

# QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

**JULY 2023 – SEPTEMBER 2023**

EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY

Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority



# MARKETING, CONTENT, & PR

## Q1 INITIATIVES

Dodie Stephens  
Vice President of Marketing

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# BLACK MOUNTAIN FEATURE

Filmed new video and updated landing page

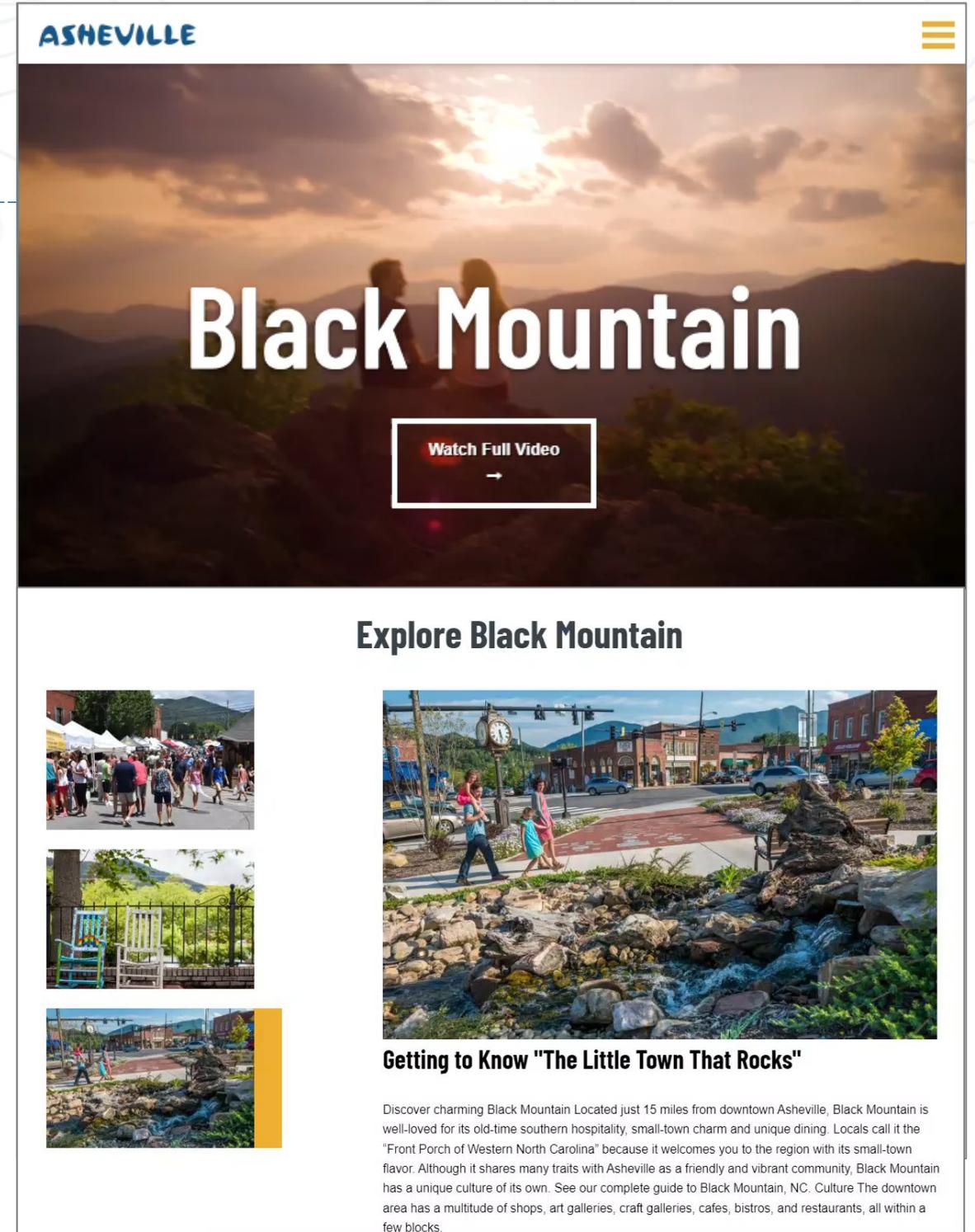
Spotlighted Black Mountain as part of our neighborhood and nearby town content initiative, which aims to disperse visitors and spending throughout the county

## Background:

- First refresh for [Black Mountain landing page](#) since 2019
- Local talent Fiasco Pictures produced quality video and photos assets
- Interest in Black Mountain is high; in 2022, Black Mountain content generated nearly 210k page views on ExploreAsheville.com
  - Our "[Top 10 Things to Do in Black Mountain, NC](#)" blog post was our second most viewed blog post in 2022 with 85k page views
  - Our "[Experience Black Mountain, NC](#)" video on YouTube was our most watched video in 2022 with 102k views

## Next steps:

- Promoting Black Mountain on social / newsletter / web
- Recruiting additional partners in Black Mountain area
- Monitoring engagement through the campaign

