

EXPLORE ASHEVILLE & BCTDA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) 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	Running A Healthy & Effective Organization
<p>Balancing resident and visitor needs, recognizing the necessary role that sustainable, long-term growth of travel has in achieving a healthy, collective economy.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Engaging residents and visitors with shared values to care for and respect natural, cultural and human resources vital in delivering quality guest experiences.</p> <p>Collaborating with community organizations, local businesses and environmentally focused partners to support the sustainability and growth of our outdoor economy.</p>	<p>Extending a genuine invitation to BIPOC travelers and other diverse audiences including LGBTQ visitors – connecting them with local neighborhoods, businesses, and entrepreneurs – creating more opportunities for all to win.</p> <p>Supporting product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.</p>	<p>Sharing stories of creators and makers who help differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences and more.</p> <p>Supporting product development, place making and community connections, enabling new experiences and business opportunities throughout our community.</p>	<p>Investing in people, policies, and practices to serve our community with integrity within the organization's legislative requirements.</p>

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

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

October 2025 – December 2025



MARKETING, CONTENT & PR Q2 INITIATIVES

Dodie Stephens
Vice President of Marketing

**EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE**
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

ASHEVILLE EVERYWHERE

Back-to-back PR launches keep community momentum front and center

"What's happening now – that's the real story;" "It isn't just rebuilding, it's reinventing, and inviting you to be part of its next chapter;" and "Asheville isn't just back, it's better." -WBTV Charlotte

HIGHLIGHTS: Press conferences, FAMs, site visits

- **Eight PR launches w. news releases** distributed to **6,216 media contacts**.
- The November press conference and releases about the **PGA TOUR's "Biltmore Championship Asheville"** garnered 450 media mentions across the U.S. that were delivered to hundreds of millions of people.
- Hosted or supported **three FAMs** with journalists who write for outlets such as Nat Geo, AAA, Bon Appetit, Epicurious, Food & Wine, Eater, The Manual, Lonely Planet, Travel Noire, NerdWallet and Afar.
- **Site visit highlight:** CBS News' Wendy Gillette visited in December, which resulted in **765 mentions airing on CBS stations in nearly every state** to hundreds of millions of viewers.
- **Site visit highlight:** WBTV in Charlotte produced "Rediscover Asheville," a 2-hour special on the heels of the milestone coverage. It featured more than **10 partners** the PR team pitched.



EARNED & ENDORSED

Impact, Accolades, and Significant Stories

Asheville brightens 2026 with art, immersive experiences

Illuminated landscapes, heritage-inspired dining and restorative journeys invite visitors to experience the Blue Ridge Mountains in a new light



For the first time, guests at Biltmore can experience the grounds and gardens after dark through Luminere, a stunning, light and sound-filled evening experience, opening in March 2026. (Photo Courtesy: Biltmore)

ASHEVILLE, NC (Dec. 4, 2025) – Each year brings a new way of seeing, and in 2026 travelers are choosing experiences that feel intentional — however indulgent or simple they want them to be. Asheville meets that shift with a season of openings and encounters that invite guests to slow down and awaken the spirit.

What's New in 2026 Press Release distributed to 1,609 media contacts

Asheville Is Back, With All Its Artistic Flair

-George Stone, Conde Nast Traveler

Frommer's®

**TRAVEL +
LEISURE**

Fodor's Travel

**Condé Nast
Traveler**

Best Places to Go in 2026

50 Places to Travel in 2026

Go List – Top Places to Go in the USA in 2026

The Gold List 2026

Earned Coverage

4.85B
Potential Media Reach

\$95.3M
Publicity Value

42
Site Visits

968
PR Team Placements

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY GREEN LIGHT DESPITE SHUTDOWN

Messaging supports 'open' status during the government shutdown



The News&Observer



This Scenic Stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway Finally Reopen After Hurricane Helene—Just in Time for Leaf Peeping

Some visitor centers, restrooms reopening along Blue Ridge Parkway during government shutdown

Blue Ridge Parkway, Smoky Mountains national parks open despite federal shutdown

Here's what we know about the Blue Ridge Parkway and Shenandoah National Park during the government shutdown

Blue Ridge Parkway remains open during government shutdown

Planning a fall trip to the NC mountains? Here's what the shutdown could mean for you

