Refused to Give
Up His Bus Seat Four Years
Before Rosa Parks Did*

Southern Living | *The 10 Best
Places for a Multigenerational
Vacation, According to Our
Readers*

The Washington Post | *How
to Help Asheville Recover
from Hurricane Helene*

AFAR | *Asheville is On Its Way
Back and Needs Visitors More
Now Than Ever*

Yahoo!Life | *Asheville is Open*

The New York Times |

*Asheville's Big Attraction,
Its Food Scene, Tries to Hit
Reset*

Essence | *The Black Girl's
Guide to Travel: JOMO-
friendly Destinations for Rest
and Recharge*

CNN Travel | *These
Mountains are Still Here:
Asheville is Ready for Your
Visit*

BBC | *Can Rare 'Blue Ghosts'
Help Asheville Rebuild?*

4.7 Million
Website users

6 Million
Website sessions



FACEBOOK

343,255
Followers

2,695,640
Engagements



INSTAGRAM

182,592
Followers

834,508
Engagements



TIKTOK

69,751
Followers

248,933
Engagements

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Readers' 15 Favorite Cities in the U.S. of 2025 |
Travel & Leisure

Forbes Travel Guide's Top 12 Destinations for 2025 |
Forbes

*Trip Advisor's Traveler's Choice Awards 5th Best U.S.
Food Destination |* **Trip Advisor**

*Sip Sought-After Sparklers at the Best Champagne
Bars in the U.S. – Battery Park Book Exchange and
Champagne Bar |* **Wine Enthusiast**

*We Ranked the 35 Best Girls' Trip Destinations in the U.S.
to Book for Your Next Bestie-cation |* **Cosmopolitan**

World's Greatest Places | The Radical | **Time Magazine**

The South's Best Cities 2025 | **Southern Living**

10 Best Beer Cities in the US | **USA Today**

12 Best Solo Trips in the US for 2025 | **The Points Guy**
*The Best New Affordable Luxury Hotels in the World –
The Flat Iron |* **Travel & Leisure**

America's Best Towns to Visit in 2025 | **CNN Travel**

*20 Best New Restaurants in the South – Good Hot Fish,
Luminosa, Potential New Boyfriend |* **Southern Living**

2025 Rolling Stone Travel Awards Best Music City |
Rolling Stone

10 Places Where Families Should Travel in 2025 |
National Geographic

The 2025 Travel Green List | **Wanderlust Magazine**
Best Places to Travel in 2025 | **BBC**



A YEAR IN REVIEW

In remembrance of Hurricane Helene and it's profound impact on our community, the following pages reflect the journey we experienced together - from crisis response to collaborative recovery and strategic renewal.

Amid unprecedented challenges, Explore Asheville relied on its Strategic Imperatives as a guide, using goals established through more than 100 hours of community listening to navigate uncharted territory. These imperatives—balancing economic vitality with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship—proved more relevant than ever as we pivoted from destination promotion to community recovery.

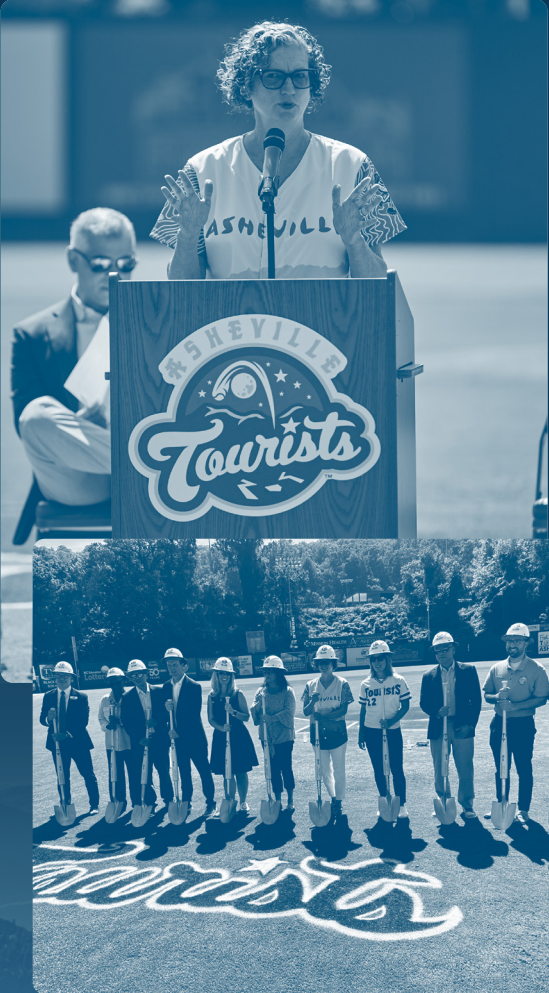
Hurricane Helene tested our resilience, but it also revealed our strength.