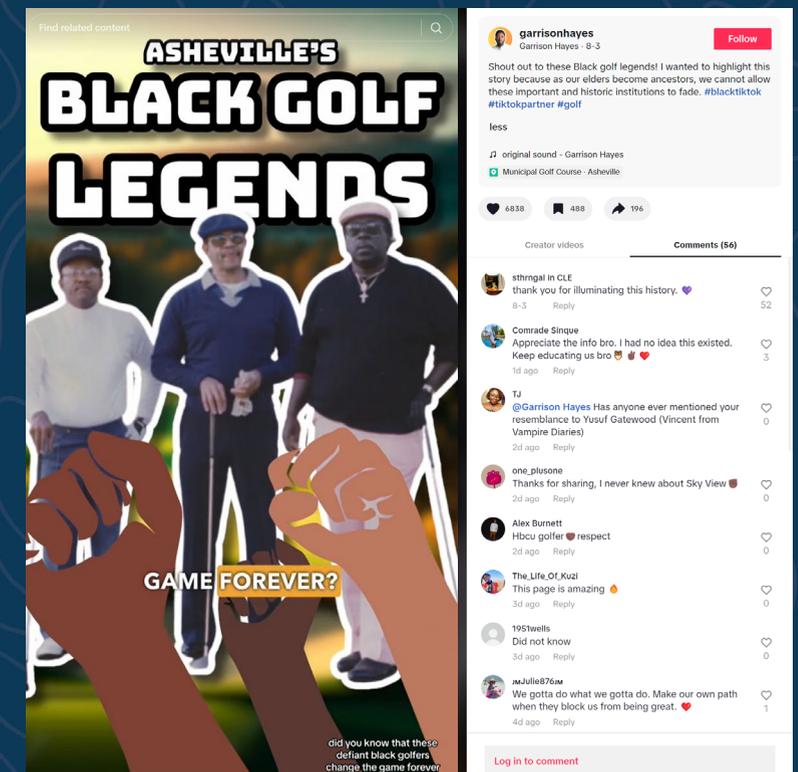


Above: [ExploreAsheville.com/BlackMountain](#)

# SKYVIEW GOLF TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIP

Honored the legacy and garnered engagement from a new generation

- Invested significant resources to promote Skyview, the nation's oldest Black golf tournament
- Integrated marketing and PR campaign resulted in national media placements, including **Golf Digest** and **Black Wall Street Times**
- Leveraged sponsor benefit securing talent from MTV's Love & Hip Hop Atlanta (a major feeder market) to play on Explore Asheville's foursome team
  - Talent pre-promoted Skyview for a total estimated reach of 57M through 32 posts with combined average engagement of 307K
- Engaged BIPOC content creators **Kimberly Barnes** and **Garrison Hayes** to create social media video posts for deeper storytelling on Black history to their 502K combined followers
- Advertised through African American Golfer's Digest, TravelDesk and Black-owned media
- Provided event support and sponsorship, including staffing and welcome bags
- **RESULTS:** All integrated efforts, including PR and social, support a collective reach of **73 Million**



Above: Love & Hip Hop Atlanta stars with Matthew Bacoate (top); TikTok post by influencer Garrison Hayes @garrison (bottom)

# CULTURAL & PERFORMING ARTS RECOVERY MARKETING

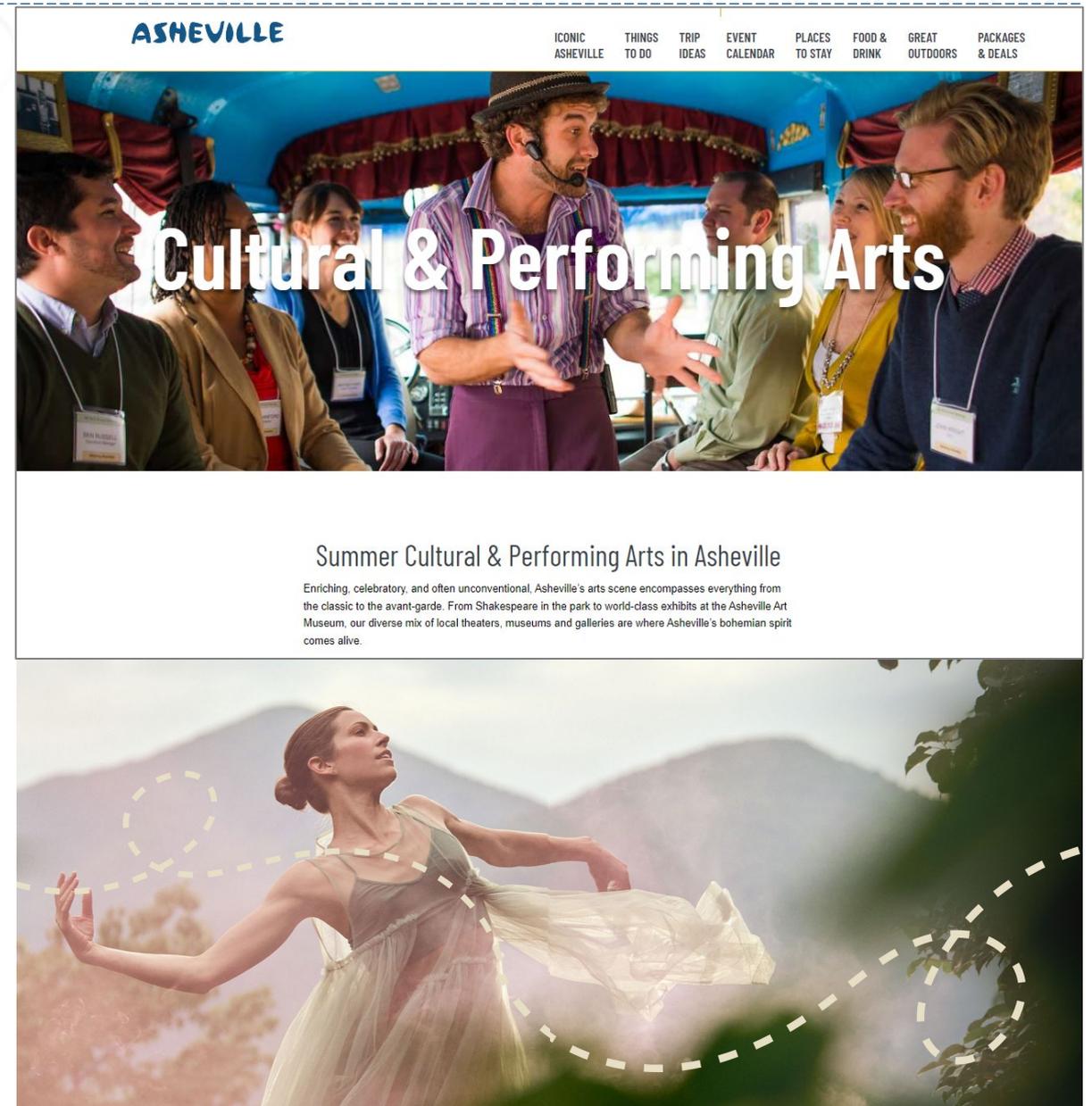
Piloted program to spotlight arts organizations and experiences

