


The word "ASHEVILLE" is written in a stylized, colorful font. Each letter is composed of overlapping shapes in various colors including blue, red, green, yellow, and grey. The letters are arranged in a slightly irregular, hand-drawn style.

ASHEVILLE

# *Building the Brand*

The Marketing & Communications Plan of the  
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

The background features several overlapping, semi-circular shapes in shades of blue, orange, and green. The shapes are layered, with some appearing in front of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors are vibrant and modern.

2008 - 2009

# Message to the Industry

Brother Doom and Sister Gloom seem to be peeking around every corner in our lives today. One cannot pick up a newspaper, turn on the TV or read a Web site without a reference to rising gas and commodity prices, sliding consumer confidence, oscillating stock market values, record home foreclosures or more corporate layoffs. Consumer confidence continues sinking to historically low levels. The famous pop song chorus, "Sure could use a little good news today," seems to be today's unofficial refrain.



Kelly Miller

So, what is the good news? Let me suggest several marketing truths and a glimmer of hope as we all navigate the turbulent waters ahead.

**The Asheville area brand and the supportive brand architecture that were officially launched in October 2005 rest on a solid foundation.** At its core is a deliverable brand promise; a promise that our visitors' lives will be enriched when they visit the Asheville area. In today's cluttered messaging world, genuine brands like Asheville stand a much better chance of resonating with visitors.

**Our brand message continues to be driven by the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority's (BCTDA) well-funded media campaign and high-powered public relations effort.** Nearly 50 percent of BCTDA's operating budget is invested in innovative ad campaigns that creatively articulate our destination's essence to potential guests residing in targeted drive markets. The CVB public relations team, along with other community PR pros, continues finding success in pitching out-of-the box stories to media outlets searching for the next travel trend. Broadcast, print, Web, PR...it all works together. When our customers think getaway, an enriching Asheville area mountain experience is, hopefully, top of mind.

**Your Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) team's other departments continue to be aggressive in each and every market they target.** A slowing economy provides great opportunity to capture more voice in markets such as meetings and conventions, tourism, AAA, motorcoach and international. We are committed to making sure we deliver compelling reasons and benefits to decision makers on why they should choose the Asheville area over our competitors. Again, the strength of our brand promise will prove helpful in challenging times.

**The spirit of the people who live and work in this region has always been an immeasurable asset when times get tough.** The mountain fortitude and forward-thinking witnessed after September 11, 2001 and the trio of hurricanes in 2004 (Charley, Francis and Ivan) will be necessary if tourism's community stakeholders are to remain competitive. Smarter spending, laser sharp target marketing and regular ROI analysis are absolutely necessary for business survival. And yes, we all are up to the task.

No one can predict the future, but I do believe our brand, the Asheville area, is poised to be as successful as any Southeast destination in unpredictable times. It's often said, Americans' vacations are a birthright. Let's hope that our destination is the place they choose. Have a surprisingly great year and best of luck to you and your team.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Miller, CDME  
Executive Director  
*a proud member of the Asheville CVB team*

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[www.exploreasheville.com](http://www.exploreasheville.com)

[www.ashevillecvb.com](http://www.ashevillecvb.com)

# Industry Snapshot

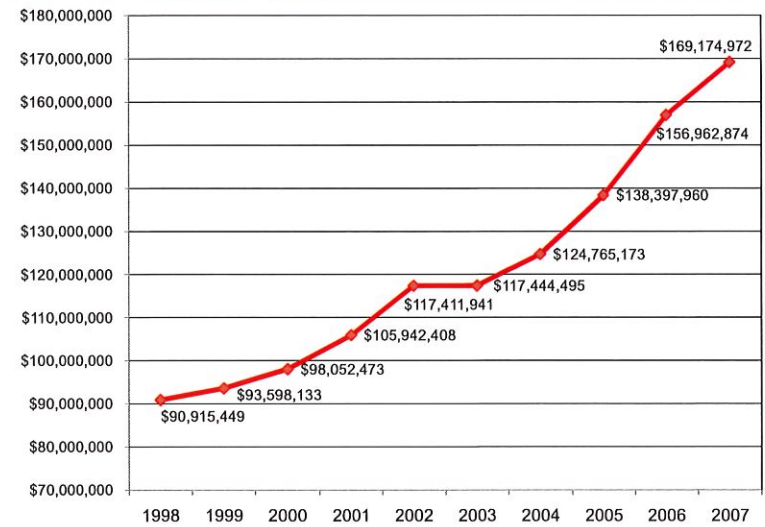
Buncombe County's tourism industry measurement numbers from July 2007-March 2008 posted steady growth in both occupancy and total accommodation sales, but dipped between April 2008 - June 2008, reflecting the slowing economy, drop in consumer confidence and rising gas prices. When reviewing the entire fiscal year, there were some highlights worth mentioning:

- Hotel sales increased 3.8%
- RevPar increased 4.8%
- Average Daily Rate increased 7.5% (2007 calendar year)
- Occupancy increased 0.5% (2007 calendar year)
- Asheville Visitor Center patronage increased 5.1% to nearly 200,000
- Convention bookings are up 16.9%; room nights generated increased 0.5%
- User sessions on ExploreAsheville.com increased 10.8%

**2008 - 2009  
Tourism Marketing  
Business Objective**

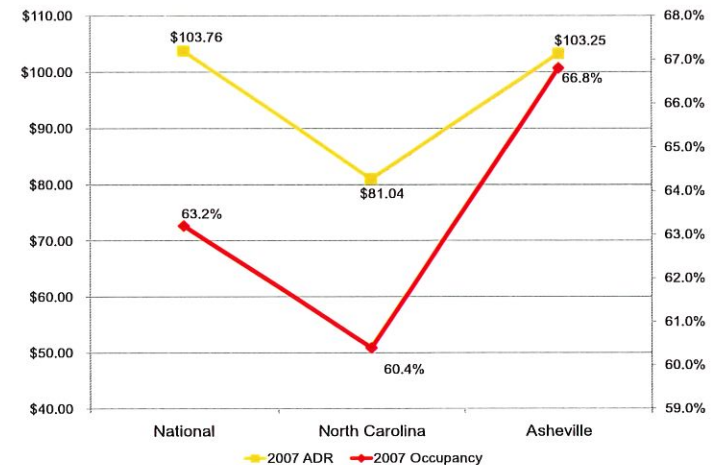
**To increase accommodation sales  
by 3% in fiscal year 2008 - 2009.**

## Buncombe County Hotel Sales



## Occupancy & Average Daily Rate

	2006		2007	
	Occupancy	ADR	Occupancy	ADR
National	63.4%	\$97.69	63.2%	\$103.76
North Carolina	60.1%	\$75.78	60.4%	\$81.04
Asheville	66.5%	\$96.09	66.8%	\$103.25



# The Asheville Area Brand

## Brand Strategy

The Asheville area brand is the representation of the sum total of our reputation and image as a tourism destination. The underlying brand proposition, "Enrich Your Life," speaks to the emotional benefits of an Asheville area getaway versus the physical attributes (mountain scenery, attractions and vacation offerings) that were so prevalent in past advertising efforts and, in many ways, common among many destinations.

By playing on the very personal, often unscripted, but transformational nature of the Asheville area, the destination carves out a category that is distinctive and strengthens its competitive advantage. While the mountains, beautiful scenery and attractions are important, it is the combination of these physical attributes along with interesting people and diverse interests that evolve into a distinctive experience that empowers visitors. It is the resulting emotional connections visitors have with the Asheville area that come to the forefront in advertising, marketing and sales efforts.

Asheville's brand promise serves as a guarantee to each guest who visits the area. Delivering on the promise, while ensuring that the core destination values of welcoming, natural and vibrant are met, is paramount. It is the responsibility of the tourism industry and the community to continue to create the warm, embracing and creative environment that makes this area distinctive and empowers guests to find their own unscripted, memorable experience.

## Brand Culturalization

Brand culturalization - identifying and impacting each visitor touch-point to authentically deliver the brand promise and ensure each visitor is able to live the brand in an emotionally compelling manner - is the most important on-going brand strategy for the BCTDA.

The idea of enrichment permeates the program of work undertaken by the CVB on behalf of the BCTDA. Staying true to the brand governs the details in the program of work undertaken by the CVB and how the area manages its future. For example, the 2006 Tourism Product Development Fund application was redesigned to require applicants to define how their projects best complement the destination brand.

While it is critical that the CVB incorporates the brand, it is equally important that each partner understands and communicates the brand values to ensure an underlying consistency in the visitor experience. To assist in educating hospitality staff, in 2008, the CVB developed a brand training program called *Delivering the Promise* to provide a cost-efficient tool with quick tips and tactics to share techniques for perpetuating on-brand experiences.

Continued efforts to educate area hospitality staff and further culturalize the brand continue into the 2008-2009 fiscal year, along with the pursuit of partnership programs with companies that can advance the Asheville area brand.

**Want to learn more?** To learn how to incorporate elements of the Asheville area brand or find out how to better deliver the promise at your organization, contact Brand Marketing Manager Beth Anne McPheeters by calling 828.257.4960 or e-mailing [bmcpheeters@exploreasheville.com](mailto:bmcpheeters@exploreasheville.com).

