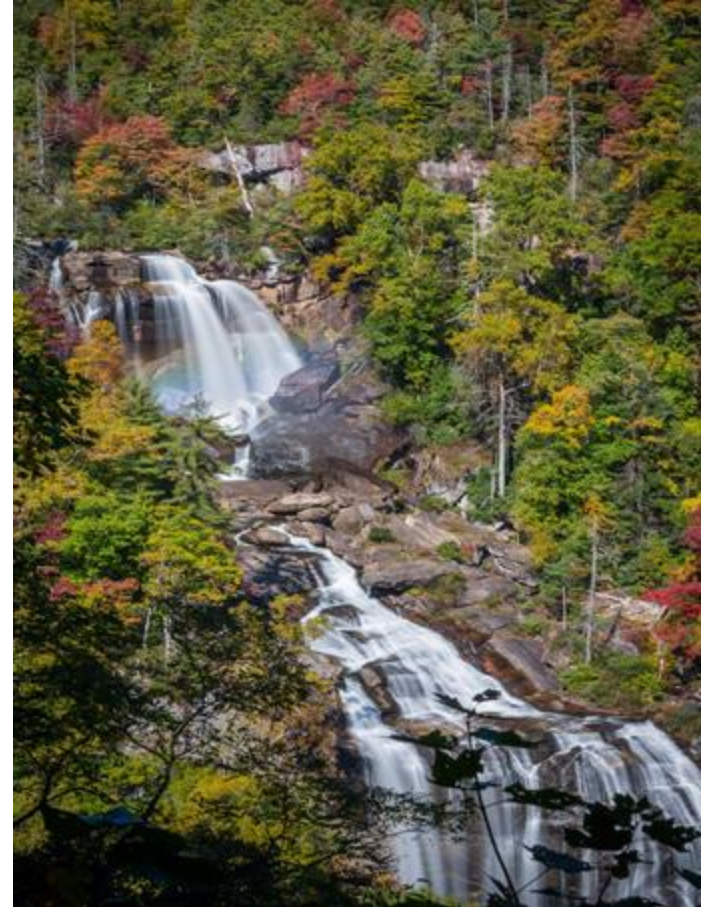




TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY  
**TOURISM**  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

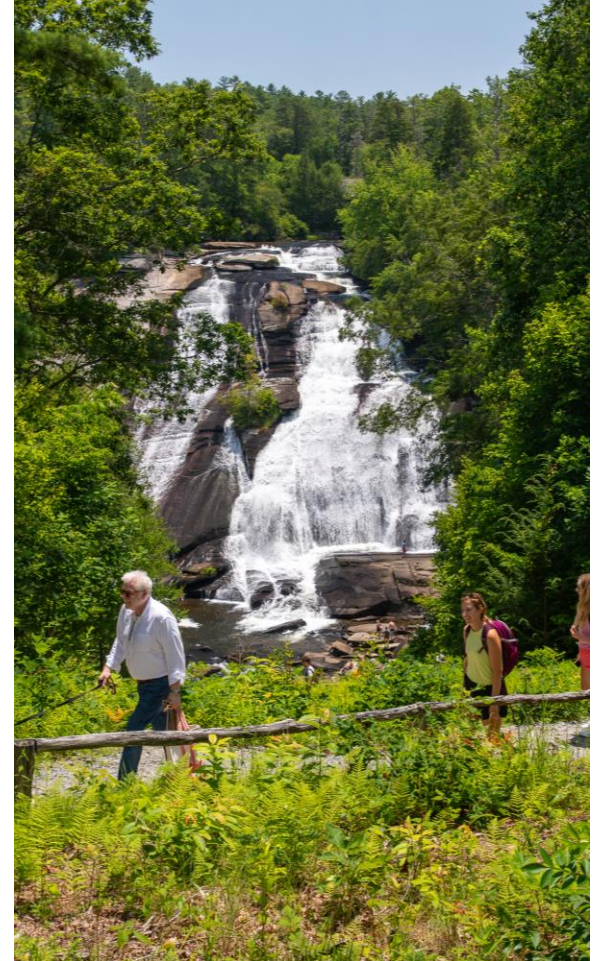
FY25 – Q1  
Quarterly Report

# Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority



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# I. Organizational News



## FY25 Q1 Board & Staff

As the work of the TDA has continued to grow in both the marketing and management of the destination, limited capacity to do the desired work has become a challenge. The need for a part-time employee to address this issue was defined by the board at their annual retreat in February, and subsequently included in the FY25 budget. As a result, JJ Carson joined the TDA team as Special Projects Coordinator in August.