Audience & Value

495.9M

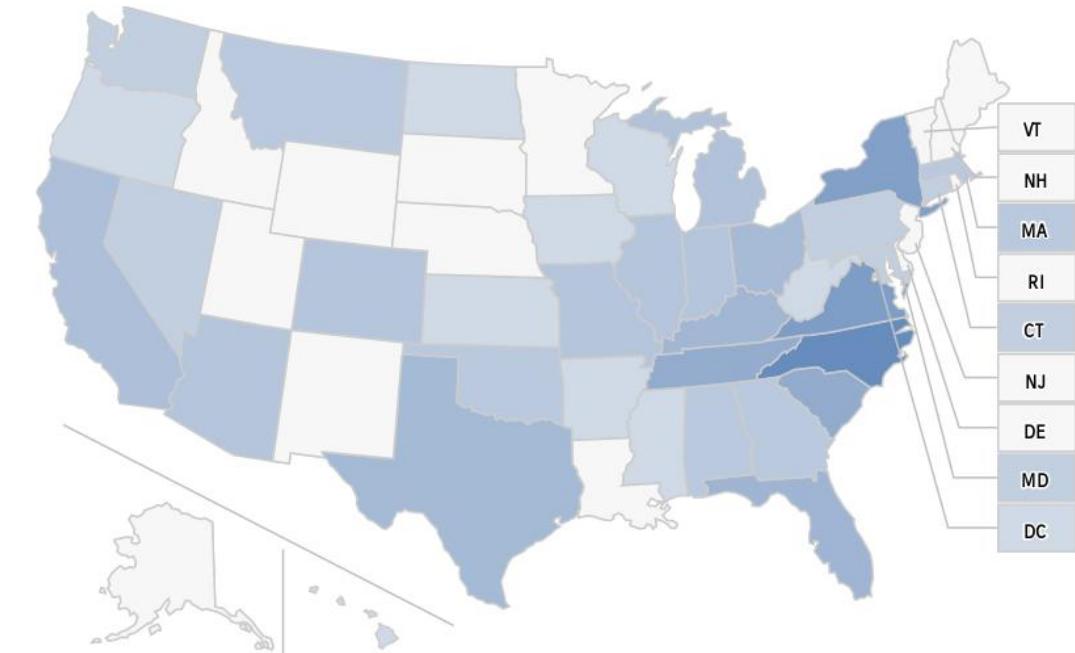
Potential Media Reach

\$6.2M

Publicity Value

Mentions by State

Powered by Critical Mention



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY VISITATION

Rebounds and surpasses visitation in the peak month of October



TRAVEL + LEISURE ADVISORY BOARD

A Full Circle Opportunity

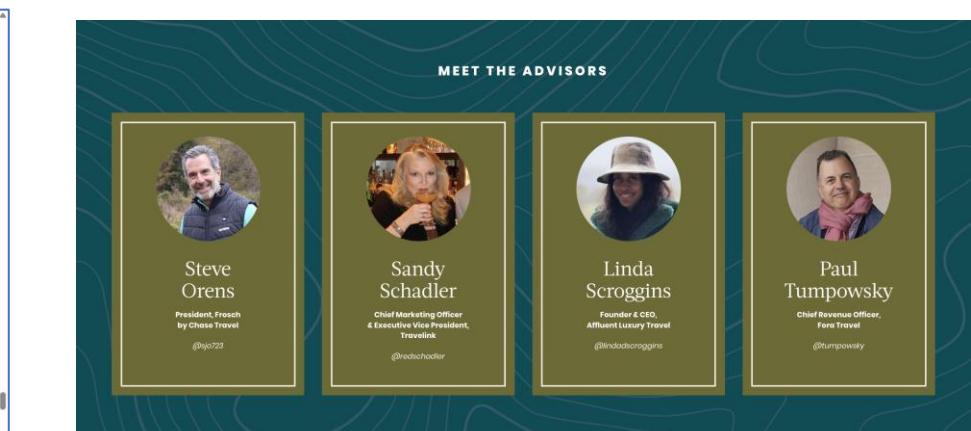
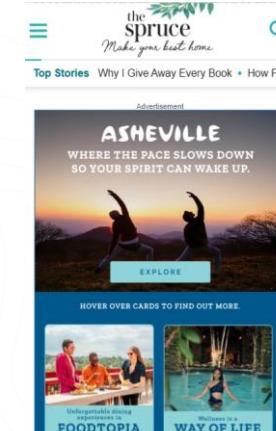
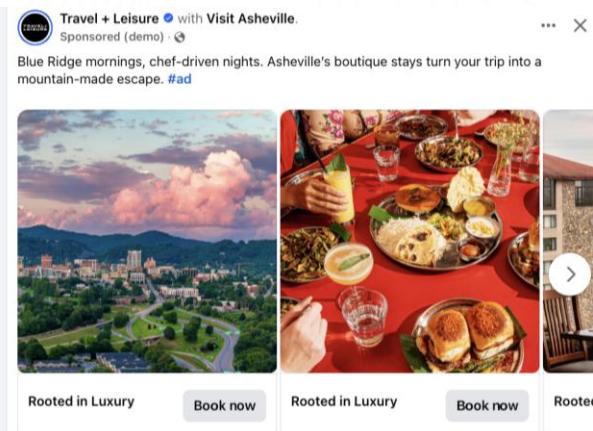
Opportunity: Four members of the Travel + Leisure Advisory Board traveled to the Asheville area this quarter.

Meeting of Luxury Travel Agents: The week following their visit, Vic traveled to the TAB Conference in Pasadena to meet with the full board.

Coverage & Amplification: Soon after an article was written, interviewing the members who came to Asheville. A savvy traveler's guide to the city.

Results for Sponsored Editorial, Ads & Social:

- 928K impressions.
- Campaign engagement and click-throughs rate was 0.35% or **3.5x higher** than industry average.
- Supporting ad units were **+50% higher** than T+L benchmarks.
- Amplified social was **+136% higher** than T+L benchmarks.



Fresh from Asheville

JOURNEY THROUGH "THE LAND OF THE SKY" WITH TRAVEL + LEISURE'S TRAVEL ADVISORY BOARD



"Asheville is for makers, and the makers here are survivors. This is a place where you can connect with people, their stories, and their handiwork."

SANDY SCHADLER, TRAVELINK

"Hospitality here feels genuine. Beyond the warm locals, the service community operates with a sincerity that's increasingly rare."

PAUL TUMPOWSKY, FORA TRAVEL

"Asheville made me feel grounded and in touch with the Earth. It opened my eyes to poetry placed in the right place."

STEVE ORENS, FROSCH BY CHASE TRAVEL

INFLUENTIAL CREATORS

Ease of Access to Asheville

Goal: Amplify paid efforts and markets of focus via micro-influencer partnership campaigns.

Focused on “**ease of access**” message and direct flight routes.

Team worked with 10 influencers this quarter, delivering a total of 180 posts and videos.

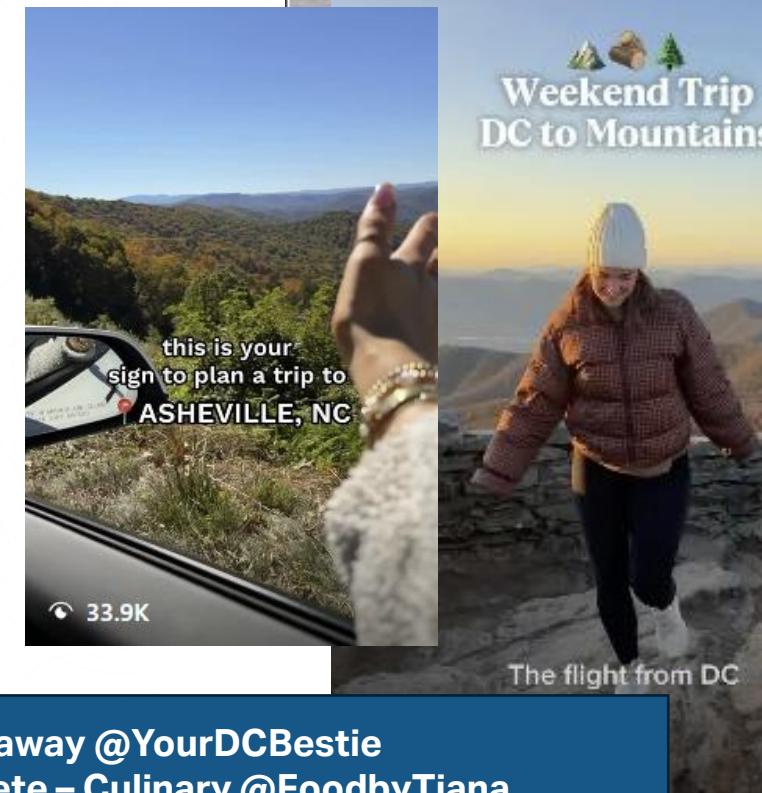
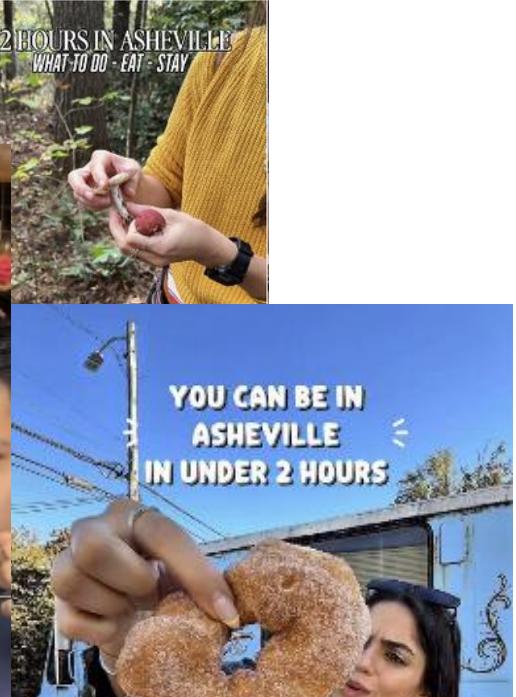
Total Engagements: 34,210+