## The Asheville Area Brand Promise

*We guarantee you a life enriching experience each and every time you visit Asheville. It's personal, personal to you. And it is personal to us. We live this same genuine experience and want to share it with you. We empower you to discover a collection of experiences that is as unique and varied as each individual who visits and allow you to do so in a warm, embracing and creative environment.*

**ASHEVILLE**  
any way you like it®

# Marketing & Public Relations Department

The CVB's mission through marketing & public relations is to promote the Asheville area as a premier travel destination through a variety of methods. The department oversees the relationship with the BCTDA's advertising agency of record; works with a variety of national media outlets to generate substantial editorial and broadcast coverage; executes viral and social media efforts; conducts ongoing industry-wide research and statistical examination of the tourism industry; maintains ExploreAsheville.com, AshevilleCVB.com and a newly created site, BCTDA.com; and proactively manages and markets the Asheville area brand. Educating the community and serving as the liaison to traditional and non-traditional partners is also of prime importance as part of the ongoing effort to develop the area as a sustainable destination. Staff also assists in fostering new product by overseeing the BCTDA tourism product development funding process.

In response to current economic conditions, the CVB has shifted its geo-target to core markets that are less than a 5 hour drive away. An integrated marketing program focuses on proximity and value messages that can be woven through various campaigns throughout the year. The effort includes an extension of the *Only 3 1/2 Hours Away* campaign that ran in Atlanta last year. Additional tweaked TV ads will target other nearby markets. A print version of the TV campaign will be used in magazines in spring 2009, in combination with a new culinary niche campaign that highlights the region's rich epicurean scene. Integrated online advertising will also be used to support print and TV. During the spring, a new creative concept to advertise the Asheville brand will go into production, with the aim of launching the new creative during late summer 2009.



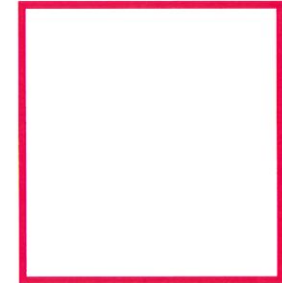
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Marketing / Public Relations Calendar		
Date	Event	Location
Aug. 28, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
September 2008	Fall Media Tour	NC & SC
Oct. 3, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 18-22, 2008	SATW Annual Convention/Marketplace	Houston, TX
Oct. 27-30, 2008	TIA Marketing Outlook Forum	Portland, OR
Dec. 5, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
February 2009	Winter Media Tour	Florida
Feb. 6, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 3, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
May 6-8, 2009	PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference	Kansas City, MO
June 5, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC



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# Advertising

Three strategic marketing initiatives are funded in the 2008 - 2009 media plan in addition to the umbrella brand campaign which will use the existing *Signs* creative. These campaigns will use the existing campaign creative materials that are consistent with the Asheville area brand, but have messages tailored to specific audiences and opportunities. The three strategic opportunities are:

**Umbrella Brand Campaign** – BCTDA will continue using its existing *Signs* creative as a means of driving brand awareness among travelers. Production will begin in Spring 2009 on a new creative concept that focuses on what you “find in Asheville.” The new creative will feature print, TV and interactive which will be launched in the latter part of 2009.

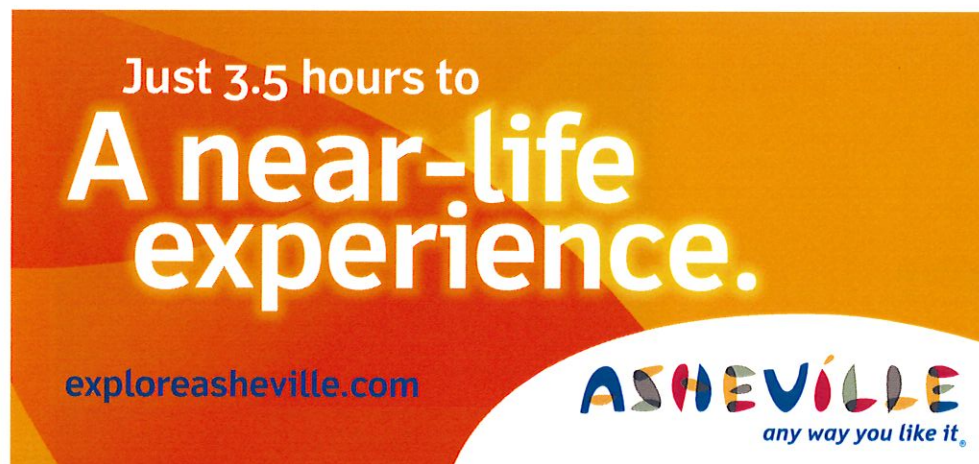
**Drive Campaign** – Research shows that consumers are traveling less due to the increased cost of gas. The objective of this campaign is to educate consumers in Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro and Charleston that Asheville is only a gas tank away. Media to be used includes television and interactive in all markets and metro traffic sponsorships and outdoor in Atlanta.

**Epicurean Campaign** – The goal is to build awareness of the Asheville area's thriving restaurant and culinary scene among travelers for whom good food is a vacation decision variable. Media to be used includes spreads and full-page ad units, a mini-book direct mail piece and advertorial.

In addition, a limited budget will be used to sustain the *Five Day Weekend* effort into 2009. Media to be used has not been determined.

The initiatives outlined above are supported by the \$2.6 million net advertising budget. This budget allows the CVB to continue to expand online efforts, run TV in five markets and to place ads in 14 magazines. Plans include a significant radio and outdoor presence in the key Atlanta market, and maintaining both the print and online 2008 cooperative ad efforts.

To view all print and television ads, please visit [ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com).



Visitor Inquiries		
	2006-2007	2007-2008
July	6,669	4,915
August	5,523	4,939
September	14,075	7,516
October	6,920	6,151
November	4,271	3,305
December	2,776	3,548
January	4,623	13,798*
February	6,452	5,934
March	13,813	8,541
April	10,305	12,535
May	7,742	8,532
June	6,182	7,530
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89,381</b>	<b>87,244</b>

\*20/20 segment aired Jan. 11, 2008, naming Asheville the “happiest place in America.”

Online Visitor Guide Requests		
	2006-2007	2007-2008
July	2,849	3,415
August	3,185	3,083
September	2,223	2,766
October	1,852	1,318
November	1,264	1,390
December	734	1,178
January	2,624	7,684*
February	3,725	3,189
March	3,711	3,724
April	3,812	3,211
May	3,068	3,173
June	2,907	3,729
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,954</b>	<b>37,860</b>

\*20/20 segment aired Jan. 11, 2008, naming Asheville the “happiest place in America.”

## Strategies and Tactics

### Drive awareness of Asheville as a travel destination within key markets:

- Concentrate message delivery against a core audience of women 35-64 with a household income of \$100K+.
- Focus the majority of media exposure during peak decision-making times to affect business during the top three seasons (spring, summer and fall), which in turn commands the most return on investment opportunity due to higher average daily rates.
- Target branding in the Southeast, with special focus on the following key markets:
  - Tier 1: Atlanta, Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh
  - Tier 2: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina
  - Tier 3: Southeast

### Maximize the impact of the strategic initiative campaigns:

- Use high-impact ad units such as full page ads in print and rich media ads online.
- Use creative customized to the campaign topic and to the media environment.
- Develop creative print execution that complements the 2, 3 ½ and 4 hour creative.

### Continue to support *Foodtopian Society* campaign launched in the 2007-2008 fiscal year:

- Use full page and spread print units and direct mail to support the campaign.

### Improve effectiveness of the spot television portion of the campaign:

- Use shorter, more targeted Prime schedules.
- Increase the level of Spot Cable targeted to affluent neighborhoods.
- Focus weight in closer-in drive markets.
- Use 2, 3 ½ and 4 hour creative.
- Coordinate the Asheville CVB TV schedule with the TV schedules of Asheville tourism partners, such as Biltmore.

### Use advertising to increase lead generation and Web site visitation to drive growth of bookings:

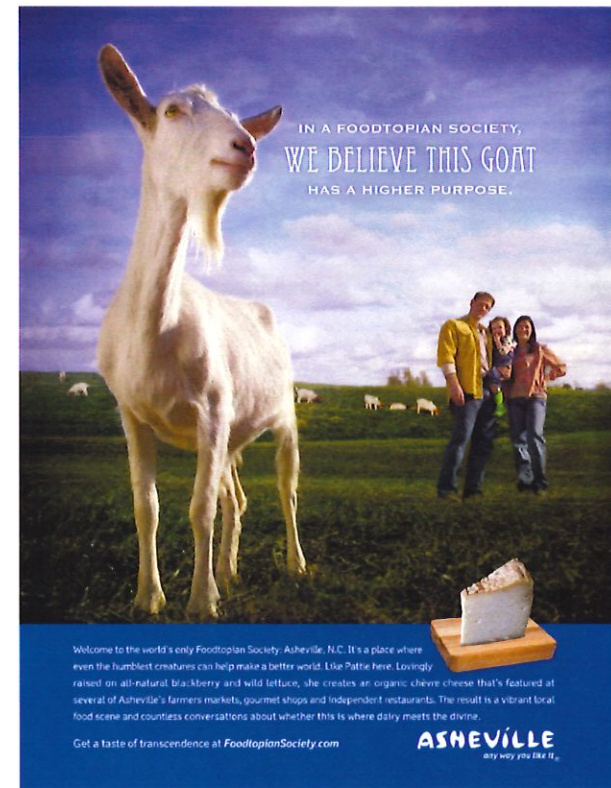
- All creative units to include a dual call-to-action, driving potential visitors to either to ExploreAsheville.com or 877.GO.TO.AVL.
- Use geo-targeted buying for online advertising.
- Evaluate various advertising media and creative units as to their effectiveness in driving Web traffic and/or phone calls.

