### **EXPLORE ASHEVILLE & BCTDA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES**

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) and Explore Asheville adopted strategic imperatives that are informing and guiding the direction of Explore Asheville's program of work and community investments going forward.

Delivering Balanced	Encouraging Safe	Engaging & Inviting	Promoting & Supporting	Running A Healthy
& Sustainable Growth	& Responsible Travel	More Diverse Audiences	Asheville's Creative Spirit	& Effective Organization
Balancing resident and visitor needs, recognizing the necessary role that sustainable, long-term growth of travel has in achieving a healthy, collective economy.  Focusing on the quality of each visit to our community – balancing growth across the seasons, business and leisure travel, and throughout Asheville and Buncombe County.	Engaging residents and visitors with shared values to care for and respect natural, cultural and human resources vital in delivering quality guest experiences.  Collaborating with community organizations, local businesses and environmentally focused partners to support the sustainability and growth of our outdoor economy.	diverse audiences including	makers who help differentiate our destination through food and drink, visual and performing arts, experiences and more.	Investing in people, policies, and practices to serve our community with integrity within the organization's legislative requirements.

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



## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

April 2025 – June 2025





## MARKETING, CONTENT & PR

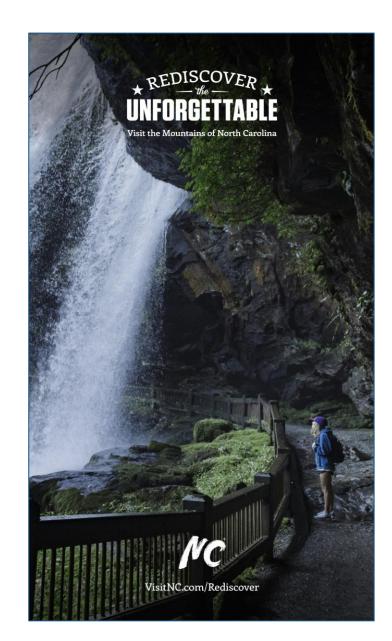


### VISIT NC CO-OP AND REFRESHED BRAND SPOT

### Visit NC Co-Op

Partnered with Visit NC for Co-Op program, investing \$2 million in messaging around Western NC's open status to priority markets. Tactics include:

- Linear Television Placements Explore
   Asheville and Visit NC spots ran at a 50/50 split in target markets
- CTV Placements all performing above benchmark across all placements in May and June with an average video completion rate of 99.5%
- Out of Home Placements Visit NC + Explore
   Asheville creative ran in high visibility
   placements at a 50/50 split.





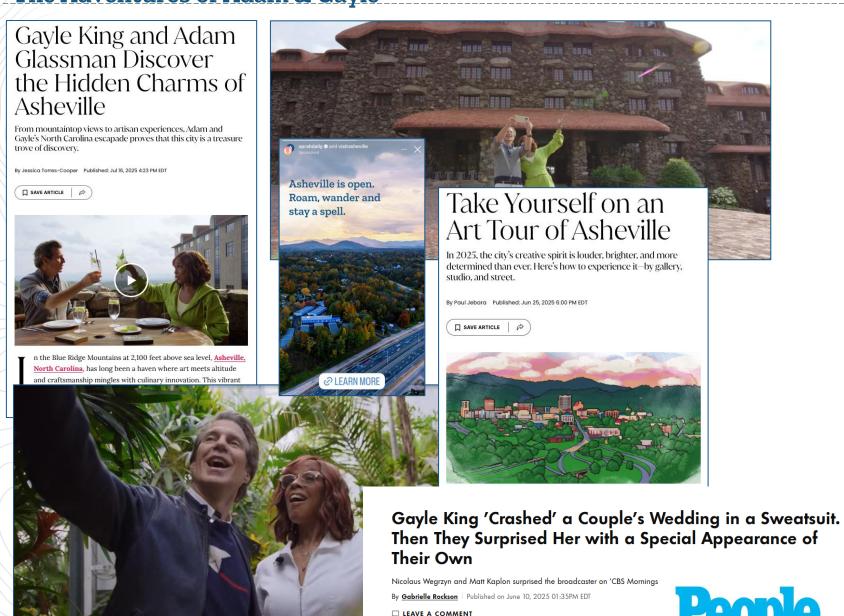
Estimated Impressions Served: 14M+





### OPRAH DAILY

The Adventures of Adam & Gayle



- Custom hero video, following Adam & Gayle around the destination as they explore the Tailgate Market, Biltmore, Arboretum, and other iconic sites in Asheville.
- 2x custom Content Articles to expand storytelling around Asheville's art and music cultures
- Social amplification, promoting the hero video, and Asheville as a destination.
- Display banners driving to the Explore Asheville site
- Custom rich media units to push brand messaging to the Oprah Daily Audience.
- Unexpected organic reach.
  - Total Impressions and counting: 10M+