Total Estimated Media Value: \$253,535+

Total Impressions: 8 Million+

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS:
DC – Dambo CTA @EmilyGoesPlaces
DC – Culinary @AlwaysBeMyFoodie
DC – Family getaway @AustinKGraff

DC – Fall getaway @YourDCBestie
Tampa/St. Pete – Culinary @FoodbyTiana
Orlando – Budget-friendly @BeerCutieandFoodie
New York City – Romantic getaway @kimchixjollof



GARDEN & GUN WEDDINGS

Partnering with taste curators in new weddings brand

Strategy: To show how a wedding in the Asheville area is built by the hands of our creative community, with a connection to the land and to the creatives who call Asheville home. Deeply personal weddings, luxury without pretense. Position Explore Asheville as expert guides.

Impressions: 1.75 Million+ across custom digital, social, e-news, homepage takeovers and run of site ad units.

HIGHLIGHTS: Still gathering campaign data and encouraged to see supporting social delivering 554K impressions and an **exceptional 15.7% engagement rate (17% on Facebook)**.

Engaged markets:

The highest engagement was among readers 35+ in key DMAs, including Atlanta, Charlotte, Birmingham, Nashville, Raleigh-Durham, Tampa, and New York.



03. Mountain Views

Asheville is known as the Land of the Sky, and it's easy to see why at Earth & Sky Dwellings. This nature-steeped venue offers twenty whimsical abodes overlooking Blue Ridge vistas, plus a selection of intimate ceremony and reception locations. Say "I do" from atop a towering double-decked treehouse, for example, or in an enchanting garden with panoramic views.

It's the perfect setting to showcase a custom gown by Angela Kim Couture, an Asheville design house that tailors each dress to the bride's silhouette and personality. Consider accentuating the dress—and the scenery—with lush blooms from Flora Botanical Living, a flower shop, boutique, and coffee house owned by Lissa Thomas. Add a confectionary flourish with the help of Short Street Cakes, a bakeshop that blends local ingredients and a touch of playfulness into delicious desserts.



In Asheville, North Carolina, a wedding unfolds less like

an event and more like a collective work of art shaped by the city's makers and the enchanting scenery of the Appalachian Mountains. Flower farmers cut native blooms for pastoral bouquets, bakers top cakes with berries fresh from the field, ceramicists mold tableware as singular as the couples themselves, and bluegrass musicians tune their strings for a homespun serenade. Even the smallest details reflect the region's fiercely local, endlessly imaginative spark. And at four remarkable Blue Ridge venues, that spark makes for unforgettable vows.

ASHEVILLE SESSIONS

Extending national visibility for Asheville's music legacy

Marketing supported Asheville Sessions through a targeted national paid media strategy and owned content production, designed to elevate awareness of the 100-year milestone and strengthen Asheville's positioning as a leading music destination.

Paid Media & Partnership Highlights:

- Asheville Sessions was supported by a multi-channel paid media mix across **The Guardian, Rolling Stone, Garden & Gun, and 6AM City**, plus a paid creator partnership with **Patrick Hicks Music Stories**. This approach blended national editorial credibility with culture-forward and creator-led storytelling.

Total Paid Impressions: 3,099,369

- Rolling Stone:** 2,337,091
- Garden & Gun:** 200,000
- The Guardian:** 175,000
- 6AM City:**
- Influencer Patrick Hicks Music Stories:** 141,951



EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Owned content efforts included a [custom landing page](#), a [short-form history video](#), and [full weekend coverage](#) to capture evergreen b-roll — creating a long-term content bank to support future storytelling around Asheville's music legacy. The Asheville Sessions landing page had **79k page views**, and the explainer video received **75k views**.

Rolling Stone

HOW ASHEVILLE'S 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE 'ASHEVILLE SESSIONS' MAKES IT THE COUNTRY MUSIC DESTINATION OF APPALACHIA

By ROLLING STONE
OCTOBER 22, 2025



GARDEN&GUN

MUSIC
A Remastered Album and New Festival Pay Tribute to the Pivotal Asheville Sessions



