



Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Annual Report

EXPLORE

BREVARD



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I. Board & Support Team

Board & Support Team

A Message From the Chair

As chair of the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority, I am honored to share with you the remarkable strides we have made over the past year, and a look forward to the future with optimism for Transylvania County.

Tourism is an important industry in Transylvania County and has been the sustaining force at difficult times in our county's history. Tourism supports hundreds of businesses and thousands of citizens, and it is crucial to economic development. Strong leadership ensures that we are successful in this mission. The Board and TDA staff take their roles seriously and I am proud of their commitment and work for our county and its citizens. I am pleased with where we are, the ambitious projects we are undertaking, and the direction we are headed.

The work of the TDA has grown considerably over the years as technology, visitation, community needs, and other factors have influenced the actions of the organization. As our ambitions and available resources continue to expand, it is more crucial than ever to identify the priorities that guide our work. Below are the core principles that have been developed through our strategic planning and will be reflected throughout this report.

- Enabling a thriving and sustainable tourism industry
- Taking care of our natural resources
- Inspiring good visitor behavior
- Staying true to who we are as a community
- Supporting our tourism partners
- Serving as our community's destination manager
- Keeping locals in consideration as we market and manage our destination

Thank you for your steadfast support and your commitment in making a difference in our community. And thank you for allowing me to serve.

Dee Dee Perkins
TCTDA Chair



BOARD MEMBERS

Dee Dee Perkins, **Chair**

Jessica Whitmire, **Vice Chair**

Isaac Allen

Dana Antonuccio

Larry Chapman

Dionne Hodgson

Nory LeBrun

Madeline Magin

Lauren Wise

SUPPORT TEAM

Clark Lovelace

Executive Director

Virginia Watkins

Operations and Outreach

Mollie Gordon

Marketing and Communications

JJ Carson

Special Projects

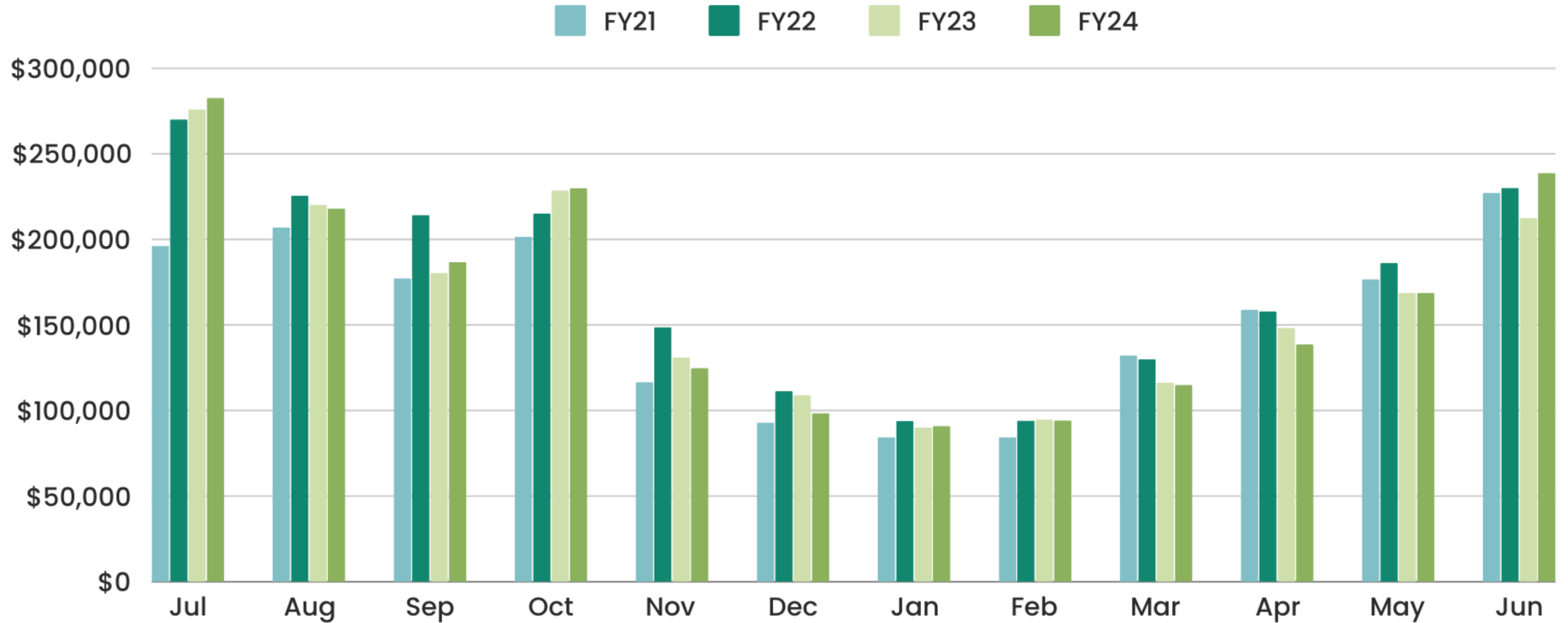
Market Connections

Marketing and Advertising



II. Occupancy & Visitor Insights

Monthly Occupancy Tax Proceeds vs. Prior Years



ANNUAL OCCUPANCY TAX PROCEEDS

FY24: \$1,987,161

↑ **Less than 1%** vs. prior year

↓ **4%** vs. FY22

↑ **7%** vs. FY21

Short-Term Rental Data

Transylvania County Summary

Transylvania County

	FY24	vs. Prior Year
Available Units	1,483	Up 9%
Occupancy	49%	Down 2%
ADR	\$267	Down 2%
Length of Stay	3.6	No Data

Submarket Breakdown

	Brevard	Western TC	Eastern TC
Available Units	626 (43%)	563 (38%)	283 (19%)
Occupancy	52%	43%	51%
ADR	\$233	\$349	\$234
Length of Stay	3.6	3.6	3.4

Transylvania County vs. Competitive Markets

	Transylvania County	Buncombe County	Henderson County	Jackson County	Haywood County	Macon County
Available Units	1,483	5,627	1,399	1,412	2,010	1,502
Occupancy	49%	56%	51%	50%	50%	47%
ADR	\$267	\$255	\$246	\$281	\$243	\$329
Length of Stay	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.7

Data was calculated based on reports from AirDNA based on data scraping. Certain assumptions had to be made to ascertain some information.

TC = Transylvania County; Western TC = Lake Toxaway/Rosman/Sapphire (TC portion); Eastern TC = Pisgah Forest/Penrose/Cedar Mountain

ADR = Average Daily Rate

Zartico Visitor Insights

Key Visitor Insights Compared to the Overall NC Average

Visitor-to-Resident Ratio
Compared to Statewide Average

+40%

0.42 vs. 0.30 statewide

Avg. Visitor Spend
Compared to Statewide Average

-67%

\$345.14 vs. \$1,034.11 statewide

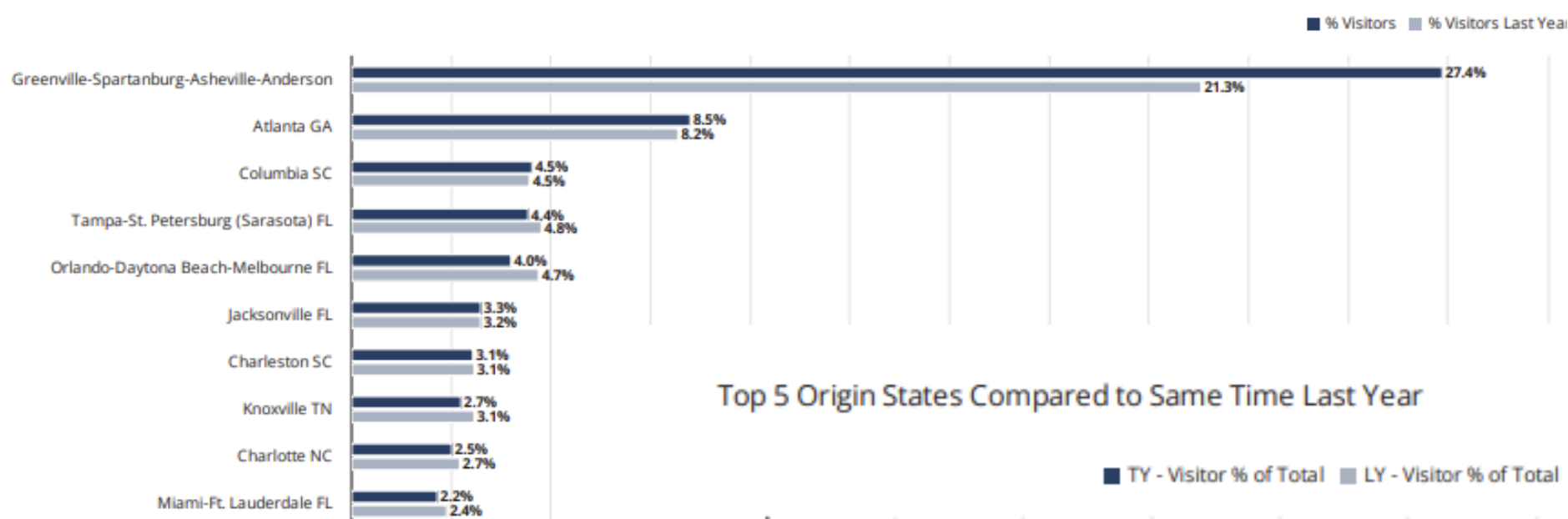
% Out-of-State Visitors
Compared to Statewide Average

+15%

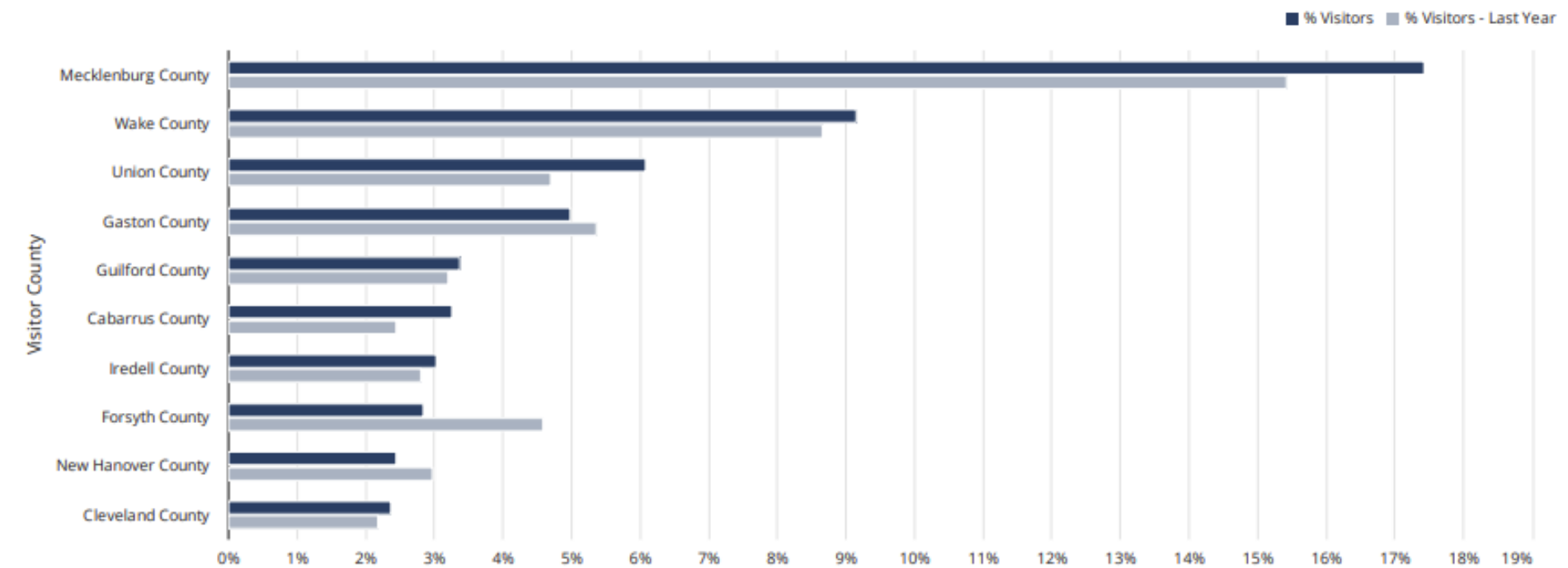
72% vs. 62.4% statewide

Where did visitors to your destination come from last year?

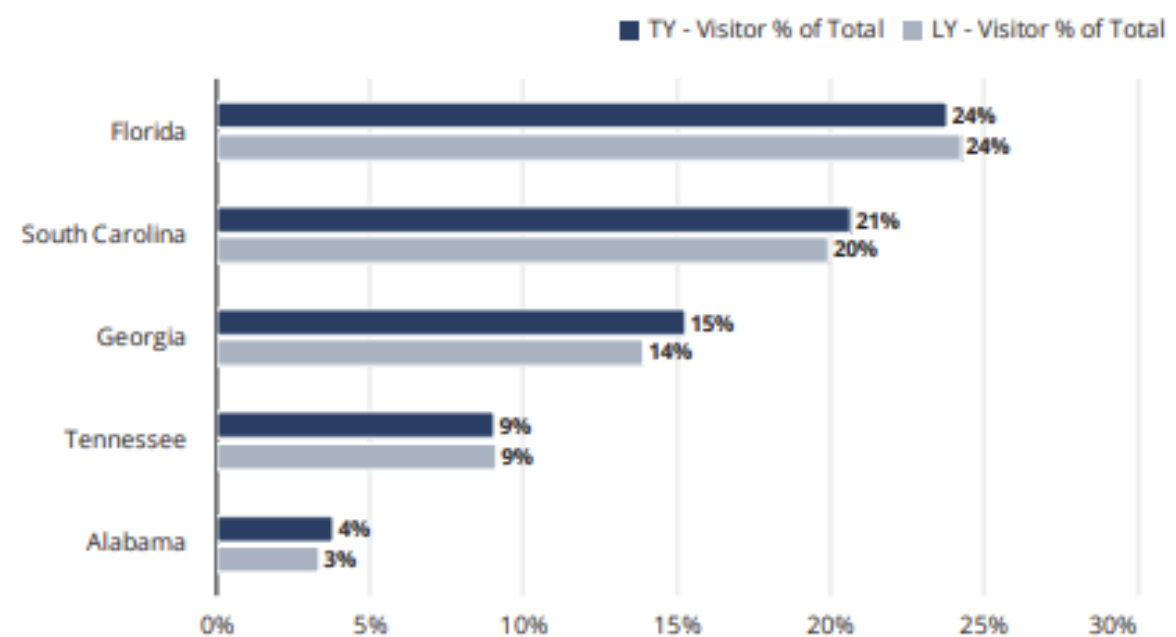
Top 10 Out of State Origin Markets, Compared to Last Year