©CBS MORNINGS

### DIRECT FLIGHT SUPPORT

Washington, DC

### **Allegiant Co-Op**

Partnered with Allegiant Airline to determine markets requiring messaging to impact flight bookings to Asheville and run messaging across a series of tactics including:

- Cinema Pre-Roll + Display Retargeting Co-branded video spots ran in target market movie theaters, and movie-goers were retargeted with co-branded display banners.
- Out of Home Placements Co-branded OOH creative ran, featuring Explore Asheville logo and imagery
- **Linear Placements** ran in target markets, running co-branded video placements with Explore Asheville and Allegiant b-roll.
- **CTV Placements -** an in target markets, running co-branded video placements with Explore Asheville and Allegiant b-roll.

### **Good Morning Washington**

WJLA – Washington ABC Good Morning Washington – 5x segments every morning for five days featuring Outdoor Adventure, Foodtopia, Family Travel, Arts Culture and Pride.

Estimated Impressions Served in DC: 13M+









### RECOVERY MARKET OF FOCUS

Raleigh, NC







### **June Raleigh Takeover**

To impact immediate travel from Raleigh, Explore Asheville deployed a series of media tactics emphasizing the destination's open status in the Raleigh, NC, market.

- iHeart Radio Audio Spots
- Digital + Traditional Out of Home Boards
- Linear Television Spots
- Raleigh Today 6/13-6/30
- Broadcast Segments
  - WRAL Raleigh NBC Inside Look
  - WTVD Raleigh ABC Local Spotlight

**Total Estimated Impressions Served in Raleigh: 4M+** 

Source: Zartico + Arrivalist

### ON-SITE BROADCAST EFFORTS

To illustrate Asheville's open status and impact immediate travel to the destination, Explore Asheville partnered with several broadcast partners in target markets to highlight activities and attractions relevant to each station's audience, and emphasize the destination's readiness for visitors.

### The Broadcast Experts Media Tour

- Syndicated to the following stations: Atlanta NBC, Washington D.C. FOX, Tampa ABC,
   Raleigh ABC, Charleston ABC, Houston CW, Miami CW
- 37,649,730 impressions delivered across all stations

#### Charlotte:

 WJZY: Fox Positively Charlotte | 3x segments featuring shopping, family friendly travel and wellness trips. (Airings taking place through late July)

### Raleigh:

- WRAL Raleigh NBC Inside Look (6/23-6/27)
- 50,200 total impressions delivered
- WTVD Raleigh ABC Local Spotlight (Broadcast Experts segment aired to be shot and aired 6/5, additional ABC shoot + airings to take place in mid-late August 2025)

### Chicago:

WLS-TV - Chicago ABC Local Spotlight + Windy City Weekend
 (Shoot + airings to take place in mid-late August 2025)

#### Washington D.C.

 WJLA - Washington ABC Good morning Washington | 5x Segments featuring Outdoor adventure, Foodtopia, Family Travel, Arts Culture and Pride.











Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel

Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

### "OPEN & READY" CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

Q4 content reaffirmed that Asheville was open and ready for exploration

### Video and Visual Storytelling

- <u>Downtown Neighborhood Video</u>: Final video in the neighborhood series published, highlighting vibrancy and creativity in the city center.
- LGBTQIA+ Pride Video: Celebrated Asheville's year-round LGBTQIA+ spirit and sense of belonging.
- <u>36 locations captured in 3 months</u>: Strategic photo and video shoots across open businesses, attractions, and public spaces to visually demonstrate post-Helene recovery.

### **Social Content**

 Tiny Neighborhood Guides: Shared tiny guides to <u>Weaverville</u>, <u>West Asheville</u>, <u>Downtown Asheville</u>, <u>Fairview</u>, <u>Black Mountain</u> and <u>The River Arts District</u> on social during National Travel and Tourism Week.