StyleBlueprint

FOR A LIFE OF STYLE + SUBSTANCE delivered daily

Asheville, NC Celebrates 100 Years of Appalachian Music



Our State

HIDDEN HISTORY

Country Music's Asheville Origins



FALL COLOR STORYTELLING & VISITATION STRATEGY

Positioning Asheville as one of the US's best fall color destinations

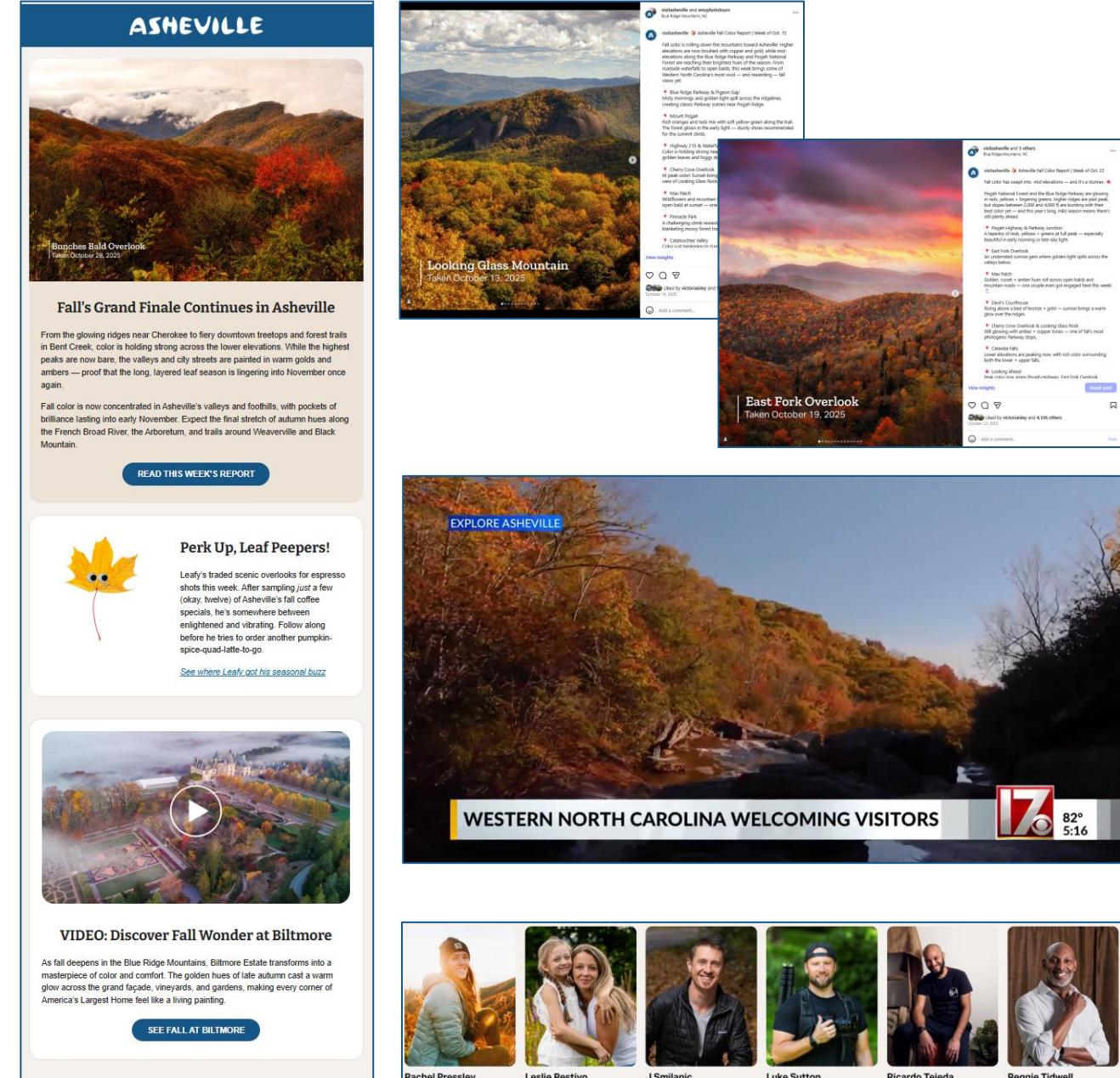
Goal:

Marketing continued to strengthen Asheville's leadership in fall travel storytelling through a mix of owned content, real-time reporting, and national PR collaboration.

Highlights:

- **Color Hunters Program** – engaged local photographers and outdoor creators across Buncombe County to capture real-time fall color conditions, supporting visitor planning and community storytelling. 2025 Fall social posts (Sep-Nov) generated **1.6M engagements**, a **132% increase** over 677k engagements for the same period in 2023.
- **Weekly Color Reports** – served as a top-performing seasonal content channel across social, newsletter and web, driving high organic traffic, repeat visitation, and strong social engagement during peak fall travel. The Fall Color Report page on EA.com received **104,340 page views**, and fall color emails were opened **162,514 times**.
- **Fall B-Roll + Video News Releases** – Content partnered with the PR team to produce a shared fall b-roll library for video news releases, increasing Asheville's visibility in regional and national fall coverage. Our combined efforts generated **58 additional TV and online/social stories** to **nearly 1 million people** across North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.
- **Fall color Sony FAM** – A co-branded FAM with **Biltmore and Sony** brought four high-level influencers to the area at the end of fall color season. Key results include **135 Instagram posts**, **1.4M earned social engagements** and **impressions to 792K combined followers**.

Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares



THOMAS DAMBO'S TROLLS: VISITOR ECONOMY ACTIVATION

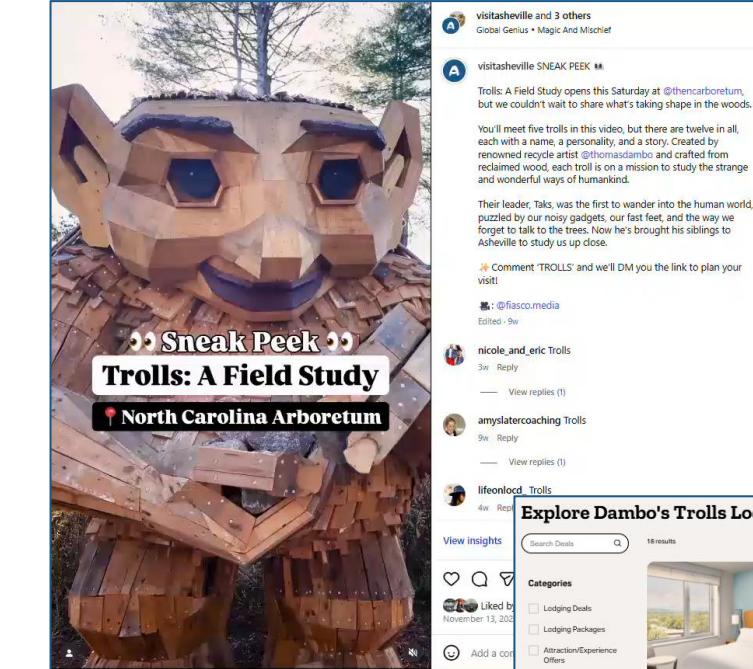
Leveraging public art to drive late fall/winter visitation and partner participation

Goal:

Marketing supported the Thomas Dambo Trolls installation at the Arboretum as a multi-month destination driver, designed to extend visitation across lodging, attractions, and winter programming.