### Build strategic partnerships that leverage the brand, expand buying power and create media efficiencies:

- Explore viable partnerships with like brands to enhance and augment the Asheville area destination brand while maximizing media efficiencies.
- Use Asheville Cooperative Ad Program to continue offering cooperative advertising opportunities for local partners while expanding media budget and reach.
- Participate in cooperative opportunities offered through industry organizations such as NCDTFSD, AdvantageWest and Blue Ridge Mountain Host.

### Leverage synergies between print, broadcast, online components and media relations to maximize financial efficiency and increase reach:

- Seek added value opportunities for media buys that focus on online initiatives.
- Create integrated campaigns that weave traditional print and broadcast media with online initiatives and media relations efforts to create broader, deeper reach.





# Planned Media Schedule - page 1

	Asheville FY 09 Media Plan																																																		
	JUL			AUG			SEPT			OCT			NOV			DEC			JAN			FEB			MAR			APR			MAY			JUNE																	
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22							
<b>Asheville Umbrella</b>																																																			
<b>Print</b>																																																			
Frommer's Budget Travel (East of Mississippi)										FPIC															FPIC												FPIC														
Cottage Living (East of Mississippi)							FPIC																					FPIC												FPIC											
Coastal Living (East of Mississippi)							FPIC																					FPIC																							
Southern Living (GA, NC, SC)				FPIC						FPIC																					FPIC						FPIC														
NC Signature							FPIC																					FPIC									FPIC														
AAA Go - Carolinas							FPIC																								FPIC																				
AAA Going Places South (FL/GA/TN)							FPIC																					FPIC																							
Travel + Leisure - Southeast													FPIC																																						
Real Simple - Southeast																												FPIC									FPIC														
Oprah Magazine - East																																		FPIC						FPIC											
<b>Television</b>																																																			
Allanta, Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, Charleston				FPIC																											FPIC																				
<b>3 1/2 Hour Campaign</b>																																																			
30 Sheet Posters - Allanta 100 Showing				FPIC																																															
Metro Traffic -750 sponsorships				FPIC																																															
<b>Foodtoplan</b>																																																			
Bon Appetit - Eastern Region				FPIC			Full Page - Facing Adversarial																					FPIC																							
Cooking Light - E.O.M				FPIC						FPIC												FPIC																													
Food & Wine - 3 full pages - GA, TN, NC, SC, FL																												FPIC									FPIC														
Our State Magazine				FPIC						FPIC															FPIC																										
Atlanta Magazine				FPIC						FPIC																					FPIC																				
Foodtoplan Direct Mail																																																			

# Planned Media Schedule - page 2

Asheville FY 09 Media Plan												
	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE
<i>Media</i>	30, 7, 14, 21, 28	4, 11, 18, 25	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	6, 13, 20, 27	3, 10, 17, 24	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	5, 12, 19, 26	2, 9, 16, 23	2, 9, 16, 23, 30	6, 13, 20, 27	4, 11, 18, 25	1, 8, 15, 22
<b>Five Day Weekend</b>												
<b>TBD</b>												
<b>NEWSPAPERS/NEWS INSERTS</b>												
<i>Spg/Sum 08 NC Travel Guide (Granite)</i>									7/20/08 NC Travel Guide & Insert			
<i>Atm 2008 NC Travel Guide (Granite) Includes Brochure &amp; listing</i>		7/21/08 Granite										
<b>GUIDES/DIRECTORIES</b>												
<i>NC Official Travel Guide (Co-Op)</i>												
<i>NC Outdoor Rec Guide 08 (Granite)</i>												
<i>Blue Ridge Pkwy Directory &amp; Travel Ptnr 08</i>												
<i>Blue Ridge Mtn Host Visitor Guide</i>												
<i>i-Wall</i>												
<b>CO-OP</b>												
<i>Blue Ridge Mountain Host Co-op*</i>												
<i>Asheville TDA Co-op/Online Focus TBD</i>												
<i>State of NC Co-op Contingency</i>												
<b>INTERNET</b>												
<i>Online Campaigns</i>												
<i>PPC Paid Search Program</i>												
<b>OTHER</b>												
<i>Meetings &amp; Convention Advertising</i>												
<i>Media Contingency</i>												

# Research

## Strategies and Tactics

Follow an integrated research approach to ensure information-driven decision making on marketing, advertising and sales messages, as well as destination management issues:

- Provide research updates to staff and tourism community through the AshevilleCVB.com Web site.
- Stay abreast of cultural and industry trends.
- Evaluate measurement of all marketing efforts, including social.

Understand the profile and pulse of the traveling consumer and Asheville visitor in order to make effective marketing decisions:

- Use research as part of the creative messaging process to ensure wide appeal to targeted audience.
- Implement consumer product research as needed to determine interest and viability of potential new tourism product opportunities that evolved from the charrette process.
- Use Internet research shareware on an as needed basis to conduct input research utilizing the e-newsletter database.

Conduct economic impact calculations in order to outline the contributions of the tourism industry:

- Utilize Implan economic modeling software to create economic impact reports based on new visitor volume data from D.K. Shifflett & Associates.
- Contract with Smith Travel Research for historical overview of hotel statistics including occupancy, average daily rate (ADR) and competitive standing.
- Maintain relationship with county officials who assist in providing key tax data that is used in various tourism economic impact reports.
- Use Internet research shareware to survey industry partners and community on an as needed basis.

Utilize public and private research resources and partnerships to maximize resources:

- Attend industry events such as TIA Marketing Outlook Forum and the NC Governor's Conference.
- Partner on research projects when opportunities arise.
- Partner with regional organizations to expand knowledge of the Asheville visitor (i.e., shared zip code research from Biltmore and research information through NCDTFSD).

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## The Typical Asheville Visitor

- Early 50s
- Traveling as a couple
- Income of \$100,000 or more
- Attended college
- Stays for three days
- No children at home
- More than half employed full-time

## Tourism Creates Jobs

In the Asheville area, tourism generates a payroll of more than \$683 million.

Approximately 25,000 people are employed in tourism-related jobs.

# Public Relations

## Strategies and Tactics

Continue a proactive media outreach program with an emphasis on relationship-building, customization and targeting to ensure the brand message is conveyed in editorial, broadcast and online placements:

- Continue to create customized pitches aimed at journalists, bloggers and online editors who produce for specific media outlets.
- Continue to create and disseminate multimedia news releases that are optimized for a variety of news mediums with digital imagery, video and background materials via embedded links.
- Encourage journalists on assignment to expand and infuse stories with brand messages, seasonal and niche story ideas, and online resources.
- Conduct media trips and continue targeting broadcast media as part of trip efforts: Columbia/Charleston/Charlotte/Spartanburg (fall); Florida (winter); series of close-in one- or two-day market blitzes as needed.
- Maintain and promote Asheville's RSS news feeds to inspire story ideas and disseminate news.
- Identify and respond to pitch opportunities generated through outside sources such as SATW, HARO, NCDTFSD and TIA.
- Attend SATW and PRSA marketplaces.
- Target key media for individual site visits.
- Target viable cable outlets such as Travel Channel, HGTV, Food Network, CNN and The Weather Channel.

Broaden use of social media as an integrated tool for media outreach, relationship development and targeted pitching:

- Conduct a culinary blogger FAM (spring) to create buzz surrounding Asheville's epicurean culture and generate online traffic to culinary tourism microsite FoodtopianSociety.com.
- Promote and facilitate development of dynamic digital content—engaging photography, video, RSS feeds and interactive online features—to inspire journalists, engage bloggers and drive online traffic.
- Identify opportunities to leverage Asheville's presence on key social media sites including Twitter, Flickr, StumbleUpon and YouTube.
- Develop and maintain best practices for online media relations to grow credibility and relationships in the social media community.
- Continue to refine and update the online newsroom to keep pace with the changing landscape of online media relations.

Enhance seasonal and niche advertising campaigns with an added emphasis on drive markets and online relations:

- Identify packages, programs or innovative ideas for creating buzz through integrated marketing efforts.

**2008 - 2009 Objective**  
Generate 300 significant placements in print, broadcast and online media outlets.

- Pitch broadcast media, particularly in conjunction with seasonal opportunities such as fall foliage, spring activities and the holidays.
- Send B-roll to pre-qualified TV news producers for seasonal promotions.
- Identify placement opportunities in niche publications, seasonal features, themed issues and special sections.

Continue to target emerging and existing niche markets, especially culinary, budget travel, weddings and the arts:

- Cultivate relationships with food writers and maintain ongoing relationships with culinary bloggers.
- Pitch TV production companies providing destination-related programming.
- Utilize social media outreach and the Asheville Travel Blog to inspire niche media, bloggers and online editors.
- Work with agency to identify and capitalize on promotional tie-ins to advertising initiatives.

Educate the region about the benefits of tourism in order to maintain support of marketing efforts:

- Continue to tell the story of the value of local tourism through awareness campaigns and media relations which includes: continued media outreach surrounding National Tourism Week, cultivation of local media relationships and continued development of AshevilleCVB.com to ensure communication.
- Develop and promote BCTDA.com as a forum for background and positioning statements on key issues.
- Continue to develop the PR/Marketing Committee as a forum to educate, update and share key messages with tourism partners and fellow communicators.