### **Editorial Content**

- How to Enjoy the Blue Ridge Parkway Near Asheville Post-Helene: Highlighted accessible overlooks, hikes, and scenic drives near Asheville post-Helene.
- <u>Summer 2025 French Broad River Guide:</u> Highlighted safe, responsible ways to enjoy the river post-Helene.

### **Partner Toolkit**

 Open and Ready Summer Toolkit: Provided partners with messaging and creative assets to amplify the story of Asheville's readiness across their own channels.





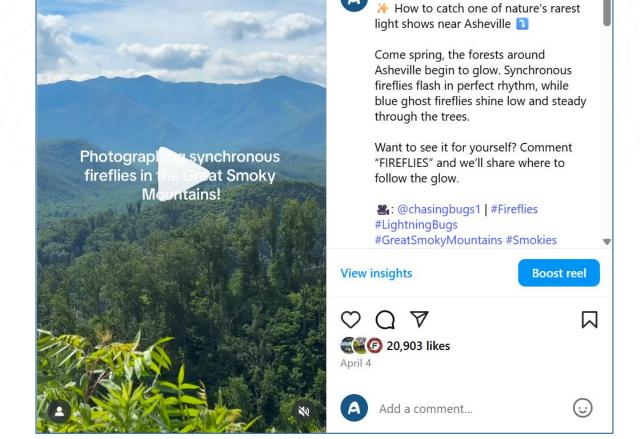


Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel

Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

### TOP PERFORMING SOCIAL POSTS

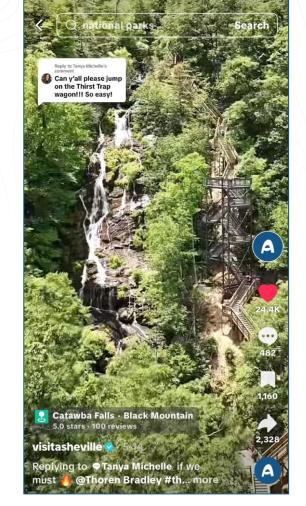




visitasheville

visitasheville 14w

Noah Kahan, Hozier • Northern Attitude



FACEBOOK

Dambo Announcement

24,963 Engagements

INSTAGRAM
Synchronous Fireflies
33,738 Engagements

Engagements = Likes, Comments, Saves, Shares





### **NOTEWORTHY NEWS CLIPS**

Pitching stories that shine a spotlight on the Asheville area

23.5B

Potential Media Reach

\$157.9M

**Publicity Value** 

Site Visits

29

Significant Team **Placements** 

**75** 

**Total Placements** 





'These mountains are still here.' Asheville is ready for your visit



Can rare 'blue ghosts' help Asheville rebuild?

### **ESSENCE**

The Black Girl's Guide To Travel: JOMO-Friendly Destinations For Rest And Recharge

### GARDEN

A Weekend Guide to Black Mountain, a Resilient Beauty in Western North Carolina

## Southern Living

You Might Feel Like You've **Stepped Into 'The Gilded** Age' In This Southern City

Accolades



America's Best Towns to Visit in 2025



Best places to travel in 2025



**Best Music City** 



Media Mission

**ASHEVILLE TEA CULTURE GROUNDS & NOURISHES** 



## ASHEVILLE POWERED BY Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

### MO SUMMIT 2025

\$250,000 of direct spending in our community

- Impact Event held April 21-23
- Known as the premier gathering for impact CEOs, the MO Summit brings together leaders who are redefining capitalism and creating solutions to the world's most pressing social and environmental issues. The event features a combination of core panel discussions and extensive networking opportunities.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> annual MO Summit attracted over 100 CEOs of high-growth, positive-impact companies, leaders at the forefront of using business as a force for good, creating an inclusive, regenerative and sustainable future.
- Explore Asheville, with support from the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, was a headline sponsor. Vic Isley presented at the opening reception/dinner and Clark Duncan moderated a panel discussion.
- The MO Summit will return to Asheville March 16-18, 2026











### TRADE SHOW EXHIBITING

Recruited group and event business to Buncombe County

Attended ten trade shows and events to build relationships with professional meeting planners and tour operators.

- Prevue Incentive Evolution
- National Tour Association Contact
- Georgia Society of Association Executives
- Adventure Travel Trade Association
- SC Society of Association Executive Conference
- North Star's Incentive Live
- SITE SE Supper
- Cvent Connect
- US Travel Association's IPW
- HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference

Events are carefully analyzed, number of contacts, potential opportunities for our city, past experience and number of leads.