Highlights:

- Lodging Packages** – amplified demand by promoting a suite of partner-led troll-themed lodging packages that bundled local stays with the Dambo experience, helping convert awareness into overnight visits and extended stays. Dambo pages have been viewed **197,228** times on EA.com.
- Event Promotion** – launched early storytelling across owned and paid channels to build anticipation, educate travelers, and position Asheville as a prominent troll trail destination. Dambo social posts have received **81k engagements** and **1.09M views** across platforms.
- Sneak Peek Visuals + Winter Lights Shoot** – coordinated content capture to supply partners, PR, and social channels with high-quality visual assets that could be reused throughout the season.



Explore Dambo's Trolls Lodging Packages

Search Deals 18 results

Categories

- Lodging Deals
- Lodging Packages
- Attraction/Experience Offers

Regions

- Downtown
- West Asheville
- Weaverville
- South Asheville
- East Asheville

See more

Cities

- Asheville
- Weaverville
- Arden
- Candler
- Woodfin

Trolls Among the Winter Lights
Element Asheville Downtown

Trolling with TownePlace Suites Asheville-West
TownePlace Suites Asheville-West

Trolls A Field Study with Haywood Park Hotel
Haywood Park Hotel

Troll Package at the Hampton Inn and Suites - Biltmore Area
Hampton Inn and Suites - Biltmore Area

Free Daytime Troll Pass with 2-night Stay
Pinehurst Bed & Breakfast

Troll Package at the Hilton Garden Inn Asheville South
Hilton Garden Inn Asheville South

Troll Hunter Adventure Package
Asheville West Kids

Fall for the Mountains: Couples Retreat & Enchanted Forest Trolls
The Inn at Arden Farms

Troll Package at the Hampton Inn Asheville - Tunnel Road
Hampton Inn Asheville - Tunnel Road

Troll Package at the Homewood Suites by Hilton Asheville
Homewood Suites by Hilton Asheville

Troll Seekers in you Element
Element Asheville Downtown

FUTURE OF TRAVEL DISCOVERY: AI INFRASTRUCTURE

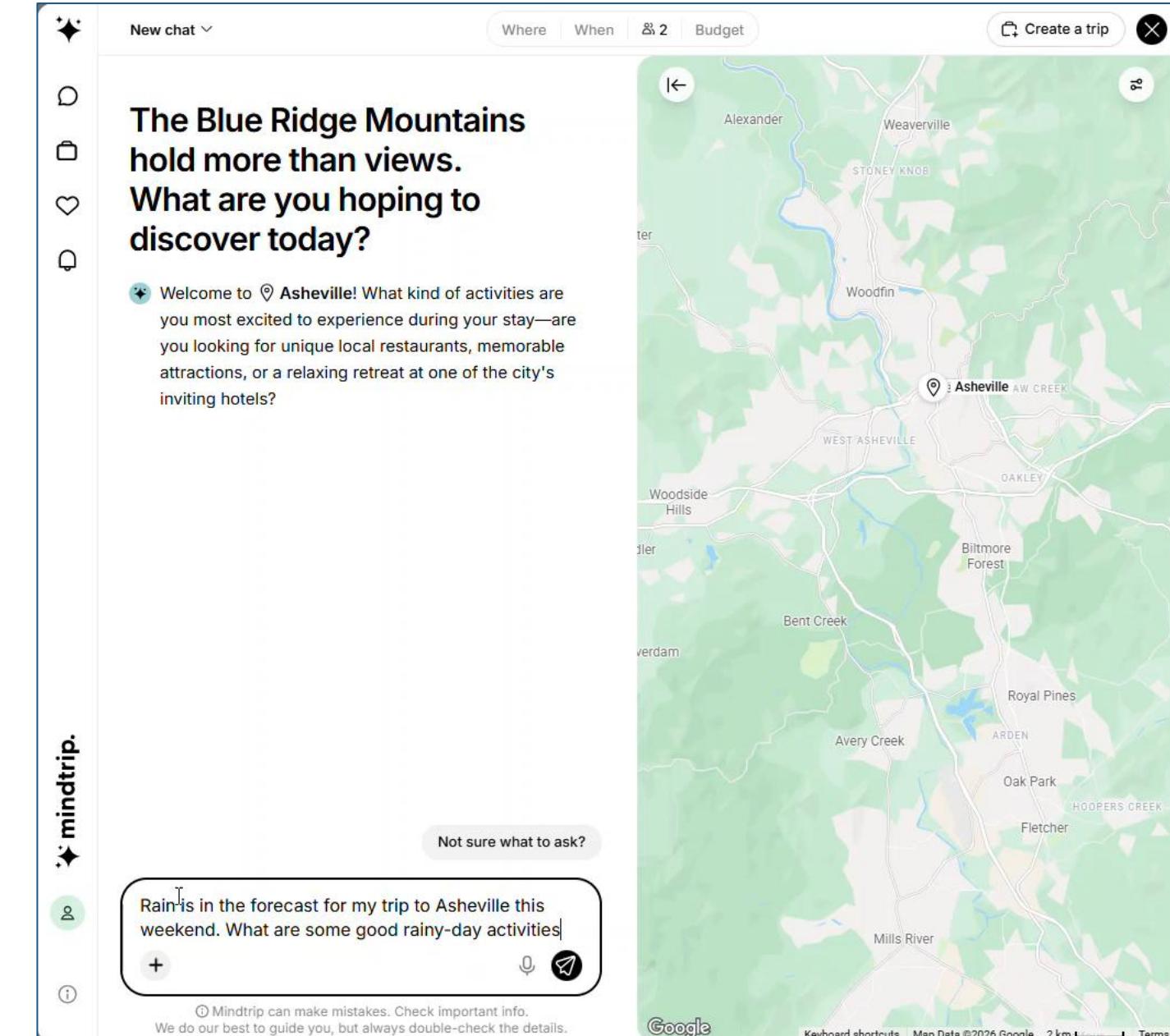
Building the foundation for how Asheville shows up in emerging platforms

Goal:

Marketing launched two AI-driven initiatives to test how emerging technologies can improve trip planning, content discovery, and partner visibility while positioning Explore Asheville at the forefront of destination innovation.

Highlights:

- **Mindtrip Trip Planner Launch** – introduced an AI-powered planning tool on ExploreAsheville.com that allows visitors to generate personalized itineraries, increasing time on site and guiding travelers toward relevant local businesses. **1,000 users** have chatted with the planner since launch.
- **Bonafide Kickoff** – implemented an AI optimization platform to structure, enrich, and validate web content, ensuring Asheville's content is discoverable and usable across next-generation AI search and planning tools.



BEST IN CLASS SOCIAL

Competitive benchmarking:

Using our analytics platform, we track performance against 20 curated competitors per platform, including other DMOs and high-performing content channels.