Surveyed partners to determine alignment of needs; top priority was marketing assistance for audience development

- Encouraged partners to update event information and image assets
- Created new Summer Cultural & Performing Arts landing page on ExploreAsheville.com
- Social media carousel ads
- Organic social posts & editorial content
- Email newsletters and outreach
- Paid media targeted behavioral and interest characteristics across 20 feeder markets

## Landing Page Metrics (June 1 – Oct 23)

- Sessions: 25,477
- Engaged Session: 14,525
- Users: 18,818
- Engagement Rate: 57.01%



Above: [ExploreAsheville.com/Summer-Cultural-Performing-Arts](https://ExploreAsheville.com/Summer-Cultural-Performing-Arts)

# CHAMPIONS OF CONSERVATION

Partnered with Garden & Gun on event to honor leaders and innovators in sustainability



Above: 2023 Champions of Conservation panel discussion at Hickory Nut Gap Farm

- Co-hosted G&G's Champions of Conservation at Hickory Nut Gap Farm in Fairview, NC
- Invited guests to the Blue Ridge Mountains for a reception featuring fresh seasonal libations and thought-provoking panel discussion led by G&G editor in chief David DiBenedetto
- Positioned as a destination that values conservation; Asheville's JJ Apodaca and Chris Smith recognized nationally
- 2023 Champions of Conservation Panelists
  - Dr. Mike Chamberlin | professor of wildlife ecology and management, University of Georgia
  - Dr. Jennie Stephens | chief executive officer, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation
  - Dr. Jacqueline Echols | president, South River Watershed Alliance
  - Mitzi Reed | invasive species coordinator, Native American Fish & Wildlife Society
  - JJ Apodaca | director, Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy
  - Julie Moore | program leader, Venus Flytrap Champion
  - Chris Smith | founder, Utopian Seed Project

## Partnership results in 244M impressions via:

- In-Magazine section in October/November 2023
- Social Media on @gardenandgun
- G & G Newsletter distribution
- Custom Event + Promotion
- National Press Outreach

# AMPED UP TV ADVERTISING

Focused on welcoming & why go now messaging in new content

New :60, :30 and :15 second spots produced with local talent

- Featured original music by Steep Canyon Rangers with voiceover by Graham Sharp (a member of Steep Canyon Rangers)
- Included outdoor, culinary, wellness, attractions and performing arts sectors
- Updated the :15s version to include "now is the time" messaging to drive immediate booking
- Target markets: Raleigh, Atlanta, Nashville, Cincinnati, Washington D.C. and Tampa
- TV spots resulted in **approximately 62 million impressions**



Above: Behind-the-scenes footage from commercial filming

# NOTEWORTHY NEWS CLIPS

Pitched stories that shine a spotlight on Asheville

# 71M

Earned Media Reach

## hospitality design

Asheville Emerges as a New City To Watch



## USA TODAY

DESTINATIONS

Family Tr

### 9 family vacation ideas for families with neurodivergent kids

#### 8. Small cities and towns

Big cities are fun for some families, but neurodivergent kids may find them overwhelming. Instead, check out small towns with plenty to offer without much hustle and bustle. I recommend Asheville, North Carolina, for a smaller-scale city with a slower pace that still offers various activities. Hiking along the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#), visiting a [pinball museum](#), going on an [Asheville Wellness Tour](#) with a guide trained in working with neurodiverse people, and touring the [Citizen Vinyl](#) record factory are all good options.



## The New York Times

### 5 Hotels Where Fall Takes Center Stage

Setting is everything when it comes to autumn getaways, and these hotels will put you in the right place at the right time.

# 16

Significant CVB placements

# 61

CVB Placements

# \$131K

Publicity Value

## Forbes



The 8 Best Hotels In Asheville, North Carolina



## TRAVEL+LEISURE

### You Can Explore One of the Best Food Cities in the U.S. Like a Local at This New Boutique Hotel

Blind Tiger Asheville, Lark Hotels' newest outpost, just opened in June with 14 rooms in the city's Chestnut Hill neighborhood.