Top 10 In-State Origin Counties, Compared to Last Year



Top 5 Origin States Compared to Same Time Last Year

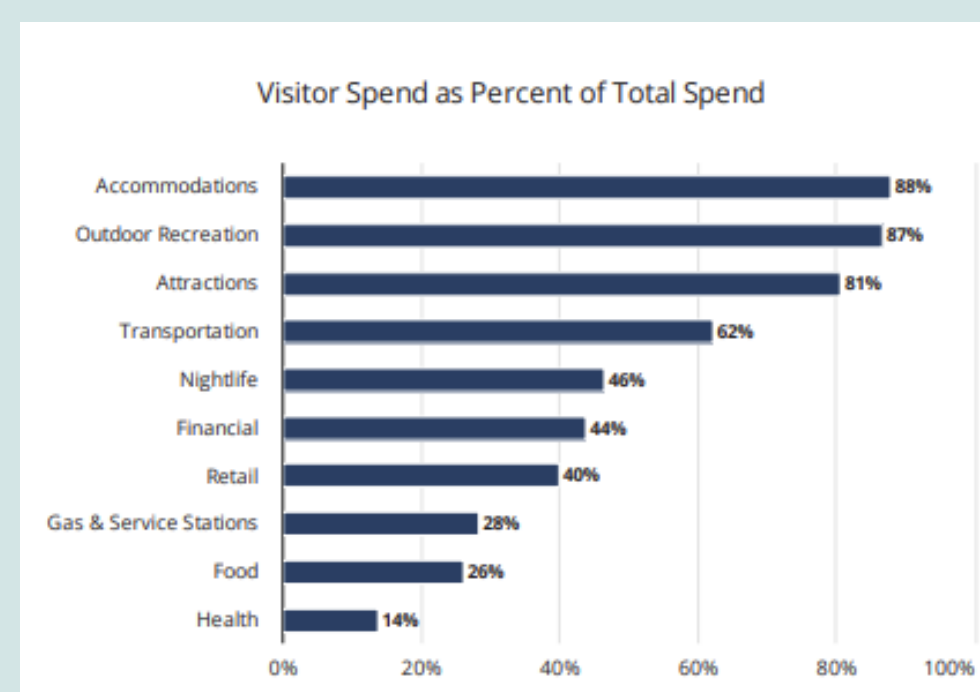
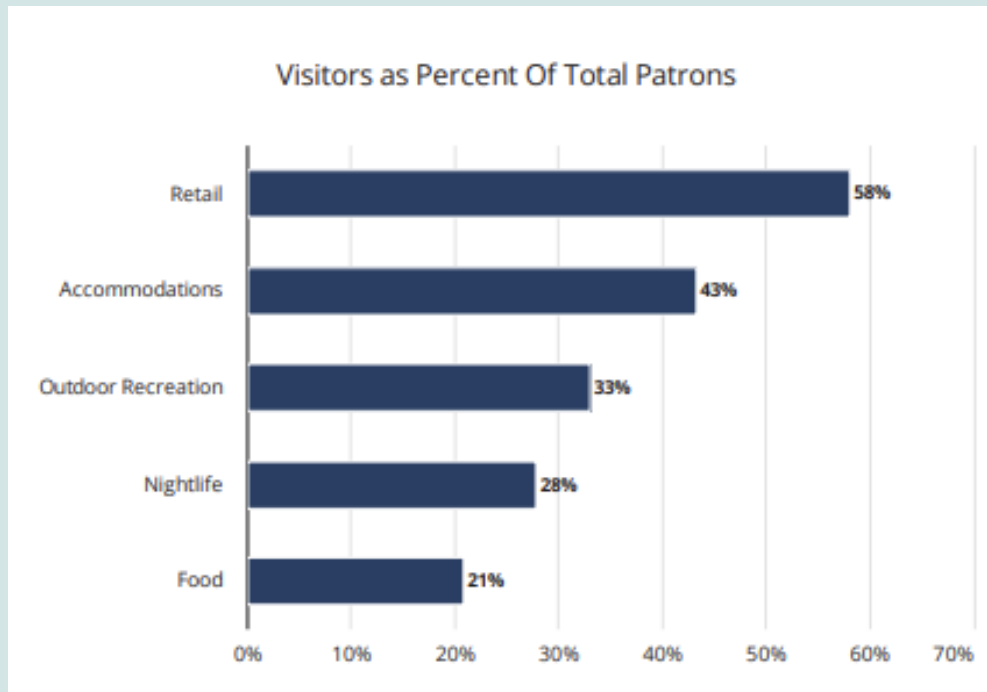


Source: Near, Affinity. Near data is anonymized mobile location data. A visitor is defined as a device with a home OR work location (to exclude commuters) more than 30 miles from your county. This visitor device must visit one of the points of interest Zartico mapped out in your county. Affinity is anonymized spend data by credit and debit cards. It includes insight from Visa, Mastercard, and some American Express and Discover.

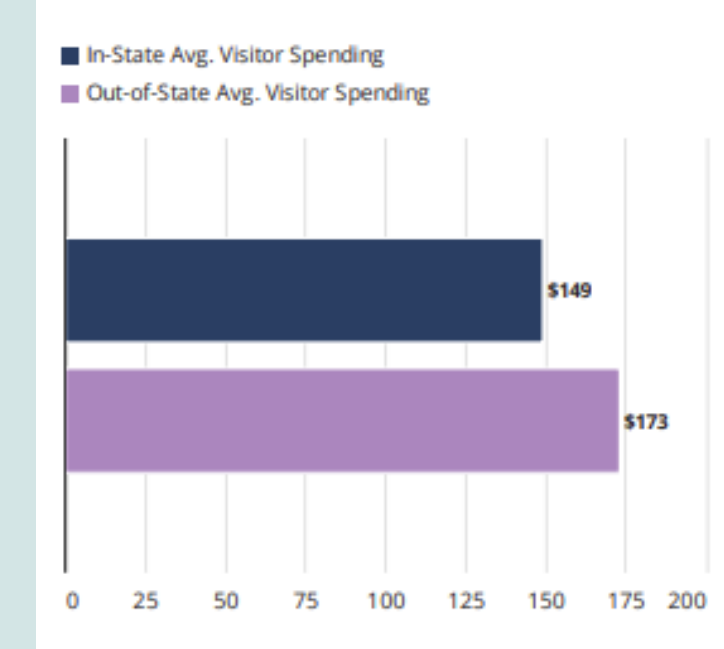
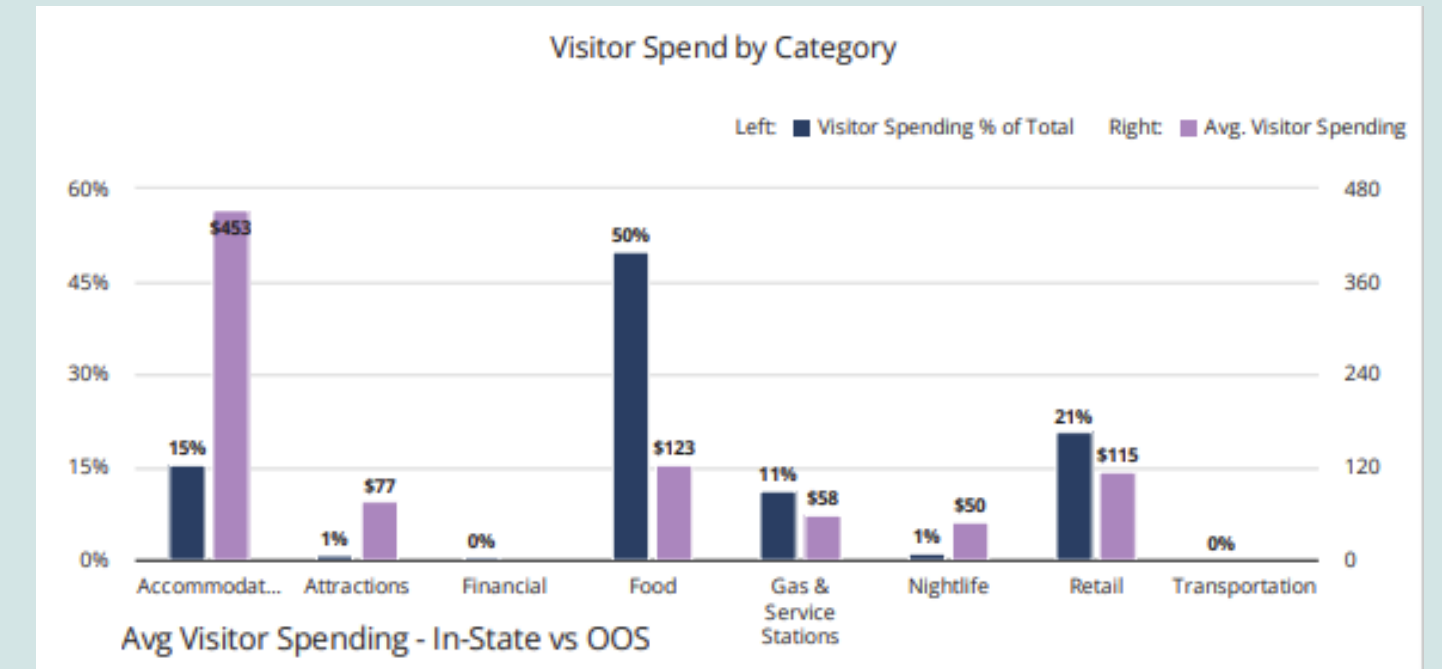
Data compiled by Zartico Insights. LY = Last Year, TY = This Year.

Zartico Visitor Insights (Continued)

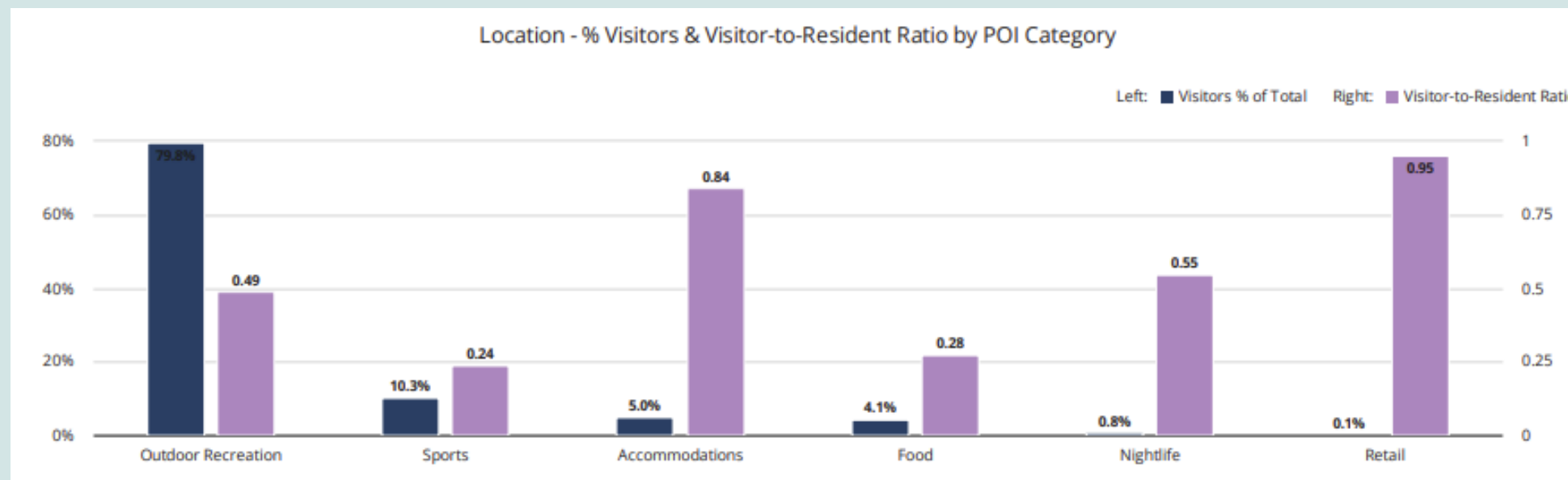
How do visitors impact your destination?



Where are visitors spending the most in your destination?



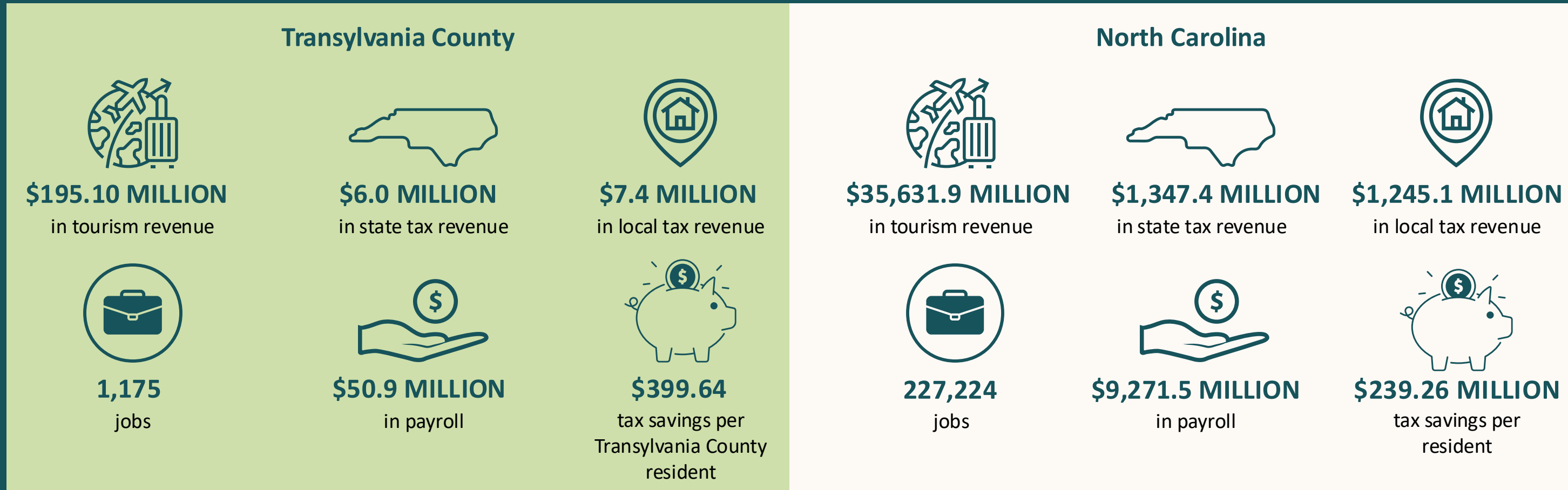
Where are visitors going within my destination?



Source: Near, Affinity. Near data is anonymized mobile location data. A visitor is defined as a device with a home OR work location (to exclude commuters) more than 30 miles from your county. This visitor device must visit one of the points of interest Zartico mapped out in your county. Affinity is anonymized spend data by credit and debit cards. It includes insight from Visa, Mastercard, and some American Express and Discover.

Data compiled by Zartico Insights. LY = Last Year, TY = This Year.

