

# TOURISM OVERVIEW: DOWNTOWN BOONE

DBDA Annual Meeting | August 26, 2025




# WHAT IS EXPLORE BOONE?

**Boone TDA + Watauga TDA**

(1988) (2009)

State-authorized Tourism Development Authority for Watauga County's District U (WC TDA), operating jointly with the Town of Boone (Boone TDA)

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# MARKETING & PR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

miles PARTNERSHIP
Ad Agency of Record

LHG LOU HAMMOND GROUP
PR Agency of Record

## Create Awareness

- Raise awareness of the destination as a must-visit, where storied traditions meet fresh, modern experiences—a compelling mix of natural beauty and local culture.

## Inspire Action

- Drive engagement utilizing a full funnel media strategy.
- Cultivate existing/new relationships with travel journalists and content creators to secure press coverage and social media mentions.

## Drive Visitation

- Responsibly increase in-state, regional and national visitation to the destination, attracting travelers who stay longer and spend more.

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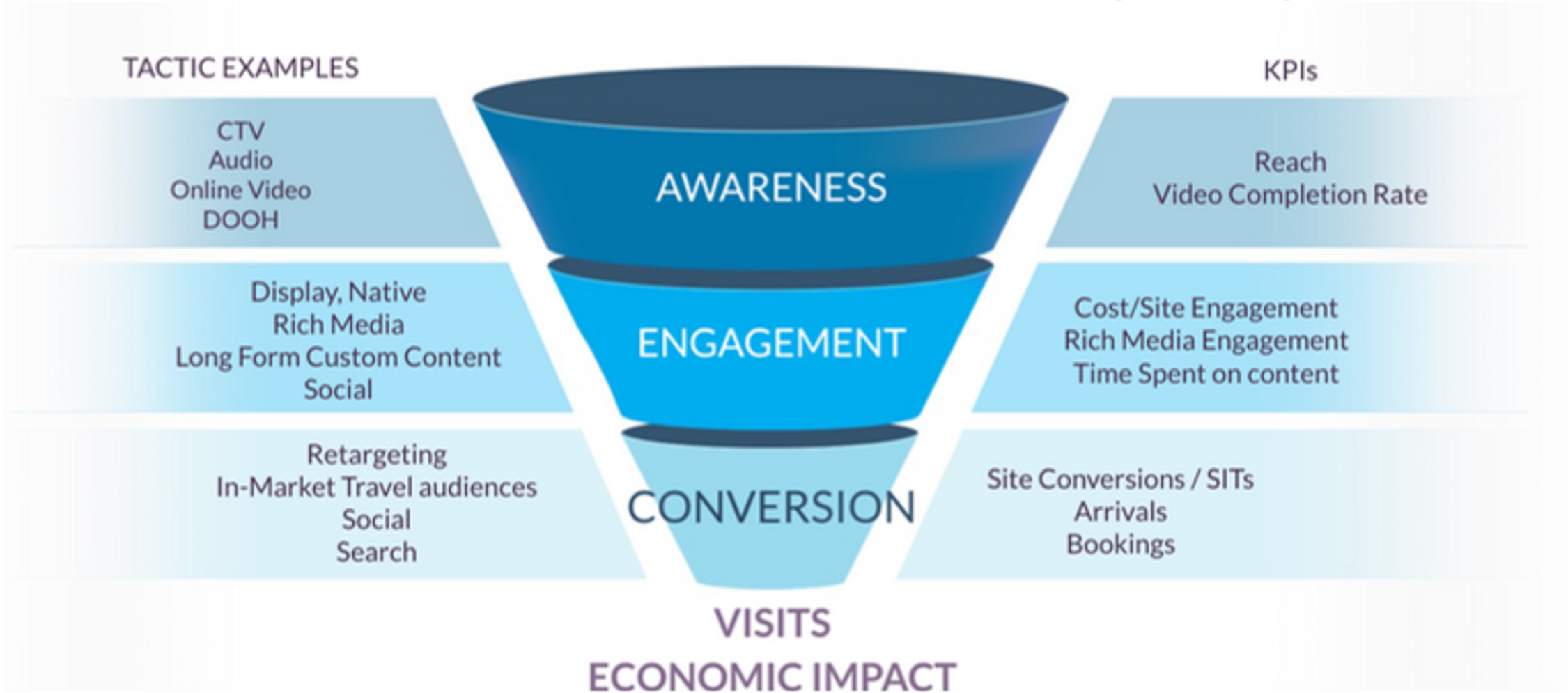
ALWAYS-ON

# FULL FUNNEL APPROACH



# MARKETING TACTICS

- **Out Of Home (OOH)**
  - Billboards, baggage claim digital displays, branded rideshare, etc.
- **Print Media**
- **Digital Media**
- **Social Media & SEM**
  - Meta, Google, Bing, Yahoo
- **TV/Sports**
  - Spectrum, App State Sports, CLT Hornets





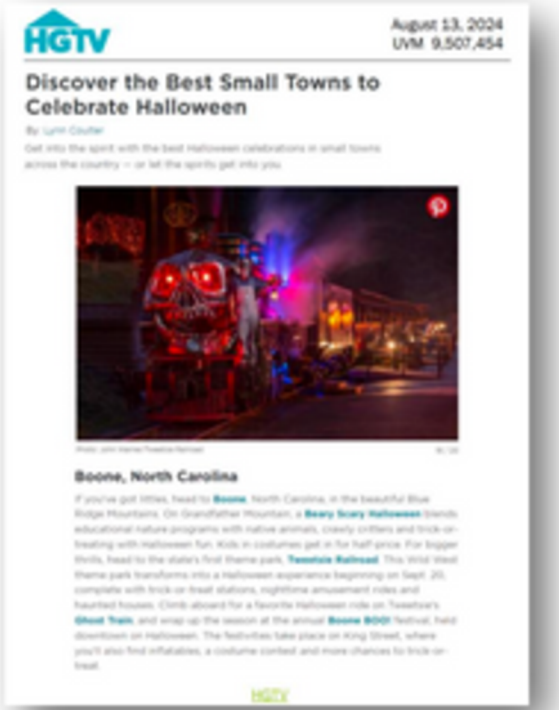

# PUBLIC RELATIONS TACTICS

- **Proactive Pitching**
- **Media Visits**
  - German Media FAM pictured to the right (July 17-19)

- **Content Creators**
- **Promotional Partnerships**
- **Awards**

## PUBLIC RELATIONS | 2024-2025

# COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS


HGTV

August 13, 2024
UVM: 9,507,454

**Discover the Best Small Towns to Celebrate Halloween**

By Lynn Coulter

Get into the spirit with the best Halloween celebrations in small towns across the country — or let the spirits get into you.

**Boone, North Carolina**

If you've got littles, head to Boone, North Carolina, in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. On Grandfather Mountain, a Beary Scary Halloween blends educational nature programs with native animals, crawly critters and trick-or-treating with Halloween fun. Kids in costumes get in for half-price. For bigger thrills, head to the state's first theme park, Tweetsie Railroad. This Wild West theme park transforms into a Halloween experience beginning on Sept. 20, complete with trick-or-treat stations, nighttime amusement rides and haunted houses. Climb aboard for a favorite Halloween ride on Tweetsie's Ghost Train, and wrap up the season at the annual Boone BOO! festival, held downtown on Halloween. The festivities take place on King Street, where you'll also find inflatables, a costume contest and more chances to trick-or-treat.

HGTV

SEASONAL


Forbes

December 5, 2024
UVM: 94,326,403

**Have A Drink On Maud Gatewood And Support Local Businesses In Blowing Rock, North Carolina**

The Blowing Rock Art & History Museum presents a retrospective exhibition for renowned North Carolina painter Maud Gatewood – straight up with a twist.

Blowing Rock, NC's charming Main Street was spared the devastation Hurricane Helene visited upon much of the western part of the state in late September 2024. Eight miles away down a winding road in Boone, extreme flooding destroyed roads, homes, businesses, and buildings.

Boone was back on its feet by mid-October, but the Walmart there has yet to reopen as of early December.