By Dobrina Zhekova | Published on August 29, 2023



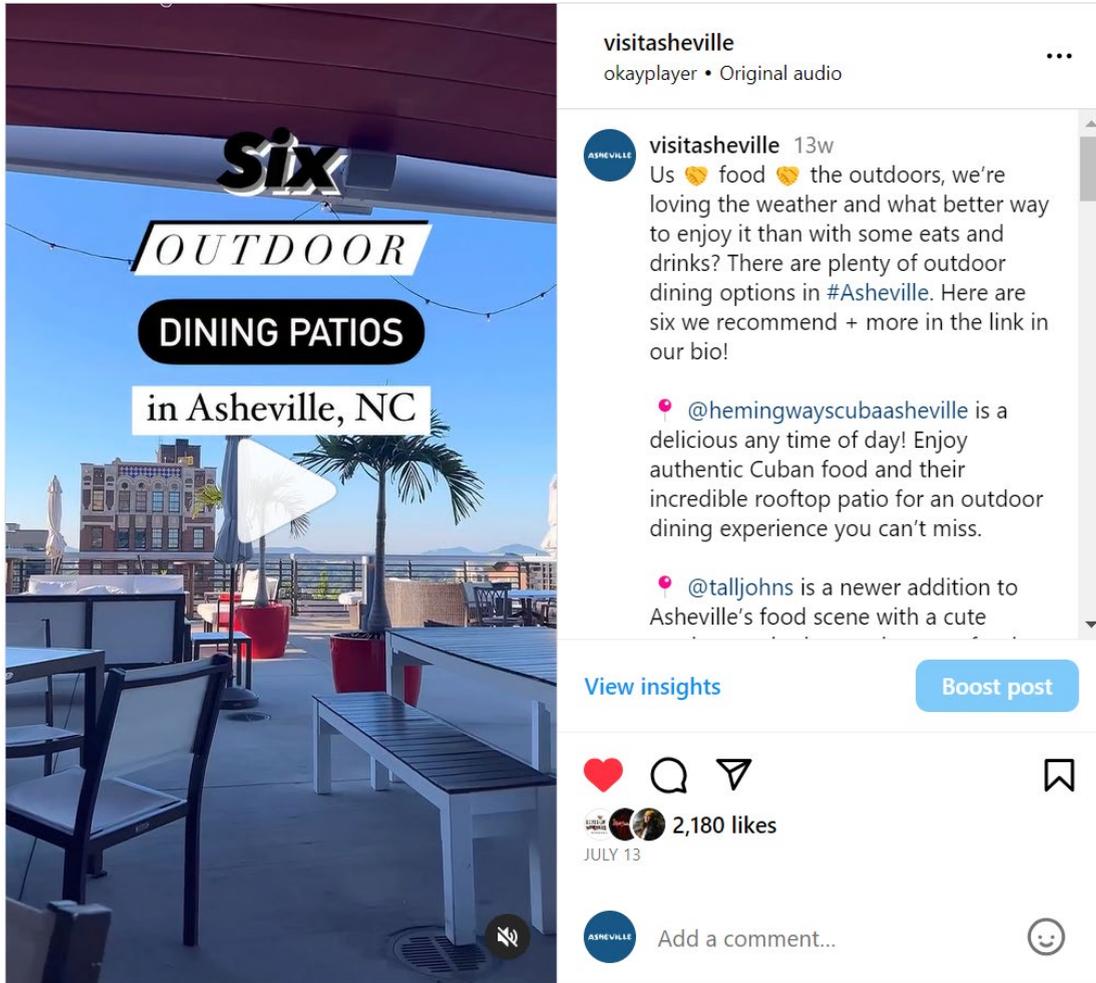
# 35

Hosted Media

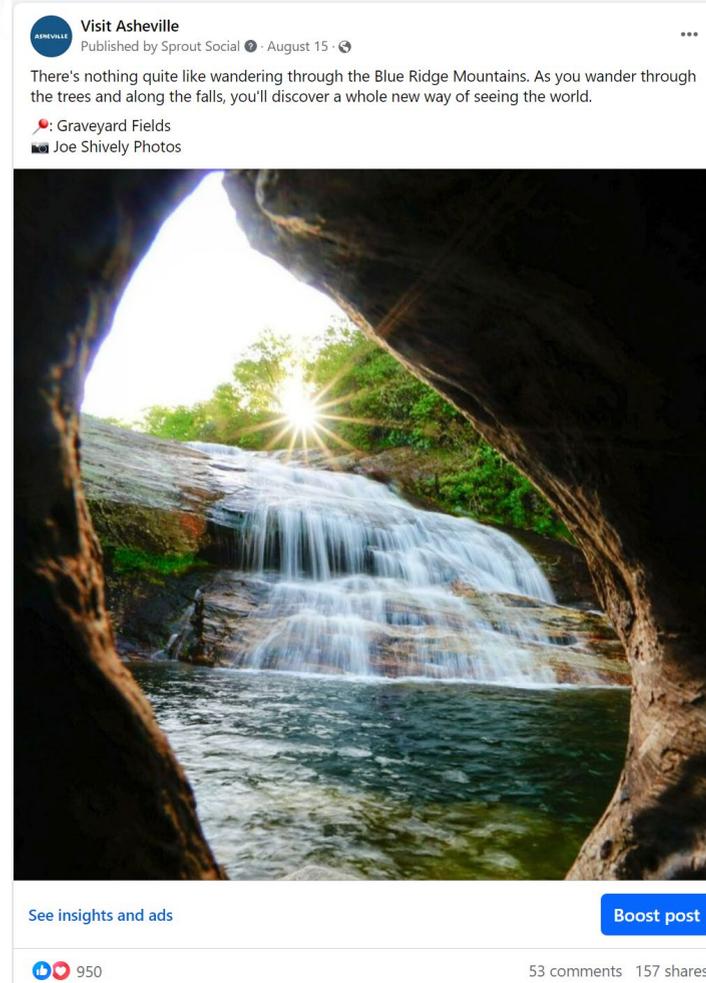


# TOP PERFORMING POSTS

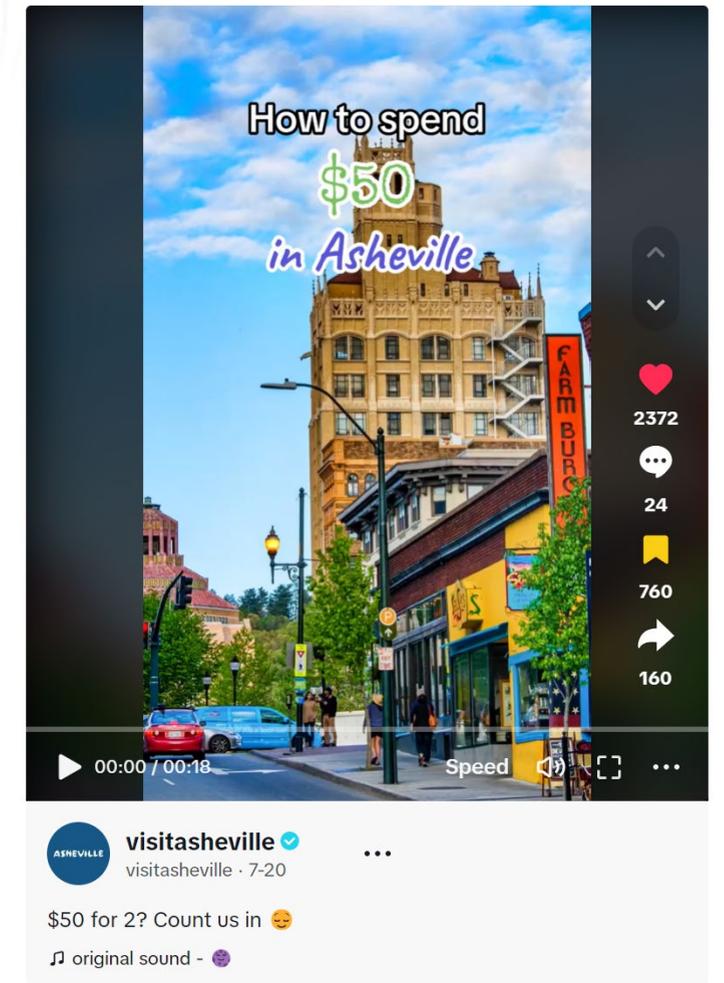
Most engaging content and format varies by channel



**INSTAGRAM: FOOD & VIEWS**  
6 outdoor dining patios in Asheville (Reel)  
 4,381 Engagements



**FACEBOOK: NATURE & BEAUTY**  
Graveyard Fields (Photo)  
 1,864 Engagements



**TIKTOK: VALUE**  
A Day in Asheville for \$50 (Reel)  
 2,920 Engagements

Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares





# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Q1 INITIATIVES

Michael Kryzanek  
Vice President Business Development

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# TRADE SHOW EXHIBITING

Recruited group and event business to our community

- Represented Asheville and Buncombe County at 11 trade shows and conferences from July – September
- Made efforts to present Asheville's creative community and resources; gave lodging partners opportunities to participate in prospecting efforts

## American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting & Expo

- ASAE was the largest trade show attended in Q1
- Total attendance of 5,000 with over 2,800 buyers/association meeting planners
- Secured five solid leads and more are expected to materialize in coming months from the 340 connections made at the booth
- Five industry partners participated, including the Renaissance, The Foundry Hotel, The Restoration Hotel, Doubletree and Embassy Suites, and Biltmore Farms Hotels
- Served mocktails with Devils Foot sodas in Asheville-branded Pirani souvenir cups; gave away ENO bags