Explore Asheville worked more closely than ever with partners near and far, collaborating with agencies, organizations, and individuals who stepped up to help our community come back stronger than ever. From the Always Asheville Fund to national partnerships, from signature recovery events to grassroots community initiatives, this report chronicles how crisis became a catalyst for deeper collaboration and renewed purpose.

Summer to Fall
Starting the year off strong



Strategic Investment & Sustainable Growth



McCormick Field Breaks Ground on \$23 Million Centennial Restoration & Capital Improvements Project

This two-year renovation project was made possible by a \$23 million investment from the **Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF)**, in partnership with the City, County, and the Tourists Baseball Club. The 15-year debt service investment marks the largest TPDF investment in the authority's history.

Charting a Path Toward Destination Stewardship

Published in August 2024, Explore Asheville's **Strategic Framework Toward Destination Stewardship** outlines how to balance Asheville and Buncombe County's economic, cultural, and environmental needs. It builds on the authority's strategic imperatives developed from over 100 hours of community input to enhance visitor experiences and the quality of life for residents.



Summer to Fall
Starting the year off strong



National
Partnerships
Aligned with
Strategic
Imperatives

Garden & Gun's Champions of Conservation Initiative Highlights Agricultural Sustainability

Asheville's sustainability stories came alive at **Garden & Gun's** third annual **Champions of Conservation**, with its Cocktails and Conservation event boosting travel and ticket sales while creating business development opportunities in our community. The event was cross-promoted with **Land to Market's** regenerative agriculture conference at Hickory Nut Gap Farm, encouraging additional midweek travel.



Town & Country Magazine Features Asheville Weddings

Behind sports, weddings are the second largest group market segment booked by Explore Asheville. **Town & Country** shot its editorial weddings section in Asheville, capturing the city's natural beauty and colorful culture in a multi-page editorial feature debuting in spring 2025.

Airport Roundtable Sets Attendance Record, Secures New Routes

The Airport Roundtable, co-hosted with Asheville Regional Airport, set a new attendance record with more than 65 participants, including representatives from nine airlines. Following the event, Delta Air Lines announced nonstop flights from Boston to Asheville on Saturdays and Sundays, beginning May 2025.

Digital
Innovation
& Industry
Celebration

New Website Launches After Year-Long Development

Explore Asheville launched a new website after a year of design and development, featuring a mobile-first design with more engagement opportunities, video activations, a cleaner user interface, snackable content like fact cards, an improved fall color map, and weekly fall color reports.



Olympic Commercial Highlights Community's Creative Spirit

The community's creative spirit was featured through **The Sounds of Always Asheville** commercial spot, which aired during the 2024 Olympics.

Annual Meeting Celebrates Decades of Community Investment

Nearly 300 partners and community leaders gathered September 16 at the Crest Center to celebrate 40+ years of Explore Asheville and the authority's investments in Asheville and Buncombe County. The event featured keynote speaker Rohit Bhargava, honored McKibbin Hospitality with the William A.V. Cecil Award, and recognized outgoing board members Kathleen Mosher and Scott Patel.



CRISIS RESPONSE & LEADERSHIP

Following Hurricane Helene's devastating impact, Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority halted all destination promotion to focus on community recovery, aiming to prevent an economic disaster on the heels of the natural disaster. This included contacting scheduled groups and events through October, encouraging rebooking, arranging lodging for emergency workers, and transforming its offices into a distribution center for essential goods with support from industry partners across the nation.

Fall to Winter
Pivoting from promotion to recovery



Strategic Partnerships & Community Collaboration: Building a Network of Support



The Always Asheville Fund: Supporting Small Businesses Through Crisis

In October 2024, Explore Asheville established the **Always Asheville Fund** to help small, independent travel and hospitality businesses reopen after Hurricane Helene. Seeded with \$300,000 from earned revenue, the fund grew through online donations and strategic partnerships—including the SOULSHINE Concert, Cooks for Carolina, and Public Interest Projects—raising an additional \$1.83 million.

By the end of FY25, the fund awarded \$2.13 million in grants to over 500 local businesses.