Forbes

ARTS & CULTURE


Smithsonian

June 16, 2025
UVM: 7,456,785

**Why Has This North Carolina Town Embraced a Strange Salamander?**

Eastern hellbenders are bizarre-looking creatures. As North America's largest salamander—growing up to two feet long and living up to 30 years—their size only amplifies their wild appearance. Long, flat bodies and wide, oblong mouths, which they use to suck in food since they have no teeth, appear even more monstrous when juxtaposed against extra flaps of slimy mock-colored skin. The species has rightfully earned the nicknames lasagna lizard, snot otter and devil dog. And yet despite the eastern hellbender's appearance, the salamander has its fans.

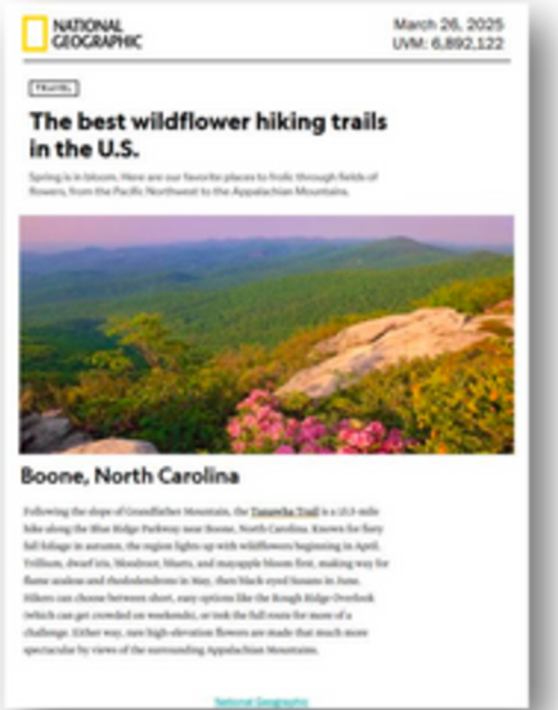
With only 10,000 residents, the town of Boone, North Carolina, has embraced the eastern hellbender. Boone has unofficially elected the native hellbender as its community symbol, and the area's love of the species has inspired hospitality concepts and even local craft brews. Last summer, the Boone leadership commissioned a vibrant mural in the heart of downtown. The mural was a collaboration between several dedicated organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Boone Town Council, who wanted to raise awareness about the hellbender's uncertain future.

"The mural and works like it reminds viewers about the importance of protecting our rivers and streams," says Andy Hill, Watauga Riverkeeper and high-country regional director of MountainTrue, a nonprofit environmental organization based in Asheville, North Carolina, not far from Boone. For Hill and many others living in the region, the salamander has become an icon of the area's fragile aquatic ecosystems, a poignant symbol of the area's environmental stewardship and conservation efforts.

"Hellbenders are an indicator species," he says. "They are an indicator of water quality. And so, the salamander has become a symbol of the area and has captured public's attention for biodiversity."

Smithsonian

SUSTAINABILITY


NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

March 26, 2025
UVM: 6,892,122

TRAVEL

**The best wildflower hiking trails in the U.S.**

Spring is in bloom. Here are our favorite places to frolic through fields of flowers, from the Pacific Northwest to the Appalachian Mountains.

**Boone, North Carolina**

Following the slope of Grandfather Mountain, the Tanawha Trail is a 10.3-mile hike along the Blue Ridge Parkway near Boone, North Carolina. Known for fiery fall foliage in autumn, the region lights up with wildflowers beginning in April. Trillium, dwarf iris, bloodroot, bluets, and mayapple bloom first, making way for flame azalea and rhododendron in May, then black-eyed Susans in June. Hikers can choose between short, easy options like the Rough Ridge Overlook (which can get crowded on weekends), or trek the full route for more of a challenge. Either way, rare high-elevation flowers are made that much more spectacular by views of the surrounding Appalachian Mountains.

National Geographic

SEASONAL

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## PUBLIC RELATIONS | AUGUST 2025

# COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

America's Best Small Mountain Town Has a Thriving Local Art Scene, Cozy Boutique Hotels, and Stunning Natural Beauty

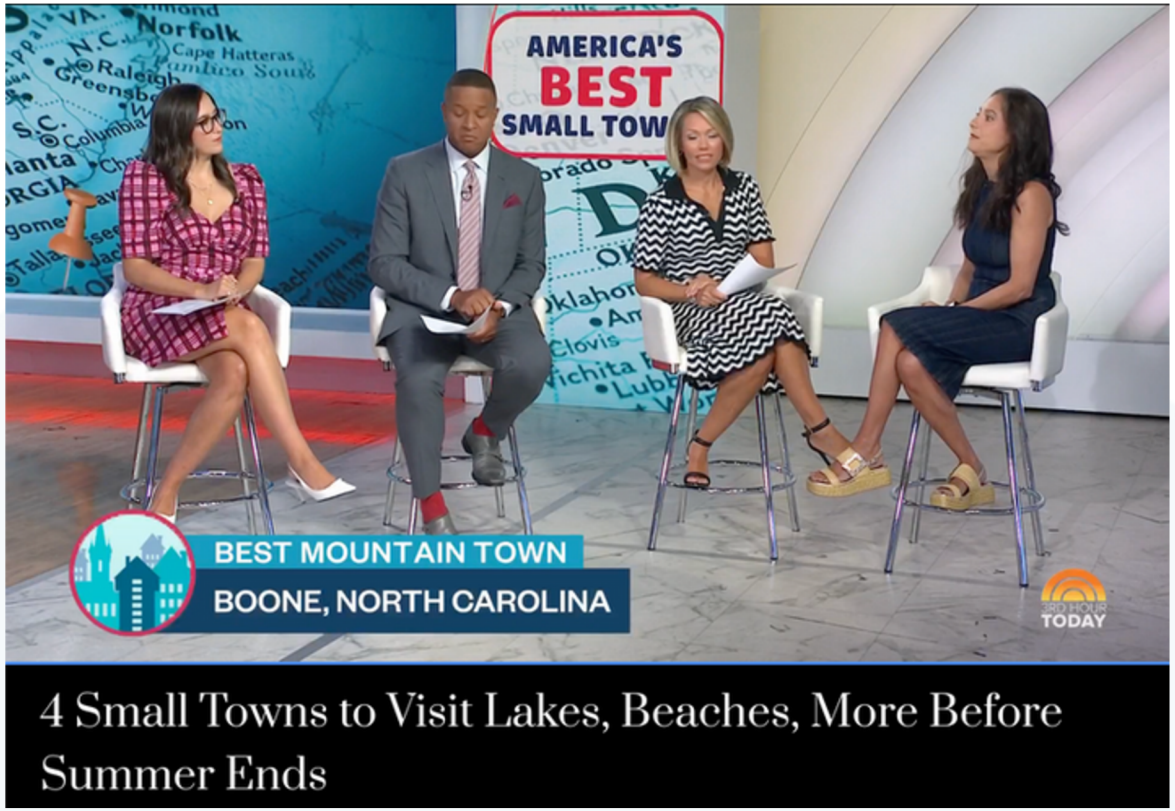
Boone, North Carolina, has long been known as the "Heart of the High Country," and now, it's writing a new chapter.

By Carrie Honaker | Published on August 15, 2025




A mural in downtown Boone.