## FEATURED LOCAL/SUSTAINABLE BRANDS AT ASAE BOOTH



Above: Explore Asheville staff and partners at ASAE booth

# 48-HOUR FAMILIARIZATION TOUR

Hosted meeting professionals in a “test drive” of Asheville

- “Fams” are one of our highest ROI initiatives - Historically, 75%+ of attendees book one or multiple events in Asheville
- In August, hosted 20 qualified meeting planners from North America
- Showcased potential venues and attendee experiences:
  - **TUESDAY** - Welcome reception at The Restoration, downtown historical walking tour, and dinner at Curate
  - **WEDNESDAY** - Sunrise hike at Craggy, tours of area hotel properties, introduction to and activities in the River Arts District, cocktail preparation class at The Foundry Hotel, and evening downtown dine-around
  - **THURSDAY** - Tour, spa experience or golf at the Omni Grove Park inn, lunch and afternoon tour/activities at Biltmore Estate, and closing dinner at Haiku
- Upcoming fams in November and March



Above: August 48-Hour FAM closing dinner at Haiku

# EXPEDITION ASHEVILLE

Supported air route development efforts with the airport authority

- Hosted 10 airline representatives and guests from American, Allegiant, Breeze and Southwest in July
- Provided destination exposure and data analysis to make the case for additional air service and new routes



## AIRLINES THAT ATTENDED EXPEDITION ASHEVILLE



# ASHEVILLE BUSINESS EVENTS COUNCIL (ABEC)

Engaging local stakeholders for networking and lead generation

- Leveraging business travel and events as the front porch of traditional economic development
- Partnering with Economic Development Coalition and local stakeholders, we are identifying conferences and events in targeted business sectors to bring to Asheville to help diversify our economy