We partnered with the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce to shine the light on a standout in tourism at their annual awards gala. The Tourism Trailblazer award celebrates those individuals, businesses, or nonprofit organizations who have blazed a trail and left a lasting impact on the tourism industry in Transylvania County. We were pleased to honor David Whitmire as the inaugural recipient for the exceptional work he has done in support of the outdoors and his community.

The start of a new fiscal year leads to a number of annual activities, from initiating the new marketing plan to outreach to local organizations about available funds for grant programs to finalizing an audit contract for the prior year. Additionally, plans for 2025 partner marketing opportunities were defined and work on the 2025 Adventure Guide and Points of Interest Maps began. Efforts continued on the development of a new website. Then, as the quarter was coming to a close, remnants of Hurricane Helene made their way to Western North Carolina and essentially changed everything for all of us. Details on our efforts in the immediate aftermath and beyond will be covered in the next report.



## Board Members

**Dee Dee Perkins, Chair**

Interested Individual

**Jessica Whitmire, Vice Chair**

Town of Rosman Appointee

**Lauren Wise**

City of Brevard Appointee

**Nory LeBrun**

Member-at-large

**Dana Antonuccio**

Accommodations Owner / Operator

**Isaac Allen**

Interested Individual

**Dionne Hodgson**

Accommodations Owner / Operator

**Larry Chapman**

Transylvania County Appointee

**Madeline Magin**

Member-at-large

## Marketing

**Dee Dee Perkins, Chair** Board

**Dana Antonuccio** Board

**Dionne Hodgson** Board

**Nory LeBrun** Board

**Layton Parker** Community

**Transylvania Always**

**Jessica Whitmire, Chair** Board

**Lauren Wise** Board

**Dionne Hodgson** Board

**Eric Caldwell** Community

**Grant Bullard** Community

**Mandi Bentley** Community

**Kate Hayes** Community

## Destination Infrastructure

**Madeline Magin, Chair** Board

**Dee Dee Perkins** Board

**Jessica Whitmire** Board

**Nicole Bentley** Community

**Melanie Spreen** Community

**Aaron Baker** Community

**Jeffrey Adams** Community

**Grant**

**Isaac Allen, Chair** Board

**Dana Antonuccio** Board

**Larry Chapman** Board

**FY25**

# Board and Committee Members

# FY25 Q1

## Partner Support

Our 2025 Partner Marketing Program (PMO) was revealed at the annual PMO Kickoff Social at Ecusta Brewing. Recent grant recipients provided a unique opportunity for tourism partners to see firsthand the heavy equipment our grant program has provided the community, such as the Polaris ATV and Joulette trail wheelchair for wilderness search and rescue efforts, Jon boat for river clean-up and Canycom buggy for trail repair.

Ongoing 2024 partner marketing this quarter included quality advertising in our fall print co-op, advertising in both Blue Ridge Outdoors (Biking issue) and WNC Magazines (WNC History & Culture issue) with a collective readership of almost 400,000, and monthly website ads on three ExploreBrevard.com pages: Eat, Stay, and What's Happening Now. Our late summer Spotlight e-newsletter featured Headwaters Outfitters, reaching our opt-in readership of 38,000 interested travelers.

A warm welcome and outreach to new tourism partners this quarter included Wood & Vine, Rocky's Grill & Soda Shop, Meraki Escape, The Ezy Egg, Ripple Bikes Mobile Bike Repair, Pisgah Dispensary, Charlie's Hot Buns, Brew Cycle @ The Yard, CDRMTN Coffee Bar, El Jarocho, and attendance at the ribbon cutting ceremonies of both Earthling Coffee & Espresso and Valley Bear Farms.