August 15, 2025
UVM: 10,804,034




August 20, 2025
UVM: 15,570,005 | Viewers: 1,819,237

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# VISITATION DATA

1. 2024 Downtown Boone Overview
2. Demographics: Age/Income
3. 2024 Trips Breakdown
4. 2023 vs. 2024 Trips Over Time
5. 2023 vs. 2024 High Visitation Days

## JAN 2024 - DEC 2024 | DOWNTOWN BOONE

# DATA OVERVIEW

### TRIP INSIGHTS
**(DOWNTOWN BOONE)**

- Avg. Nights in Destination = **2.6 nights** (up 5.8% YoY)
- Share of day trips = **4.9%**
- Share of overnights = **95.1%**

### VISITATION BY ORIGIN MARKET

1. **Raleigh/Durham**
2. **Charlotte**
3. **Greensboro/High Point**
4. **Greenville/Spartanburg**
5. **Wilmington**
6. **Miami/Ft. Lauderdale**
7. **Atlanta**
8. **Greenville/New Bern**
9. **Tampa/St. Pete**
10. **Washington, DC**

### VISITATION BY ORIGIN STATE

1. **NC** (65.5%)
2. **SC** (8.6%)
3. **FL** (8.3%)
4. **GA** (3.8%)
5. **VA** (2%)

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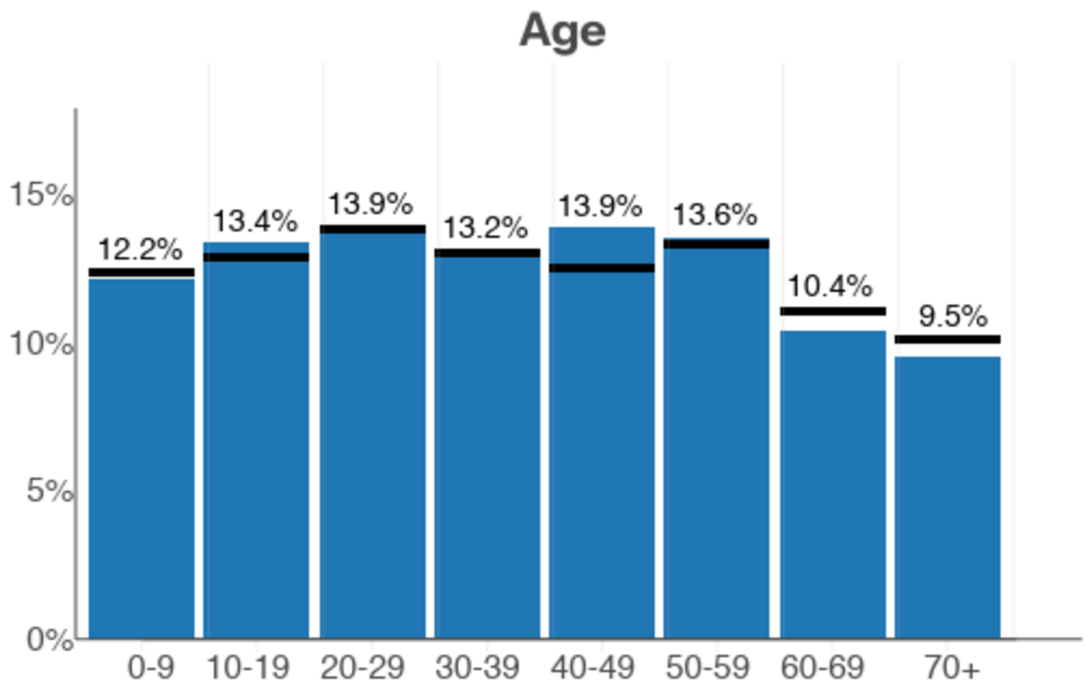
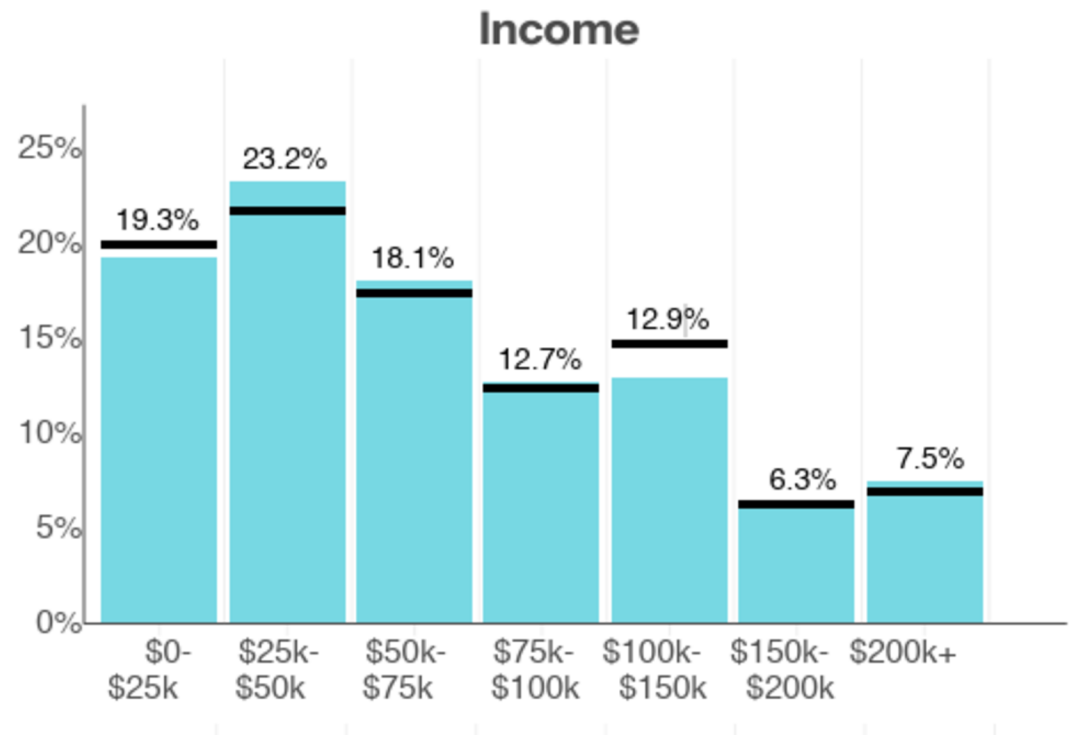
## AUDIENCE