**ADVANCED  
MANUFACTURING**

**LIFE SCIENCES**

**CLIMATE  
TECHNOLOGY**

**OUTDOOR  
PRODUCTS &  
INDUSTRIES**

**TECHNOLOGY**

- Hosting meetings, conferences, and events associated with these business sectors can strengthen industry-specific supplier/customer relationships for local businesses, attract EDC prospects, and provide exposure for Asheville and Buncombe County to business decision makers
- ABEC members, representing target sectors, are asked to provide access and/or referrals to organizations, associations, and boards with business potential for Asheville in exchange for access to data/statistics and networking/promotional opportunities

# CUSTOM DIGITAL PROPOSALS

Creating market-specific proposals for key vertical markets

## Applications

- Sales Presentations
- Custom Bid/Proposal Presentations

## Benefits

- Consistent and positive brand experience
- Effective and quick presentation creation
- Efficient prospecting and accelerated sales efforts
- Real-time analytics and email notifications

## And More

- Digideck Live
- Custom business sector and market segment presentations



Above: Sample DIGIDECK proposal

# ONLINE GIFT BAG GUIDE

Showcasing local products for purchase

- Developed guide for meeting and event planners to access Buncombe County businesses and their unique goods
- 24 businesses are currently providing items for meeting or wedding attendees; the goal is to curate more local products
- Gift categories include Local Wares, Artisan Food & Beverage, Outdoors & Wellness
- Included option for gift bag assembly and delivery services



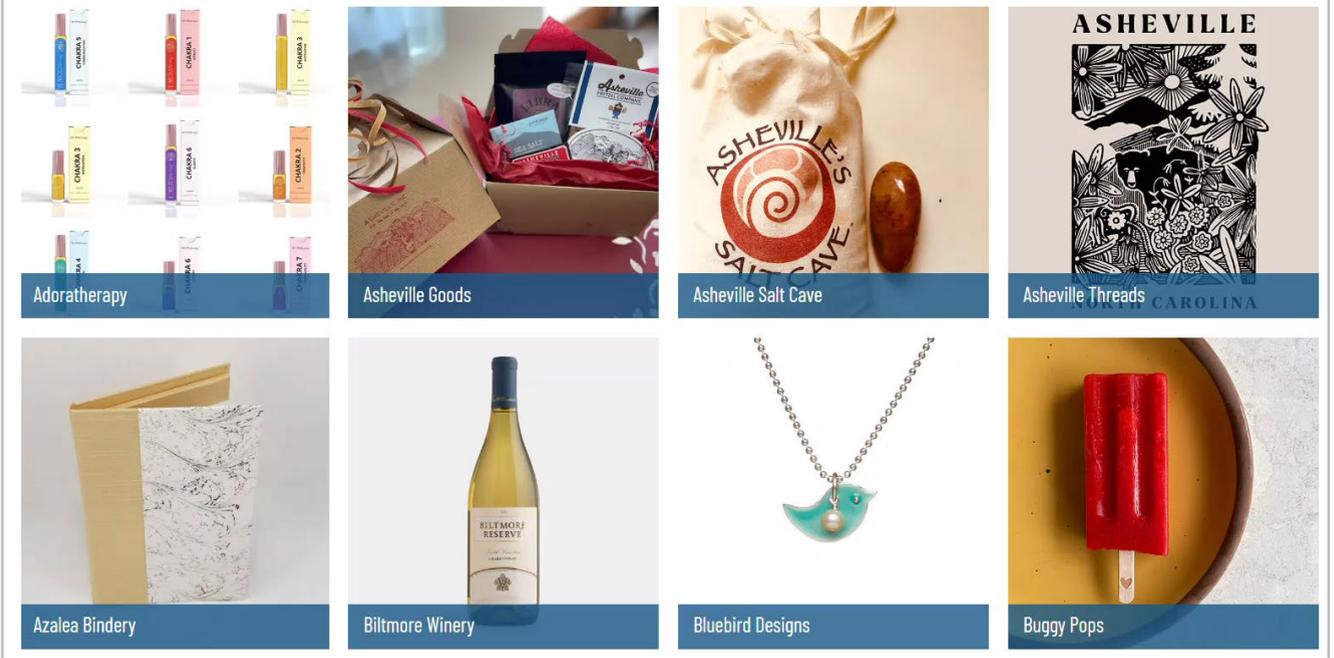
EVENTS by KIERSA

## Asheville's Welcome Bag Gift Guide

Looking for the perfect meeting attendee gift idea? We've got your shopping covered!

Purchase unique gifts from Asheville's Welcome Bag Gift Guide. Featuring products from local businesses, our Gift Guide allows you to shop one-of-a-kind gifts from some of Asheville's top creatives, makers and businesses. From wellness to specialty food and beverages, Asheville's online gift guide features treasures from across Western North Carolina.

Need help putting your Welcome Bags together? Check out [these local vendors who offer full service bag assembly.](#)



Above: [ExploreAsheville.com/meeting-planners/meeting-planner-gift-guide](https://ExploreAsheville.com/meeting-planners/meeting-planner-gift-guide)

# Q1 GROUP & EVENT DEVELOPMENT

Benefitted businesses in our community

**116**  
GROUPS/EVENTS  
OCCURRED  
IN OUR COMMUNITY



**\$13.4M in direct spending**  
16,848 room nights

**107**  
GROUPS/EVENTS  
BOOKED  
FOR FUTURE VISITS



**\$11.5M in direct spending**  
20,441 room nights

**272**  
LEADS GENERATED  
FOR POTENTIAL  
GROUPS/EVENTS



**8.4% increase over Q1 FY23**  
75,323 room nights



# PARTNERSHIP & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT Q1 INITIATIVES

Penelope Whitman

Vice President of Partnership & Destination Management

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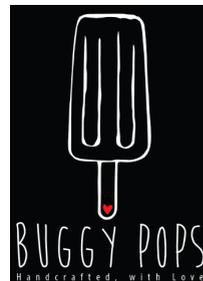
# SUMMER SOCIAL