Q2 engagement highlights:

- Facebook:** Total engagements: 29,859 vs. competitor average 17,068 (+75%)
Average per post: 728 vs. competitor average 160 (+355%)
- Instagram:** Total engagements: 103,950 vs. competitor average 33,245 (+212%)
Average per post: 1,299 vs. competitor average 500 (+62%)

Viral post:

Our Omni Gingerbread Competition preview reel was our top-performing post on FB, IG and TT, garnering over 250,000 engagements and 6,476,471 views.



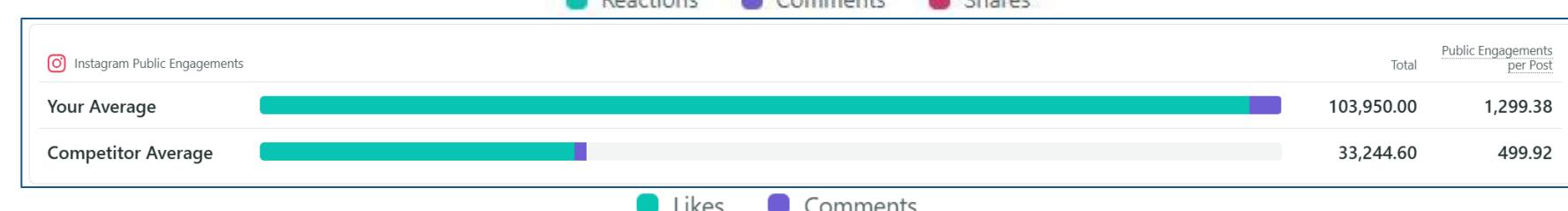
FACEBOOK
[Gingerbread Competition](#)
24,964 Engagements
1,466,668 views



INSTAGRAM
[Gingerbread Competition](#)
28,303 Engagements
273,569 views



TIKTOK
[Gingerbread Competition](#)
179,758 Engagements
4,736,234 views



Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Q2 INITIATIVES

Ed Silver

Vice President of Business Development

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Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Strengthening Brand Visibility, Generating Leads, and Advancing Storytelling Alignment

Attended Key Events:

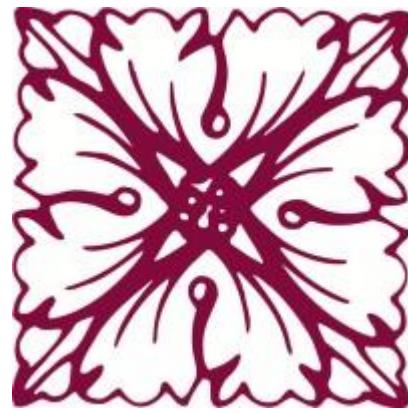
- IMEX America – Oct.7-9 Las Vegas, NV
- Northstar's TEAMS - Travel Events And Management in Sports - Oct. 13-16 Columbus, OH
- Meetings Today Live! Incentive – Oct. 19-22 Los Cabos, Baja California Sur
- NTA National Tour Association Travel Exchange – Nov. 9-12 Ottawa, Canada
- Association Forum's Holiday Showcase – Dec. 3-4 Chicago, IL
- SITE SE - Society of Incentive Travel Executives Education Summit – Dec.7-9 New Orleans, LA
- TNSAE - TN Society Association Executives Bootcamp & Tradeshow – Dec.10-11 Franklin, TN



These events produced a potential **6,413 rooms**. IMEX alone resulted in **5 Booked Events** for **1,161 contracted rooms**. Buyer sentiment for Asheville remains high.

STRATEGIC GROUPS THAT VISITED IN Q2 2025

Attracting groups and conferences as the front porch of economic development



Preservation North Carolina 87th Annual Conference

October 5-6, 2025

\$482,000

80 roomnights

Preservation/Non-Profit



North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association 2025 Conference

October 19-23, 2025

\$562,000

655 roomnights

Government



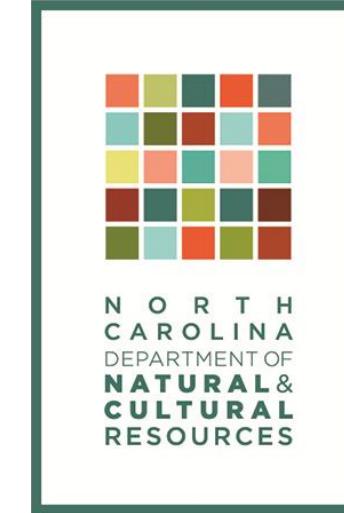
National Association of Educational Procurement District III Conference