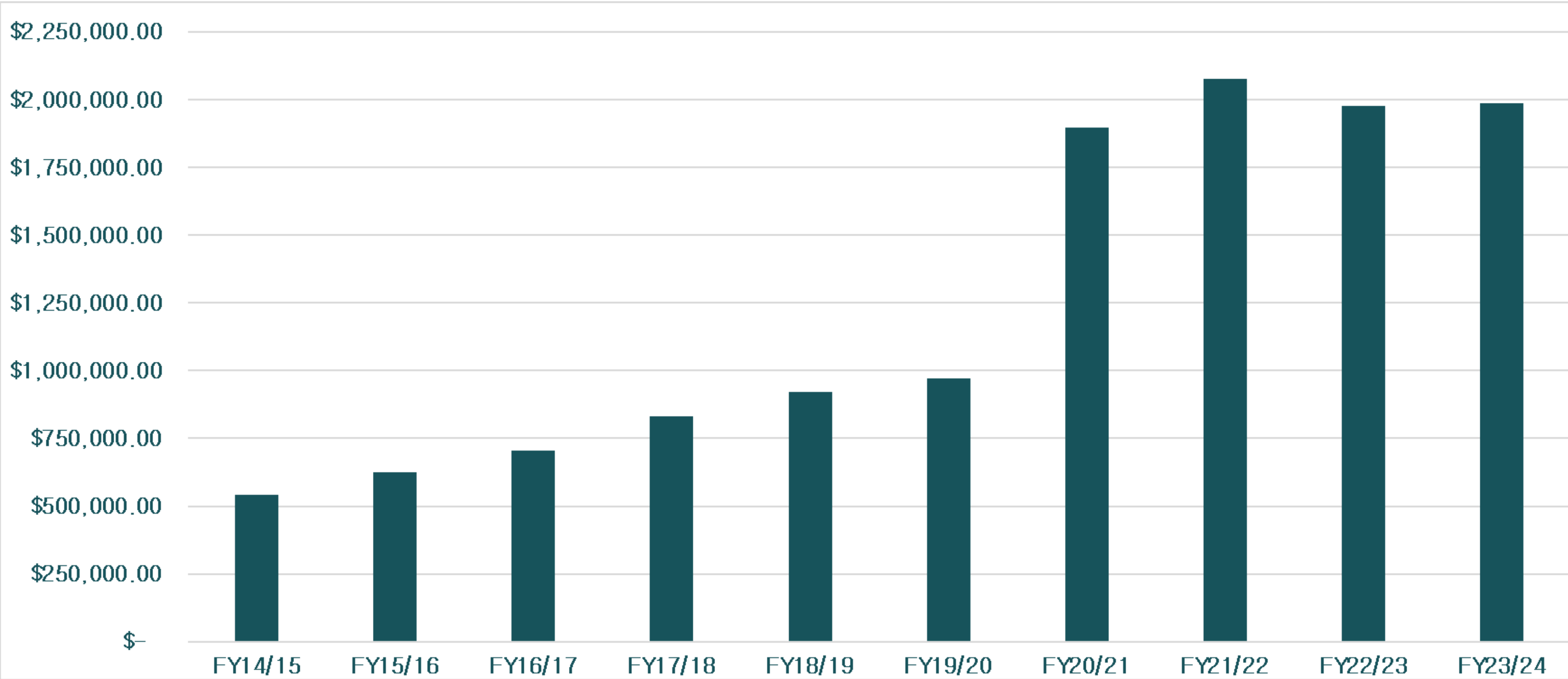
2023 Visitor Impact



Visitor Spend in Transylvania County (in millions)						
	Total Spend	Lodging	Food & Beverage	Recreation	Retail	Transport
2023	\$195.10	\$48.10	\$57.81	\$28.86	\$17.26	\$43.08
2022	\$188.53	\$47.13	\$55.36	\$26.33	\$17.05	\$42.66
% Change	3.5%	2.1%	4.4%	9.6%	1.2%	1.0%

*Data sourced from Tourism Economics, who completed a study for all NC counties for Visit NC
 **Information is for calendar years

Occupancy Tax Proceeds: 10-Year View



Occupancy and Visitor Insights

As a reminder, Transylvania County experienced almost a decade of consistent annual growth of 5% or more prior to the onset of the pandemic in early 2020. During that time, the makeup of the inventory of rooms in destinations worldwide changed significantly as Airbnb created a way for homeowners to easily rent their homes on a short-term basis. Both the demand for and the supply of short-term rental accommodations grew dramatically.

During the pandemic, visitors sought short-term rentals, rural communities, and outdoor recreation. Destinations like ours who had all three saw an unprecedented level of visitation. Occupancy tax proceeds in Transylvania County more than doubled from the summer of 2020 through the summer of 2022.

Proceeds in Transylvania County peaked in FY22, with FY23 showing a decrease of roughly 5%. Others in WNC saw a decrease of 10% or more. Our assumption is that this was a natural retraction as some travelers returned to their normal travel patterns that included cruises and travel further from home, including internationally. FY24 occupancy tax proceeds were flat with the prior year, which leads us to believe that most of the growth that occurred during the pandemic is here to stay.

Industry reports provide signs that destinations like ours are likely to have heavy demand in the future. Outdoor recreation continues to grow as a driver of travel decisions. Technology, a new mindset around the workplace, and changing behaviors with the balance between work life and personal life, as reflected by the new category “bleisure” travel and phrase “going on a workation”, have all contributed to increased demand for rural locations.

Key insights about our visitors from 3rd party data includes:

- Usage of short-term rentals (STR) continues to grow with 55% of occupancy tax proceeds coming from STR in FY24, compared to 52% in FY23
- Our market continues to see a high number of day trippers, including those staying in surrounding counties and those who live within a 90-mile radius
- Most of our visitors live in the southeast, with nearly 30% coming from in-state and 50% from our top five origin states - Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama
- Outdoor recreation continues to be the most common driver of travel to our destination
- Waterfalls, opportunities for rejuvenation and healthfulness, and being seen as an authentic and friendly small mountain community are key differentiators between our destination and similar competitors
- Our efforts to preserve our public lands and improve visitor behavior align with our core visitors

All of the above reflects that our destination and our brand are in good positions and provides optimism that the tourism industry will continue to be an important part of the local economy for many years to come.





III. Marketing & Promotion Highlights

Marketing

Marketing Overview

Throughout Fiscal Year 23/24, our marketing strategies focused on promoting Brevard and Transylvania County as a premier destination for nature, adventure, and authentic small-town charm. Campaigns were designed to align with the seasons, highlighting the unique offerings across the county—from outdoor adventures to cultural experiences and seasonal celebrations.

Key Strategies & Campaigns

- **Mid-Week and Extended Stays:** We focused on driving mid-week and extended stays, targeting visitors who can work remotely, and focusing on drive markets within a 200-mile radius.
- **Seasonal Messaging:** Our messaging shifted with the seasons, promoting summer and fall adventures, transitioning to winter holiday campaigns, and wrapping up with spring experiences for families, couples, and outdoor enthusiasts. This approach highlighted the diversity of offerings across the county, from scenic hikes and waterfalls to shopping, dining, and festivals in communities throughout Transylvania County.
- **Expanded Digital Campaigns:** We strengthened our digital outreach by expanding creative messaging across platforms and testing new markets. Campaigns were tailored to specific demographics to drive interest in seasonal and off-peak travel.
- **Brand Positioning:** In addition to emphasizing iconic features like waterfalls, rivers, and trails, we introduced new brand themes around wellness, romance, sustainability, and authentic small-town experiences—reflecting the county's broader appeal.

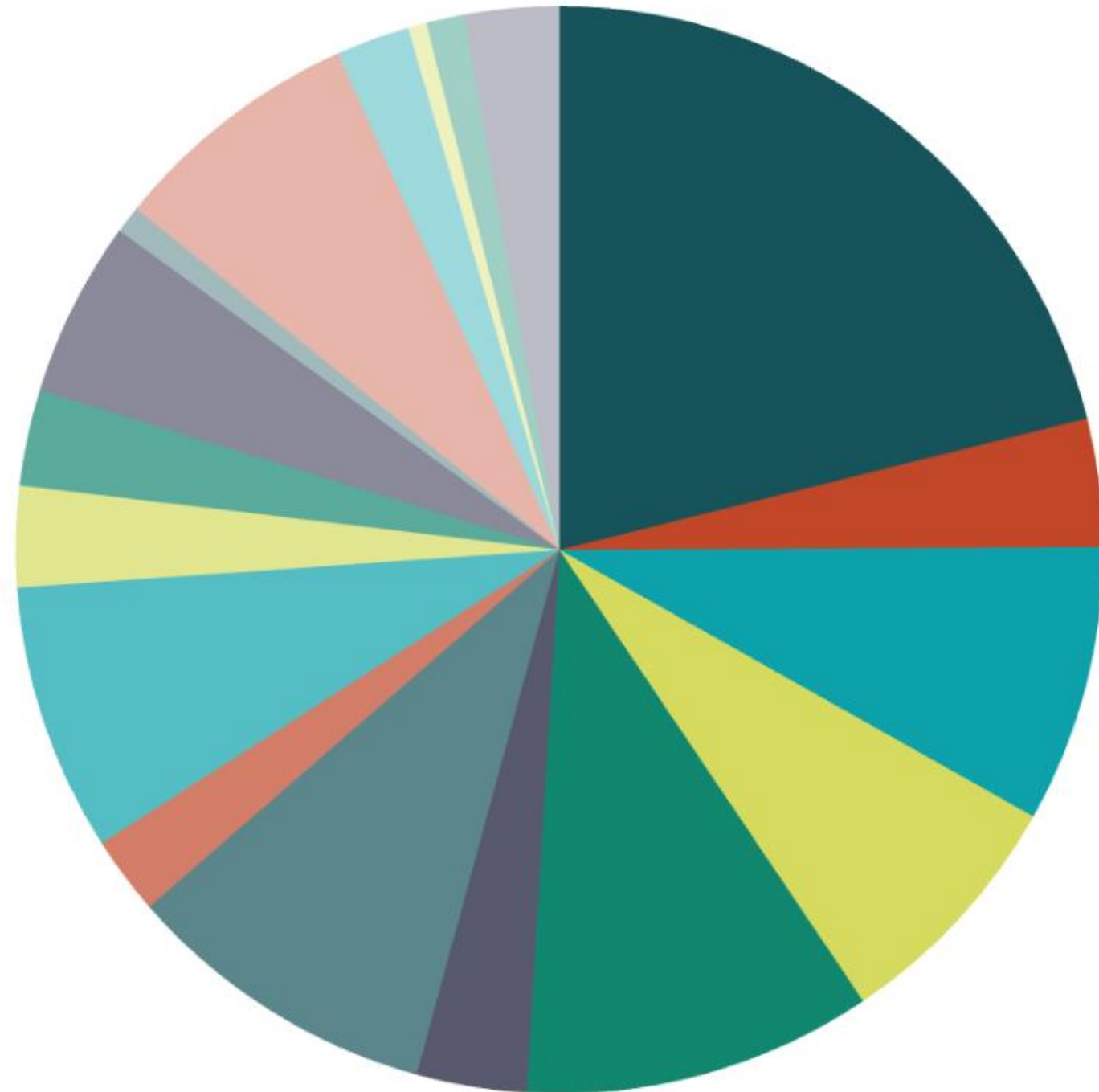
Quarterly Highlights

- **Q1:** Campaigns targeted niche adventurers and couples during the late summer and fall, focusing on outdoor activities, cultural events, and small-town charm throughout Transylvania County.
- **Q2:** Holiday and winter campaigns promoted local shopping, festivals, dining, and winter recreation, with an emphasis on increasing visitation during the quieter months. Print advertising was increased to enhance reach and highlight unique seasonal offerings across the entire county.
- **Q3:** Winter campaigns focused on extended stays, wellness opportunities, and local experiences in all corners of Transylvania County. A winter sweepstakes generated interest for winter and spring travel, while digital efforts reached new markets, including Canada.
- **Q4:** Spring campaigns highlighted family-friendly activities, niche adventures like hiking and biking, and cultural experiences across the county. We refreshed our "Leave it Better" and "Be Waterfall Wise" campaigns to support sustainability and responsible tourism.

Summary of Key Results

As the fiscal year concluded, our efforts successfully increased visibility for Transylvania County across a variety of markets. We launched new campaigns, strengthened our digital presence, and worked closely with local partners to promote the unique beauty and charm of the county year-round. Our work, including the development of the 2024 Adventure Guide and the new Explore Brevard website, laid the foundation for future growth and continued success in positioning Transylvania County as a top destination for adventure, culture, and relaxation.

Marketing FY24 Marketing Plan Budget



- 21% ● Digital
- 4% ● Print
- 8% ● Broadcast
- 8% ● Production
- 10% ● Monthly Marketing Services
- 3% ● Web Updates
- 9% ● Billboards
- 2% ● Social
- 8% ● Adventure Guide
- 3% ● Regional Map
- 3% ● Partner Marketing
- 5% ● PR
- 1% ● Market Research
- 8% ● Special Projects & New Website
- 2% ● Memberships, Sponsorships & Subscriptions
- 1% ● Sweepstakes
- 1% ● TCTDA Marketing Expenditures
- 3% ● Misc / Contingency

\$1,328,369

Marketing

Digital Advertising

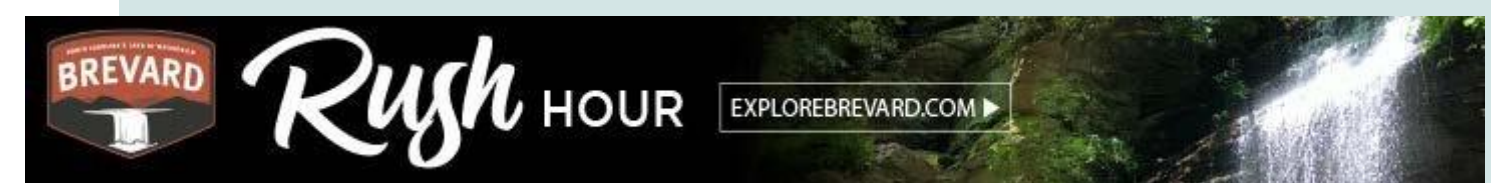
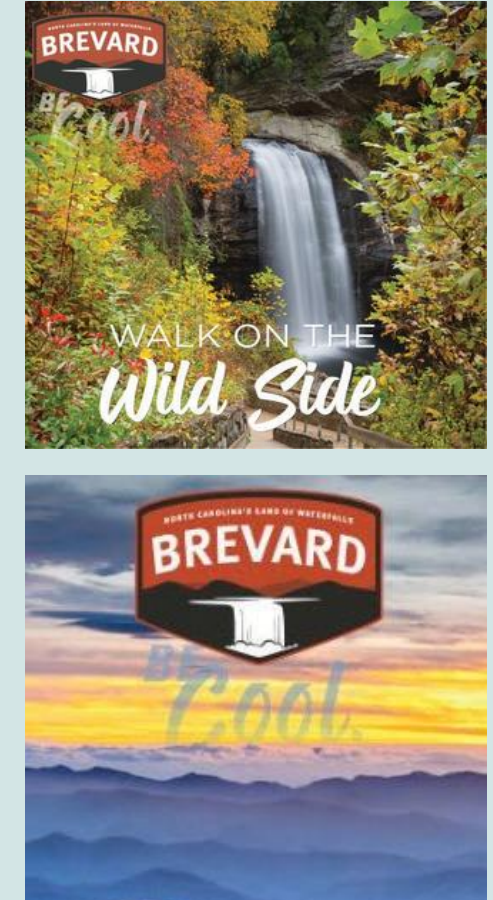
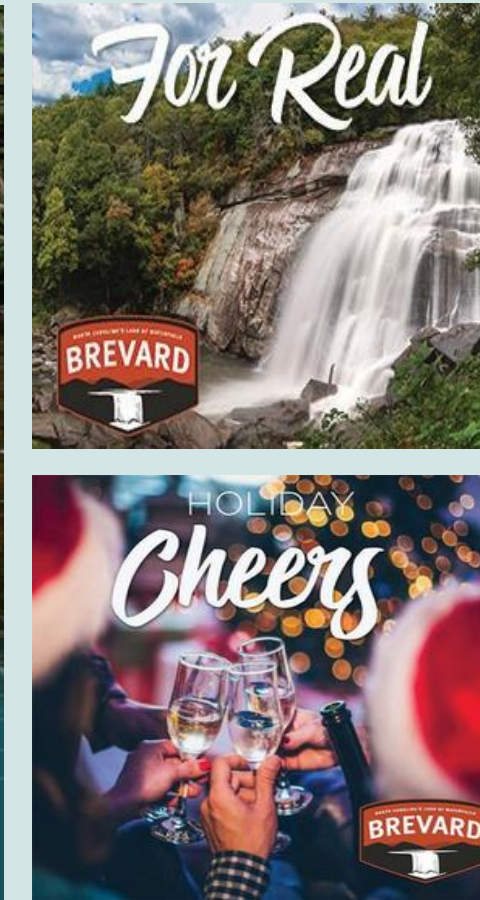
Our digital advertising strategy played a vital role in promoting Transylvania County as a premier destination, with campaigns designed to target key demographics, geographical locations, and interests. Digital efforts were focused on driving traffic to our website, highlighting the county's unique seasonal offerings, and supporting our local partners through increased visibility.