Connected partners to partners at the Summer Social

- Convened 270+ community partners for an evening of networking and engagement at The Restoration Hotel
- Gathered more than \$400 worth of art supplies for Buncombe County elementary and middle schools through the generous donations made by hospitality partners

## FEATURED PARTNERS

- Partners enjoyed activations, live music, local food and drinks, and an afterparty in The Draftsman Bar + Lounge.
- Talented event vendors included: Brian Konutko Photography, WilderKin Beekeeping, Buggy Pops, and DJ Captain EZ



Above: Photos of partners and staff at Summer Social event

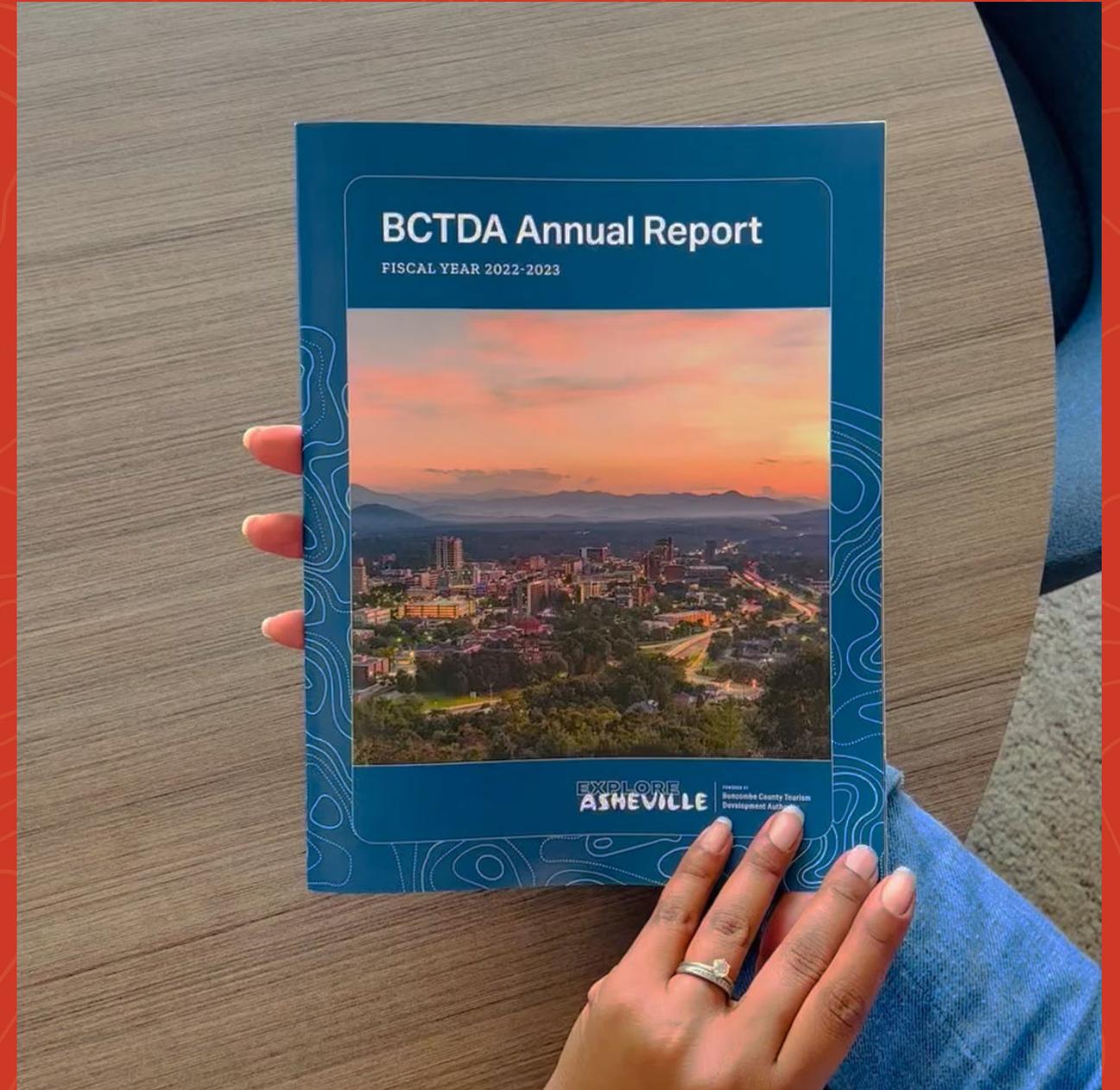
# FY23 ANNUAL REPORT

Captured our Destination and Organization's Collective Achievements Last Fiscal Year

The **FY23 Annual Report** comprehensively reflects the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority and Explore Asheville's performance and achievements over the past year.

Highlights Include:

- A record \$2.88 Billion in Visitor Spending
- 20 years of investing in community capital projects through TPDF
- A 40-year timeline depicting the BCTDA's legacy and impact
- Destination achievements organized by strategic imperative
- Media accolades collected throughout the year
- 115 new partners joining our expansive partner network
- More than 1,000 attendees at our partner events



Above: Preview of the FY23 BCTDA Annual Report

# ANNUAL MEETING

Celebrated 40 years of investing in and building community

Nearly 275 local leaders, travel and hospitality partners, and community members attended the 2023 BCTDA Annual Meeting at the Wortham Center for Performing Arts on September 19

- The Annual Meeting celebrated the 40 year-long commitment to community investment, highlighting economic growth and the important role of travel & hospitality in our community's past and future.
- Richard Florida provided a thoughtful keynote on the future of city centers, cultivating community relationships, and understanding the vital roles of city centers as places of connection for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Matthew Bacoate Jr. was honored as this year's recipient of the William A.V. Cecil Leadership Award. A commemorative video directed by Paul Bonesteel shared historical and new footage of Bacoate's long legacy of building community in Asheville.