October 24-29, 2025

\$556,000

647 roomnights

Education



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

November 10-16, 2025

\$1M

270 roomnights

Government/Arts & History



North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians Winter Weekend

December 3-6, 2025

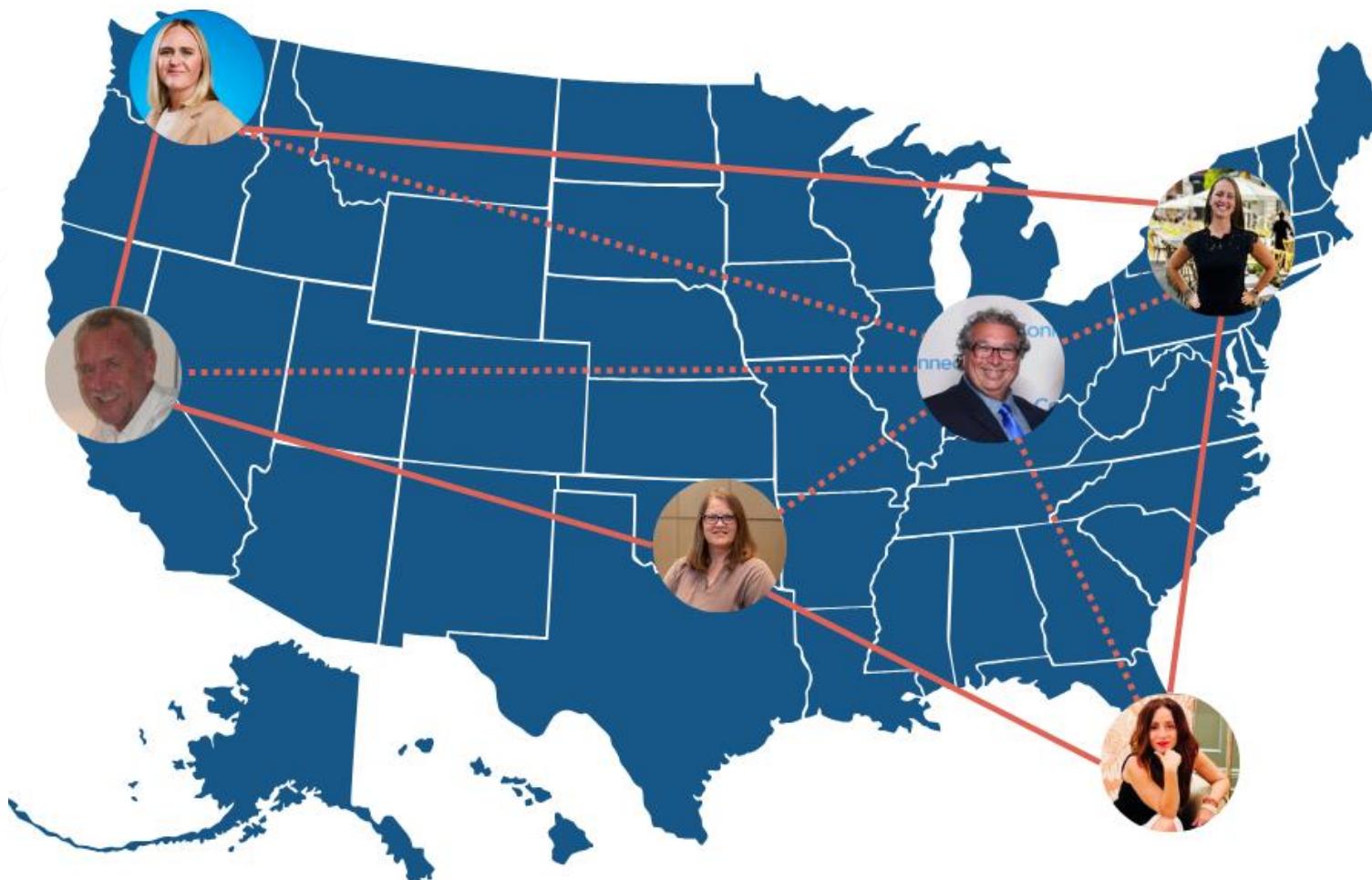
\$803,000

228 roomnights

Healthcare/Education

48-HOUR FAMILIARIZATION TOURS

November 11-14, 2025



Planners from Across North America, Representing Diverse Industries

Sara Brown	Auburn, New York	Associations/Corporations
Joseph Burke	Ogden Dunes, Indiana	Corporate/Manufacturing
Meranda Sizer	Grand Island, Florida	Associations/Corporations
Denise Moody	Bartlesville, Oklahoma	Nonprofit/Medical/Research
Othmar Witteveen	Richmond, California	Corporate/Incentives
Lynn Hochrine	University Place, Washington	Corporate/Outdoor Recreation

Hosted 12 planners from around the country, representing a diverse range of market segments. We have booked one group from this FAM tour so far.

48-HOUR FAMILIARIZATION TOURS

Testimonials from November 2025 FAM

*"This was probably one of the **best FAMs I've experienced in my 13 years with HB**. Thank you!!" – Lindy Long, FL*

*"From a business standpoint, **seeing the hotels that had meeting space to meet my needs**, as well as seeing a good cross section of what Asheville has to offer. It's hard to pick one thing for a highlight." – Denise Moody, OK*

*"This venue (Omni GPI) was gorgeous and the food was delicious. **Would love to host something here**. The spa was such a relaxing experience – **we were very lucky**."*

– Jennifer Miller, IN

*"It was absolutely very **well organized**. It was the right thing to do to let the industry know that **Asheville has made a full comeback** after the natural disasters it went through. **The community came together in a very impressive way!**" – Othmar Witteveen, CA*

***(EA) Planned every detail wonderfully** and really gave us a great insight into Asheville and everything it has to offer for groups. **The vibe was amazing**, and the people were so kind." – Ashley Engebretson, TX*



Q2 GROUP & EVENT DEVELOPMENT

Benefitted businesses in our community

97

GROUPS/EVENTS
OCCURRED
IN OUR COMMUNITY

100

GROUPS/EVENTS
BOOKED
FOR FUTURE VISITS

278

LEADS GENERATED
FOR POTENTIAL
GROUPS/EVENTS;
110,649 ROOMNIGHTS



\$11M direct spending
12,088 contracted rooms



\$6M in direct spending
32,723 contracted rooms

34% increase in number of groups/events booked
Over Q2 FY 25



40% increase in roomnights
over Q2 FY25



PARTNERSHIP & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT Q2 INITIATIVES

Tiffany Thacker
Partnership & Destination Management

**EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE**
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Outreach, Relationship-Building, & Career Days

- Participated in five career days across three high schools and two middle schools, engaging with more than 1,000 students.
- Created a custom "Build-A-Job" activity to highlight hospitality career pathways.
- Expanded relationships with teachers, counselors, and students countywide.



Applications Now Open

Explore Asheville Travel & Hospitality Internship
Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship

Applications Due March 18

CONCIERGE WORKING GROUP QUARTERLY MEETING

Engaging Front-Line Teams Across the County

The November Concierge Working Group meeting took place at Hotel Arras and featured a showcase of tours & attractions, as well as updates from Explore Asheville, including:

- **Marketing Update** by Dir. of Marketing Sarajane Case emphasizing importance of sharing news with Explore Asheville marketing team
- **Partnership Update** provided an overview of events and conferences coming to town and how partners can plug-in
- **Visitor Market Update and Look Ahead** by Vic Isley

A Tours & Attractions Mini Fair allowed lodging and frontline staff an opportunity to learn connect with and learn about a range of tourism attractions available, including:

- LaZoom
- Adventure Center of Asheville
- Asheville Art Museum
- Asheville Food Tours
- Museum of Costume Jewelry
- Moogseum



FRENCH BROAD RIVER PARTNER COORDINATION

Stewarding Recovery Through Information, Alignment, and Trust

What this is:

A year-long coordination effort convened by Explore Asheville to support river-based businesses following Helene.