Be Part of the Comeback

Inspired and surrounded by the breathtaking Blue Ridge Mountains, Asheville, North Carolina has been a hub for creative arts and quality craft-making since its founding. The city's **River Arts District** is home to more than 600 artist studios and galleries. On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene struck Asheville, a mountain town 300 miles from any ocean, killing over 100 people and causing millions of dollars of damage. Flooding from the French Broad River overtook hundreds of artist spaces and diminished this year's tourism season on which Asheville artists depend. This gallery features their works, and 100-percent of your purchases here will benefit these artists.

Today, Asheville is open – still stunning and standing.

Shop, support, and sustain artists from Asheville's River Arts District, and plan your return trip with heart.

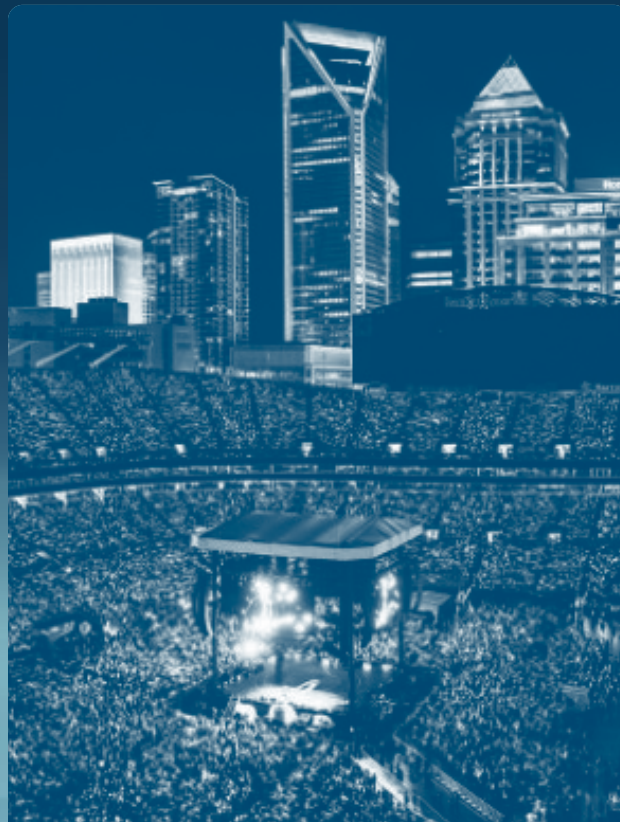


Love Asheville from Afar: Connecting 770 Local Businesses to Global Support

In response to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Explore Asheville quickly launched Love Asheville from Afar with local partners to connect small businesses and artists with customers nationwide and globally. The platform became a vital revenue lifeline, featuring 770+ businesses, attracting 113,000+ users, and driving over 200,000 link clicks. It also inspired a pop-up gallery at Atlanta's Ponce City Market that raised \$20,000 for River Arts District artists.



Signature Recovery Events & Cultural Resilience: Major Fundraising Successes



Concert for Carolina: \$24.5 Million Raised for Western North Carolina

Within a week of Helene, Explore Asheville pledged \$1 million as the presenting sponsor of the **Concert for Carolina**, featuring Luke Combs, Eric Church, Billy Strings, and James Taylor. The October 26 event at Bank of America Stadium raised \$24.5 million for Eblen Charities, MANNA Food Bank, Samaritan's Purse, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Eric Church's Chief Cares Foundation. Explore Asheville hosted 100+ first responders and their families in Charlotte and organized a free community livestream for more than 600 residents at Thomas Wolfe Auditorium.

Cooks for Carolina: \$100,000 in Direct Restaurant Relief

Local culinary talent joined 20+ New Orleans chefs to curate 13 fundraising dinners, raising \$100,000 in recovery grants for 10 small, independent restaurants in Asheville, Black Mountain, and Swannanoa facing hardship. The series celebrated the connection between the two southern culinary communities while providing direct financial support.



Rebuilding Visitor Confidence for Economic Revival: \$4.5 Million Marketing Investment

Drive Market Email Series: Targeted Regional Outreach

Weekly targeted emails and curated itineraries engaged key regional drive markets to encourage travel and promote open businesses in the Asheville area.



Linear TV & Streaming Partnership with Biltmore: Coordinated Return Messaging

Post-Helene, Explore Asheville worked cooperatively and in lockstep with Biltmore to maximize the collective impact of return messaging. Going in together across the same markets and programs, Asheville area messages ran alongside calls to visit from the region's most beloved attraction during NBC's Christmas at Rockefeller Center, Macy's Parade, NFL Football, and the Country Music Awards on ABC.