# Committee Update

## Transylvania Always

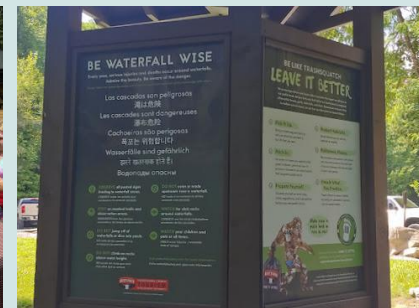
The TCTDA was named an official “Trail Town” by Outdoor NC, launching a digital Trail Towns Visitor Guide promoting sustainable tourism.

We joined The Pisgah Conservancy and Pisgah Area SORBA to celebrate the reopening of Butter Gap and Searcy Creek Connector trails.

The “Leave It Better” campaign, with mascot Trashsquatch, will feature educational branding at Bracken Mountain Reserve’s parking lot and trailhead.

At the August TAC meeting, Fire Marshall Scott Justus presented and secured approval for funding for search & rescue equipment. TAC also continued its collaboration with Headwaters Outfitters and MountainTrue to enhance water safety messaging, with updates on the French Broad Paddle Trail’s Strategic Master Plan from Jack Henderson.

TCTDA staff supported local initiatives, including Smokey the Bear’s 80th birthday at the Cradle of Forestry and a group paddle with conservation leaders.



# Q4 Project Funding Transylvania Always

- **Pisgah Area SORBA: “Canycom Buggy” \$4,733**
  - The canycom machine handles heavy rocks and materials for trail work, enabling volunteers to tackle large projects and maintain remote areas in the Pisgah Ranger District that larger equipment can't access.
- **Transylvania County Emergency Services: “Search & Rescue Rapid Response Equipment” \$28,488.80**
  - The acquisition of a UTV and two Joelette wheelchairs improves rapid response and victim transport on public trails, with 98% of those affected being visitors.

**Year-To-Date Funding: \$33,221.80**

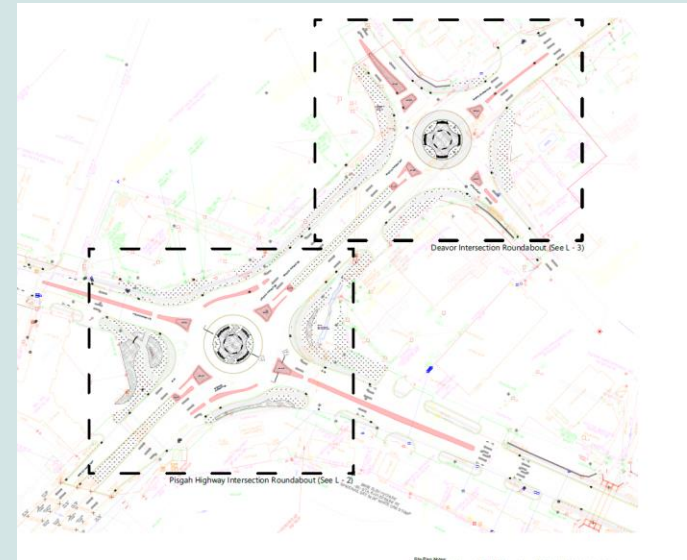
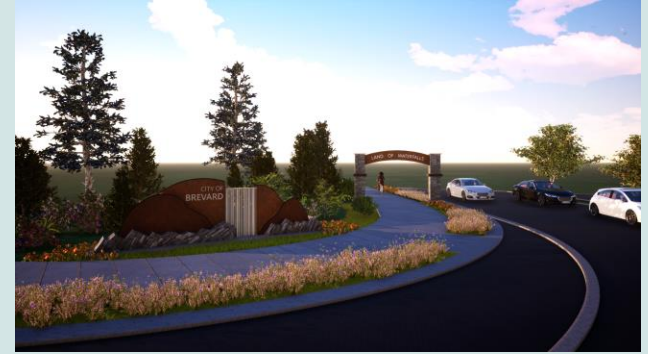