### Q4 GROUP & EVENT DEVELOPMENT

Benefitted businesses in our community

113

GROUPS/EVENTS
OCCURRED
IN OUR COMMUNITY



\$16.0 million direct spending 19,300 roomnights

130

GROUPS/EVENTS
BOOKED
FOR FUTURE VISITS



\$11.9 million in direct spending 14,950 roomnights

43% increase in number of groups/events booked

Over FY 24

226

LEADS GENERATED
FOR POTENTIAL
GROUPS/EVENTS;
78,937 ROOMNIGHTS



4.0 % increase in roomnights over Q4 FY24





# PARTNERSHIP & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Tiffany Thacker

Partnership & Destination Management



### **EXPLORE ASHEVILLE TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY EARTH DAY CLEANUP**

### Industry partners cleanup 5 areas of Buncombe County

- 100+ travel and hospitality partners and community members joined Explore Asheville's Travel & Hospitality Earth Day Cleanup on April 28
- With support from <u>Asheville</u>
   GreenWorks, <u>RiverLink</u>, and
   <u>MountainTrue</u> teams collected
   more than 4,000 pounds of trash
   and debris from the following 5
   neighborhoods:
  - o Biltmore Village 1,920 lbs
  - o Black Mountain 540 lbs
  - Downtown 270 lbs
  - o River Arts District 1,130 lbs
  - o Weaverville 150 lbs













### HEROES OF HOSPITALITY AWARDS LUNCHEON

The Heroes of Hospitality Awards Luncheon brought together more than 200 industry partners to honor the 60+ nominees powering the region's recovery and resilience during challenging circumstances. The event celebrated these ambassadors of Asheville and Buncombe County, including the six recipients of the Heroes of Hospitality Award.

### 2025 Heroes of Hospitality Award Recipients:

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

Each recipient received a custom glass bowl from <u>Small Batch Glass</u> <u>Company</u> in the River Arts District and a \$500 gift card. All nominees received a certificate of nomination and a custom bag of Asheville-made products by <u>Asheville Goods!</u>











### INAUGURAL HOSPITALITY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

### Three Local Students Honored with Inaugural Explore Asheville Scholarship

The Heroes of Hospitality Awards Luncheon marked the launch of the Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship Program. This new initiative supports students pursuing hospitality, travel, and serviceoriented careers.

Recipients will receive \$2,500 per year for up to four years, which can be used for tuition, housing, books, or other education-related expenses at any post-secondary institution in North Carolina, including certificate programs and degrees.

### Inaugural Scholarship Recipients:

- Gillian Kerns: Kerns, a junior at Western Carolina University majoring in Hospitality and Tourism Management with a Psychology minor
- Kayleigh Schofield: Schofield, an Owen High School senior, plans to major in communications at Appalachian State University
- Nathan Tucker: Tucker is a T.C. Roberson High School senior focused on culinary arts. Tucker won first place at the SkillsUSA North Carolina State Culinary Competition, and represented the state at the national competition in Atlanta in June, where he came in at an impressive 11<sup>th</sup> place.





Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

### BCHT PHASE II MURAL RIBBON CUTTING

Phase II of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail unveiled at community event in South Slope

On May 8, Explore Asheville and the Riverfront Development Group hosted a community celebration unveiling the first mural along the <u>Asheville Black</u> <u>Cultural Heritage Trail.</u>

Local artist Tommy Lee McGee's new mural in South Slope offers gratitude, respect, and honor to Black and Brown women, marking the first of three murals planned for the trail.

The Hayes High Steppin' Majorettes and Drum Corps performed to celebrate this occasion, alongside a block party including local Black artists, musicians, and makers featured at Chemist, The Funkatorium, Green Man, Burial, Good Hot Fish, and The Whale.







### **CONCIERGE WORKING GROUP**

### Connecting partners within the travel and hospitality community

Explore Asheville hosted our latest quarterly Concierge Working Group Meeting on June 11 at the Grand Bohemian Lodge, where 50 attendees learned about health and wellness visitor experiences and marketing resources.

- Mini Wellness Fair & Experiences: Participants took part in a sound bath, tarot readings, auratherapy, and a mini wellness fair featuring the following partners: Asheville Wellness Tours, Auratherapy, and Shoji Spa. Attendees received coupons to experience additional tours on their own time.
- Marketing & Visitor Resources: Sarajane Case, Explore
   Asheville's Director of Marketing gave an overview of available
   resources attendees can use to learn about visitor
   experiences, events, and where they can direct visitors to
   learn more.