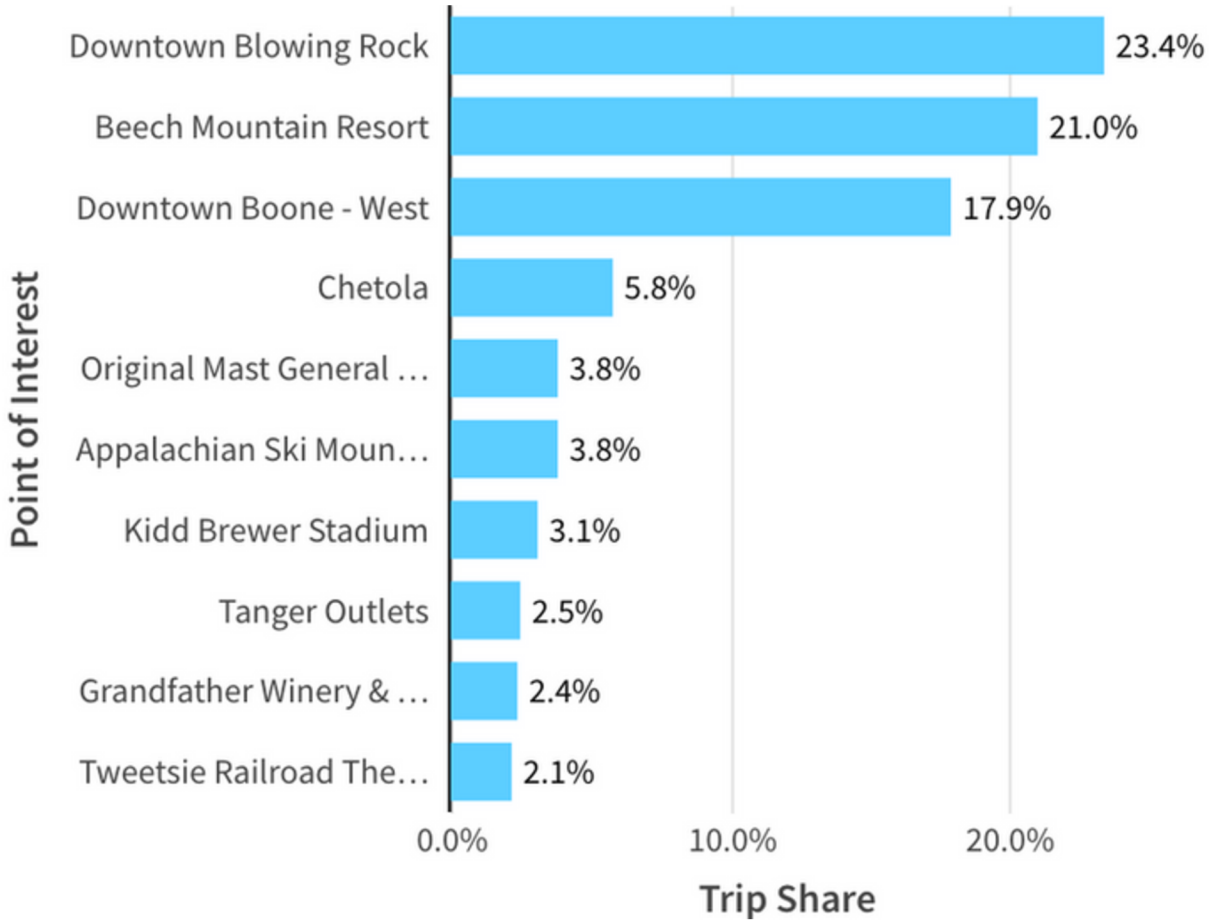
# DEMOGRAPHICS

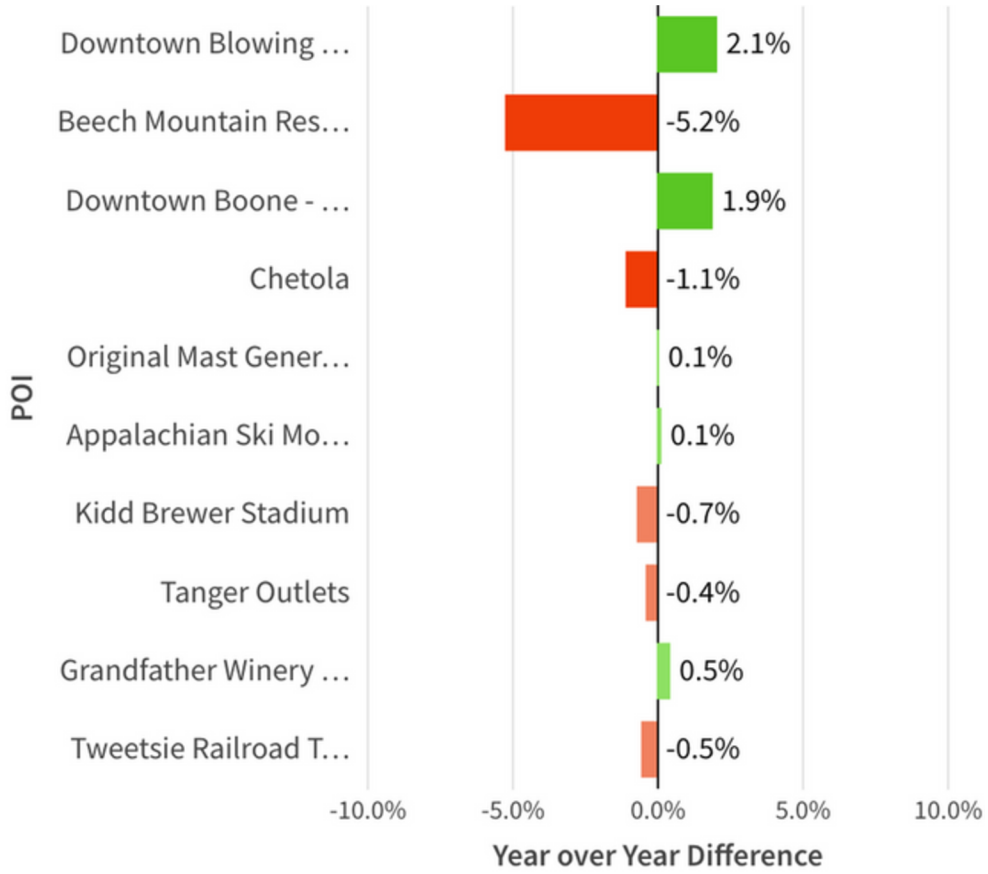
*as of 01/01/24*



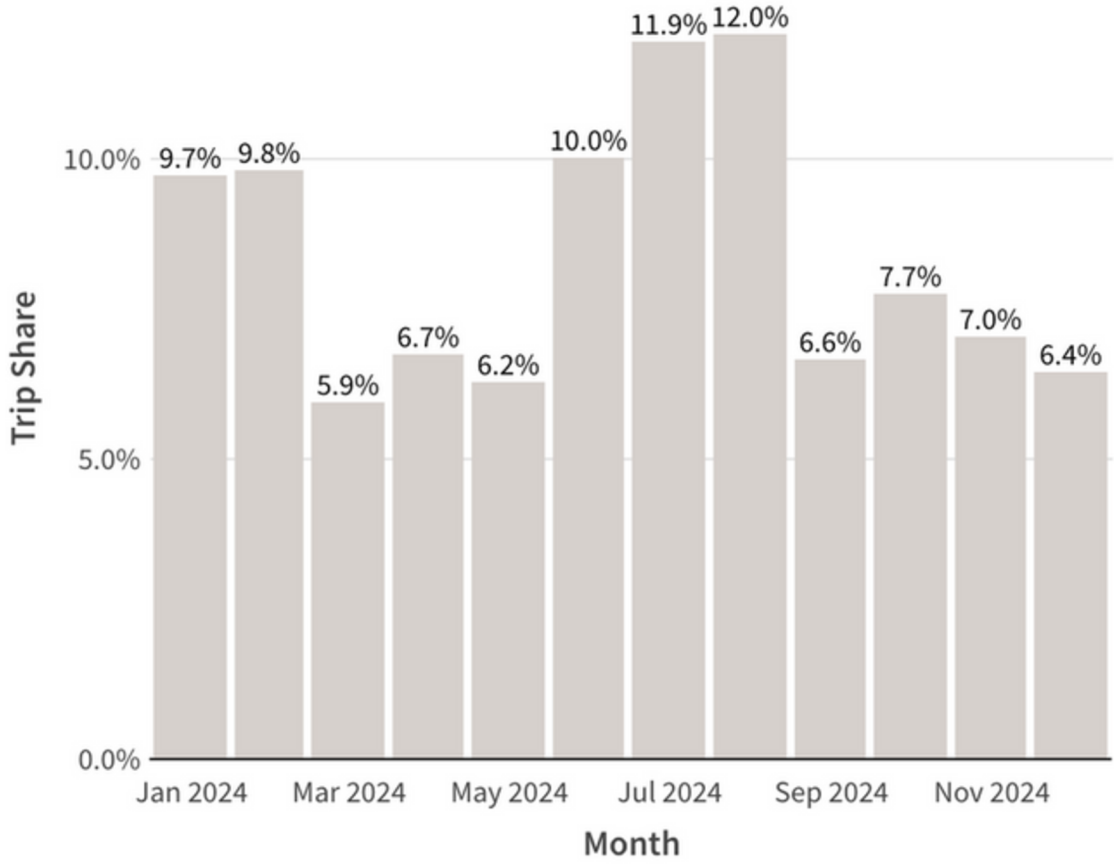



# IN 2024, DOWNTOWN BOONE REPRESENTED 17.9% OF ALL POI VISITS IN THE AREA, UP 1.9% YoY

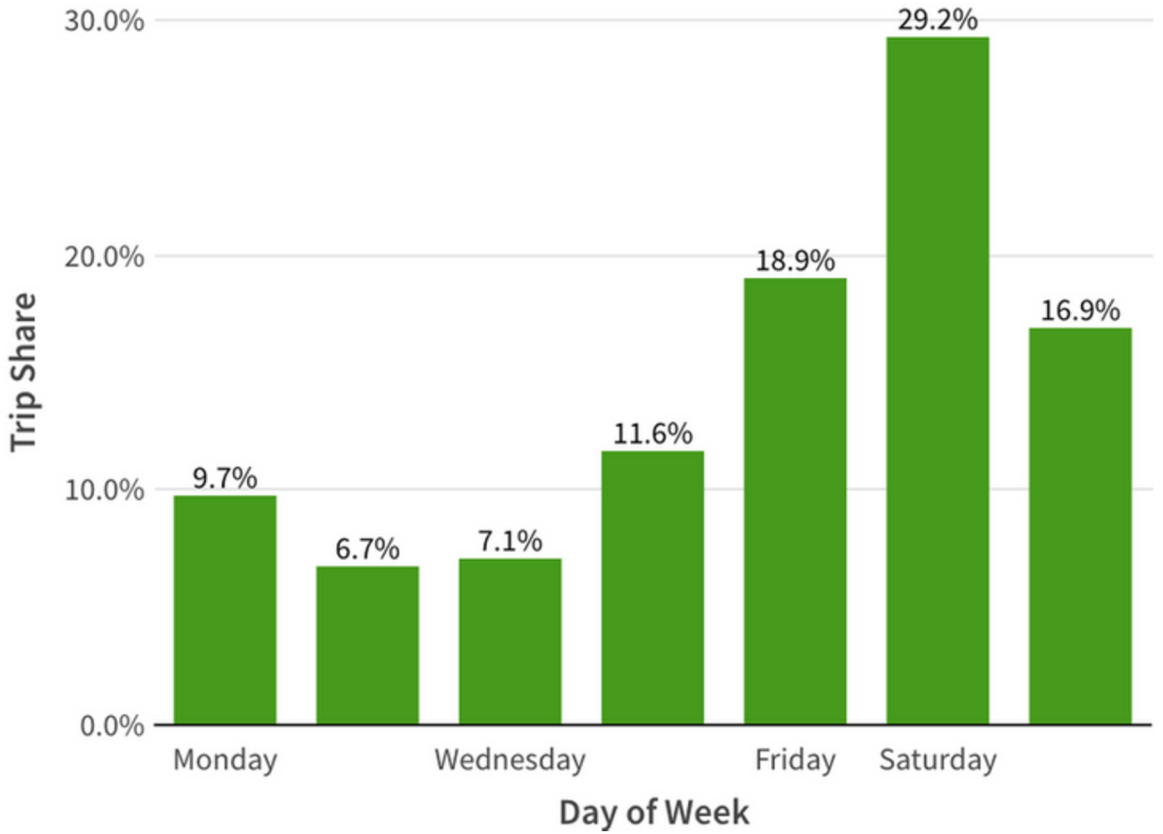