Campaign Highlights

- **Targeting Key Markets:** We concentrated our efforts on drive markets within a 200-mile radius, expanding to national and international audiences, including NC, SC, AL, FL, OH, VA, TN, GA, TX, and Canada. This approach allowed us to attract visitors with the highest likelihood of seasonal visitation.
- **Platform Diversity:** Our digital campaigns utilized a wide array of platforms, including programmatic display ads, native ads, keyword search, pre-roll video, and geofencing. We also leveraged social media platforms like Facebook to target specific audience segments.
- **Content Strategy:** Seasonal creative content showcased outdoor adventure, arts and culture, downtown experiences, festivals, and more. Messaging was consistently updated throughout the year to align with current seasonal opportunities and visitor interests.
- **Retargeting & Prospecting:** Ads were designed to retarget those already familiar with our brand while also prospecting for new viewers. We used data-driven targeting based on audience behaviors, habits, and niche interests to enhance engagement.

Performance Metrics

- **Website Traffic:** Website traffic saw a consistent year-over-year increase across the board, with Facebook ads alone contributing significantly.
 - **First Quarter:** Facebook ads delivered 495,470 impressions and resulted in a 26% increase in traffic to the website.
 - **Second Quarter:** Facebook ads had 1.68 million impressions, resulting in a 49.5% increase in website traffic.
 - **Third Quarter:** Impressions surged to 2.5 million, driving a 13.1% rise in sessions.
- **Collaborative Platforms:** In addition to Facebook, digital outlets like YouTube, Blue Ridge Parkway Association, AccuWeather, Garden & Gun, Our State e-newsletters, and Visit NC co-op programs were leveraged to broaden our reach and engage specific interest groups.



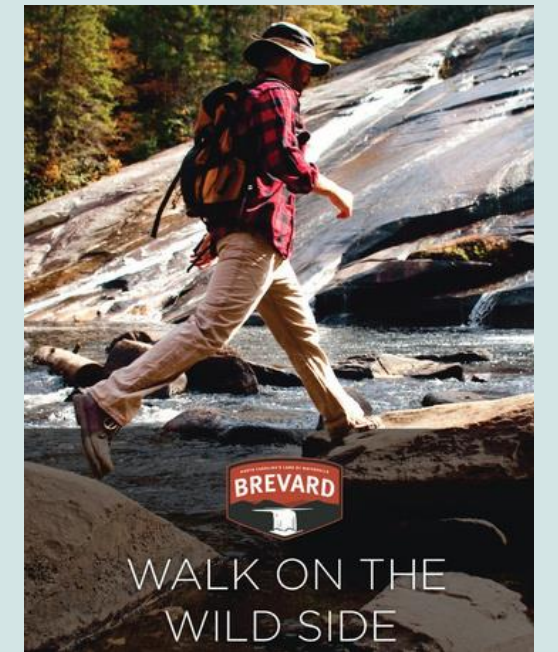
Marketing

Print Advertising

While digital marketing remained the primary focus in Fiscal Year 23/24, we strategically utilized print advertising to reach specific regional and local audiences, supporting our seasonal campaigns and partner marketing initiatives. These targeted placements ensured that Transylvania County maintained a strong presence in reputable publications, complementing our digital efforts.

Campaign Highlights

- Quarter 1:** With a focus on expanding digital marketing, only a few key print placements were utilized during the first quarter. These included AAA Go, Blue Ridge Parkway Guide, and Blue Ridge Outdoors to reach regional and drive markets.
- Quarter 2:** To support holiday and winter marketing, targeted print placements were added. These included ads in AAA Go, Blue Ridge Parkway Guide, Blue Ridge Outdoors (Adventure Towns), Our State (holiday), Our State "Towns We Love", Visit NC Travel Guide (annual), Southern Living (arts/Carolinas), Birding Magazine, and Food & Travel (national, December through February). Partner co-op ads were featured in The Laurel, WNC Magazine, and Blue Ridge Outdoors.
- Quarter 3:** In the third quarter, print ads continued to complement digital efforts. Notable placements included two Our State full-page ads, a Food & Travel cover and advertorial in the winter edition, and Outside Magazine. Partner co-op ads appeared in Blue Ridge Outdoors and WNC Magazine.
- Quarter 4:** Spring and summer campaigns were supported by print placements in Our State (North Carolina Outdoors special issue), Southern Living (Regional Travel Directory and Carolinas Arts), and The Laurel and WNC Magazine through partner co-op ads. An Our State back cover ad was also secured due to the strength of the creative.



Marketing

TV & Radio

Throughout FY24, we strategically utilized radio and television advertising to reach key target markets. Our 30-second TV spots, including "Be Cool" and "Heart of Adventure," were broadcast across several major regional and national markets, generating significant awareness for Transylvania County. These campaigns were supported by digital video placements on platforms like YouTube and social media, as well as live radio reads. Targeted channels and markets allowed us to effectively highlight the area's unique seasonal appeal, driving increased visibility for Brevard and the surrounding areas.

Campaign Highlights

- **Quarter 1:** "Be Cool" and "Heart of Adventure" TV spots aired in Raleigh, Charlotte, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Charleston, Nashville, and Orlando, with Atlanta delivering the strongest metrics. Ads were also shown on YouTube, pre-roll platforms, and social media.
- **Quarter 2:** The holiday versions of our TV spots continued in key markets, including Raleigh, Charlotte, Atlanta, and Orlando. Ads also ran on CBS Sunday Morning in Charlotte and the Upstate, and at Charlotte Cinemas. Digital video content was promoted on YouTube, pre-roll, and social media.
- **Quarter 3:** "Be Cool" TV ads ran in Charlotte, Greensboro, Atlanta, and Knoxville. Radio "live reads" were introduced on WESC in the Upstate, promoting winter experiences in Transylvania County. Video content continued across YouTube, digital, and social platforms.
- **Quarter 4:** TV spots were broadcast in Charlotte, Atlanta, Nashville, and Knoxville, as well as on CBS Sunday Morning and WRAL-TV's local news in Raleigh. Digital video ads were maintained on YouTube, pre-roll platforms, and social media.



Marketing

E-Blasts & Blogs

E-Blasts

We produced two e-blasts each month, The Adventurist and Field Notes, which were delivered to 37,663 opt-in subscribers. The Adventurist, Explore Brevard's signature e-calendar of events, was distributed at the end of each month, highlighting top events of interest for the following month, and inviting visitors to enjoy unique offerings of the area. Field Notes offered a deep dive into various topics, highlighting the characteristics that make our destination so special. One topic was picked each month, ranging from waterfalls to practices promoting sustainability.

Top Performing Adventurists:



December 2023



March 2024

Top Performing Field Notes:



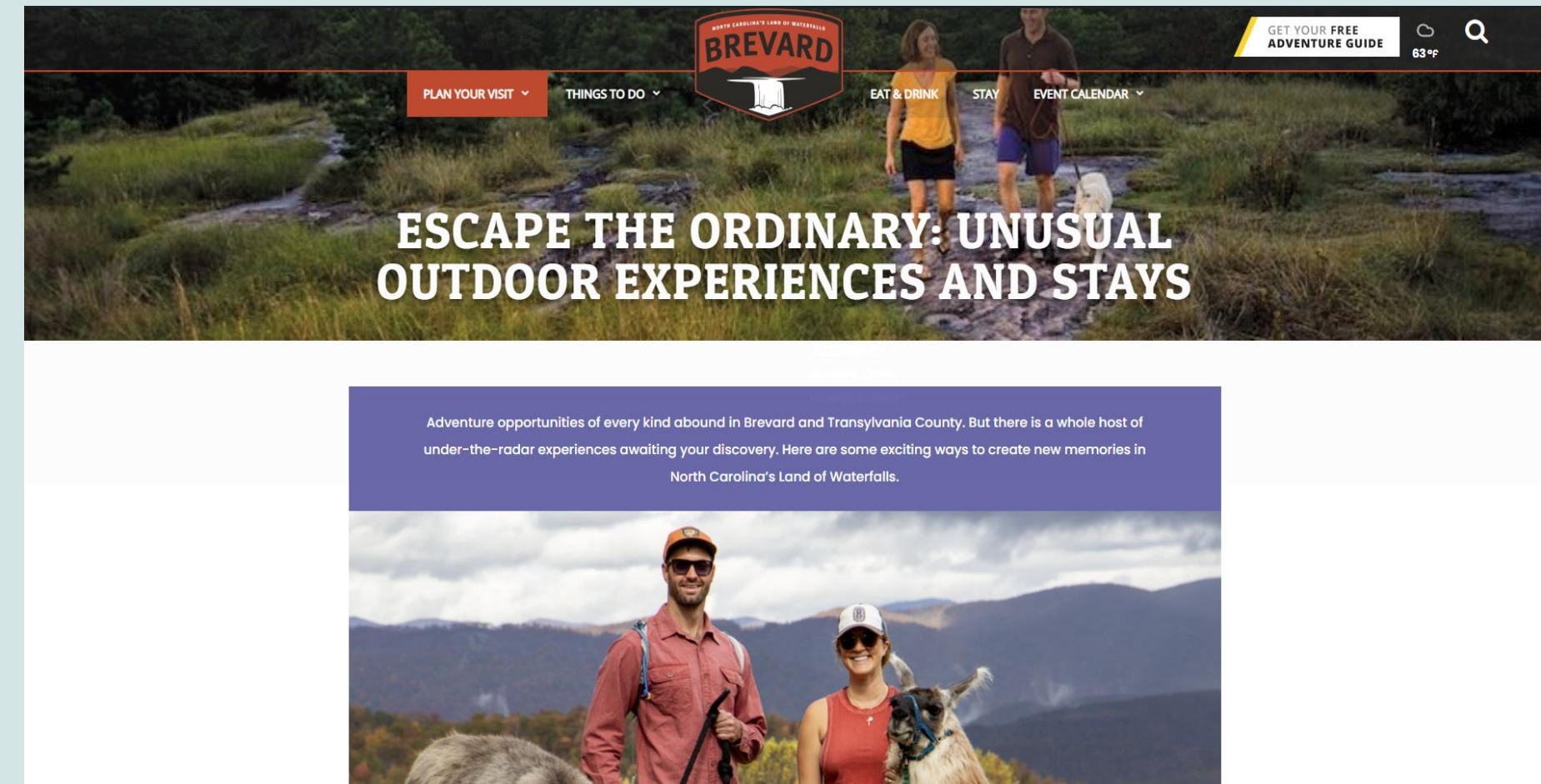
August 2023

Forest Bathing – Renewal and Rejuvenation through Nature



March 2024

Top Hiking Trails To Explore Near Brevard, NC



Blogs

In FY24, many new blogs were added to explorebrevard.com, enhancing resources and engagement for visitors. Every Field Notes post was converted into a blog, and several new entries were created in collaboration with Outdoor NC. Some older blogs were also updated to keep information fresh and relevant. This effort resulted in a diverse mix of top-performing blogs, both new and existing, resonating with readers.

Highlights include:

- Something's Brewing: Top 5 Best Breweries Near Brevard - 6,778 views
- 8 Iconic Brevard Experiences - 5,675 views
- Escape the Ordinary: Unusual Outdoor Experiences and Stays - 4,819 views
- 5 Best Brevard Swimming Holes: Splash Down - 3,594 views

Marketing

Sponsored Content E-Newsletters

In FY24, paid features in special newsletters by Blue Ridge Outdoors, Our State, Romantic Asheville, and Outside Magazine were used in marketing efforts. These partnerships allowed us to engage with a diverse and engaged audience, providing valuable exposure for Brevard and Transylvania County.

RomanticAsheville.com

Want a Romantic Escape?

The magic of love is alive in Western North Carolina. Check out our handpicked list of romantic getaways below. Experience intimate settings, charming ambiance, and unforgettable moments in picturesque locales.



Win a Dreamy Romantic Getaway to Brevard, NC!


Here's your chance to escape with your loved one to a luxury inn, enjoy a horseback waterfall tour, dine at The Bohemian, and more. Valued at over \$1,700, don't miss your chance to enter from January 10-31, 2024.

[Click here for more details and to enter.](#)



Blind Tiger

Enjoy boutique charm and create the perfect backdrop for a lovers' getaway.




Beaufort House Inn

Indulge in the romance of a historic 1894 Victorian mansion with a lush garden.

Our State
CELEBRATING NORTH CAROLINA


Winter On the Wild Side



BROUGHT TO YOU BY TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM.

Brevard's 250 waterfalls, 100,000-plus acres of public land, and authentic mountain-town setting give visitors an unforgettable opportunity to step into adventures of all flavors. Whether your idea of a getaway involves exploration, unforgettable art, delicious dining, live music, or a cozy cottage shared with the people you love, you'll find what you need to warm up this winter.


[Learn More](#)




Blaze Your Trail

Visit [ExploreBrevard.com](#) to discover places to stay and things to do during your Transylvania County adventure. And while you're there, be sure to sign up for an Adventure Guide to Brevard and Transylvania County, so you can get the scoop for your next trip.

[View in browser](#)



A MESSAGE FROM OUR BRAND PARTNER




Break out of the winter doldrums with a trip to Brevard. Explore 300 miles of epic singletrack. Discover remote backcountry camping experiences on over 100,000 acres of pristine public lands. And pick your favorite waterfall from our 250. Then make a beeline for Brevard, where you can choose from five stellar craft brewers and a live music scene as dynamic and varied as you'll find in any big city.

Our tap rooms, cafes and pubs are ready to fuel your adventures by serving up everything from Carolina BBQ to piled high burgers to super stuffed burritos.


Adventure is calling.

[Start here](#)

You are receiving this Outside Partner Offers email because you are subscribed to Outside Online, which is a part of the Outside Network.




Water is a constant, reassuring presence in Transylvania County. It flows down from some of the highest peaks in the Blue Ridge and gives rise to the 3rd oldest river in the world – the French Broad – and multiple smaller tributaries. Its abundance also fuels a wealth of waterfalls, some 250 in all, the highest concentration in North America. Thankfully, access to the water wonders of Transylvania County is easy. Read on to learn what it takes to go with the flow.