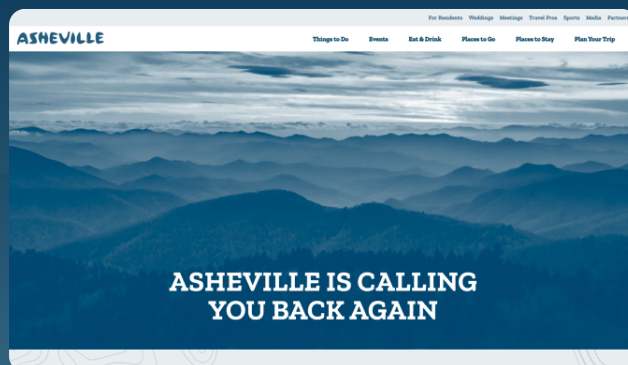


Governor-Elect Josh Stein Press Conference: Announcing Asheville is Open

After winning the governorship, Josh Stein visited Downtown Asheville with Explore Asheville, stopping by local businesses like Lexington Glassworks and Mast General Store to signal that Asheville and Western North Carolina are **open for business**.

Amplifying Asheville's Comeback: Stories That Inspire Visitors to Return

Following Hurricane Helene, Explore Asheville's messaging centered on the Always Asheville storytelling foundation, highlighting the community's resilience and independent spirit. Explore Asheville invested \$4.5 million in marketing, promoting messages such as "**Plan Your Return Trip with Heart**," "**Be Part of the Comeback**," and "**Asheville is Calling You Back Again**." A new travel landing page helped visitors navigate the region with travel routes, open accommodations, and an interactive map of businesses by category and neighborhood.



Leveraging State & National Alliances

TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY RECOVERY MILESTONES

- Power was restored to most residents and businesses within 17 days of Hurricane Helene, and non-potable water service returned within 19 days
- Interstate 26 reopened to traffic between North Carolina and Tennessee on October 30
- The City of Asheville restored potable water 53 days after Hurricane Helene
- The Biltmore Estate and Omni Grove Park Inn reopened in November
- River Arts District galleries and businesses hosted a special reopening celebration, RADFest 1.0,

Visit NC Market Co-Op: \$5 Million State Investment in Regional Recovery

Using \$5 million in state tourism marketing funds, Visit NC worked to revitalize the mountain region's economies and correct misconceptions about storm impacts. The campaign promoted holiday and winter travel with the message, "Our Best Way to Get Back is for You to Come Back."

U.S. Travel Partnership: Reaffirming Asheville as a Premier Meetings Destination

Just weeks after Hurricane Helene, the authority partnered with the **U.S. Travel Association** to welcome 24 state tourism directors for the National Council of State Tourism Directors Leadership Forum, as one of the first large groups to gather in the community, which helped inspire future events and meetings.

LEADING THE COMEBACK EFFORT FOR OUR CREATIVE VISITOR ECONOMY

Explore Asheville collaborated with partners to create a steady drumbeat of events throughout the winter shoulder season, securing a calendar designed to inspire residents, visitors, and large groups to be part of the area's comeback. Recognizing that businesses faced numerous decisions as they entered the first quarter of 2025, the authority worked to revive confidence, support recovery, and reinvigorate the economy with national reach.

Winter to Spring
Recovering in stages and pockets



Reactivating
Asheville's Event
Economy with
National Reach



Southern Conference Championships Generate Nearly \$10 Million in Direct Spending

The Southern Conference Men's and Women's **Basketball Championships** generated nearly \$10 million in economic impact at Harrah's Cherokee Center – Asheville, producing \$9.86 million in direct spending and 3,000 room nights from March 7–10. As part of Explore Asheville's expanded partnership with SoCon, the **Wrestling Championship** at UNC Asheville's Kimmel Arena added \$388,000 in direct spending and introduced new events, including the Business Leader Forum and SoCon Symposium.

Residents
Recognize
the Impact
of the Visitor
Economy

Stars Servin' Up Love Raises More than \$1 Million for the Community

Explore Asheville served as the presenting sponsor of **Stars Servin' Up Love**, a nationally televised celebrity tennis benefit supporting post-Hurricane Helene relief that **raised over \$1 million** for the Always Asheville Fund, United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and Asheville Tennis Association. The event featured tennis legends Andre Agassi, Andy Roddick, Jessica Pegula, and Emma Navarro alongside celebrities Jeff Probst and Pete Wentz. Explore Asheville produced three custom video spots for the broadcast and in-stadium, highlighting the city's creative and hospitality sectors while reinforcing community resilience.