Complement sales efforts through media relations efforts:

- Target trade publications for possible editorial.
- Maintain focus for general coverage on key markets also targeted by sales team.
- Respond to media leads from select trade publications seeking input and story ideas.
- Build relationships with trade magazine editors during media trips.

Utilize measurement tools to gauge effectiveness of existing and new projects:

- Continue to track effectiveness of media relations efforts and examine the value of specific projects by utilizing a clip service, tracking contacts, fulfilling e-mail requests and assessing online and broadcast placements.
- Identify and evaluate emerging tools to measure the value and reach of online media relations efforts and social media placements.

# Web Development

## Strategies and Tactics

Maintain and expand a dynamic Web site (ExploreAsheville.com) that includes significant content opportunities and user-generated information that will maximize visitor conversions:

- Promote the updated MyAsheville section as the source for user-generated information and community interaction for Asheville travelers.
- Promote and encourage more user-generated content, including video and photo submissions from visitors and industry partners.
- Promote new Google map mashup, which allows users to build their itinerary through maps, view their itineraries on a map and search for category specific listings by map location.
- Integrate Chamber Web cam to provide views of city and nearby mountains and create page with links to Web cams throughout Asheville area.
- Create Web pages to complement seasonal and marketing promotions.
- Maintain ongoing, comprehensive calendar of events listings.

Continue an online outreach program that incorporates e-mail newsletters and viral marketing opportunities utilizing a more customer-focused approach:

- Continue to expand e-newsletter subscriber database.
- Explore opportunities for creating a special online community of contributors and/or serve as an online panel for feedback.
- Maintain a year-round effort to promote package deals/opportunities through the Web site.
- Look for viral marketing opportunities and other visitation-generators to increase traffic to the Web site and increase awareness of Asheville.

Maximize traffic generation to the Web site through online efforts including search engine optimization, PR placements and links:

- Double investment in paid search and pay-per-click campaigns.
- Use Google Analytics tools to hone keyword strategies.
- Continue to aggressively pursue organic search engine placement and positioning.
- Implement partner link strategy to promote search engine optimized niche content pages to boost traffic to ExploreAsheville.com for general travel-related phrases, e.g. romantic getaways, romantic vacations, mountain vacations, family vacations, hiking vacations, mountain biking vacations, etc.
- Target e-zines, bloggers and travel-oriented Web sites for editorial

## 2008 - 2009 Objective

Increase traffic to ExploreAsheville.com to more than 3,100,000 annual visitors.

placement and links.

- Continue to explore ways to develop a more extensive social media effort.

Monitor and analyze Web metrics to more effectively review marketing efforts and Web programs to ensure the largest ROI:

- Develop a monthly Web index.
- Use Google Analytics, ClickTracks and Urchin to examine trends and impacts.
- Stay abreast of new tools to assist with monitoring online conversations.

Utilize the Web to increase communication with industry partners and provide general tourism business information:

- Maintain and update AshevilleCVB.com with relevant information.
- Develop BCTDA.org for information about the BCTDA, its efforts and impact.



ExploreAsheville.com homepage



FoodtopianSociety.com homepage

# Tourism Department

The tourism department's program of work stretches across multiple markets including leisure tourism, group travel and international. Of these, leisure travel promotion is the largest area of focus. The leisure travel manager looks to the community for interesting and distinct experiences through which visitors can dive into Asheville's cultural landscape. Utilizing ExploreAsheville.com, the tourism department offers marketable opportunities for industry partners to engage visitors with creative opportunities to experience the destination in authentic ways.

Established programs aimed at increasing overnight visitation from Southeast based AAA clubs will continue, including AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training and state AAA marketplaces.

The tourism team will continue working with tour operators in the motorcoach market with the aim of keeping the area top of mind.

The department is also taking an active role in coordinating the 2009 American Bus Association's Annual Marketplace in Charlotte, NC and will host a pre-convention FAM in Asheville and Cherokee as part of that effort.

Coordination with area partners in conjunction with internationally focused associations, as an effort to capture positive international leads for the area, also remains a priority for the year.

Tourism Department Calendar		
Date	Event	Location
Sept. 18, 2008	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Nov. 15-19, 2008	National Tour Association	Pittsburgh, PA
Nov. 21-23, 2008	AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training	Charlotte, NC
Nov. 21-23, 2008	AAA Superbowl of Knowledge	Charlotte, NC
Dec. 18, 2008	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Jan. 4-7, 2009	American Bus Association Pre-Convention FAM	Asheville, NC & Cherokee, NC
Jan. 7-12, 2009	American Bus Association	Charlotte, NC
March 19, 2009	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
March 2009	AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training	TBA
April 2009	AAA Blue Ridge Parkway FAM	Asheville, NC
May 16-20, 2009	POW WOW	Miami, FL
June 2009	North American Journeys East Coast Summit	New York, NY

## Community Overview (Motorcoach)

	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	Variance
Groups	455	532	17%
Room Nights	13,883	15,809	14%
Economic Impact	\$2,104,663	\$2,396,644	13.9%

\*The numbers shown reflect total motorcoach groups for 24 reporting accommodation properties.



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# Tourism Promotions

## Strategies and Tactics

Continue to raise awareness and working knowledge of Asheville among AAA auto touring counselors and call centers in Southeast markets:

- Participate in the Blue Ridge Parkway Association's annual AAA FAM trip.
- Conduct two AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training trips, to include AAA NC/SC and a second target market yet to be determined.
- Continue to distribute the Asheville Visitor Guide and other leisure market materials to AAA auto touring agents across the country.
- Attend AAA Carolinas Super Bowl of Knowledge.

Continue to explore and develop strategic alliances with leisure travel industry partner organizations:

- Conduct research and inform Asheville's travel community of opportunities with American Express and other travel groups.
- Coordinate and execute quarterly niche-focused speed packaging sessions, bringing together traditional and non-traditional partners to develop experiential overnight packages.
- Expand wedding pages on ExploreAsheville.com, capitalizing on Asheville's areas of distinction as a wedding destination.
- Continuously post and update industry-initiated packages on ExploreAsheville.com.

Work with industry associations for additional exposure in leisure markets:

- Work with BRPA, DMANC, NCDTFSD and Southeast Tourism Society on joint marketing efforts.
- Coordinate Asheville's participation in consumer travel shows.

Maintain measurement tools to gauge the effectiveness of existing and new projects.

Provide information and materials to consumers as well as travel specialists in order to convert inquiries into overnight visits:

- Work closely with Journal Communications to enhance and publish the 2009 Visitor Guide.
- Continue to increase visibility of the online Visitor Guide on ExploreAsheville.com.

## 2008 - 2009 Objectives

1. Increase package views on ExploreAsheville.com by 25%.
2. Exceed 100,000 page views in newly launched wedding section of ExploreAsheville.com.

## Package Page Views

Overall package page views on ExploreAsheville.com

Date Range	Page Views
Sept. 2006 - June 2007	149,866
Sept. 2007 - June 2008	517,306

Variance 245%



Industry partners participating in a speed packaging session.



American Bus Association Marketplace 2008 hosted in Virginia Beach, VA.

# Group Tour

## Strategies and Tactics

Attend key marketplaces, trade shows and conventions to maintain current tour operator relationships and locate new sources for leads:

- Work in conjunction with NCDTFSD, DMANC and tour operators on joint marketing programs/sales missions and association events that match Asheville's client profile.
- Participate in the following trade shows: National Tour Association (NTA) and American Bus Association (ABA).
- Work in conjunction with Visit Charlotte's local organization committee to prepare for American Bus Association 2009 that will be hosted in Charlotte, NC.
- Host pre-familiarization tour in partnership with Cherokee, NC for ABA 2009.

Continue to refine effective ways to communicate with decision-makers:

- Post quarterly editions of the group tour e-newsletter on ExploreAsheville.com.

In coordination with accommodation partners, continue to trend the number of motorcoach tours and travelers into the Asheville area:

- Meet with industry partners to keep the lines of communication open.

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# International

## Strategies and Tactics

Work closely with NCDTFSD and MountainSouth USA in international marketing efforts:

- Maintain a close relationship with North Carolina's international sales representatives responsible for promoting travel to Asheville from Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- Work with NCDTFSD to accurately gauge current market share of international visitors to North Carolina in general and to Western North Carolina specifically.

### 2008 - 2009 Objective

To increase the area's market share of international visitors traveling through the region's gateway cities.

### 2008 - 2009 Objective

To maintain an Asheville presence in significant regional and national group tour markets.

Provide tour operators, group leaders and travel agents with the tools needed to package and sell tours to the Asheville area:

- Distribute the Group Profile Information Guide, group tour DVD, brochures and CD ROM of images to tour operators and qualified group leaders.
- Maintain Asheville's Web presence on TheTourOperator.com, hosted by North American Journeys, targeting domestic and international tour operators.
- Enhance group tour Web pages with inclusion of updated itineraries, industry partner information, special group events and e-newsletter.

Provide support services to tour operators after the initial sale has been made:

- Develop content for updated Web pages along with an updated version of Asheville's Group Profile Information Guide to show product and itinerary suggestions, obtain sales leads and announce new group tour opportunities for community partners.

Provide international tour operators and domestic-based receptive service operators tools needed to sell the Asheville area:

- Attend the following marketplaces: North American Journeys East Coast Summit (New York) and POW WOW (Miami).
- Explore and pursue additional regional marketing alliances that foster inclusion of Asheville in receptive operators' product offerings to their international clients.