Waterfall Hunting

Waterfalls abound throughout the county. Consider Pisgah National Forest, DuPont State Recreational Forest, and Gorges State Park as sensible starting points. [ExploreBrevard.com](#) provides an excellent overview of the most popular falls on these [public lands](#). Pick up a copy of our Adventure Guide and Waterfall Map at the Visitor Center at 175 East Main Street in downtown Brevard. Or access it [here](#).

Please remember while our waterfalls are beautiful, the areas around them can be dangerous. Protect yourself and your loved ones by learning how to [Be Waterfall Wise](#).



Paddling & Paddleboarding

Marketing Billboards

Over the past fiscal year, we invested in four strategically placed billboards to draw attention to Transylvania County's stunning natural assets and/or enhance brand visibility among regional travelers. Three major billboards—positioned along I-40 westbound from Hickory, I-85 near the turn-off to Asheville, and I-26 at the Asheville Regional Airport—serve as highly visible placements. These billboards showcase the area's seasonal allure, with spring/summer and fall/winter imagery rotated biannually. Throughout the year, the boards highlighted iconic scenes, including Looking Glass Falls in the spring and a mountain biking scene at Pilot Cove during the fall.

In addition to the three regional boards, a local brand board on Highway 280 near the Transylvania County line has been an effective reminder of the area's iconic attractions. This board, visible to both visitors and residents, was updated seasonally to spotlight scenes like Rainbow Falls in autumn and a vibrant cycling image in the spring, showcasing the county's outdoor recreation opportunities.

These billboards have been strategically placed to maximize impact and serve as both a warm welcome and a compelling call to action, inviting travelers to explore the natural beauty and unique offerings of Transylvania County.



I-40 Seasonal Activity



I-26 Iconic Brand Asset | Directional



I-85 Seasonal Activity



Hwy 280 Welcome | Claiming Destination and Iconic Asset

Marketing

Public Relations

We implemented various public relations initiatives, primarily focusing on unpaid media coverage, due to its high level of effectiveness. Unpaid media is often viewed as more credible by audiences because it carries a perception of objectivity and impartiality. It can be particularly effective with our destination due to its incredible natural beauty and many one-of-a-kind attractions. Simply put, a lot of folks fall in love with Brevard and Transylvania County once they get here. With all of this in mind, we place a high value on this area of marketing and have built and nurtured essential relationships with travel writers and the public relations team at Visit NC. Below you'll find a list of key FAM and media relations efforts from this past year, followed by editorial highlights.

Familiarization (FAM) Tours

FAM tours include us hosting media for an immersive look at Transylvania County's unique attractions and natural beauty, helping them capture the essence of the region for their audiences. They typically result in immediate coverage on social or a planned article, often with additional coverage over the next few years.

- **Emily Hart – UPROXX Writer**

- In July, we hosted travel writer Emily Hart with UPROXX, an entertainment and culture website. Emily visited four WNC communities during her trip, posting to social media. Her first UPROXX article was published in August, followed by two more articles in April, one for UPROXX and one for Business Insider.

- **Amy White – Freelance Writer**

- In June, a national travel and eco writer visited Transylvania County in tandem with AdventureElevate. Amy writes for National Geographic, Garden & Gun, and Sierra. She is a key national sustainability writer. She subsequently published an article for Sierra Magazine.

- **Stinson Carter – Freelance Writer**

- Stinson Carter, a writer for Esquire, Fatherly, and MSNBC visited in April. Along with his family, he explored Pisgah National Forest, Downtown Brevard and the Toxaway area. He posted to social media during his stay.

- **Robin Sutton Anders**

- We hosted Robin Sutton for a visit to the Greystone Inn. Robin was at the Greystone Inn doing research for a special feature about unique historic homes in North Carolina. Her article appeared in the July edition of Our State magazine.

- **Adventure ELEVATE**

- In June, we hosted five select media who attended the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) conference in Asheville. They posted to social media during their trip and we expect several stories to come as a result.

- **Tee George – Influencer**

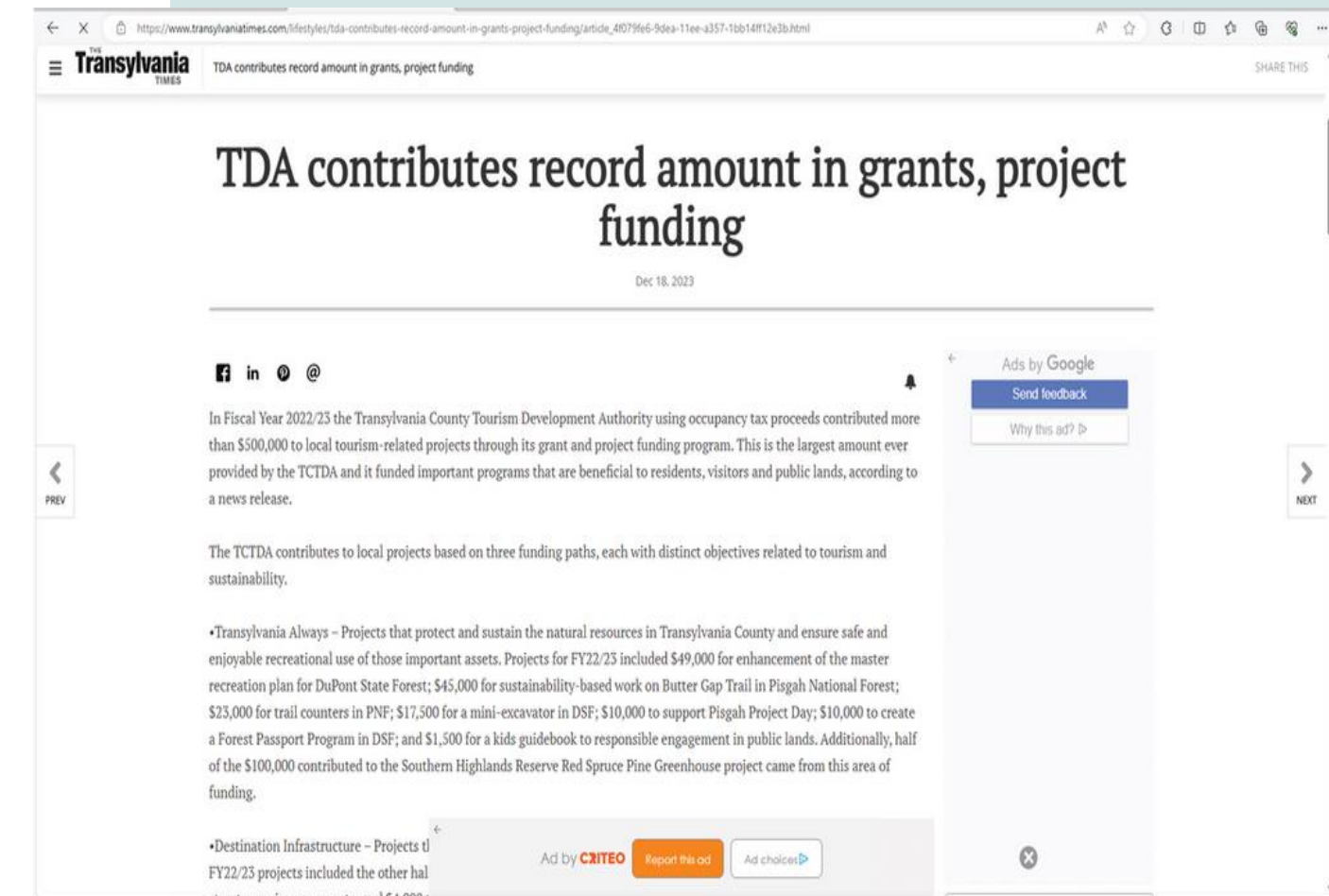
- We hosted outdoor adventure influencer @_asipoftee_ in coordination with Visit NC. She posted to social media during her trip.



Marketing Public Relations

Media Relations

- Supported many travel writers and editorial staff from afar by providing local insights, fresh story ideas, innovative angles, upcoming events, high-quality photos, and connections with locals who were willing to share their stories, traditions, and expertise.
- Attended various media missions:
 - Washington D.C. Media Mis
 - Media sessions during the Adventure ELEVATE Conferene in Asheville, hosted by the Adventure Travel Trade Association.
 - Media sessions during the NC 365 Tourism Conference, hosted by Visit NC. Led to subsequent North Carolina Weekend features on ATOM and Pisgah Fish Camp.
 - Virtual PechaKucha style presentation to Meredith/DotDash Publishing for story ideas for the 2024 NC Travel Guide, coordinated by Visit NC.
- Sent approximately 5 press releases covering newsworthy topics ranging from the launch of our 2024 Leave It Better campaign to introducing new staff members.
- Selectively connected with and provided support for influencers who we felt had the number of followers and type of messaging to provide high ROI for our resources.



Marketing Public Relations

The editorial features listed below were often produced with the help of our media relations and FAM tour efforts. Some articles derived inspiration from past relationships, others were meticulously crafted with our support and resources, and some surfaced unexpectedly.

Noteworthy Articles

- Southern Living Magazine Online: "15 Fun Things to Do In Brevard, North Carolina"
- UPROXX: "Road Trip From Charlotte To Asheville: The Ultimate Western North Carolina Adventure Guide"
- *The Laurel of Asheville*: "This April In Transylvania County: Pisgah Projects, Art Market & More"
- *Food & Travel Magazine*: "Falling for Brevard"
- *Strava Online*: "Top 10 Mountain Bike Destinations In the USA: 2023"
- Backroad Portfolio: "THE MOUNTAINS ARE CALLING Appalachia summons cyclists to her rugged backroads and hills"
- Southern Living: "18 Things to Do In Pisgah National Forest"
- UPROXX: "US National Forests & Recreation Areas to Visit When the National Parks are Too Crowded"
- Business Insider: "I've visited all 50 states solo. These are the 8 places I'd pick for a relaxing, low-key vacation."

Noteworthy TV

- WSPA-TV's *Morning News*: "Holiday Windows Competition, tree lighting, and more this weekend in Brevard"
- WSPA's "Let's Eat" Segment: Quixote Feature
- CBS *Sunday Morning*: "Gisele Bündchen on modeling, divorce, and her true self" - Included coverage of her role as spokesperson for Gaia Herbs
- PBS - UNC TV's North Carolina Weekend: "Your Holiday Weekend"
- PBS - UNC TV's North Carolina Weekend: Pisgah Fish Camp Feature



For a full list of articles and stories, [Click here](#).

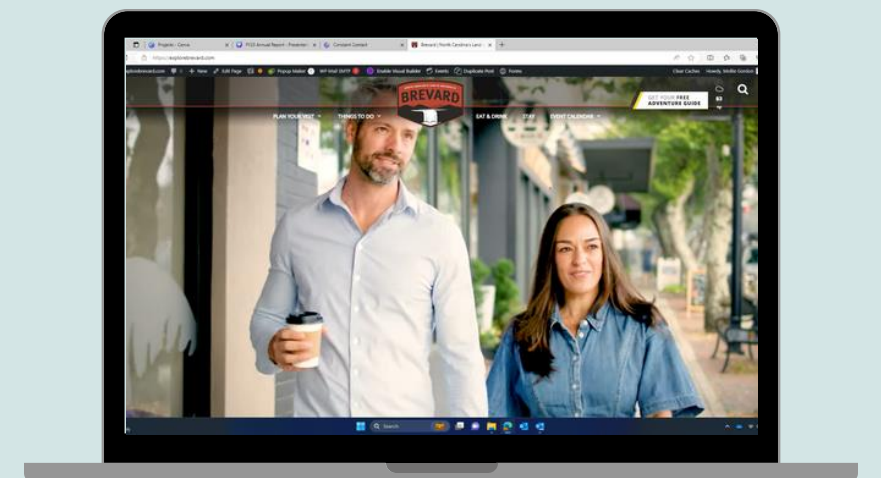
Marketing Electronic & Digital Metrics

From FY23 to FY24, our digital and electronic metrics showed substantial growth, reflecting an expanded audience across multiple platforms.

Growth By Platform

- **Instagram followers** grew from around 19.8K to 21.4K, an increase of 8%.
- **Facebook followers** rose from about 17.5K to 18.7K, marking a 7% increase.
- **E-Blast subscribers** expanded significantly, climbing from 22,953 to 37,663, representing a 64% increase. Much of this was due to our holiday and winter sweepstakes, which were newly promoted through Romantic Asheville and generated more than 10,000 entries each.
- **Website visitors** saw a rise from 291,570 to 318,000, up by 9%.

These metrics highlight our ongoing success in expanding our audience and attracting more people interested in learning about Transylvania County.



Marketing

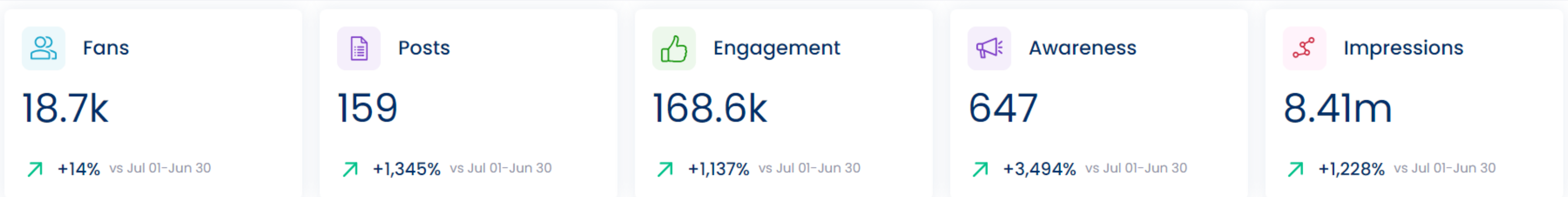
Social Media Metrics

In FY24, our social media presence saw significant growth over the prior year, driven by a more strategic approach and a commitment to authenticity. By incorporating locals and user-generated content, we've created a more genuine connection with our audience on Facebook and Instagram, inviting followers to experience the heart of our community. These expanded efforts have not only broadened our reach but also strengthened engagement, allowing us to showcase the unique spirit of our area through the eyes of those who know it best.

Instagram



Facebook



Marketing

Top-Performing Social Media Posts

Instagram

- **Views on Top-Performing Post:** 9,255

The top-performing Instagram post was a reel of Looking Glass Falls in Autumn. It helped promote fall travel and show our iconic imagery to our audience.

Facebook

- **Views on Top-Performing Post:** 63,773

The top-performing Facebook post was a post about voting for Brevard in USA Today's 10 Best Small Towns in the South competition. The post engaged fans of Brevard and drew lots of engagement.

YouTube

- **YouTube Subscribers:** 349
- **Views on Top-Performing Post:** 68,982

The top-performing YouTube video in FY24 was Heart of Adventure. It showcases all of the adventures Transylvania County offers from the hitting the trails to exploring Downtown Brevard.



Performance		Last updated on Sep 15, 2024	
Impressions Number of times this post has been seen.	Reach Number of unique users that have seen this post.	9,255	7,004
Total saved Number of unique users that saved this post.	Shares Number of times this post has been shared.	25	111
Likes Number of times this post has been liked.	Comments Number of comments written on this post.	849	10
Plays Number of times this post was played	Avg. Watch Time Avg. number of seconds this post was item was watched.	9,255	5



Performance		Last updated on May 11, 2024	
Impressions Number of times this post has been seen.	Engaged users Number of users engaged with this post.	63,773	3,006
Likes Number of times this post has been liked.	Comments Number of comments on this post.	1,162	201
Shares Number of times this post has been shared	Clicks Number of times this post has been clicked.	137	4,286

Marketing Adventure Guide

Each year, we produce an Adventure Guide that serves as our flagship piece, celebrating Transylvania County's remarkable offerings. This guide is designed to inspire visitors by showcasing our natural wonders, vibrant arts and culture, unique festivals, welcoming communities, thriving music scene, diverse culinary options, craft breweries, and more. Complete directories of accommodations, dining, camps, resources, and a fold-out waterfall map with trail details and difficulty levels add further depth to this essential resource.