### **Background on Concierge Working Group**

Since the first Concierge Working Group meeting was held in May 2024, we have hosted 5 meetings and have had nearly 100 people signed up to participate in various visitor-facing roles, ranging from concierges, visitor center volunteers, to general managers and bed and breakfast owners.







### TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND (TPDF) EXPEDITED FUNDING

The authority approved funding early in the 2025 TPDF Cycle for two key projects

On May 28, 2025, the board approved the TPDF Committee's recommendations to expedite approval for 2 projects due to urgent needs and strong alignment with strategic priorities

## Asheville Buncombe Youth Sports Association – John B Lewis Soccer Complex Restoration (\$2,155,000 awarded)

- Replace artificial turf damaged by Hurricane Helene
- Repair underground stormwater system
- Restore lighting infrastructure (16 field poles)

### Enka Youth Sports Organization – Bob Lewis Ballpark Updates (\$500,000 awarded)

Pave and stripe existing gravel lots to maintain tournament capacity

- Prevents a reduction from 45 to 25 teams per event
- Avoids loss of ~640 teams and ~39,000 visitors per season
- Enhances visitor safety







Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit

### **EVENT GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS**

Support for local festivals & cultural events through grants and sponsorships

### Explore Asheville / BCTDA supported the following events in FY25 Q4

- Maker Faire Asheville
- AIR's Taste of Asheville
- DTA5: Downtown In Bloom
- UNCA's Our Turn to Play 2025
- Pritchard Park Culture & Arts Series
- Weaverville's Music on Main
- 17<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual Asheville Bread Festival GRINDfest
- Connect Beyond Festival
- ADA's Community Concert

- Juneteeth Celebration
- Asheville Beer Week
- DTA5: Juneteenth Celebration
- LEAF May Retreat
- {Re}HAPPENING23
- Coda Music Festival
- ArtsAVL State of the Arts Brunch

\$53.3k

**Grants &** Sponsorships









**Events** 



### NEW PARTNERSHIPS & OPERATIONAL STATUS UPDATE

Onboarded 46 local businesses as Explore Asheville partners in Q4; 152 in FY25

- Explore Asheville onboarded 46 local businesses as new partners in Q4
- In FY25, Explore Asheville welcomed a total of 152 new partners to our network. More than 40% of new partner businesses are diversly owned/operated.
- **Operational Status Update:** 
  - **Open: 1,295 (86.9%)** | ↑ 9% from Q3
  - **Temporarily Closed: 89 (6%)** |  $\downarrow$  23.3% from Q3
  - **Call for Status: 35 (2.3%)** |  $\downarrow$  42.6% from Q3
  - **Permanently Closed: 71 (4.8%)** | ↓ 12.3% from Q3

### **WHAT & WHERE**

### Regions of new businesses:

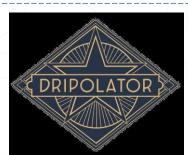
- Black Mountain
- Biltmore Village
- Downtown
- North Asheville
- River Arts District
- South Asheville
- Weaverville
- West Asheville
- Woodfin

### Types of new businesses:

- Food & Drink
- Attractions
- Arts/Cultural
- **Event Venues**
- Photographers
- Tours
  - Lodging
  - Retail
  - Wellness
  - Wedding Services



