# Committee Update

## Destination Infrastructure

The Destination Infrastructure Committee (DIC) brought together NCDOT and the City of Brevard to discuss improvements to the Pisgah National Forest Entrance Area Roundabouts. In July, NCDOT's Barry Mosteller presented project plans, and consultant Teresa Buckwalter covered landscaping and signage. The DIC's goal is to create a welcoming, aesthetically pleasing entrance and manage visitor communication during the 3-year construction. In August, Paul Ray from the City of Brevard provided updates on signage, budget, and TCTDA's role in funding and messaging. The DIC also reviewed the City of Rosman's Riverfront Park project and recommended funding to the TCTDA Board, which was approved.



# Q4 Project Funding

## Destination Infrastructure

- **Town of Rosman: “Rosman Riverfront Park Project – Phase 1” \$22,860.68**
  - The Rosman Riverfront Park master plan aims to become a regional tourism hub for river recreation, addressing infrastructure needs over three phases. Phase 1, spanning three years, focuses on site preparation, permits, contracts, and initial site work.



**Year-To-Date Funding: \$22,860.68**

# Q4 Project Funding

## Tourism Marketing

- **1. Heart of Brevard: “Professional Display Panels for Brevard Plein Air” \$4,800**
  - We funded professional display panels for the Brevard Plein Air Festival, providing an enhanced gallery experience for artists and visitors.
- **2. Cedar Mountain Music Project: “White Squirrel Artisan Market (WSAM)” \$4,500**
  - WSAM, our county's largest indoor/outdoor artisan market, showcases top WNC makers and musicians in a one-day, family-friendly, free event.  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=8497765956937255>
- **3. Deerwoode Reserve: “Festival of Lights” \$3,000**
  - This family-friendly Christmas event offers holiday activities like hayrides, cabin tours, and s'mores around firepits with carols by a local chorus.

**Year-To-Date Funding: \$12,300.00**







## II. Marketing



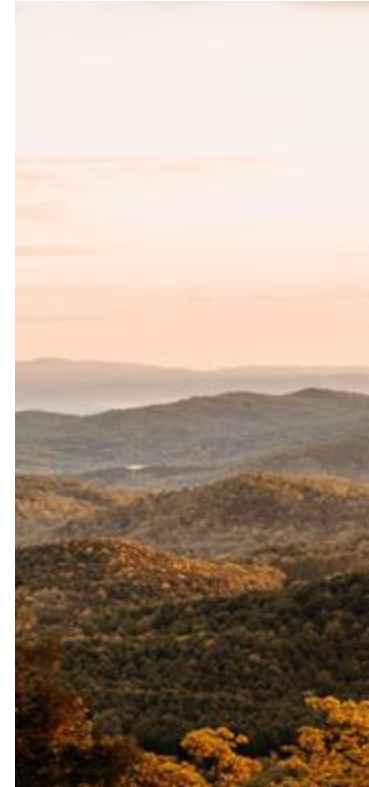
# FY2025 Q1 : July – September

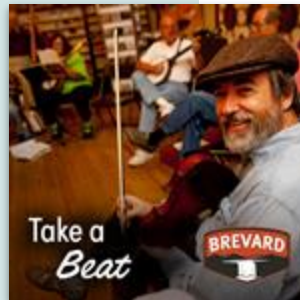
## Marketing Overview

TCTDA's first quarter key messaging celebrated summer. Play and stay opportunities were highlighted and we began to tee up fall in Transylvania County. The goals were to increase occupancy at Transylvania County accommodations, to encourage and capture day trip visitors, and build mid-week, extended-stay visits.

Summer advertising and communications were targeted toward the following:

- Families, individuals; professionals who work remotely, leaf season visitors, and adventurers
- Focus on drive markets: Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh, Charleston, Columbia, Knoxville, Nashville, DC & Virginia
- Focus on non-stop flight markets: Chicago, Dallas, Orlando, Denver, NYC, DC, etc.
- Niche adventurers (cycling, camping, hiking) and cultural/ lifestyle





## Marketing Digital

Summer's digital campaigns focused on outdoor adventure, culture, and lifestyle experiences. Late first quarter, digital ads transitioned from summer to fall messaging and targeted nearby geographic markets.