## TRIPS BY MONTH




## TRIPS BY DAY OF THE WEEK




*Downtown Boone, 2024*

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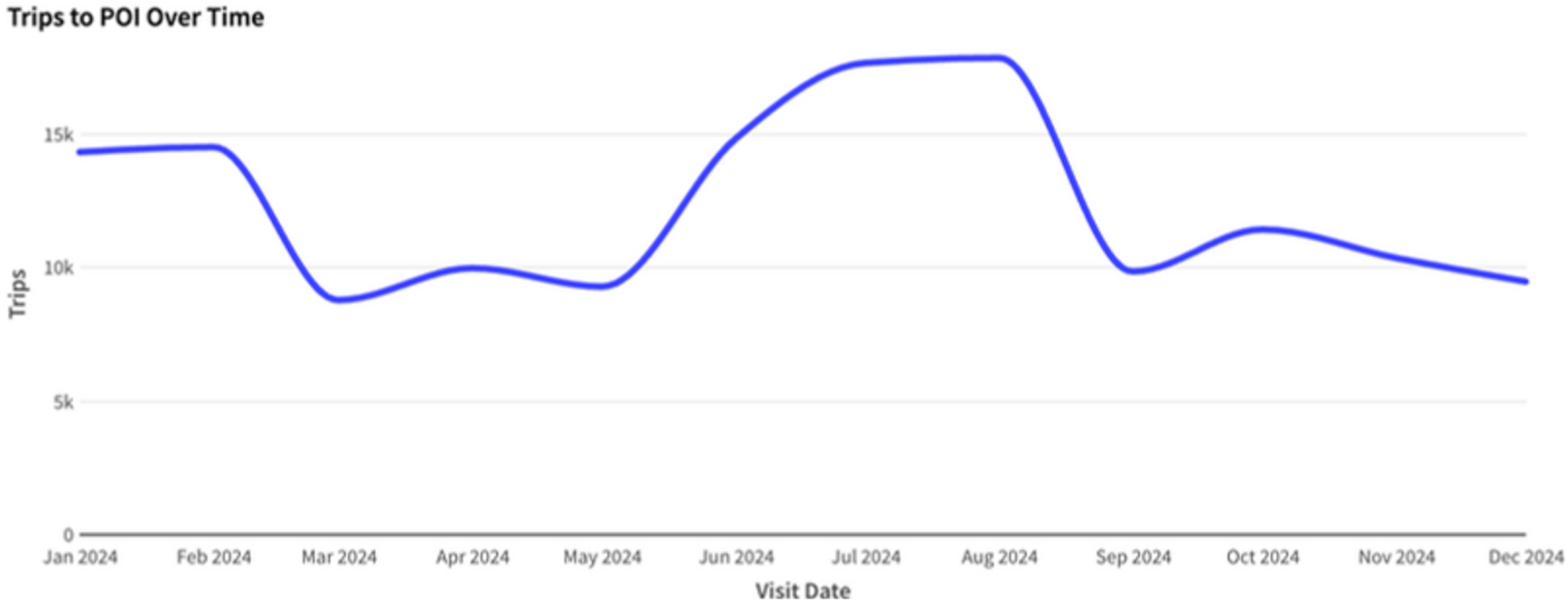
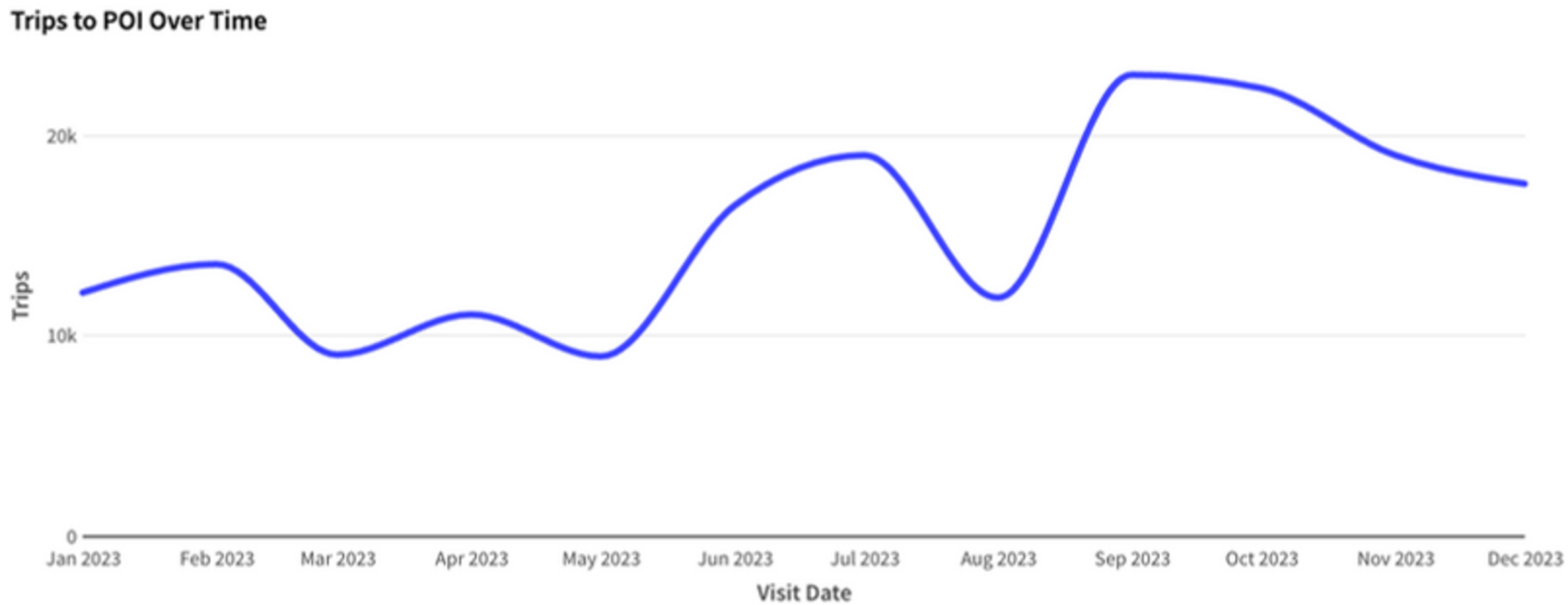
2024