Resident Sentiment Survey: 92% of Residents Believe Tourism is Beneficial to Their Community

Each year, Explore Asheville surveys Asheville and Buncombe County residents on their perspectives on tourism. In the 2025 survey, an overwhelming majority (92%) of residents agreed that tourism benefits their community, up four percent from last year.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, community pride increased.

- 84% of respondents are proud of their community, an eight-point increase from 2024 and a 12-point rise since 2023. Nearly the same number agree that visitors have a positive impact on post-hurricane economic recovery.

Residents increasingly felt the personal benefits of the local travel and hospitality industry.

- 70% agree that travel and hospitality positively impact themselves and their families, a seven percent increase from last year

Visitors play an important role in economic recovery.

- 94% believe visitors help support the number and variety of independent businesses, a six percent increase from last year

Residents see the benefits of tourism and broadly support the promotion of travel and hospitality.

- 92% believe tourism is beneficial to the community, up from 88% in 2024 and 84% in 2023
- 76% agree benefits outweigh potential challenges, a five percent increase from last year





Marketing Asheville's Resilience & Restoring Confidence

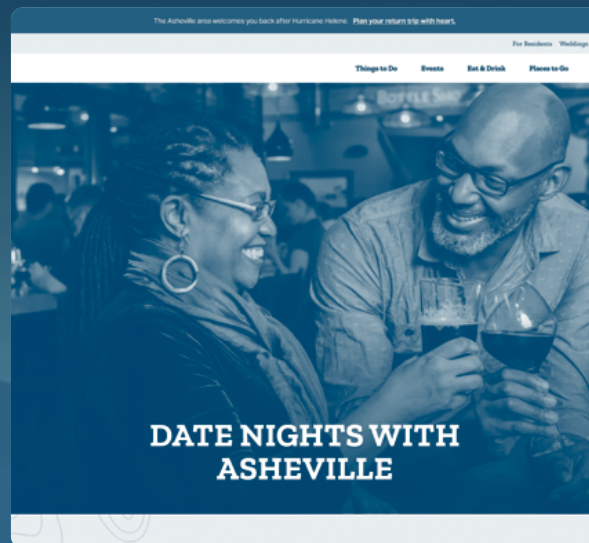


Good Morning America's "Asheville Rising" Spotlights Local Recovery

Good Morning America returned to Asheville for the first time since the pandemic, broadcasting **Asheville Rising** live from Highland Brewing's event center to over 2.6 million viewers. The March 27 broadcast with Robin Roberts, Sam Champion, and Ginger Zee highlighted Western North Carolina's recovery and raised \$2.7 million for local entities and individuals.

Hotel Weeks and Date Nights Promotion Drive Winter Business and Visitor Engagement

In February, Explore Asheville launched Hotel Weeks and Date Nights with Asheville to boost winter shoulder-season business. **Hotel Weeks** featured 44 lodging partners offering 25%+ off through custom landing pages, PR, and digital campaigns, while **Date Nights with Asheville** offered 28 curated itineraries highlighting dining, shopping, arts, and outdoor recreation, promoted via paid and organic media.



Charting the Road to Recovery

TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY RECOVERY MILESTONES

- The State of North Carolina and the City of Asheville were approved to receive \$1.4 billion and \$225 million, respectively, for their Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery Action Plans
- 11 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway reopened in Buncombe County, including access to the Folk Art Center and hikes like Graveyard Fields
- A 12-mile stretch of Interstate 40 through the Pigeon River Gorge reopened



The Year Ahead Event Lays a Roadmap for Regional Recovery

The Year Ahead brought together nearly 350 community leaders and tourism industry partners at A-B Tech for the first partner event following Hurricane Helene, focusing on building back stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient than before. Six industry-leading entities received the Explore Asheville **Superstar Awards** for their commitment to community recovery: Cooks for Carolina, Biltmore, Stars Servin' Up Love, Hood Huggers, River Arts District Artists, and Soulshine.



BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH PURPOSE-DRIVEN INITIATIVES

As spring emerged and the community continued its recovery journey, Explore Asheville concentrated on strategic investments and collaborative programs to strengthen Asheville's foundation for long-term growth. From expedited facility restorations and cultural celebrations to workforce development and environmental stewardship, these initiatives reflected the organization's commitment to building back better while welcoming visitors with intention and authenticity.