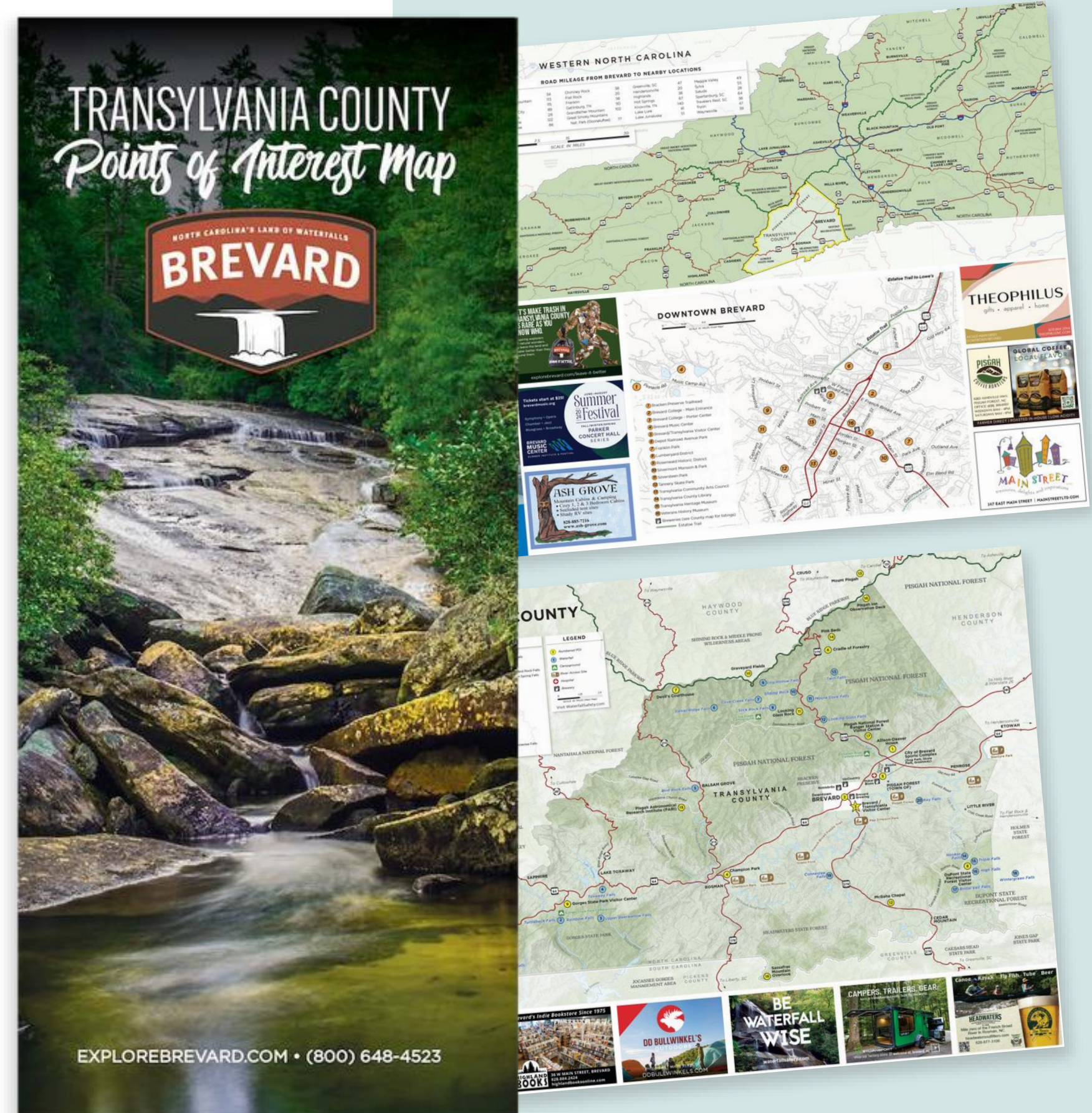
Our Adventure Guide also includes advertisements from local partners, providing a platform to promote businesses throughout the county. For FY24, we printed 90,000 copies, strategically distributing them across local and regional locations and sending them to visitor centers and individuals worldwide. This guide is one of our most effective tools for inviting travelers to experience all that Transylvania County has to offer.



Marketing

Points of Interest Map

We produce a stand-alone map that spotlights Transylvania County, highlighting over fifty points of interest, river access points, and waterfalls on one side, with a map of Downtown Brevard and a regional map centered on Transylvania County on the reverse. Local partner advertisements are also included, providing additional resources for visitors. This map is designed to guide visitors already in Transylvania County, helping them make the most of their stay by easily navigating our many unique attractions. For FY24, we produced 50,000 maps, which are distributed to key locations throughout the county.



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IV. Destination Management Highlights

Destination Management Transylvania Always

In FY24, we deepened our commitment to sustainable tourism, responsible travel, and environmental preservation throughout Transylvania County with messaging campaigns, participation in The Outdoor Economy Conference, Outdoor NC initiatives, and support of our partners.

A continued focus was supporting initiatives tied to the French Broad River Blueway Plan, with MountainTrue's Jack Henderson providing regular updates to our Transylvania Always Committee (TAC). This collaboration led to grant funding for projects aligned with the Blueway, including our backing of the Rosman Riverfront Park Master Plan.

During the winter we hosted a land managers meeting, where we brought together leaders from Pisgah National Forest, DuPont State Recreational Forest, Gorges State Park, and Headwaters State Forest to review campaigns and discuss trends and concerns for visitor education.

We were pleased to join 15 other DMO's in NC for the Outdoor NC "Trail Town Stewardship Designation" pilot program, led by Visit NC's Outdoor NC initiative. This program emphasizes sustainable tourism and responsible visitor practices, with key resources soon to be featured in the Outdoor NC Trail Town Visitor Guide.

As part of our involvement in Outdoor NC's "Trail Town Stewardship Designation" pilot program, we launched the Explore Responsibly campaign. This initiative emphasizes sustainable tourism and responsible visitor practices including Leave It Better and Be Waterfall Wise, but also other elements like respecting locals, shopping local, and staying where you play. By fostering these values, we aim to inspire visitors to take a holistic approach to responsible travel, ensuring that Transylvania County remains a cherished destination for generations to come.

We also expanded our public outreach through rebranded educational kiosks at Bracken Mountain Preserve and DuPont State Recreational Forest, delivering impactful safety and stewardship messages to visitors directly at popular trailheads.



Destination Management

Transylvania Always – Leave It Better & Be Waterfall Wise

In FY24, our Leave It Better and Be Waterfall Wise campaigns continued to shape a culture of responsible tourism in Transylvania County. Through expanded social media, press releases, and displays at community events, we underscored the importance of safety and preservation, reminding visitors of their role in protecting our landscapes for future generations.

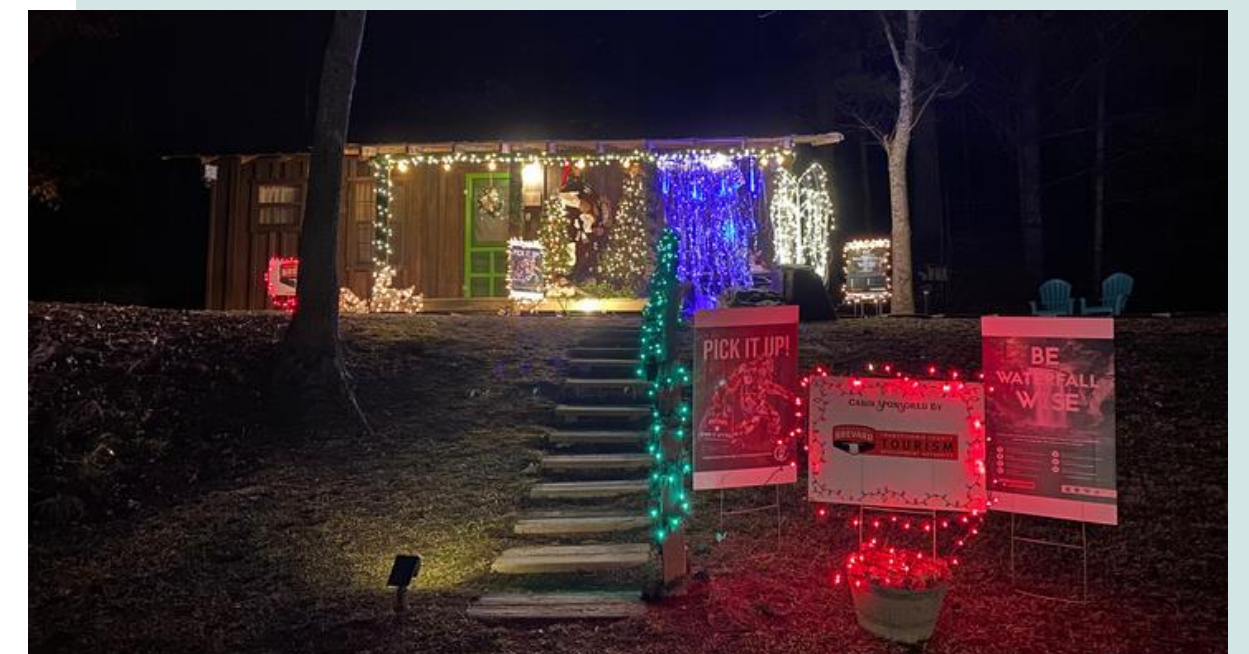
Kicking off the year, Executive Director Clark Lovelace appeared on WSPA to discuss Be Waterfall Wise, sharing critical safety tips for enjoying our waterfalls responsibly. A Leave It Better video series was also debuted, featuring local experts sharing stewardship principles and offering practical ways for visitors to care for our landscapes. Building on this momentum, our 8-foot Trashquatch cut-out joined us at the Outdoor Economy Conference in Cherokee, bringing our Leave It Better message to a national audience.

Trashquatch also gained new fans in a children's book written by a local advocate with funding from us, inspiring young readers to join in preserving our natural spaces. We also got a pull-up Trashquatch banner to complement our cut-out and make display at events easier.

In December, our campaign messages received special visibility at Deerwoode Reserve's Light Up the Night, where we decorated a cabin with Leave It Better and Be Waterfall Wise themes. Visitors enjoyed seeing the life-sized Trashquatch on the porch and a "waterfall" display, which added a creative touch to our message of environmental stewardship.

Near the end of the fiscal year, we introduced updated kiosk signage at DuPont State Recreational Forest and Bracken Preserve, prominently featuring Leave It Better and Be Waterfall Wise messaging to guide visitors on responsible outdoor practices.

To further expand our reach ahead of the busy summer season, we released a toolkit for local partners, providing resources to help them amplify these messages with visitors.



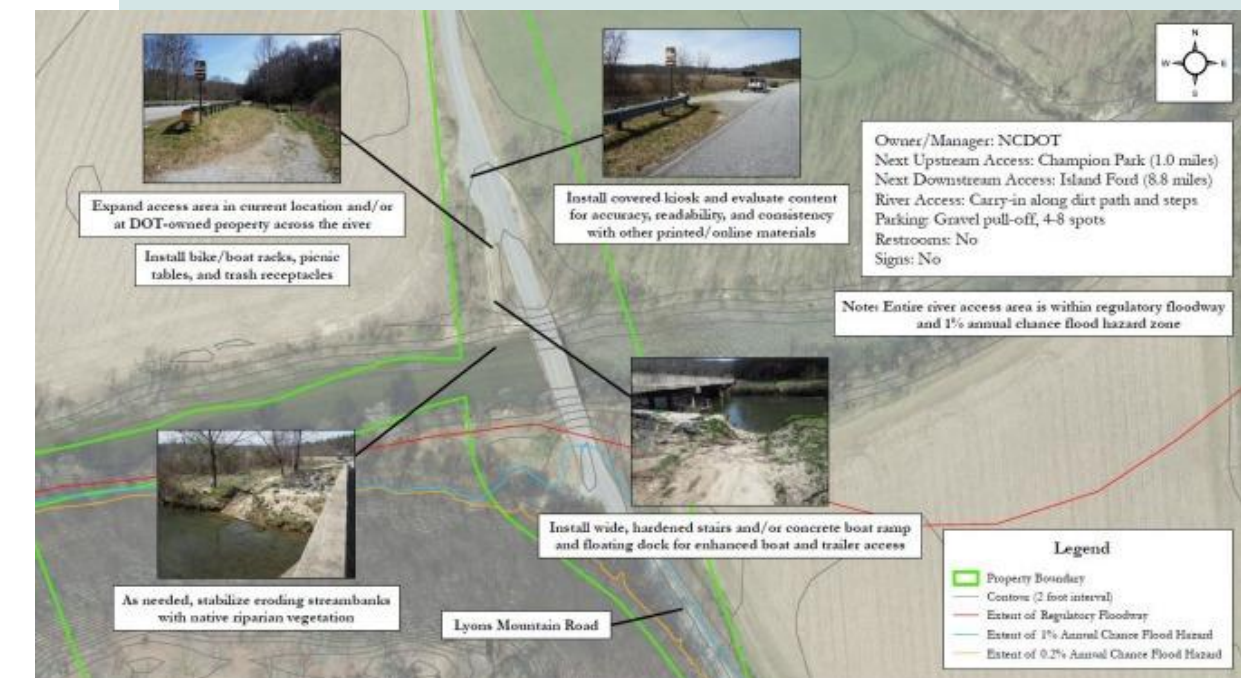
Destination Management

Transylvania Always – Project Funding

Projects that are aligned with the mission of the TCTDA’s Transylvania Always initiative by either addressing the impact of users in public lands or creating safe and enjoyable use of natural recreational assets.

Q1

- **City of Brevard: “Bracken Preserve Expansion & Trail Enhancement” \$25,000**
 - This grant enabled the City of Brevard to acquire and develop 34 additional acres to expand Bracken Preserve and initiate the creation of new and more accessible trails within the property. The \$50,000 investment was funded with both Transylvania Always and Destination Infrastructure funds.



Q2

- **MountainTrue: “Lyons Mountain River Access – Pre-Construction Site Design” \$15,851.52**
 - As one of the first projects to come out of the Strategic Master Plan for the French Broad River Blueway, this high-priority project is designed to revitalize and improve the public river access point at the bridge along Lyons Mountain Road in Rosman.



Q3

- **The Pisgah Conservancy: “Estatoe Trail Improvement Project (& Pisgah Project Day)” \$43,270**
 - Phase one of the Estatoe Trail renovation, a section of the trail located in Pisgah National Forest, addresses longstanding safety concerns by replacing 110’ of deteriorated boardwalk with three durable 16’ fiberglass bridges and 62’ of improved trail tread.
- **MountainTrue: “French Broad River Stewardship & Enhancement” \$4,000**
 - To better respond to woody debris blockages and garbage removal, this project provides the heavy equipment necessary to tend to our French Broad River’s narrow corridors and steep banks in our headwaters with the help of a jon boat and other equipment.
- **Headwaters Outfitters: “French Broad River Clean-up/Paddling Film Fest World Tour” \$1,000**
 - The 33rd annual volunteer event to clean up the French Broad River, bringing out thousands of pounds of trash from the water and its banks, making a cleaner and safer experience for its users and inhabitants.