Trips to POI Over Time
15k
10k
5k
0
Trips
Jan 2024
Feb 2024
Mar 2024
Apr 2024
May 2024
Jun 2024
Jul 2024
Aug 2024
Sep 2024
Oct 2024
Nov 2024
Dec 2024
Visit Date

2023


Trips to POI Over Time
20k
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Trips
Jan 2023
Feb 2023
Mar 2023
Apr 2023
May 2023
Jun 2023
Jul 2023
Aug 2023
Sep 2023
Oct 2023
Nov 2023
Dec 2023
Visit Date

## WATAUGA COUNTY

# HIGH VISITATION DAYS

### 2023

1. **February 17** (Valentine's Day/President's Day wknd) – 11.8k
2. **September 1** (Labor Day) – 10.2k
3. **February 10** (Pre-Valentine's Day) – 8.5k
4. **January 13** (MLK wknd) – 8.2k
5. **May 26** (GFM Rhodo Ramble) – 7.2k
6. **January 27** – 7.4k
7. **January 20** (Jan. 14 Snow) – 7.2k
8. **June 30** – 7k
9. **February 3** (Men's B-Ball?) – 6.9k
10. **June 23** (Damn Tall Buildings/Leslie Odom Jr.)– 6.9k (tie)

### 2024

1. **February 16** (Valentine's Day) – 12k trips
2. **August 30** (ASU Game on 31st) – 11k
3. **January 12** (MLK wknd) – 9.7k
4. **February 23** – 7.8k
5. **July 4** (Independence Day) – 7.5k
6. **May 24** (GFM Rhodo Ramble) – 7.4k
7. **August 31** (ASU Game) – 7.4k (tie)
8. **February 2** (ASU Fiddler's Convention) – 7.1k
9. **January 26** (Blowing Rock WinterFest) – 6.7k
10. **May 17** – 6.6k

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EXPLORE
boone
HORN IN THE WEST
THANK YOU

# DOWNTOWN BOONE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

# ANNUAL MEETING

## AUGUST 26, 2025






# Downtown Boone Development Association

The Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA) is Boone's local partner in the North Carolina Main Street Program. We've been trusted by the Town of Boone to carry out this program here at home, following the Main Street America™ model. At its heart, this approach is about strengthening our downtown through four key areas: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. Together, these guide our efforts to make downtown Boone a vibrant, welcoming place for everyone.

Our mission is simple: the Downtown Boone Development Association promotes and champions the enhancement of downtown Boone.

Our vision is that Downtown Boone serves as the guide to the High Country for locals and visitors. Tucked against the Blue Ridge Mountains backdrop, downtown is the hub of High Country outdoor recreational adventures, entertainment, and culinary experiences, set in one of the most walkable towns in the region.

# Thank you!



For six years, Sarah Long has shared her enthusiasm, her grounded perspective, and her genuine care for the health of our downtown. She's been a steady voice for what makes this place special, always bringing a down-to-earth approach and a big heart to every conversation. We're grateful for the time, energy, and love she's poured into keeping downtown vibrant.

# Current Board Members

## Town Council Appointed Positions



Kendra Sink
Mast General Store



Megan Kevorkian
South End Brewing




Stephanie Boozer
Come Back Shack




Jordan Humler
First Baptist Church of Boone




Julia Moretz
Betty's Biscuits




Joe Lynch
Speckled Trout Outfitters

## Board Appointed Positions



Suzanne Livesay
Appalachian Theatre of the High Country




Renee Boughman
F.A.R.M Cafe



Fulton Lovin
Pads for Grads



Mike Forrester
Fizz Ed




Ethan Rector
Lumina Spas

Open Position

# Ex-Officio Positions



Eric Plaag
BooneTown Council Member
Board Liason



Edie Tugman
Boone Town Council Member
Board Liason



Lindsay Miller Turchin Center
for the Visual Arts
Ex-Officio

# Executive Director



Lane Moody
Downtown Development Coordinator

# Past Years Accomplishments




BOONERANG MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL
BOONE · NC ·

CERTIFIED NORTH CAROLINA DESTINATION BUSINESS

High Country JAZZ FESTIVAL

MAIN STREET AMERICA

SMALL BIZ DIGITAL TRAINERS

**UPCOMING LIVE DIGITAL TRAININGS FOR MAIN STREET BUSINESSES**




**September 19, 2024**
**4-5pm (EDT)**
A strong online presence is essential for any small business in today's digital age. This workshop with guide you through the process of keeping your Business Profile, social media accounts and website up-to date and optimized.




**October 17, 2024**
**4-5pm (EDT)**
Whether you are a solopreneur or lead a small team, this one-hour workshop will provide you with valuable strategies to foster innovation, resilience, and growth in your business.




**November 21, 2024**
**4-5pm (EDT)**
Small business owners and entrepreneurs seeking to enhance their productivity and professional presence are invited to join this one-hour workshop.

## BUSINESS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

SBCN
Small Business Center Network

The Small Business Center Network offers an extensive array of resources. The DBDA will be hosting in-person training opportunities at the Jones House, allowing participants to engage directly with these valuable offerings while also providing a local networking opportunity. We welcome anyone who would like to attend! Please contact Lane Moody at 828-268-6283 or by email at lane.moody@townofboone.net

WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 @12PM-1PM
**CASH FLOW MASTERY**
This hour long session will provide strategies for managing cash flow during tight financial periods, including budgeting tips, alternative financing options and ways to improve cash flow through better financial management.

TUESDAY MARCH 11 11:30AM-1PM
**CANVA: CREATING MARKETING DESIGNS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND NON-PROFITS**
Learn how to utilize CANVA to boost your Small Business and Non-Profit Campaigns. You can create flyers, brochures, business cards, social media graphics and much more. Learn how to navigate CANVA's website to create your own designs.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 26 @12PM -1PM
**REACH CUSTOMERS ONLINE WITH GOOGLE: SMALL BUSINESS LUNCH AND LEARN SERIES**
Are you a new business owner or have an idea for a small business? If so, then this lunch and learn series is the perfect opportunity to step away from the office and learn more about Google!

**Want to see the available trainings for yourself.**
**Click here.**



# 2025 NC Main Street Director's Meeting




## August 4-7, 2025

# GRANT COMPONENTS

1) "How to Make Your Business & Community A Destination" Training for Small Businesses

2) Storytelling Training for Downtown Leaders

3) Professional Media Assets – Photography & Videography of All 72 Communities

4) Itinerary Development Template for Community Websites

EDA
U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

NORTH CAROLINA
MAIN TO MAIN
T•R•A•I•L

MS&RP NC MAIN STREET & RURAL PLANNING CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

EDA U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

A series of workshops to support the expansion of the NC Main to Main Trail @ maintomaintrail.com.

# MAKING YOUR BUSINESS & COMMUNITY A DESTINATION




## Who should attend?

Small business owners and managers (retail stores, service businesses, restaurants, and professional practices), Main Street staff, leadership, board, and committee members in any of the 72 designated NC Main Street communities.

*Businesses who attend both sessions and successfully implement Jon's criteria will be awarded designation of "Certified NC Destination Business".*

## What is it?

A fun, fast-paced all-day workshop with Jon Schallert of The Schallert Group, the world's foremost expert in teaching independent businesses how to reinvent themselves into Consumer Destinations.