Expand the number of catalogues that include Asheville and Western North Carolina product:

- Maintain Asheville's Web presence on TheTourOperator.com, hosted by North American Journeys, targeting domestic and international tour operators.



# Convention Sales & Servicing Department

The CVB's mission through the convention sales & servicing department is to offer a staff of experts and myriad services that will increase revenues for Asheville's hospitality industry and, subsequently, tax dollars to the region through booking meetings and conventions. The sales team uses direct sales efforts, sales trips, site inspections, industry trade shows and various marketing techniques to meet with potential clients and position Asheville as a distinctive meeting and convention destination for new and repeat business travel.

Through the servicing team, planning a meeting in Asheville is made extraordinarily simple through superb customer service. As the Asheville brand conduit for meeting attendees, the servicing team provides the travel planning resources that ensure groups have fun, stay longer and tell others of their experience.

In the 2007-2008 fiscal year, it is estimated that the convention sales & servicing department traveled 32,000 miles to reach potential customers. The department firmly believes that face-time with clients is a key strategy in enhancing relationships with meeting executives and planners and selling the Asheville area's authentic travel experiences and outstanding amenities.

An aggressive program of work in 2008-2009 will advance the successes enjoyed the previous year. The department will follow an extensive travel schedule and serve as host to two major feeder organizations, Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) and Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC). Continuing the momentum of defining a path for sustainable tourism in Asheville that was showcased during the 2008 National Tourism Week celebration also remains a priority.

Convention Sales			
	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	Variance
Leads Distributed	242	279	15.3%
Room Nights in Leads	68,494	83,199	21.5%
Booked Room Nights	44,787	45,004	.5%
Conversion	65.4%	54.1%	(17.3%)
Economic Impact of Booked Business	\$23,194,006	\$26,377,938	13.7%



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# Convention Sales

## 2008 - 2009 Objective

To produce 45,000 group room nights.

### Strategies and Tactics

#### Review and identify niche market opportunities:

- Revitalize backyard marketing efforts to determine partnerships with local stakeholders that will attract high-yield, first-time and repeat business.
- Book at least two niche groups at the Asheville Civic Center.
- Conduct a direct mail campaign to government meeting planners, positioning the Asheville area as a viable meeting site.
- Utilize new wedding section of ExploreAsheville.com and new printed wedding guide to grow the weddings market segment.

#### Increase Asheville's meeting bookings in the first quarter of 2009:

- Conduct a concentrated telemarketing campaign with *Corporate Meetings and Incentives* magazine.
- Utilize the November 17-18 multimedia Atlanta sales blitz to solicit increased winter business.
- Develop print collateral and Web content to emphasize winter meetings.

#### Maximize Asheville's visibility for meetings and conventions and continue to seek creative ways to relay the Asheville destination message to key meeting planners:

- Arrange and conduct a minimum of two familiarization tours, attracting a combined minimum attendance of 12 potential new clients.
- Continue to leverage "think better here" as a brand platform for meetings and conventions held in the Asheville area.
- Work in conjunction with the CVB marketing team and advertising agency to leverage synergies between sales and leisure travel messaging and campaigns.

Convention Sales & Servicing Department		
Date	Event	Location
July 28-30, 2008	DMAI Annual Convention	Las Vegas, NV
August 16-19, 2008	ASAE Annual Meeting/ Exposition	San Diego, CA
Sept. 16, 2008	GaMPI Monthly Educational Program	Atlanta, GA
Sept. 17, 2008	GSAE Quarterly Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
Sept. 18-19, 2008	MPI Carolinas Meeting	Chapel Hill, NC
Sept. 25, 2008	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 8, 2008	HSMAI Luncheon	TBA
Nov. 10-12, 2008	Sales Academy	Providence, RI
Nov. 11-12, 2008	GSAE Quarterly Luncheon	Marietta, GA
Nov. 17-18, 2008	Atlanta Blitz	Atlanta, GA
Nov. 20-21, 2008	MPI Carolinas Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Dec. 4, 2008	Group Business Development Team Holiday Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 9, 2008	GaMPI Monthly Educational Program	Atlanta, GA
Dec. 10, 2008	GSAE Holiday Luncheon/Silent Auction	Atlanta, GA
Dec. 11, 2008	AENC Tradeshow/Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Dec. 11, 2008	HSMAI Holiday Luncheon & Awards	Atlanta, GA
Jan. 22, 2009	SCSAE Tradeshow	Columbia, SC
Feb. 7-10, 2009	MPI Professional Education Conference	Atlanta, GA
Feb. 18, 2009	GSAE Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
Feb. 26, 2009	DMAI Showcase	Washington, D.C.
March 5, 2009	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 15, 2009	GSAE Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
May 12, 2009	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
May 26-29, 2009	GSAE Annual Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 7-9, 2009	AENC Annual Meeting	Asheville, NC

# Convention Services

2007-2008 was a year of significant growth for convention services. Groups serviced increased nearly 14 percent from the previous year and correspondingly, the number of delegates reached was up 17 percent. Unique opportunities, particularly the Big South Women's Basketball Tournament, the Southeast Tourism Society Meeting, and the Carolinas Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), created strong opportunities for showcasing Asheville's brand and encouraging repeat visitation to the Asheville area.

Convention Services			
	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	Variance
Groups Serviced	282	321	13.8%
Motorcoaches Serviced	33	30	(10%)
Hospitality Tables	41	25	61%
Conventions Welcomed	4	4	0%



## Strategies and Tactics

Increase the availability and quality of travel planning resources available to meeting attendees prior to their arrival in the Asheville area:

- Post personalized Web pages for individual groups that are accessible prior to arrival in Asheville.
- Create suggested itineraries, encouraging meeting attendees to extend their stays in the Asheville area.
- Work with hosting accommodation properties to offer early arrival/late departure incentives.
- Work with meeting planners to enhance meeting attendance by providing incentives.

Continue to research and identify sustainable initiatives that make sense for the Asheville area tourism community:

- Create a measurement and guidance tool through partnership with the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University to assist industry partners in identifying and recording sustainable practices.
- Collect information on existing sustainable practices within the Asheville tourism industry to leverage marketing opportunities.
- Strive to implement green practices within the internal operations of the CVB and disseminate findings.
- Continue to work through a green task force as a forum for education and action on community-wide sustainability projects.
- Serve as liaison to connect groups with local civic and volunteer organizations that complement the Asheville brand.

**2008 - 2009 Objective**  
 Increase groups impacted by services 5%.

# Visitor Services

Often the first stop for visitors, the Asheville Visitor Center (housed within the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce headquarters) is a 4,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility, offering a wide array of services to the approximately 200,000 visitors welcomed throughout the year. Knowledgeable volunteers staff the Asheville Visitor Center to offer insider advice and ensure that each visitor begins living the brand as soon as he or she walks through the door. The center offers opportunities for the community to showcase the area's offerings with the goal of educating visitors and extending their stay.

A unique feature of the Visitor Center is the on-site concierge services program, which booked more than 472 rooms with a value of over \$70,800 last year. The concierge assisted nearly 6,000 callers over the past year with information about Asheville's accommodations and offerings.

The Visitor Center is also home to The Asheville Shop. As a premier destination for Asheville area memorabilia, The Asheville Shop is the only place to purchase merchandise bearing the destination logo. In addition, the shop carries gifts authentic to the Western North Carolina region, including pottery, music, food items and books by local authors and of local interest.

Recognizing that some travelers to the area wish to make the transition to residents, the Asheville Visitor Center offers an assortment of relocation information and assistance.

The majority of positions in the visitor services department are paid by the Chamber. Therefore, each employee not only works to assist each visitor, but also to ensure that members of the Chamber reap the benefits of membership and exposure to visitors.

By delivering enriching experiences and educating area visitors, the department helps to further the Asheville area brand and mission of the BCTDA.



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# Visitor Services

## Asheville Visitor Center

Located at 36 Montford Avenue in the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce building, the Asheville Visitor Center is the prime location for visitors to get directions, tickets to area attractions and book their rooms at area accommodations.

Knowing that the center is Asheville's front porch and often a first-impression, every detail was carefully considered in its design -- from brochure racks that open for extra storage and quick stocking, to an event kiosk that's centrally located and updated daily with community events and information. Visitors also find Wi-Fi Internet access and free parking that's capable of holding around 150 cars as well as motorcoaches and RVs.

For guests looking for the tastiest restaurants, most comfortable rooms and most exhilarating attractions, trained volunteers and an on-site concierge serve as a primary touchpoint. In addition, a light-board allows for a visual representation of accommodations, tours, attractions and restaurants in the area. Phones are available at these stations to encourage visitors to call immediately to book their reservations.

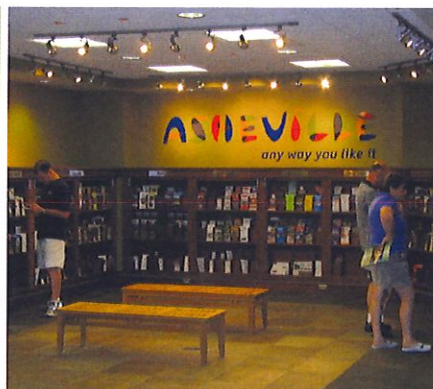
Moving Sidewalk Tours operates out of the Asheville Visitor Center, taking visitors through downtown on Segways. The center is also the prime operations headquarters for the Asheville Historic Trolley and Gray Line Tours of Asheville.