Destination Management

Transylvania Always – Project Funding

Q4

- **The Pisgah Conservancy & U.S. Forest Service: “Pisgah River Rangers” \$4,999**
 - This program enhances Pisgah’s ecological health by educating visitors and providing stewardship for long-term protection. The grant allowed for more staff, enabling simultaneous educational and stewardship projects. It employs local college students and recent graduates, giving them experience with nonprofit and federal agencies to develop future public lands leaders.
- **MountainTrue: “Updated French Broad River Stewardship & Enhancement” \$4,000**
 - To better respond to woody debris blockages and garbage removal, this initiative provides the heavy equipment necessary to tend to our French Broad River’s narrow corridors and steep banks in our headwaters with the help of a Jon boat, trailer, various saws and other equipment.
- **MountainTrue: “French Broad Paddle Trail Rest Stop & Campsite –Poplar Bend” \$4,680**
 - This project fulfills part of the “Strategic Master Plan for the French Broad River Blueway – Transylvania County” (The Blueway Plan), funded by the TCTDA. It addresses the need for a new river access site near the Everett Road bridge in Pisgah Forest. MountainTrue’s Poplar Bend project, in partnership with Conserving Carolina, will develop a new rest stop and campsite for paddlers along the French Broad River.

Total FY24 funding: \$98,800.52



Destination Management

Destination Infrastructure

In FY24, the Destination Infrastructure Committee (DIC) remained dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of Transylvania County's infrastructure and resources as a premier tourism destination. Established following the success of the Transylvania Always initiative, the DIC focuses on providing funding support for local projects that align with its objectives. This involves identifying and prioritizing current needs while engaging key stakeholders to foster shared interests in addressing those needs.

Throughout the year, the DIC identified the enhancement of bike racks and signage as critical infrastructure improvements. The committee actively advocated for these enhancements to the City of Brevard. In September, DIC members presented at the City's Downtown Master Plan Committee meeting, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive strategy for improving these elements. Continued discussions with city officials focused on securing funding to address these infrastructure concerns.

As the year progressed, the DIC supported ongoing projects such as the Estatoe Trail, which is currently developing plans for necessary signage improvements. Additionally, DIC members advocated for the Rosman Riverfront Park Master Plan during the Town of Rosman's Board of Aldermen meeting. These discussions, in partnership with Regional Planner Kayla DiCristina from Land of Sky, aimed to establish a framework for Destination Infrastructure grant support across the plan's three phases.

In line with the organizations strategic goal of enhancing local infrastructure, the Board of Directors issued the first payment of \$250,000 toward a \$1 million pledge for the Ecusta Trail project during the March board meeting. This funding request from the City of Brevard is aimed at covering design and engineering costs, as well as the development of construction-ready plans for essential infrastructure components like bridges and road crossings.

Through these efforts, the Destination Infrastructure Committee continues to play a vital role in fostering a welcoming environment for visitors, ensuring Transylvania County remains an attractive destination for years to come.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Signage For the Greenway:

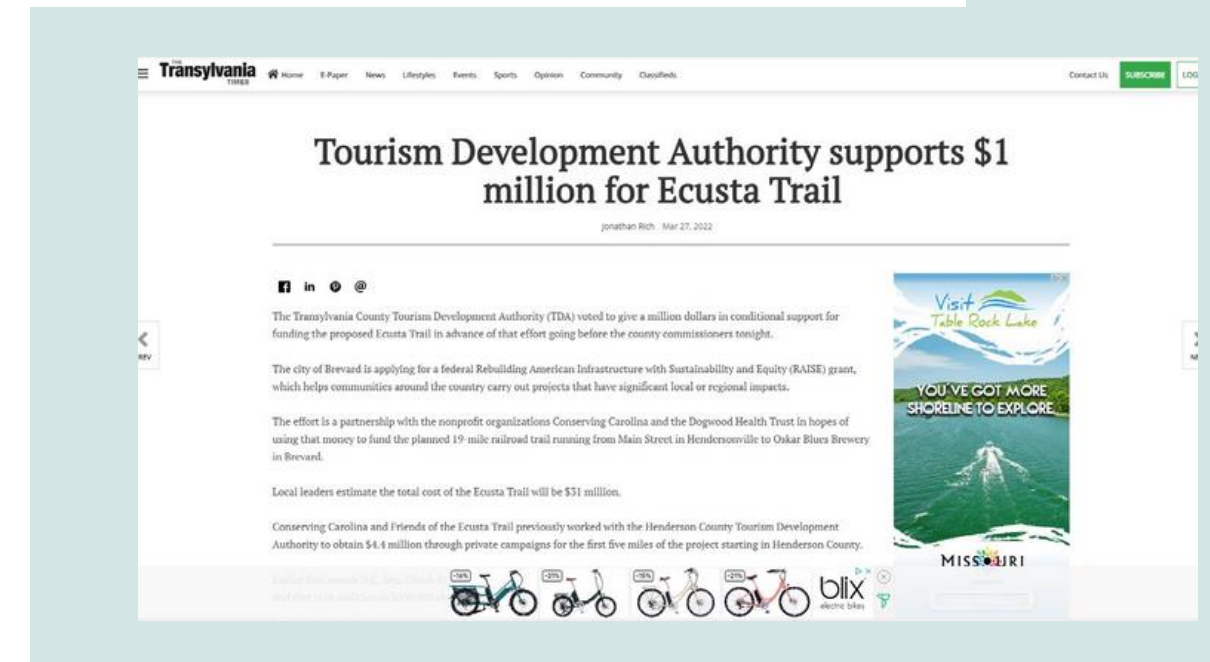


Image courtesy of the City of Brevard

Destination Management

Destination Infrastructure – Project Funding

Projects that make a substantial impact on the tourism infrastructure of the destination, with cycling, downtown Brevard, entryways to our public lands, arts, music, and outlying communities being identified as priorities. These are typically brick-and-mortar projects.

Q1

- **City of Brevard: “Bracken Preserve Expansion & Trail Enhancement” \$24,999**
 - This grant enabled the City of Brevard to acquire and develop 34 additional acres to expand Bracken Preserve and initiate the creation of new and more accessible trails within the property. The \$50,000 investment was funded with both Transylvania Always and Destination Infrastructure funds.
- **Transylvania County: “Holiday Season Christmas Tree” \$4,900**
 - To keep our decorations as bright as our holiday cheer, the TCTDA will fund the purchase of 140 commercial UV protection treated, shatterproof, giant replacement ornaments and red bows to adorn the Transylvania County Courthouse’s fir tree in style.

Q2

- **Blue Ridge Bicycle Club: “Bench on Brevard Area Trail System” \$706.85**
 - In a partnership with the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club, an attractive black bench (consistent with those found within downtown Brevard) will be added alongside the Estatoe Trail on Railroad Avenue as an added piece of infrastructure that helps support the multi-use nature of this trail.



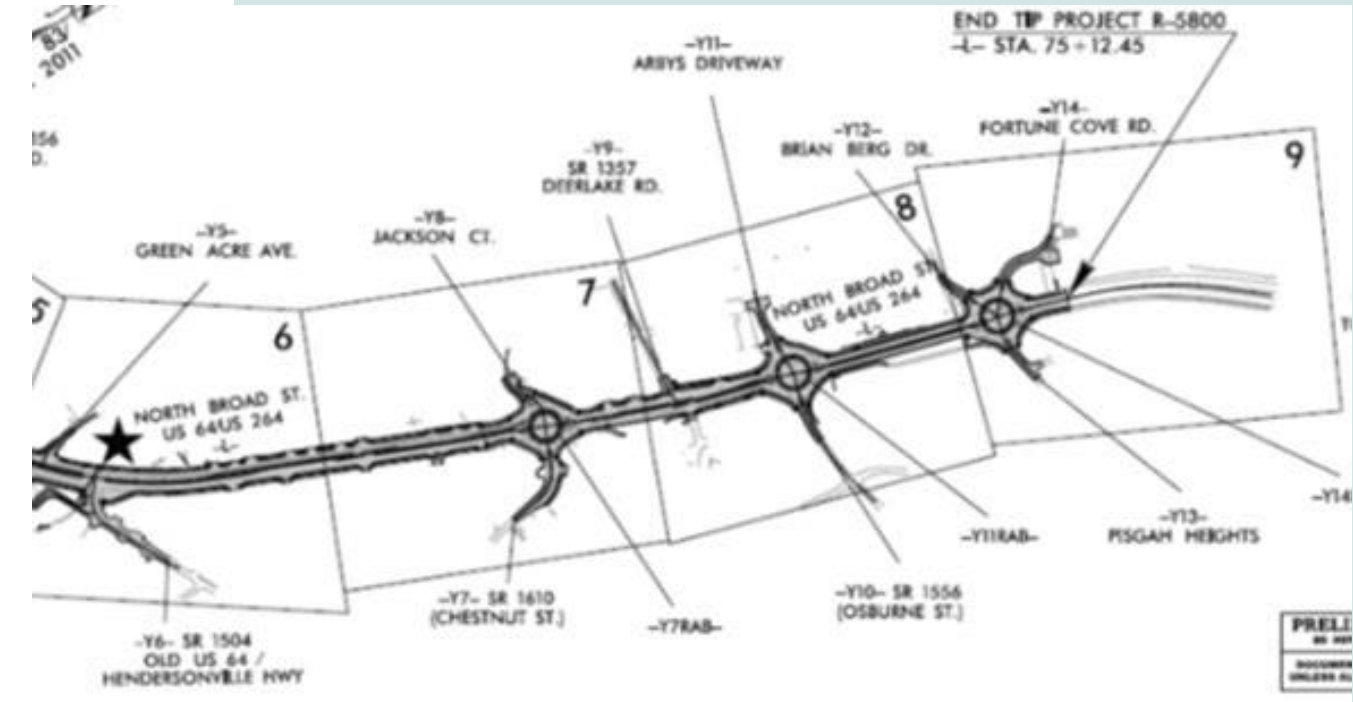
Destination Management

Destination Infrastructure – Project Funding

Q4

- **Heart of Brevard: “Downtown Holiday Expansion Project” \$10,000**
 - This project enhances holiday lighting in downtown by expanding decorations along East and West Main Street gateways. It includes installing power receptacles on 15-20 poles to create a vibrant, festive atmosphere that attracts visitors and boosts community spirit.
- **City of Brevard: “Asheville Highway Greenway Safety Improvements” \$24,999**
 - The Estatoe Trail section along Asheville Hwy, where NCDOT’s R-5800 project includes three roundabouts, is a critical yet unsafe link to connect the future Ecusta Trail to downtown Brevard. Improved pedestrian and cyclist design treatments are needed in NCDOT plans. This grant funds the development of treatment illustrations, design details, and cost estimates to aid NCDOT and City decision-makers in approving and funding these improvements.
- **Heart of Brevard: “Clemson Plaza Mural” \$15,000**
 - This grant will enhance the Loretta Mary Aiken mural at Clemson Plaza with educational information about the NC Music Mural Project and NC African American Heritage Commission. It includes wrapping an adjacent utility box, erecting a plaque for the NC Music Trail & NC Cultural Resources, and creating marketing materials and a website page to showcase the site's story and history.

Total FY24 funding: \$80,604.85



Destination Management

Tourism Marketing Project Funding

Projects that are designed to generate overnight visitation and/or add significant value to the visitor experience. Strong preference is given to efforts that impact traditionally slower periods of visitation. These projects are often events but can also be programs or other initiatives.

Q1

- Friends of Silvermont: "Silvermont Pumpkin Fest 2023" \$4,000
- Transylvania Heritage Museum: "Aluminum Christmas Tree Display" \$3,600
- Transylvania County Historical Society: "Behind the Mask; Cherokee Mask Makers & Their Legacy" \$2,500
- Cedar Mountain Music Project: "White Squirrel Artisans Market" \$2,750
- Transylvania County Parks & Recreation Department: "Light Up the Night - Silvermont" \$4,000
- Conserving Carolina: "Forks of the River Fly Fishing Festival 2023" \$500

Q2

- Rotary Club of Pisgah Forest: "Assault on the Carolinas 2024" \$3,500

Q3

- Blue Ridge Bicycle Club: "WNC Flyer- 20th Year" \$2,000
- Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS): "Wilderness Skills Institute" \$4,999
- Transylvania Heritage Museum: "Spring Marketing Campaign" \$4,999
- Appalachian Region Porsche Club of America: "Luft Wasser Porsche Celebration in Brevard" \$1,065
- Heart of Brevard: "Annual Program & Marketing Request" \$16,000
- Conserving Carolina: "Upper French Broad Riverfest" \$4,300

Q4

- Friends of Gorges State Park: "2024 Mountain Monarch Festival" \$2,000
- Center for Spiritual Wisdom: "Beginning the Great Search: A Day with John Philip Newell & Cami Twiling" \$4,995
- Mary C. Jenkins Community & Cultural Center: "Juneteenth Family Fest 2024" \$4,100

Total FY24 funding: \$68,668.00



Destination Management

Partner Support

In FY24, we strengthened our commitment to supporting tourism-related businesses and attractions in the county through a variety of initiatives.

We launched our 2024 Partner Marketing Program, which included an online Partner Marketing Program Booklet and a user-friendly Request Form, making it easier for partners to access marketing opportunities. Our successful Kickoff Social at 185 King Street fostered connections among partners and provided insights into industry trends. We introduced a Partner Profile Form to ensure we had up-to-date information on local tourism businesses and non-profits.

Through our marketing program, we offered partners a variety of advertising opportunities including purchasing ads in the Adventure Guide, Points of Interest Map, Co-op ads, and more. Co-op advertising played an important role in our marketing efforts. Through our print co-op program, we secured placements in popular publications like Our State Magazine, Blue Ridge Outdoors, and WNC Magazine. This collaboration allowed multiple partners to showcase their unique offerings, enhancing their visibility and attracting more visitors to the area.

Throughout the year, we prioritized visibility for our partners by coordinating press coverage whenever possible. This included a "Let's Eat" segment on WSPA with Christine Scarpelli, featuring Quixote. Christine also highlighted local businesses and Heart of Brevard in a morning segment ahead of Light Up the Night, amplifying the reach of our holiday celebrations. We also hosted various travel writers throughout the year, most notably a group of 5 national and international media and the executive director of Visit NC, Wit Tuttle, ahead of the Adventure ELEVATE conference in Asheville.

During the holiday season, we ran a "Shop Local" campaign on social media to promote local businesses and encourage visitors to support them. This initiative provided free promotional opportunities for our partners and helped raise awareness about the importance of shopping locally during the festive period.

To further enhance our marketing efforts, we updated website ads on ExploreBrevard.com for better integration with our content. This improvement ensured that our advertising looked authentic and required less effort from our tourism partners to produce, making it more accessible.