The 2024 Destination Marketing Training workshop series will lay the foundation of attracting customers that will be followed and supported the balance of the year by online action groups and Q&A sessions. In 2025, an advanced series will, in addition to offering more in-depth information and support, highlight those businesses that have successfully put the training into action.

Jon provides a roadmap, strategies, tools, and tons of ideas to implement so that consumers will say, "I have to go to that place!"

**In-Person Support**
Participants may attend in-person workshops in eight different regions of NC.

Attendees will learn:

- Jon's 14-step Destination Strategy which he developed after interviewing over 10,000 business owners in over 600 communities
- A basis to build on for Advanced Destination Marketing Workshops to be held in 2025

Selected businesses will receive a 1-on-1 meeting with Jon Schallert!

## After Workshop Support:

- All attendees may participate in monthly online trainings to increase their customer traffic, sales, and profits, including Virtual Action Group calls
- Attendees will receive access to Jon's Destination University® private training library

This training will position small, local business owners and managers to understand how to differentiate themselves from others to make consumers drive hours to visit!

Local staff, such as Main Street programs, city, and local economic development, will also benefit from the training so they may actively support their local businesses.

## Schedule

**2024**
June 24 - Hendersonville (Western Region)
June 25 - Morganton (Northwest Region)
July 29 - Edenton (Northeast Region)
July 30 - Goldsboro (Southeast Region)
Aug 12 - Lexington (Piedmont Triangle Region)
Aug 13 - Wake Forest (North Central Region)
Sept 23 - Concord (Southwest Region)
Sept 24 - Laurinburg (Sandhills Region)

These workshops are hosted by the NC Department of Commerce Main Street & Rural Planning Center. Funding was secured through a State Outdoor Recreation, Travel & Tourism Grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) to expand the NC Main to Main Trail website.

CERTIFIED NORTH CAROLINA DESTINATION BUSINESS

828 REAL ESTATE

# Storytelling Training for Downtown Leadership

HUMAN FACES HUMAN STORIES




## Workshop Overview

Community storytelling is the most effective way to market your Main Street while uplifting and embracing the people who create the places we love. Even better? The process is simple, you don't have to be a professional writer or photographer, and it won't burden a busy schedule. The Grow Your Own Storytellers Workshop is designed to equip Main Street professionals of any level of marketing experience with the skills necessary to integrate storytelling into their community's marketing.

Over the last three years, Storyville's story-based content has been viewed over 60 million times in Main Street communities across the country, and in this workshop, participants will learn and practice Storyville's three-step process to create powerful but simple and sustainable human-centered marketing.

## Outcomes

All participants in this one-day and hands-on workshop will:

- Understand the philosophy of community storytelling in place-focused marketing
- Learn how to conduct interviews that automatically create stories while deepening relationships
- Learn and practice the three rules to taking great photos
- Create an editorial calendar for the year
- Hone writing and editing skills
- Learn social media tips, tricks, and strategies for implementation

PEOPLE MAKE STORIES. STORIES MAKE PLACES. STORYVILLE.SUBSTACK.COM

**Set for the week of Sept 8, 2025**

# Updated Photography for Downtown



**Coming Soon**

# NC Main Street Impact Reports












# 15 New Businesses













































# 9 Lost Businesses

FAMOUS TOASTERY




CAROLINA PIZZA CO.
BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA










EVERYBODY'S
Brunch on Club

HOLE
DOUGHNUTS
LOTTA



Appalachian Regional Commission



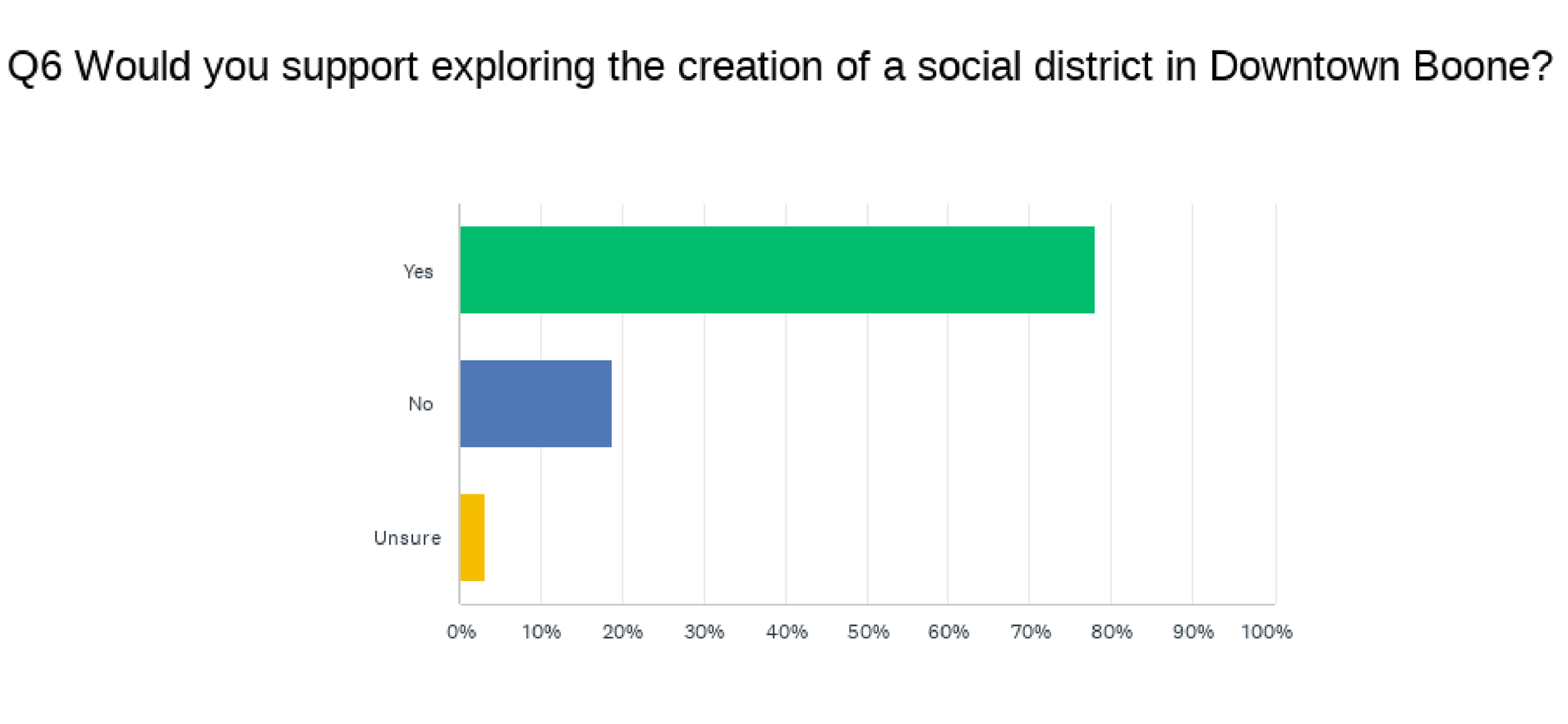

The Downtown Boone Development Association is honored to be one of 75 communities selected to participate in the Appalachian Regional Commission's READY Non-Profits Training. Our cohort is focused on Board Development, and the experience has already been incredibly insightful. Upon successful completion, we will be eligible for a non-competitive, no-match grant of $25,000 to further strengthen and expand our Board Development efforts.

# Gameday Parking Changes

At their August 5, 2025 meeting, the Watauga County Board of Commissioners approved Appalachian State University's request to renew its use agreements for two downtown parking areas: the Human Services lot at 132 Poplar Grove Road Connector and the county parking deck at 140 N. Water Street. The agreement would support pre- and postgame football operations. Under the agreement, the University would pay the County for the Human Services lot,  and a percentage of the net revenue from game day parking at the deck. App State would also handle event security, towing, portable restrooms, and returning the lots to their original (or better) condition after each event.

At its August 13 meeting, the Boone Town Council voted to impose a two-hour limit on downtown public parking during Appalachian State University football games. Council members noted that the change is intended to keep parking available for downtown businesses and visitors, as game-day fans often occupy spaces for the full length of a game. While most downtown spaces are already limited to two hours, some locations, including Queen Street, the Depot Street lot, and spaces in the King Street lot, currently allow up to eight hours. These areas will now also shift to a two-hour maximum on game days.

