



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: TDA Board
From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Date: October 14, 2023
Subject: Monthly Director's Brief

Dear Board Members,

Please see below for updates.

Trends

We've seen a slight decline in our share of the hotel lodging economy, however, this is less than the amount we anticipated as a decline, so that is positive news. Short term rentals remain steady.

August	September (running 28 days)*
Occupancy Percentage: - 2023: 60.9% - 2022: 66.0% - Percent Change: -7.8%	Occupancy Percentage: - 2023: 61.4% - 2022: 62.0% - Percent Change: -1.0%
Average Daily Rate: - 2023: \$168.88 - 2022: \$167.25 - Percent Change: +1.0%	Average Daily Rate: - 2023: \$180.86 - 2022: \$174.64 - Percent Change: +3.6%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) - 2023: \$102.85 - 2022: \$110.44 - Percent Change: -6.9%	Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) - 2023: \$111.12 - 2022: \$108.35 - Percent Change: +2.6%

**Complete September report comes out around the 20th of the month.*

We're seeing a busy October in town so far, so we're hoping that translates into a good month for accommodation partners.

In Short Term Rental data from AirDNA for Airbnb and VRBO, please see the below highlights:

August	September
Occupancy Rate - 2023: 61% - 2022: 63% - Percent Change: -2.7%	Occupancy Rate - 2023: 57% - 2022: 55% - Percent Change: +2.8%
Average Daily Rate (ADR) - 2023: \$313 - 2022: \$308 - Percent Change: +1.5%	Average Daily Rate (ADR) - 2023: \$316 - 2022: \$289 - Percent Change: +9.3%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) - 2023: \$190 - 2022: \$193 - Percent Change: -1.3%	Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) - 2023: \$180 - 2022: \$160 - Percent Change: +12.4%
Available Listings - 2023: 1,232 - 2022: 1,065 - Percent Change: +15.7%	Available Listings - 2023: 1,228 - 2022: 1,098 - Percent Change: +11.8%
Booked Listings - 2023: 1,155 - 2022: 997 - Percent Change: +15.8%	Booked Listings - 2023: 1,163 - 2022: 1,041 - Percent Change: +11.7%

Fall Giveaway

We deployed our giveaway with High Hampton Resort which provides a free two-night stay at HH for those who enter to subscribe to both of our e-newsletters. To date we have 700+ entries. The contest runs through the end of the month. It provides a great opportunity for a potential visitor to win a premium stay to HH and increases our mailing list database size.

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Grant Application

We received a grant application for a wheelchair-accessible glass blowing adaptive seat for the Green Energy Park. This adaptive seat will allow people who use wheelchairs to utilize offerings at the Green Energy Park. The Shepherd Center of Atlanta, Georgia worked with the GEP to submit the grant application. The modified adaptive chair will remain at the Green Energy Park once constructed. The Executive Committee recommends funding \$1,500 of the \$2,500 total ask. The difference in the recommended and requested amount is the Shepherd Center's request for class materials and registration for ten participants.

Audit

Our annual TDA audit is being presented at this week's meeting.

As part of our audit process, board members were emailed surveys to complete on behalf of our audit firm to capture information about management & finances. Some of the questions highlighted an opportunity to better educate our board members on how we mitigate fraud and what internal controls are in place; this is not because of any findings, simply best practice to ensure you are fully informed. Our Finance Officer will share these with the board.

TCPF

Our new tourism capital project fund cycle will open in January. We will issue press releases to notify communities, towns, and others of this opportunity. We have roughly \$1 million in remaining funds for the TCPF this fiscal year and are in a healthy financial position to fund meaningful applications.

Videos

I'm happy to share an update on our video production contract with Tembo Hospitality Group. Since July 1, we've produced approximately 22 videos.

On TikTok alone, those short form videos have been seen **568,233 times** and had **19,345 engagements**.

Across Facebook and Instagram videos during the same time period have received **1,187,995 views**. Video continues to be a strong driving force for trip inspiration.

SEM stats

Love Communications (our Search Engine Marketing Firm) will be present at our Oct. 18 meeting. They're flying in from Utah to share updates and meet the board while on their immersion trip to the County.

Media Visits

LHG is producing stellar Public Relations work for us with continued top-tier media visits. Recent media visits have been numerous and include:

Blake Miller, Home Design & Decor Magazine; Jennifer McKee, Orlando Magazine; Lia Picard, The Local Palate; Stephanie Burnette, TOWN Magazine; Nikki Miller-Ka, Eater Carolinas; Lydia Mansel, Travel & Leisure.

LHG is working to secure media to attend a premier culinary event on Nov. 14 at Stay Outland (the former Chalet Inn and Suites) in coordination with Tembo HG, ILDA, and food journalist Matt Lardie. Lardie recently coordinated and produced coverage that appeared in Garden & Gun, highlighting the culinary scene in Jackson County. Read it [here](#).

BOC/CORE/MadeXMtns

Staff is participating in planning for the Building Outdoor Communities effort / Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies effort and the MadeXMountains branding initiative. These three different efforts overlap and are being used to grow the outdoor recreation economy in WNC. There will be more updates on this process in the future; however, we are working to identify opportunities for enhancing our regional outdoor economy.

Pinnacle Park

The Board will recall we funded approximately \$10,000 in trail counters for Pinnacle Park. This data has proven invaluable to the town and other organizations that are currently working toward a master plan for the 1,500+ acre Pinnacle Park. We were recently recognized in the [report](#) by the Pinnacle Park Foundation for spearheading the visitor counting project. I would encourage the entire board to read their draft report in full as it contains invaluable data about the park's visitation collected by counters we funded. This data will feed into the park's master planning efforts, currently under way.

Dillsboro Luminaries

We're working with the state tourism office, VisitNC, to bring media to Dillsboro for their 40th annual Luminaries. They are held the first two Fridays and Saturdays of December. We're using our PR resources along with a media buy with *OurState* to highlight this terrific event's 40th anniversary.

WCU Sustainability Study & Litter Project

I'm working with two WCU classes at the present to assist with sustainable tourism related efforts. One class is focused on senior capstone sustainable tourism project in downtown Sylva. The other class is working to develop signage for trailheads along with materials for the local school system to educate children on the impact of litter on our trails, waterways, and more in a visual format.

Cycle NC Feasibility

There is a group of local stakeholders that are looking at the feasibility of bringing the Western NC Cycle NC ride through Jackson County, NC next year. Early planning is under way.

Upcoming events include the Halloween Block Party in Cashiers on October 28, Treat Street in Sylva on October 31, and the WNC Pottery Festival on November 4.