Sponsorship opportunities for Chamber members are located throughout the Asheville Visitor Center to ensure that members' businesses are prominently-showcased for the approximately 200,000 visitors expected to walk through the center's doors in the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

## Chamber Concierge Services

The Chamber's concierge services program, managed by Concierge Elaine Rich, provides visitors with convenient trip planning and personalized service. Chamber member accommodations are welcome to register for the program. All Chamber member properties are visited by the concierge, regardless of whether or not they choose to participate in the program, to learn each property's amenities to promote to inquiring visitors.

The concierge works to personalize each guest's experience by ensuring that accommodation recommendations match the style and preference of what is desired by the visitor. Extended vacations lasting as long as eight-days have been booked utilizing the program.



### The Asheville Shop

The Asheville Shop is the only gift shop that sells merchandise sporting the Chamber logo and the Asheville destination brand logo. It's also home to a wide assortment of items authentic to the Western North Carolina region, including pottery, soap, honey, books, music and more.

Tickets to many Asheville attractions and tours are also sold through The Asheville Shop. Some include LaZoom Tours, Go Blue Ridge cards, Haunted Asheville Ghost Tours, Asheville Tourists baseball games, the WNC Dining Guide, among other seasonal events and tours.

Number of Travelers to the Asheville Visitor Center		
	2006-2007	2007-2008
July	21,759	21,767
August	20,085	20,457
September	16,664	17,575
October	21,612	21,940
November	12,011	15,391
December	9,530	12,587
January	6,643	8,353
February	6,980	7,357
March	12,012	12,852
April	16,461	15,506
May	19,733	18,016
June	19,385	20,468
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182,875</b>	<b>192,269</b>

## 2008 - 2009 Objective

To improve the quality of the Asheville area experience by providing trained staff and volunteers to assist visitors with Chamber member collateral.

### Strategies and Tactics

Continually improve the types of services offered to Asheville Visitor Center guests:

- Manage all visitor-related activities in the Asheville Visitor Center, including the accommodations concierge service.
- Provide trained, knowledgeable volunteers and staff to relay information to visitors.
- Distribute relocation information to those who are considering moving to the Asheville area, a motivator for 25% of all visitors to the Asheville area.

Utilize the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center services to increase the length of stay of visitors to the Asheville area:

- Utilize the concierge service to promote longer overnight stays in Asheville.

Create awareness of the Asheville area brand and improve the Asheville experience for visitors:

- Develop the volunteer program with training sessions, FAM trips and appreciation receptions.
- Increase involvement in community issues that ultimately affect visitors by participating in D.O.V.I.A., Citizen's Corporate and Police Academies.
- Provide enhanced Asheville destination brand logo items for The Asheville Shop.



# Executive Office

Serving as the liaison to the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, the executive office maintains communication with board members to develop and implement long-range strategic and operational planning.

In an effort to ensure the voice of Asheville tourism echoes throughout the community and regional hospitality industry, the executive director serves as a board member of the NC Travel & Tourism Coalition, Asheville Art Museum, Pack Square Conservancy, National Council of Destination Organizations, and the Southeast Tourism Society's Foundation. The executive team also works closely with local, state and national elected officials on numerous issues.



Celebration was in the air Monday, July 14, 2008, as BCTDA Chairman Ron Storto presented a check for \$1.5 million to representatives of Pack Square Conservancy (PSC). The check will help to fund the final phase of construction in Pack Square Park, bringing the total granted to PSC through the BCTDA's Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) to \$2 million. The TPDF is funded by occupancy tax dollars collected via the local lodging community.

The executive office oversees budget and financial issues and all departmental personnel and operations. Support is provided for BCTDA meetings as well as many Tourism Product Development Fund Committee functions. Statistical information on the tourism industry is compiled for monthly reports that are presented to the board and also available to the industry and general public. Additional administrative assistance is provided to all CVB departments on a project or ongoing basis.

## Executive Office Calendar

Date	Event	Location
July 28-30, 2008	DMAI Annual Convention	Las Vegas, NV
Aug. 21-22, 2008	DMANC Meeting	Carthage, NC
Aug. 23-26, 2008	Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO)	Bonita Springs, FL
Sept. 3-5, 2008	STS Fall/Annual Meeting	Little Rock, AR
Oct. 27-30, 2008	TIA Marketing Outlook Forum	Portland, OR
Nov. 6-7, 2008	DMANC Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Dec. 4, 2008	BCTDA/CVB Holiday Open House	Asheville, NC
Dec. 15-16, 2008	STS Board of Directors Meeting	Amelia Island, FL
Jan. 29-30, 2009	DMANC Meeting	New Bern, NC
March 1-3, 2009	NC Governor's Conference	Raleigh, NC
March 23-25, 2009	STS Spring Meeting	Alabama
April 2-3, 2009	DMANC Meeting	Hickory, NC
May 9-17, 2009	National Tourism Week	Asheville, NC
June 7-9, 2009	DMANC Meeting	Concord, NC
June 19-20, 2009	STS Board of Directors Meeting	TBA



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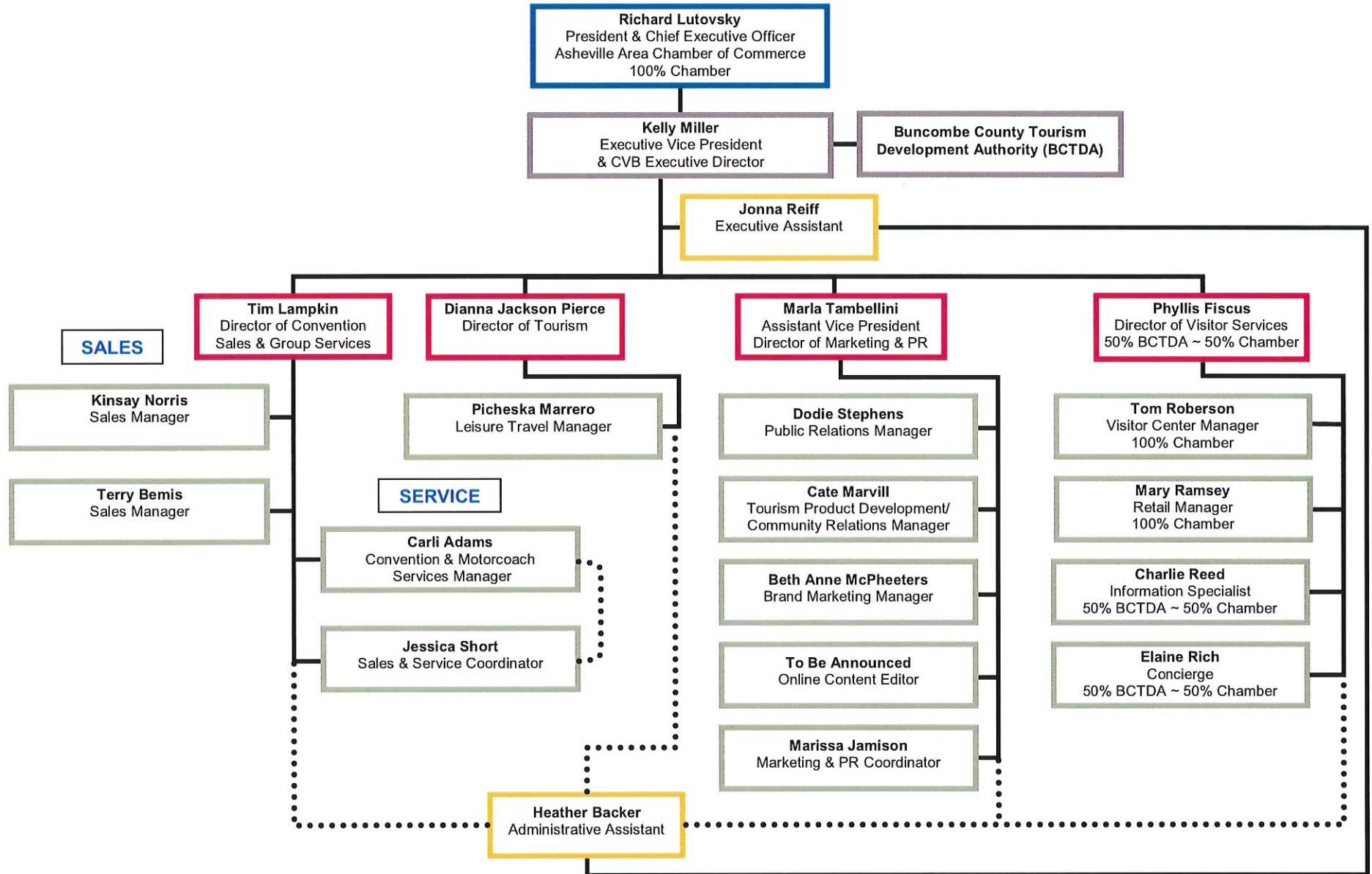


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# The CVB Team





# Tourism Promotion in Asheville

There are as many ways to organize and fund a marketing and promotional effort for tourism development as there are cities in America. Each community structures its work in a slightly different way. In Asheville, the implementation of a room tax in 1983 led to the current organizational structure. Before that, the Chamber of Commerce, through the efforts of its Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), served as the primary tourism promotion agent with the assistance of partnership dollars from area attractions and hotels.