Spring to Summer
Strengthening recovery and renewal



**Strengthening
Community
Through
Collaboration
& Investment**

\$2.6 Million in TPDF Cycle Investments Expedited to Restore Essential Sports Facilities

The John B. Lewis Soccer Complex and Bob Lewis Ballpark received expedited TPDF investment to help restore Buncombe County's status as a leading sports destination. This support comes in response to the substantial disruption caused by Hurricane Helene, which damaged critical tournament infrastructure and decreased the county's field capacity.

John B Lewis Soccer Complex Restoration - \$2,155,000

Bob Lewis Ballpark Parking Improvements - \$500,000

Total FY25 TPDF Investment - \$2.65 million



**Honoring
Service,
Strengthening
Belonging**

First Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail Mural Unveiled

The first of three murals by local artist Tommy Lee McGee was unveiled along the trail, honoring Black and Brown women. Established in 2018 with a \$500,000 TPDF investment in partnership with River Front Development Group and a 19-member community advisory group, the trail highlights the resilience and contributions of Black communities in Asheville and Buncombe County.



Heroes of Hospitality Awards Luncheon Celebrated 60+ Nominees

The second annual Heroes of Hospitality Awards Luncheon brought together more than 200 industry partners to honor 60+ nominees powering the region's recovery and resilience during challenging circumstances. Six ambassadors of Asheville and Buncombe County received the Hero of Hospitality Award.

2025 Heroes of Hospitality Award Recipients

- Elvira Sanchez, housekeeping supervisor at Grand Bohemian Asheville, Autograph Collection
- Fran and Taylor Montgomery, owners at Montgomery Sky Farm
- Katie Kasben, concierge at The Inn on Biltmore Estate
- Katherine "Kat" Bell, bartender at Tall John's
- Erin Cronin, lead cook at Bear's Smokehouse BBQ and World Central Kitchen
- Philip DeAngelo, owner of Philip DeAngelo Studio



Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship Program Launched

Explore Asheville launched a new scholarship initiative to help recruit, develop, and retain hospitality talent in Buncombe County. Part of the broader Hospitality Workforce Development Program, the effort responds to staffing challenges heightened by the pandemic and Hurricane Helene. Three local students Gillian Kerns, Kayleigh Schofield, and Nathan Tucker, were honored with the inaugural Explore Asheville scholarship.



Explore Asheville Travel & Hospitality Earth Day Cleanup

More than 100 travel and hospitality partners and community members joined Explore Asheville's Travel & Hospitality Earth Day Cleanup on April 28. With support from Asheville GreenWorks, RiverLink, and MountainTrue, teams collected more than 4,000 pounds of trash and debris from Biltmore Village, Black Mountain, Downtown, River Arts District, and Weaverville.

TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY RECOVERY MILESTONES

- Several parks, greenways, and access points along the French Broad River reopened following debris removal by the Army Corps of Engineers and collaborative planning discussions with municipal partners, advocacy groups, and tour providers
- The first freight train rolls into the River Arts District in Asheville
- The new north concourse at Asheville Regional Airport opened, adding more gates, dining options, and a new ticket lobby

Welcoming Visitors Back Respectfully & with Purpose



Oprah Daily: The Adventures of Adam & Gayle

To make a splash with our open and ready message, Explore Asheville brought Oprah Daily's Adam Glassman and Gayle King to town for an immersive visit. From the North Asheville Tailgate Market to Biltmore and the North Carolina Arboretum, they experienced some of the best highlights Asheville has to offer—and shared them with Oprah Daily's engaged national audience. These prominent endorsements help build trust and credibility in our invitation to come explore Asheville now.

FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

The authority approved a total investment of **\$75,000 for 21 local cultural events and festivals** at a time central to the region's recovery.

An additional 42 events received a total of **\$204,418 in event sponsorship and marketing** support this year.