## FEATURED PARTNERS

Partner activations immersed attendees in the creative spirit of Asheville including:

DJ Lil Meow Meow, Bad Drawings, J. Chong Eats, French Broad Chocolate, Ninja Spirits, Giddy Chick Catering, Blunt Pretzels, Camilla Calnan Photography, Dare Vegan Cheese, and Legally Addictive Foods.



Above: *Photos of 2023 BCTDA Annual Meeting program and networking reception*

# MCCORMICK FIELD | TPDF INVESTMENT

Single Largest Investment in TPDF History

This investment will modernize the stadium into a multi-use public facility with the necessary infrastructure to operate year-round events. The project also includes the necessary capital improvements for McCormick Field to meet new Minor League Baseball facility standards passed in 2019. Construction is expected to begin Sept. 2024 and be completed by March 2026.

- Single largest investment in the 20-year history of the Tourism Product Development Fund - \$22.95 Million
- First debt service project investment for the Tourism Development Authority
- Including McCormick Field investment, the TDA has invested over \$80 million in tourism-related capital projects through TPDF



Asheville Tourists hosted the first annual **Travel & Hospitality Nights** - August 29 & August 31 (postponed from August 30)



Above: McCormick Field (top); ceremonial recognition of investment with Mayor Manheimer and TPDF Committee Chair Jim Muth (bottom)

# LIFT FUND COMMITTEE

Inaugural LIFT Fund Committee Established



**Laura Webb**

Founder & President  
*Webb Investment Services*



**Dr. Joseph Fox**

Founder & Owner  
*Fox Management Consulting Enterprises*



**Barbara Benisch**

Non-Profit Management & Community Development Consultant



**Mike McCarty**

Restaurant Owner  
*The Lobster Trap*



**HP Patel**

BCA Hotels  
*TDA Ex-Officio Liaison, Treasurer of the nonprofit*



**Himanshu Karvir**

President & CEO  
*Virtelle Hospitality*  
Lodging Appointment



**Kyle Highberg**

Sr. Director of Operations  
*Biltmore Farms*  
Lodging Appointment



**Amy Kelly**

Managing Principal  
*Hatteras Sky*  
Lodging Appointment



**Kathleen Mosher**

VP of Communications  
*Biltmore*  
Lodging Appointment



**Shelton Steele**

Co-Owner  
*Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins*  
Lodging Appointment

# LGBTQIA+ WORKING GROUP

First Official Meeting & Pride Festival 2023

## First Official Meeting : August 22, 11 participants + staff

At the Everyone Welcome training for staff last spring, we also convened a roundtable for the LGBTQIA+ community. At that time, it was agreed that a working group would be a good way to convene and discuss areas of need and ways to collaborate. Explore Asheville is leading this initiative to bring everyone together.

- The agenda included: meeting staff, creating a quarterly meeting schedule, and brainstorming ways to engage with the Pride festival, and a discussion about creating a "You are welcome" window cling for businesses.
- In November, the working group will meet to address goals and steps for the coming year.

## Pride Festival 2023

Explore Asheville's sponsor booth offered the window cling (printed by Lightning Bolt Ink), a trivia game on queer Asheville history with prizes, visitor guides, and educational info.



Above: You are Welcome Here window clings (top); Explore Asheville's sponsored booth at Blue Ridge Pride festival (bottom)

# EVENT GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS

Support for local festival & cultural events through grants and sponsorships

## Explore Asheville/BCTDA supported the following events in FY24 Q1:

- Shindig on the Green
- Mountain Dance & Folk Festival
- Asheville Open Tennis Championship
- Skyview Golf Tournament
- Southern Highland Craft Guild July Fair
- AVL Fest
- Sourwood Festival
- Come To Leicester Artists Studio Tour
- 2023-24 ArtsAVL Event Series
- 4th Annual Asheville FM Record Fair
- East End/Valley Street Community Heritage Festival
- Symphony in the Park
- Asheville Art Museum's Community Day: The Art of Food
- Chow Chow Festival
- ASAP Farm Tour
- Asheville Quilt Show
- 2023 Eliada Home's Fall Festival & Corn Maze
- Blue Ridge Pride Festival
- Sow & Grow Fest

**\$72k**

**Grants &  
Sponsorships**



**19**  
**Events**

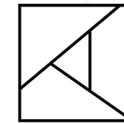
# NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Onboarded 27 local businesses as partners

- Explore Asheville has partnered with 27 new local business between July and October, ranging from Bed and Breakfasts to walking tours to private chef experiences.
- 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 businesses:
  - Fairview
  - River Arts District
  - West Asheville
  - Downtown
  - Weaverville
  - South Asheville
- Types of new businesses:
  - Wellness
  - The Arts- Galleries/Studios
  - Food & Drink
  - Retail
  - Venues
  - Lodging
  - Tours & Attractions
  - Wedding Planners
  - Outfitters
  - Private Chef Experiences



**KEVIN ANDREW**  
GALLERY + STUDIO



**Jaime Byrd**  
Contemporary Art



**ARCHETYPE**  
BREWING + KITCHEN