## Marketing Asheville

As other Southeast destinations became prominent, the tourism industry in this area recognized the need for a dedicated source of marketing funds if it was going to compete. In 1983, hoteliers in this community agreed to tax themselves and earmarked the proceeds toward tourism marketing. The enacted legislation created the authorization to levy a two percent room occupancy tax on the rental of rooms furnished by hotels, motels and inns with five or more units. The BCTDA was established to administer the proceeds of the tax with the caveat that they could expend funds only to further the development of travel, tourism, and conventions in the county through state, national and international advertising and promotion. To implement the marketing plan, the BCTDA naturally turned to the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce which was already the tourism marketing agent for the Asheville area. The Chamber's mission, "to enrich the region's livability by advancing its economic vitality," is a natural fit with the efforts of the BCTDA.

With an additional one percent tax approved in 1985, the advertising campaign for Buncombe County began to pay off for the community. Within 20 years of the legislation, the economic impact of tourism grew 400 percent in Buncombe County and now accounts for more than \$1.8 billion in direct and non-direct spending from overnight visitors. More than 2.76 million leisure visitors stay overnight in our community, attracted by the enriching experiences they find here.

## Managing the Destination

A critical shift occurred in 2001, when the industry went back to state legislators with a bill designed to create an innovative funding process for tourism product. The NC General Assembly passed the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) bill which increased the room tax by one percent to total a four percent tax. The bill dedicates the proceeds from the one percent increase to the development of new tourism products that demonstrate the ability to generate substantial new room nights in Buncombe County. Rather than just a marketing organization, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority took a leap forward in becoming managers of the destination, ensuring its viability and sustainability.

## Planning for Development

In 2006, the BCTDA became more proactive in its development efforts. It partnered with the City of Asheville and several community organizations to bring in a destination consultant who addressed the need for signage and wayfinding to better direct visitors throughout the community. Additionally, the BCTDA hosted a first-of-its-kind charrette, which brought in product experts from around the nation to Asheville for three days of dialogue with community leaders and citizens.

The tourism experts agreed that future product development efforts must build on the differentiating aspects that define the Asheville area brand. From this feedback, along with advisory reports from tourism experts and public survey intelligence, the Strategic Destination Development Plan was written. The plan serves as a directional and guideline document to ensure that future projects align with the Asheville brand platform, "enrich your life," and serve as destination drivers that will attract visitors to the Asheville area while maintaining the integrity of the community.

Through dialogue with its partners and constituent groups throughout the community, the BCTDA continues to work toward a sustainable, vibrant destination that will generate revenue for all sectors of the community.

# Tourism Builds Community

## Tourism Product Development Fund

The one percent occupancy tax collected by the lodging industry for the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) currently amounts to nearly \$1.7 million annually. The fund was established to provide financial assistance for tourism capital projects that will significantly increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County, creating a greater economic benefit for the entire community. Also of importance is that the funded projects support Asheville's brand identity of a welcoming, natural and vibrant destination.

The TPDF committee, a nine member committee appointed by the BCTDA, is responsible for managing the fund, reviewing applications and making project recommendations to the BCTDA.

### Funding Process & Criteria

All projects must demonstrate feasibility and go through the formal funding process, which includes completion of the application, applicant interviews, and possibly a site visit. As guided in the legislation, requested funds must be used for capital costs (i.e., bricks and mortar) only. The TPDF committee may award funds to qualified projects as grants, guaranteed loans or pledges of debt service.

Nine criteria principles are used in evaluating submitted projects. All projects must meet the core criteria of destination brand alignment, economic impact on the region and return on investment based on estimated new room nights generated. If a project meets the core criteria, additional criteria principles are assessed including: community value, feasibility of the project, timeline of project completion, the current financial picture, partnership funding structure, project costs and the ability of the project to leverage additional development for the community.

The BCTDA approves final funding following recommendations from the TPDF committee. In return for funding, projects provide annual updates to the BCTDA on the progress of their project.

The next funding cycle begins in 2009 with applications due on January 23, 2009. Recommendations for funding will be given to the BCTDA in March and awards will be formally announced on March 23, 2009. A copy of the TPDF application can be found on AshevilleCVB.com.

"Funding from the TPDF was an important factor in the Grove Arcade's revitalization and growth. The rebirth of the Arcade was an outstanding public/private partnership. The BCTDA funds provided vital support as the building developed into a resource that continues to attract merchants, tenants and businesses, resulting in 100% occupancy for the first time since re-opening to the public."

- Ruth Summers, Executive Director of The Grove Arcade

### Tourism Product Development Fund Awarded Projects

Since its inception, ten projects have received funding through the TPDF. With nearly \$9 million awarded to area projects, the BCTDA has become one of the largest granting organizations in Western North Carolina. The BCTDA continues to shape the destination of tomorrow by being a catalyst for smart growth and development. These projects that benefit the residents and visitors of Buncombe County demonstrate that tourism truly does build community.

Tourism Product Development Fund Projects		
Project Funded	Amount Funded	Funding Cycle
John B. Lewis Soccer Complex	\$800,000	2002 & 2004
The Grove Arcade Public Market	\$500,000	2002
Bonsai Garden at The NC Arboretum	\$750,000	2003
Asheville Visitor Center	\$750,000	2003
Pack Square Park	\$2,000,000	2004 & 2007
The Health Adventure	\$1,500,000	2004 & 2007
Asheville Art Museum	\$1,000,000	2007
Western North Carolina Veteran's Memorial	\$67,000	2007
Buncombe County Civil War Trails	\$16,500	2007
Asheville Area Wayfinding Program	\$1,500,000	2007

# Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

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## Mission Statement

*To be a leader in the economic development of Buncombe County by attracting and servicing visitors, generating income, jobs and tax revenues which make the community a better place to live and visit.*

### BCTDA Board Meeting Schedule

Date	Event	Location
July 23, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Aug. 27, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Sept. 24, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 22, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Nov. 25, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 17, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Jan. 28, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Feb. 25, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
March 12-13, 2009	BCTDA Strategic Planning Retreat	Asheville, NC
March 13, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 22, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
May 27, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 24, 2009	Public Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 24, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC

# 2008 Industry Calendar

Date	Event	Location
July 23, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
July 28-30, 2008	DMAI Annual Convention	Las Vegas, NV
Aug. 16-19, 2008	ASAE Annual Meeting/Exposition	San Diego, CA
Aug. 21-22, 2008	DMANC Meeting	Carthage, NC
Aug. 23-26, 2008	Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO)	Bonita Springs, FL
Aug. 27, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Aug. 28, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Sept. 3-5, 2008	STS Fall/Annual Meeting	Little Rock, AR
Sept. 16, 2008	GaMPI Monthly Educational Program	Atlanta, GA
Sept. 17, 2008	GSAE Quarterly Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
Sept. 18, 2008	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Sept. 18-19, 2008	MPI Carolinas Meeting	Chapel Hill, NC
September 2008	Fall Media Tour	NC & SC
Sept. 24, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Sept. 25, 2008	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 3, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 8, 2008	HSMAl Luncheon	TBA
Oct. 18-22, 2008	SATW Annual Convention/Marketplace	Houston, TX
Oct. 22, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 27-30, 2008	TIA Marketing Outlook Forum	Portland, OR
Nov. 6-7, 2008	DMANC Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Nov. 10-12, 2008	Sales Academy	Providence, RI
Nov. 11-12, 2008	GSAE Quarterly Luncheon	Marietta, GA
Nov. 15-19, 2008	National Tour Association	Pittsburgh, PA
Nov. 17-18, 2008	Atlanta Blitz	Atlanta, GA
Nov. 20-21, 2008	MPI Carolinas Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Nov. 21-23, 2008	AAA Explore Asheville: Destination Training	Charlotte, NC
Nov. 21-23, 2008	AAA Superbowl of Knowledge	Charlotte, NC
Nov. 25, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 4, 2008	Group Business Development Team Holiday Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 4, 2008	BCTDA/CVB Holiday Open House	Asheville, NC
Dec. 5, 2008	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 9, 2008	GaMPI Monthly Educational Program	Atlanta, GA
Dec. 10, 2008	GSAE Holiday Luncheon/Silent Auction	Atlanta, GA
Dec. 11, 2008	AENC Tradeshow/Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Dec. 11, 2008	HSMAl Holiday Luncheon & Awards	Atlanta, GA
Dec. 15-16, 2008	STS Board of Directors Meeting	Amelia Island, FL
Dec. 17, 2008	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 18, 2008	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC

# 2009 Industry Calendar

Date	Event	Location
Jan. 4-7, 2009	American Bus Association Pre-Convention FAM	Asheville, NC & Cherokee, NC
Jan. 7-12, 2009	American Bus Association	Charlotte, NC
Jan. 22, 2009	SCSAE Tradeshow	Columbia, SC
Jan. 28, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Jan. 29-30, 2009	DMANC Meeting	New Bern, NC
Feb. 6, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Feb. 7-10, 2009	MPI Professional Education Conference	Atlanta, GA
February 2009	Winter Media Tour	Florida
Feb. 18, 2009	GSAE Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
Feb. 25, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
Feb. 26, 2009	DMAI Showcase	Washington, D.C.
March 1-3, 2009	NC Governor's Conference	Raleigh, NC
March 5, 2009	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
March 12-13, 2009	BCTDA Strategic Planning Retreat	Asheville, NC
March 13, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
March 19, 2009	Tour & Travel Development Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
March 2009	AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training	TBA
March 23-25, 2009	STS Spring Meeting	Alabama
April 2-3, 2009	DMANC Meeting	Hickory, NC
April 3, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 15, 2009	GSAE Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
April 22, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 2009	AAA Blue Ridge Parkway FAM	Asheville, NC
May 6-8, 2009	PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference	Kansas City, MO
May 9-17, 2009	National Tourism Week	Asheville, NC
May 12, 2009	Group Business Development Team Meeting	Asheville, NC
May 16-20, 2009	POW WOW	Miami, FL
May 26-29, 2009	GSAE Annual Meeting	Asheville, NC
May 27, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 5, 2009	PR/Marketing Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 7-9, 2009	AENC Annual Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 7-9, 2009	DMANC Meeting	Concord, NC
June 2009	North American Journeys East Coast Summit	New York, NY
June 19-20, 2009	STS Board of Directors Meeting	TBA
June 24, 2009	BCTDA Public Budget Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 24, 2009	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC

# Glossary of Terms

**AAA** — American Automobile Association — A not-for-profit organization of some 90 motor clubs serving more than 42 million members in the U.S. and Canada.