What we've done:

- Convened four targeted working sessions with outdoor outfitters and river-based operators
- Connected partners directly with US Army Corps of Engineers, City & County government, and environmental organizations
- Created space for outfitters to share reopening plans, constraints, and timelines with each other and with Explore Asheville
- Provided real-time updates on debris removal, access points, and restoration timelines

Why it matters:

- Helps businesses plan responsibly and align expectations across the sector
- Improves Explore Asheville's communications planning with real-world partner input
- Builds trust through two-way communication and shared problem-solving
- Supports safe, sustainable use of shared community assets

What's next:

- Shift from response to confidence-building and coordinated communications
- Support long-term stewardship and public understanding of river use and safety



2026 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND INVESTMENTS

Invested \$12.4 Million in 8 community projects

Organization	Project	Award
Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association	John B Lewis (JBL) Soccer Complex Restoration	\$2,155,000
Enka Youth Sports Organization	Bob Lewis Ballpark Visitor Amenity Enhancements	\$500,000
Asheville Museum of Science	AMOS Museum Master Plan – Infrastructure Expansion	\$189,500
Beacon Foundation	Beacon Park	\$4,500,000
Buncombe County Government	Enka Recreation Destination Phase II	\$1,975,920
Enka Youth Sports Organization	Bob Lewis Ballpark - Visitor Amenities	\$220,000
UNC Asheville Foundation	UNC Asheville on Campus Tennis Complex	\$500,000
Warren Wilson College	Warren Wilson College Aquatic Center	\$1,606,000
White Horse Stepstone	White Horse Community Patio	\$736,537
		\$12,382,957



2026 FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS INVESTMENTS

Invested \$92,000 in 26 local festivals & cultural events

\$92K

Grant Awards

26

Cultural Events
& Festivals

2026 Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund Awards

- ASAP Farm Tour
- Surreal Sirkus Arts Festival
- Asheville Legacy Neighborhood History & Culture Festival
- Holi 2026
- Maker Faire Asheville
- Asheville Mardi Gras Parade and Queen's Ball
- Black Mountain Blues Festival
- {Re}HAPPENING 14
- GRINDfest
- Lake Julian Festival of Lights
- Shindig on the Green®
- Mountain Dance and Folk Festival®
- The City of Asheville Celebrates Juneteenth and Community Healing
- Spring Fling!
- LEAF May 2026 "Rooted" Retreat
- North Carolina Cider Fest Asheville
- RADFest 2026
- Sketch Crawl and Sketch Club in the RAD
- RISE: A Fly-Fishing Festival
- Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands
- Swannanoa Winterfest
- Groovin' on Grovemont
- Black Storytelling on The Block
- A Dicken's Christmas
- Weaverville's Music on Main
- Goombay Festival 2026

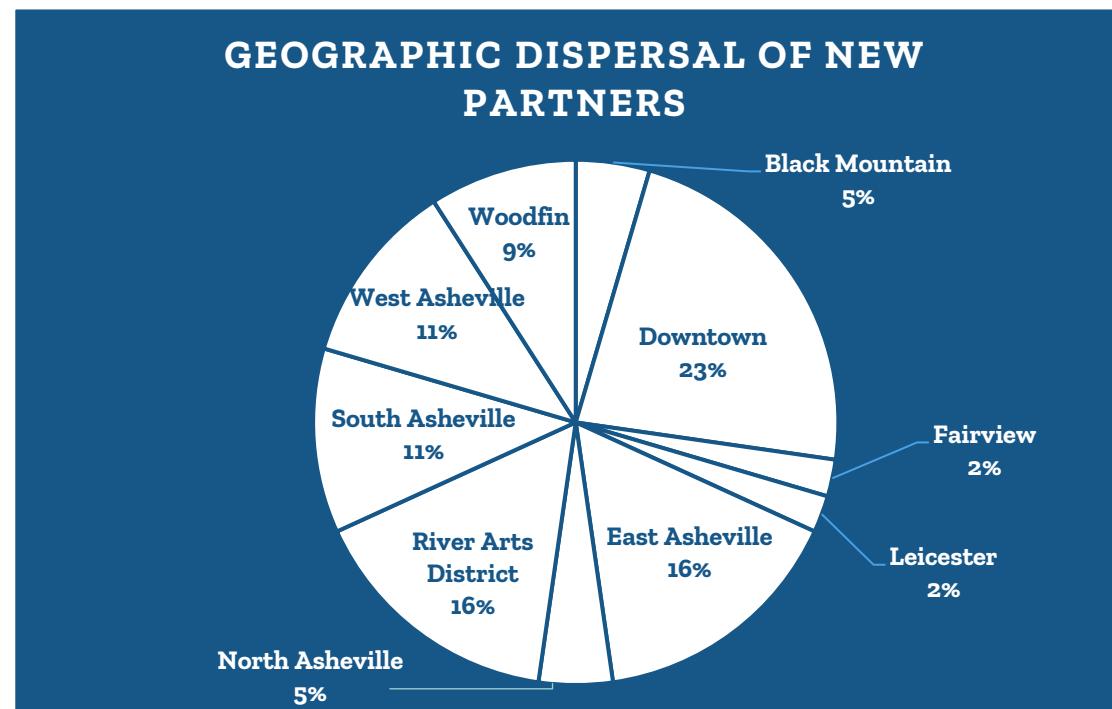
NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Onboarded 46 local businesses as Explore Asheville partners in Q2

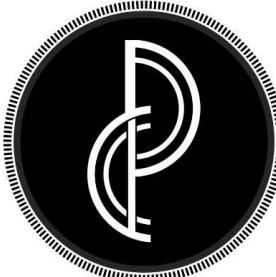
- Explore Asheville onboarded 46 local businesses as new partners in Q2

TYPES OF NEW BUSINESSES:

- Restaurants, Bars, Coffee Shops
- Attractions & Tours
- Music Venues
- Meeting & Wedding Venues
- Meeting & Wedding Vendors
- Recreation & Sports
- Arts & Culture/ Galleries & Studios
- Transportation Services
- Retail
- Lodging



ACE & EAGLE



o.henry's / THE UNDERGROUND
at o.henry's



Finch Grocery
gifts • foods • wines



Revival



CULTURE & BUSINESS AFFAIRS Q2 INITIATIVES

Jennifer Kass-Green

Vice President of Culture & Business Affairs

**EXPLORE
ASHEVILLE**

POWERED BY
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

New Team Member



Rachel Young
Creative Services Coordinator

GIVING TUESDAY

Annual Service Project

- GivingTuesday is “a global generosity movement” that encourages people to give back to their communities
- 2025 GivingTuesday service project: Blooms of Kindness (formerly Random Acts of Flowers – Asheville)
 - BOK aims to enhance the emotional health and well-being of healthcare patients through floral bouquets, which have been shown to improve patient outcomes
 - They collect donated flowers from weddings and event venues, including flowers used for Explore Asheville's partner events
- Explore Asheville donated flowers which were then arranged by team members into over 20 bouquets
- Bouquets were delivered to local healthcare facility Emerald Ridge for placement in patient rooms