2025

Festival & Cultural Events Support Fund Recipients

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program
ASAP Farm Tour

Asheville Bread Festival
17th Biannual Asheville Bread Festival

Asheville Brewers Alliance
AVL Beer Week

Asheville Fringe Society
The Big Crafty

Asheville Makers Inc.
Maker Faire Asheville

Black Mountain Center for the Arts
Art in Bloom

Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
{Re}HAPPENING 13

Blue Ridge Pride
Blue Ridge Pride Festival

NC Craft Brewers Foundation / Burial Beer Co
Burnpile Harvest Festival

Asheville Downtown Association / Chai Pani
Diwali Mela

Connect Beyond Festival
Connect Beyond Festival

Folk Heritage Committee
Mountain Dance and Folk Festival / Shindig on the Green

LEAF Global Arts
LEAF Retreat

Montreat College
Coda Music Festival

Punch Bucket Lit
Punch Bucket Literary Festival Asheville

RADA Foundation
RADFest

Southern Highland Craft Guild
Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands

The Cathedral of All Souls
A Dickens Christmas

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County
Juneteenth: A Celebration of Resilience and Persistence

Weaverville Business Association
Weaverville's Music on Main

YMI Cultural Center
Goombay Festival

SPORTING EVENTS

Explore Asheville's Business Development team partners with national event organizers, local community partners, and its recruiting partner Airstream Ventures to attract new sporting events to our community. Sports account for one-third of the total business our organization books for Asheville and Buncombe County, generating significant economic impact and national visibility.

In FY25, Asheville hosted 48 sporting events with an overall economic impact of more than \$22 million. Several of these events took place at facilities supported by the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF), creating a positive cycle where investment in local venues helps recruit premier events, further strengthening Asheville's reputation as a top sports destination.

MAJOR EVENTS



2025 USA Archery NC State Indoor Championship
Warren Wilson College
January 31 - February 2 2025
Estimated Direct Spend: \$300,000



Blue Ridge Spring Dinger
Bob Lewis Ballpark
April 2025
Estimated Direct Spend: \$2,086,000



United Flag Football League Weekend Warriors Series
John. B. Lewis Soccer Complex
July 2025
Estimated Direct Spend: \$345,000



National Club Softball Association Fall Tournament
Bob Lewis Ballpark
November 9 - 10, 2024
Estimated Direct Spend: \$293,000



She Can Fly with Shilise Jones
Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville
January 17-19, 2025
Estimated Direct Spend: \$1,380,000



9 Panel All Star Jam Cheer & Dance
Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville
February 2025
Estimated Direct Spend: \$1,970,000

EXPLORE ASHEVILLE WELCOMED

152

NEW PARTNERS THIS YEAR

Accessible Towns
Adlib Clothing
Akira Satake Ceramics
All The Things Ceremonies
Aluminati Guitar Company
America's Best Value Inn
Andy Buchanan Art
Appalachian Riverboard Company
Arash Massage
Art and Culture of Asheville
Asheville Bee Charmer
Asheville Cryotherapy and Recovery
Asheville Dispensary and Elixir Bar
Asheville Tea Company
Asheville Web Design
Ashley Chambliss Music
Bad Manners Coffee
Battery Park Hall
Bebop Bottle Shop
Bellflower Management
Luxury Vacation and Mid-term Rentals
Beloved Body Spa
Big Tikka Restaurant
Blossoms Creative
Bob Lewis Ballpark
Botiwalla by Chai Pani
Bottinelli Fine Art
Carol Spags Photography
Cenzontle Language
Justice Cooperative
Claudia Moore Field Art
Community Commons at Center for Spiritual Living Asheville

Cornelia's Place
Cuentos y Café BIPOC Bookstore
Dripolator Coffeehouse
Biltmore Village
Dripolator Coffeehouse
Candler
Dripolator Coffeehouse
South
DSSOLVR
East Coast Entertainment
Eda's Hide-a-Way
ELEMENTALITY
Erika Busse Art
Ernest
Estate Jewelry AVL
Fitz and the Wolfe
Fixed Line Appalachia
Flour
Foothills Butcher Shop
Foreverwood Lens
Franny's Pharmacy - West
Gemelli
Good Hot Fish
GreenFlash Watersports
HapBE Valley Equine and Wellness Farm
Heartful Art Gallery
Heather Divoky Art and Design
Hilltop Ice Cream Shop - Woodfin
Hitched - Traveling
Chapel
Hi-Wire RAD
Holly's Perfect Pour
Mobile Bar
Hope Bus
Hot Box AVL

Hygge Elements
Jeff Snell Fine Art
Jess Hopkins
Photography
Joey's Bagels
La Bodega by Cúrate
Laila Indian Cuisine
Laura Wood Studios
Legally Addictive Foods
Light Shifter Studios
Live Happier Photography
L'optique
Lovely Picnics and Events
Luna Gallery
Lunadendron
Mary's Mountain Cookies
Master BBQ
Men in Harmony
Mighty Tree Properties
Mountaineer Motor Tours
MsPearl Productions
Neng Jr's
Newfound Sound and Lights
Of The Earth
Nourishments
On the Wing Gallery
Pad Thai Asheville
Paige Houghton Art
Palms Cuban American Kitchen
Peri Social House
Period Nirvana
Picnic Pop-Up
Pisgah Conservancy
Plant Bar - Coffee and Tea
Pop Bubble Tea
Potential New Boyfriend
Print House