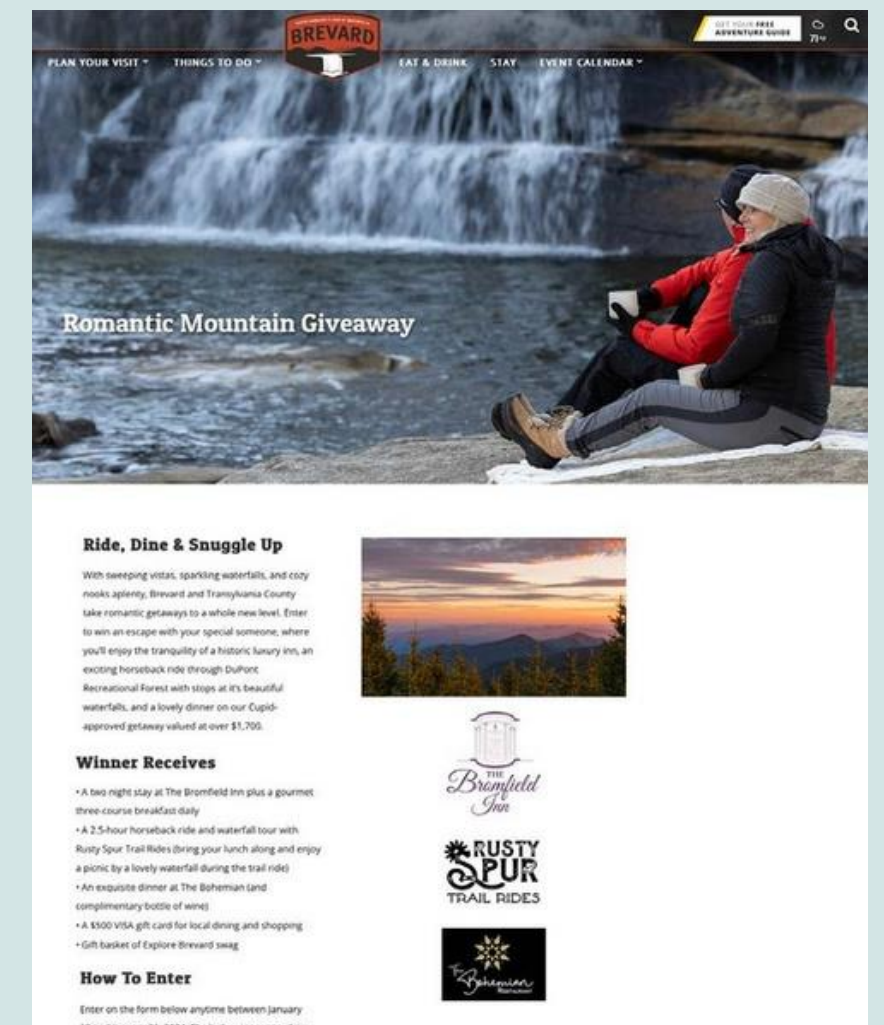
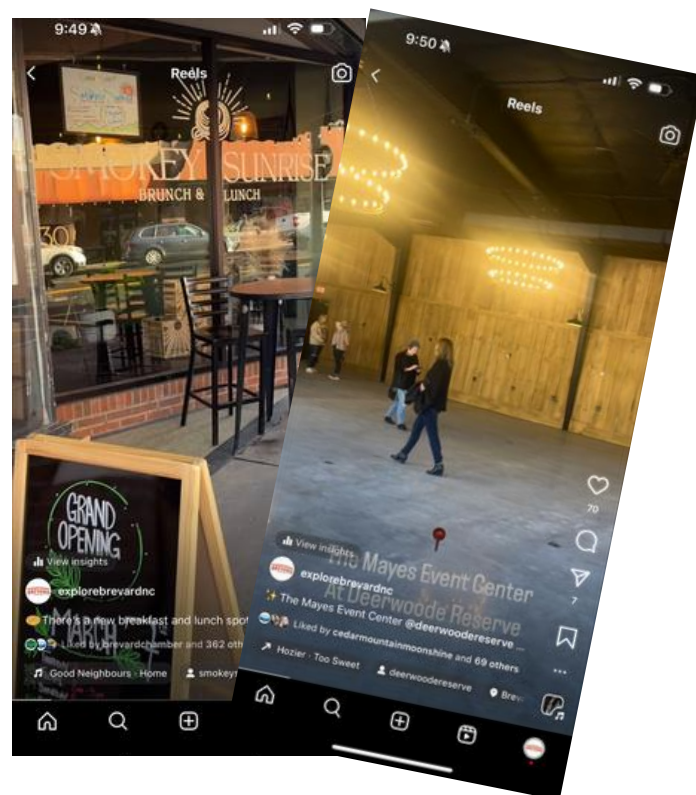
Destination Management Partner Support

We run two sweepstakes each year to increase visitation and promote our destination during key travel periods, specifically the holidays and winter months when visitor numbers are typically lower. Each sweepstakes offers participants a chance to win a two-night stay, a meal, and a unique experience, highlighting the best of Transylvania County. Three partners received a high level of exposure through a dedicated landing page, e-blasts, and digital ads for each sweepstakes.

In FY24 our holiday sweepstakes, "A Candlelit Holiday Giveaway," attracted 9,624 entries, significantly boosting awareness of our local businesses during the bustling holiday season. In January, we launched the "Romantic Mountain Giveaway," which drew 10,169 entries, surpassing our previous engagement records.

We regularly showcase our partners on social media, highlighting their unique offerings and engaging our community. These posts boost visibility and attract visitors eager to explore Transylvania County.

Each month we send a tourism partner e-blast to provide organizational updates, tourism updates, and industry news. We also recommend relevant content our partners can share with their audience. To strengthen connections among our partners, we also launched a Facebook group for real-time updates and collaboration. This platform allows partners to share news and ideas directly with TCTDA staff and each other, moving beyond our monthly e-blasts.





V. Organizational Updates

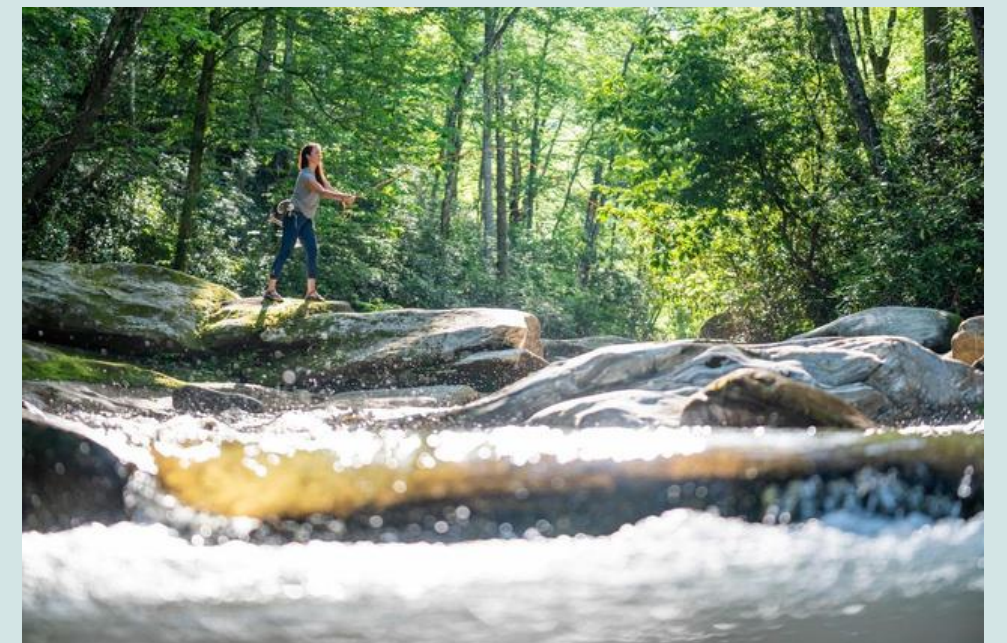
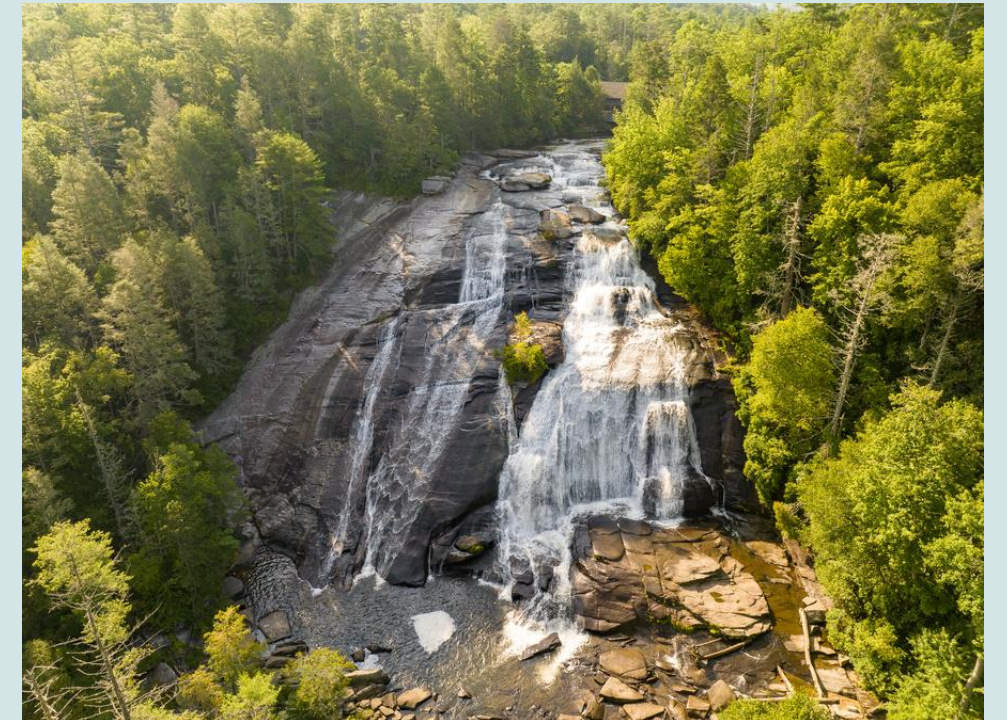
Organizational Updates

Financial Summary

There are a few key factors that dictated the FY24 budget when it was developed and approved in spring of 2023 that are worth noting as we look back on the year. One, the Board continued to budget a higher level of expenditures than revenues with plans for fund balance reserves to cover the anticipated \$250,000 in Ecusta Trail funding. Two, financial reports through the midpoint of FY23 showed that pandemic-era-related growth had flattened, so expectations were for a flat finish to FY23 with the trend continuing in FY24. Three, the Board continued to prioritize funds dedicated to the management of Transylvania County as a tourism destination, specifically with efforts in support of Destination Infrastructure and Transylvania Always initiatives.

After the budget was set, proceeds for the second half of FY23 came in, and instead of remaining flat as projected, there was actually a decrease of 10% during that period. This changed the outlook for FY24. Occupancy tax proceeds were now expected to fall below the budgeted amount. Based on this information, the Board determined that it was prudent to reduce the marketing plan budget by \$100,000. All other budgeted expenditures remained the same.

In the end, occupancy tax proceeds were 4% below budget, similar to where the prior year ended. Expenditures were down by 10% versus budget due to the reduced marketing plan expenditures and both the Destination Infrastructure and Transylvania Always grant funding paths closing with available dollars. In the end, expenditures exceeded revenues by approximately \$275,000, less than the budgeted amount.



Organizational Updates

Financial Summary

Revenues

Total revenue – \$2,095,071 (down 4% vs. budget, up .5% vs. prior year)

Accounts of note:

- Occupancy tax proceeds – \$1,987,161 (down 4% vs. budget, up .5% vs. prior year)
- Interest on investments – \$67,469 (2nd year of interest-bearing account, which was previously less than \$2,000)

Expenditures

Total expenditures – \$2,371,432 (down 10% vs. budget, +/- 0% vs. prior year)

Accounts of note:

- Salaries and wages – \$161,548 (up 8% vs. budget due to commissioner-approved pay study adjustments and board-approved part-time support at year-end)
- County administrative fee – \$127,375 (up 31% vs. budget as occupancy tax collection fee was moved to this category)
- Marketing Plan – \$1,343,973 (down 7% vs. budget)
- Transylvania Always – \$127,354 (down 43% vs. budget due to the natural fluctuation of funding requests from year to year, with FY23 over budget for TA and DI and FY24 under)
- Destination Infrastructure – \$83,105 (down 45% vs. budget, same reason as above)

Net Total and Fund Balance

Net total of revenues & expenditures – \$276,361 (below budgeted amount of \$449,528)

Year-end fund balance – \$1,570,000 (approximately 9 months of operations)

This was the second year of a five-year plan to spend down the fund balance, primarily to cover the \$1M pledged by the Board toward the development of the Ecusta Trail. Annual spending levels were to be set to cover payment toward the pledge and ultimately draw down the fund balance to the \$550K – \$726K range, which is the equivalent of 3-4 months of operations and what the Board identified as a desired “normal” fund balance.



Organizational Updates

Summary

Guiding the work of the TDA this year was a Board and team with several new faces. Mollie Gordon joined the staff as Marketing & Communication Specialist in August. In December, Layton Parker rolled off the board following four years as chair, along with Brevard representative, Aaron Baker, and member-at-large, Ali Lien. Dee Dee Perkins was selected as chair for 2024, with Lauren Wise joining as the Brevard representative, Nory LeBrun as a member-at-large, and Dionne Hodgson as an accommodations owner/operator.

Marketing remained a significant driver of the organization's work, although it's worth noting that the marketing plan budget was reduced from where it was at the peak of occupancy tax proceeds in 2022. Promotional efforts continued to go beyond simply bringing visitors here and centered more on attracting visitors at times with less demand, encouraging visitation beyond our most popular spots and throughout Transylvania County, and inspiring good visitor behavior. Broad strategies also focused on strengthening our brand and image as a destination with incredible outdoor recreation, a friendly and authentic community, a vibrant local scene with music, art, brews, shopping, etc., and a concentration on stewardship of our natural resources.

Work supporting and managing Transylvania County as a tourism destination continued in FY24. The TCTDA eclipsed the \$600,000 mark in local support of projects aligned with our Transylvania Always initiative since its inception. The important Leave It Better and Be Waterfall Wise messaging campaigns were expanded. Partnerships with the Outdoor Economy Conference, Outdoor NC, Black Folks Camp, Too, and others helped maximize the impact of our dollars and our efforts. Over the past year, our destination infrastructure grant program saw \$250,000 to the development of the Ecusta Trail, plus an additional \$80,000 to projects that preserve or enhance the infrastructure and resources that make Transylvania County a desirable tourism destination. Important conversations on signage, roundabouts, and other relevant topics were held with local and state government representatives and others to advocate for infrastructure and other resources aligning with the committee's priorities and to seek opportunities for future TDA investment.



Organizational Updates

Summary

At the end of the year, lease agreements with the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce were extended for the operation of the Brevard/Transylvania Visitor Center and the lease of office space. Both were short-term agreements with each party determining that they need to explore various long-term options.

A brief glimpse at FY25 shows expectations of occupancy tax proceeds remaining flat with the “new normal” level of visitation established post pandemic, strengthening our image as an authentic community who cares about our natural resources, a new website, expanded efforts on the tourism infrastructure of Transylvania County, continued support and enhancements of the local forests and waterways, and expanded and enriched information to assist and educate our visitors. This reflects the Board mindset that while there’s always more work to do, the tourism industry and the efforts of our organization are headed in the right direction.



Image by Callie Horwath, courtesy of the Pisgah Conservancy