# Social District Discussions



# Hurricane Helene Milestone and Resources




BOONE
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HIGH COUNTRY
workforce
development board

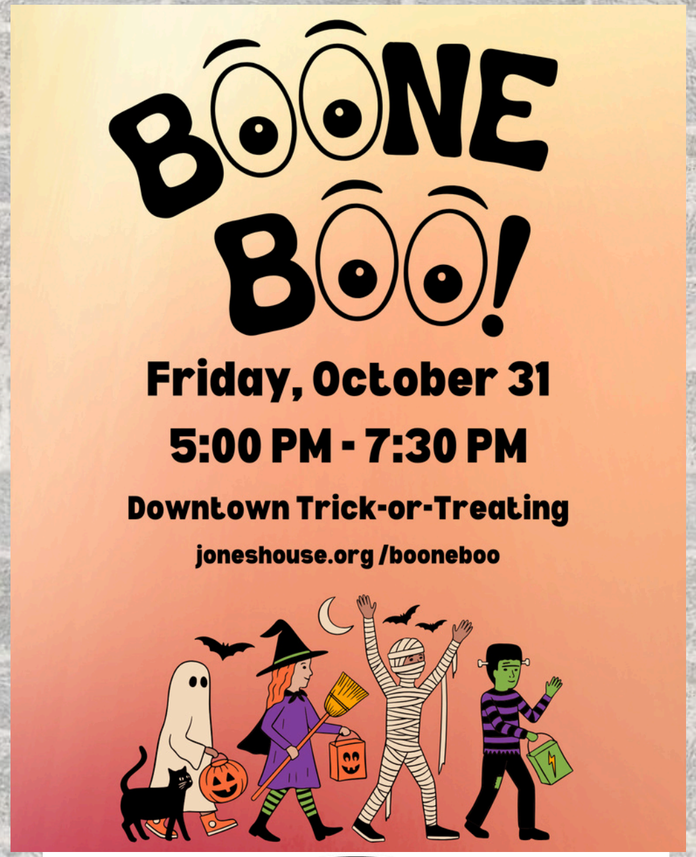


# Event Calendar on downtownboonenc.com




# Please upload your events! I'll send the link!


WATAUGA ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS,
BUSKERSFEST
DOWNTOWN BOONE
HOME OF BUSKING LEGENDS
SEPTEMBER
ADVOCATE
SUPPORT
EDUCATE
INSPIRE
MUSIC
PERFORMANCES
ART MAKING
20
2-7PM
WATAUGA-ARTS.ORG/BUSKERSFEST


BOONE BOO!
Friday, October 31
5:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Downtown Trick-or-Treating
joneshouse.org /booneboo


Festive First Friday and
Solar Tree Lighting
Friday, December 5


Art Crawl
FIRST FRIDAY
Downtown Boone, NC


ANTLERS & ACORNS
SONGS & STORIES
Sept 10-13, 2025


HOLIDAY NIGHT
PARADE
SATURDAY,
DECEMBER 13
AT 6PM





# Host a Chair

## Seat at the Table Chair Challenge

























Seat at the Table is a community art project where artists transform chairs into works of art, highlighting the vital role of creativity in our daily lives and public spaces.

The finished chairs will be displayed in downtown businesses in early September, accompanied by a scavenger hunt organized by the Watauga Arts Council to complement the experience.

All chairs will then be showcased and auctioned at Buskers Fest on September 20 in Downtown Boone. Proceeds will support participating artists and inclusive community art programs through the Watauga Arts Council.

# Saturday, November 29, 2025 is “Shop Small” Saturday

AppState will be playing Arkansas State at Home that day






# PUBLIC ART



Legacy NC: 100 Murals in 100 Counties" is an ambitious campaign led by artist Max Dowdle, with support from NC Main Street and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. .




With the bulk of sidewalk replacement complete we are working towards incorporating additional public art opportunities



# Howard Street Construction Update



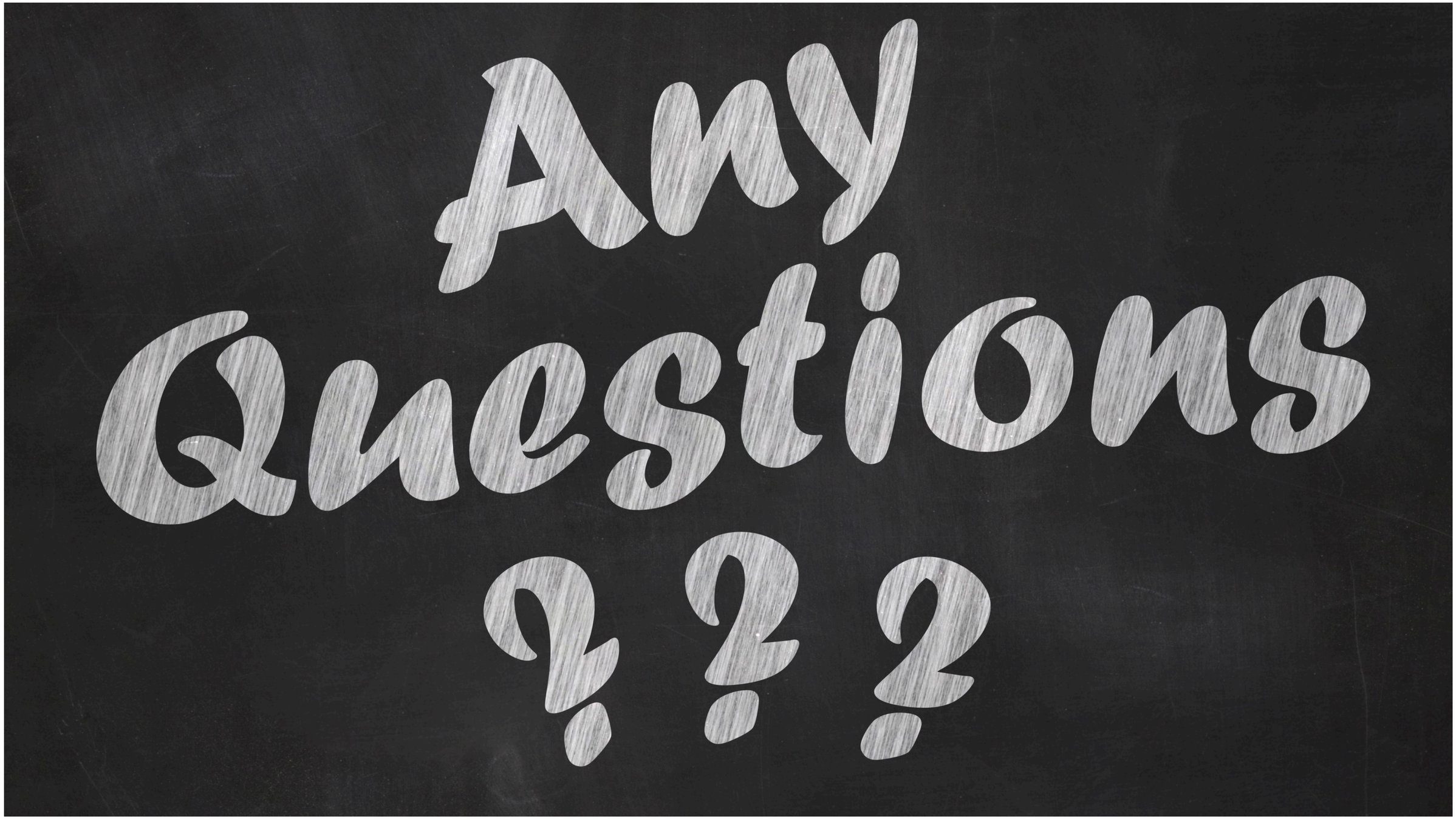






# Looking Ahead

- Howard Street Construciton
- Social District Discussions
- Board Development Updates
- Refocus on Commitee Work


Any
Questions
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