THE WELL







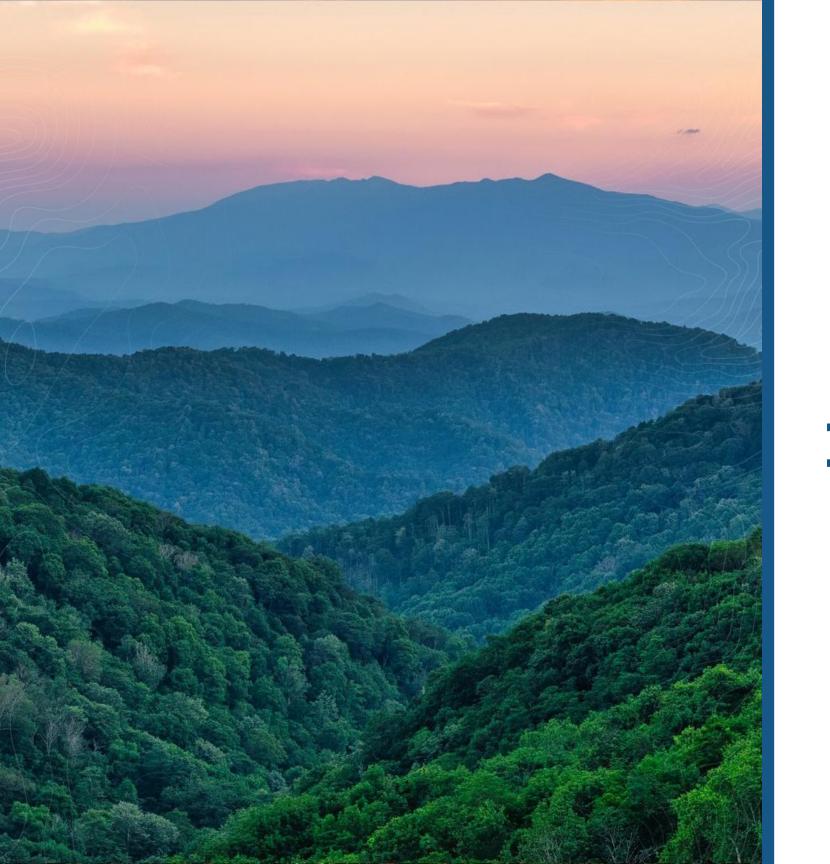
27











# CULTURE & BUSINESS AFFAIRS Q4 INITIATIVES

Jennifer Kass-Green

Vice President of Culture & Business Affairs



### ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

**New Team Members** 



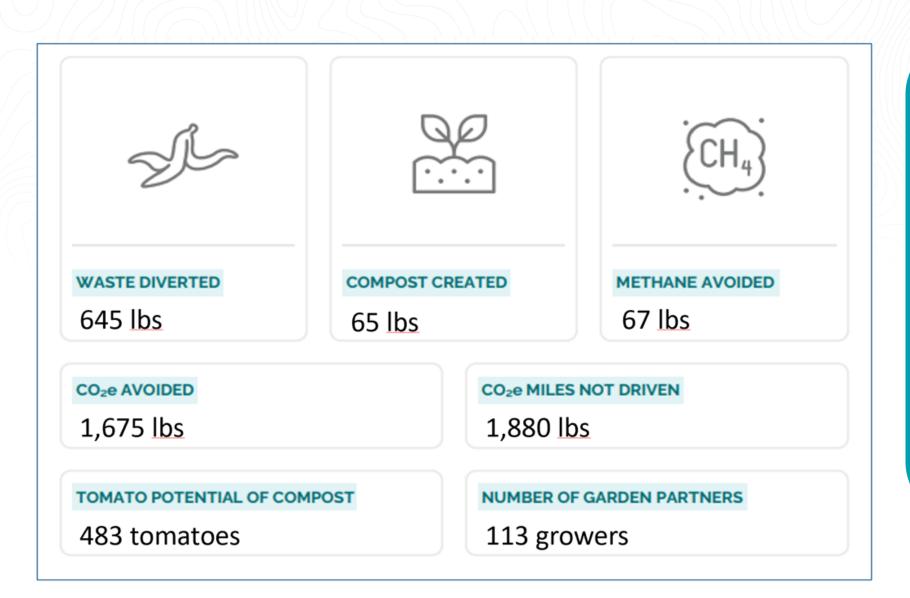
**Kristen Childers**Sales Manager



**Karis Roberts**Marketing Manager

### **COMPOSTING EFFORTS**

FY25 Impact Report from CompostNow





### VOLUNTEER TIME OFF (VTO)

Total Volunteer Hours + Organizations in FY25

- Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
- Asheville Community Theatre
- AVLFest
- Equal Plates Project
- Grassroots Aid Partnership
- Grateful Village
- Haywood Congregation
- Higher Ground Western Carolina Rescue Ministries
- MANNA FoodBank
- NC Craft Beverage Museum
- Skyview Golf Association
- Silverado's Disaster Relief Distribution Center
- Southern Conference
- United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County

117.50

Hours Volunteered

14

Non-Profit Organizations





Running a Healthy & Effective Organization

### DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY WORKSHOP

**Annual Social Inclusion Training** 

- Full-day on-site workshop on May 20
- Facilitated by Chief Impact
   Officer and Social Impact
   Manager for Destinations
   International
- Agenda included social identity and understanding exercises as well as discussion surrounding destination stewardship for a welcoming and inclusive community