Rabbit Hole at Sunny Point
Café
Rachael McIntosh
Photography
Rare Bird Collective
Red Ginger Dimsum and Tapas
Red Ribbon Society
Resurrection Studios
Collective
Ross Pottery Studio
See Asheville Segway Tours
Selene Plum Studios
Serenity Sound Healing of Asheville
Sew AVL
Shining Rock Goods
Simple Café and Juice Bar
Sky E-Bikes Guided Tours and Rentals
Slice of Life Comedy
SMB Biz-Tech Solutions
Smokee's on the Creek
Sonali Devesh Wellness Spa
Spicewalla
Stewart/Owen Dance
Subject Matter Studio
Sumo Asian Kitchen
SUP Asheville
Superlove Film
Sweet Cub
Terra Nova Beer Co. - South Slope
Terra Nova Beer Co. - Swannanoa
The Altamont Condos
The Artisan Tour

The ASHEVILLE Co
The Breakroom AVL
The Breath Nurse
The Draftsman Bar and Lounge
The Flat Iron Hotel
The Hop Ice Cream Café - Black Mountain
The Hop Ice Cream Café - Downtown
The Observatory
The Roof
The Studio
The Sublime Theater and Press
The Watch Kitchen + Spirits
The Well
THIRD ROOM, LLC
Timeless Asheville
Photography
Towns Property Management
TP's Day Trip Adventures
TRVE Brewing Company
Uphora Dance
Visuals Rooftop Bar
Wagbar
Waypoint Adventure
Wild Waters Guiding
Wildwood Still
WNC Realty and Rentals
WNC Shuttle Luxury Transportation
Yoga Nut Worksite
Wellness

Meet The Staff
**EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE**



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



Connie Nuckolls Holliday
(She/Her) Director of Sales



Vic Isley
(She/Her) President & CEO



Jay Curwen
(He/Him) Director of Sports,
Film & Entertainment



Shawn Boone
(He/Him) Senior
Sales Manager



Tina Porter
(She/Her) Sales Manager



Sarah Myers
(She/Her) Manager,
Executive & Strategy



Emily Crosby
(She/Her) Group
Service Manager



Khal Khoury
(He/Him) Sales
Manager



Kristen Childers
(She/Her) Sales
Manager



Ali Wainright
(She/ Her) Sales
Coordinator



John Dawson
(He/Him) Group
Service Coordinator



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



Josh Jones
(He/Him) Systems &
Operations Manager



Glenn Ramey
(She/Her) Human
Resources Manager



Christina Fernandez
(She/Her) Office
Assistant



Dodie Stephens
(She/Her) Vice
President of Marketing



Sarajane Case
(She/Her) Director
of Marketing



Kyle McCurry
(He/Him) Director
of Public Relations



Emilie Soffe
(She/Her) Director
of Content



Mia Brown
(She/Her) Sales &
Marketing Assistant



Carli Adams
(She/Her) Group
Marketing Manager



Cass Santander
(She/Her)
PR Manager



David Thompson
(He/Him) Digital
Communications Manager



Karis Roberts
(She/Her)
Marketing Manager



Mickey Poandl
(He/They/Them)
PR Manager



Elizabeth White
(She/Her)
Web Manager



Holly Watts
(She/Her)
Services Coordinator



Payton Byrnes
(She/Her)
PR Coordinator



Kayla Speis
(She/Her) Social
Media Manager



Tiffany Thacker
(She/Her) Vice President of Partnership
& Destination Management



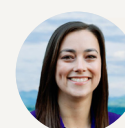
Ashley Greenstein
(She/Her) Public
Information Manager



Allison Bashford
(She/Her) Grants
Manager



McKenzie Provost
(She/Her) Partner
Engagement Manager



Kimberly Puryear
(She/Her) Destination
Project Manager



Shelby Pearsall
(She/Her) Partnership
Coordinator

The background of the entire page is a dark green topographic map with white contour lines. The lines are more densely packed in some areas, indicating steeper terrain, and more spread out in others, indicating flatter areas. The map covers the entire page, with a dark green rectangular box at the bottom containing white text.

EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

ExploreAsheville.com

828-258-6109

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