**ABA** — American Bus Association — A national association of private inter-city bus companies, travel industry organizations, motorcoach tour organizers and associates offering a marketplace where buyers and sellers meet in one-on-one prescheduled appointments.

**Association organizations** — Organizations of association executives who meet regularly and host annual meetings, conventions and trade shows.

ASAE — American Society of Association Executives

AENC — Association Executives of North Carolina

CMCA — Christian Meetings and Conventions Association

GaMPI — Georgia Meeting Professionals International

GSAE — Georgia Society of Association Executives

RCMA — Religious Conference Managers Association

SGMP — Society of Government Meeting Professionals

**BCTDA** — Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority — A nine-member board responsible for overseeing the expenditure of the county's four percent room occupancy tax revenues. The board is comprised of seven members with voting status (three appointed by Buncombe County, three by the City of Asheville, and one by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce), as well as two ex-officio, non-voting members.

**B-roll** — A broadcast term that refers to video with natural sound on tape.

**Blog** — An online diary; a personal chronological log of thoughts published on a Web page; also called Weblog. Many Weblogs allow visitors to leave public comments which can lead to a community of readers centered around the blog.

**Brand** — A genuine brand is the internalized sum of all impressions received by customers and consumers resulting in a distinctive position in their mind's eye based in perceived emotional and functional benefits.

**BRPA** — Blue Ridge Parkway Association — A membership organization representing over 600 businesses and destination marketing organizations serving visitors along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

**CDME** — Certified Destination Marketing Executive — Recognized by the CVB industry as its highest educational achievement, CDME is an advanced educational program for veteran and career-minded CVB executives looking for senior-level professional development courses. The focus of the program is on vision, leadership, productivity and the implementation of business strategies.

**Charrette** — A workshop to stimulate ideas and involve interested parties and the public at large in a community or sectoral planning process. The purpose is to harness the talents and energies of all involved to create and support a feasible plan that represents transformative change by building community consensus on a designated vision through active involvement and visualization.

**CMS** — A shortened term for Content Management System. It allows users to enter content without any knowledge of Web coding. The ExploreAsheville.com Web site is maintained and edited through a CMS.

**Conversion study** — A study conducted to determine the number of visitors requesting visitor information who actually visit the area.

**DMAI** — Destination Marketing Association International, formerly IACVB, International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus — A professional organization for the convention and visitor industry across the world. Educational opportunities are provided at seminars and its annual convention.

**DMANC** — Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina, formerly NCACVB, North Carolina Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus — A private, not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the promotion of North Carolina as a convention and visitor destination. Comprised of more than 30 destination marketing organizations, the group works on cooperative marketing projects in partnership with the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development (NCDTFSD).

**DMC** — Destination Management Company — A local company that specializes in the organization and logistics of meetings and events. Such organizations base their business on a claim to have in-depth knowledge of the destination as well as offering the services that a meeting and convention planner would offer.

**ESTO** — Educational Seminar for Tourism Organization — The premier learning and knowledge-sharing forum for U.S. destination marketing professionals. Hundreds of participants from state and territory tourism offices and destination marketing organizations across the nation come together at ESTO each year to discuss fundamental and pressing issues affecting destination marketing.

**FAM** — A shortened term for familiarization tour, a common marketing tool used in the travel industry. A FAM is an invitation-only, complimentary trip hosted by a destination for the purpose of "familiarizing" a specific group (media, motorcoach operator, meeting planner, etc.) with the attributes of the area.

**Group leaders** — Non-professional travel planners associated with religious, social and/or senior clubs. Group leaders work with pre-formed groups drawn from the organization's membership, rather than individuals brought together by a professional tour operator.

**Gateway city** — A city with an airport servicing direct international flights.

**HARO** — HelpAReporterOut.com — Free mailing list utilized by the CVB's PR department that distributes media leads/queries. Each day, e-mails distribute 10-25 queries from various media outlets, freelancers, blogs and Web sites.

**HSMIAI** — Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International — A global organization of sales and marketing professionals representing all segments of the hospitality industry, strongly focused on education, and operating as a leading voice for both hospitality and

sales and marketing management disciplines.

**Mashup** — The combining of information from two Web sites or data sources on one Web page. An example of this would be a Google map with Flickr photos shown geographically, allowing visitors to select points of the map to see pictures taken in those locations.

**Media tour** — A tour of a city or cities in a core market in which appointments are scheduled with media for interviews and to distribute information about visiting the Asheville area in hopes of obtaining editorial and broadcast coverage.

**MPI** — Meeting Professionals International — The leading professional society of meeting planners and suppliers. The organization hosts an annual meeting along with a trade show which the Asheville CVB attends. In addition, state chapters also host their own annual meetings and trade show opportunities.

**NAJ** — North American Journeys — A trade organization of and for companies who sell/arrange international travel. NAJ hosts an East Coast marketplace, bringing together domestic-based receptive tour operators and suppliers.

**NCDTFSD** — North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development — A division of the Department of Commerce which oversees tourism affairs and marketing for North Carolina.

**NCMA** — North Carolina Motorcoach Association — A North Carolina state association whose membership consists of tour and charter operators in the state and those suppliers who provide services for motorcoach operations.

**NCRLA** — North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association — The leading advocate and resource for the state's \$17.5 billion restaurant and lodging industries. NCRLA represents the interests of more than 16,000 businesses throughout NC, that combined employ 10 percent of the state's workforce.

**NCT&TC** — North Carolina Travel and Tourism Coalition — A non-profit trade association comprised of associations, businesses, industries, resorts, attractions, convention and visitor bureaus and other organizations throughout North Carolina, all working together to promote public policies that encourage the growth and development of North Carolina's travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

**NTA** — National Tour Association — NTA is a non-profit trade organization of and for individuals who package both retail and wholesale tours. The NTA member company is the "middle man" who sells and/or arranges interstate pleasure tours and motorcoach tours for compensation. The marketplace is designed for buyers and sellers to meet on a one-on-one basis in pre-scheduled appointments.

**POW WOW** — Organized by TIA, this is the major marketplace in the U.S. for domestic suppliers and international buyers and is structured with pre-scheduled appointments. The organization was created to promote unbiased, accurate and interesting reporting on travel destinations, facilities, and services. The group holds an annual convention as well as regional meetings and educational forums.

**PRSA** — Public Relations Society of America — The national professional organization of

public relations practitioners and communicators. Each year, the Travel and Tourism Section of the organization plans a conference that brings media and travel communicators together in an educational setting.

**RSS** — Really Simple Syndication — A family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines and podcasts in a standardized format. A RSS document (which is called a *feed* or *channel*) contains either a summary of content from an associated Web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with Web sites in an automated manner that can be fed into special programs or filtered displays.

**SATW** — Society of American Travel Writers — A not-for-profit professional association of writers, photographers, editors and electronic media.

**SMERF** — An acronym for the meeting market segments that comprise social, military, educational, religious and fraternal groups.

**Social Media** — The online tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself, thus facilitating conversations and interaction online between groups of people. These tools include blogs, message boards, podcasts, micro blogs, livestreams, bookmarks, networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs.

**State Motorcoach Associations** — State associations of member motorcoach operators who work together to promote safe travel by motorcoach through networking with other operators and suppliers and by positively influencing state legislation. Each state association holds an annual meeting and trade show to offer supplier members an opportunity to meet with tour planners and/or group leaders.

**NCMA** — North Carolina Motorcoach Association

**STS** — Southeast Tourism Society — STS is the private sector voice in the travel industry in 10 Southeastern states, including North Carolina. Membership in STS affords an opportunity for educational seminars, joint trade show ventures and networking.

**TIA** — Travel Industry Association of America — The Washington, D.C. based national, non-profit association that serves as a unifying organization for all of the U.S. travel industry, which is the second largest employer and third largest retail industry in the nation.

**TPDF** — Tourism Product Development Fund — Established in 2001, the TPDF is a dedicated fund representing one percent of the occupancy tax earmarked to fund capital projects in the Asheville area, with the goal of substantially increasing overnight lodging stays.

**TPDF Committee** — Tourism Product Development Fund Committee — A nine-member sub-committee of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) who researches requests for the funding of capital projects, making recommendations for recipients of TPDF dollars to the BCTDA.

**Viral marketing** — A marketing concept in which an unusual, interesting or funny message promoting the area is distributed to consumers in hopes that they will forward the message to other people. This method is most often used in e-mail marketing.



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