Digital ads continued across multiple platforms, including programmatic display, native, keyword search, pre-roll, Facebook, and more. Ads retargeted those already familiar with the brand while prospecting for new viewers. Digital outlets also included YouTube, Blue Ridge Outdoors, and Pink Bike. Transylvania County was featured in a digital Our State custom article eblast and website placement.

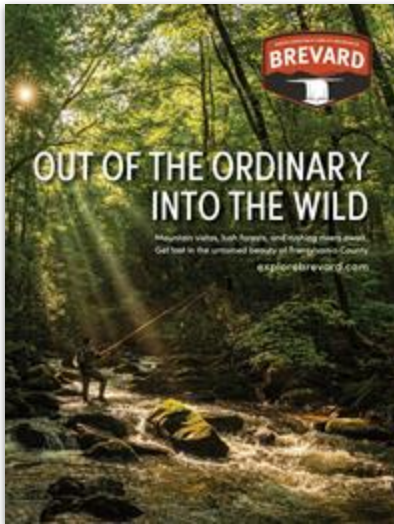
Facebook advertising targeted audiences across nearby areas, as well as national locations including NC, SC, AL, FL, OH, VA, TN, GA, TX, DC, NY, GA, TN, KY, and more.

Web page partner ads continued through TCTDA's Partner Marketing Program.

# Marketing Print

In the first quarter, one print placement was used to supplement the larger digital marketing campaign. and was targeted more toward regional or local markets.

- **Our State** – Full Page Ad in September Issue.



# Marketing Broadcast

During the first quarter, the 30 second “Be Cool” TV spots ran in Atlanta, Nashville, and Raleigh on targeted cable channels. Various videos were also utilized on YouTube, digital, and pre-roll platforms as well as through social media advertising.

# Marketing Newsletters & Blogs

**Partner Spotlights** July's Partner Spotlight featured Headwaters Outfitters.

**Blue Ridge Outdoors** In August, an email was sent to encourage our followers to vote for Brevard as a "Top Adventure Town."

**Trailblazer Campaign** A special eblast launched the Transylvania Trailblazers campaign. Following this, individual short videos featuring our Trailblazers were shared on social media, once a week and boosted.

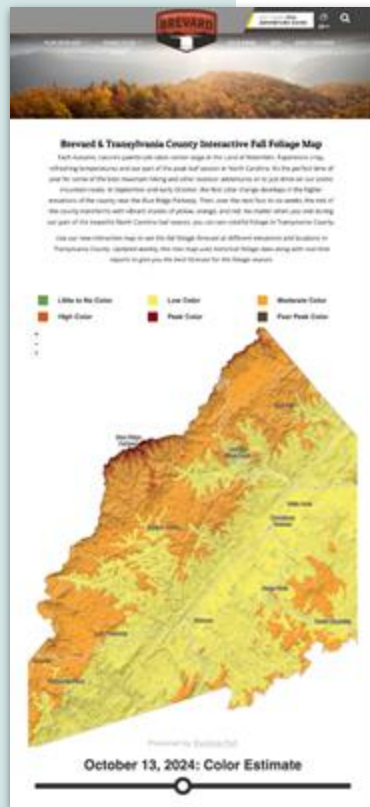
## Adventurist & Field Notes

Three Field Notes eblasts were distributed to approximately 38,000 opt-in subscribers. In July, "Gear Up for Adventure: Shopping Guide for Hitting the Outdoors" listed several popular activities and where to gear up to enjoy them. August's Field Notes, "Listen to the Music: Live Music in Transylvania County" highlighted live music venues in Transylvania County. In September, "Off The Beaten Path: Arts, Culture, and History Stops" focused on discovering the arts, culture, and history of Transylvania County.

The Adventurist was distributed with coverage of events in July, August, and September.







# Marketing Website Updates

## New Website Development

Development continues on the new website by the Madden team supported by weekly meetings and work by the TCTDA and Market Connections staff. Homepage and top-level page development is complete. Content is being migrated over from the existing website by the Madden team with support from the TDA and Market Connections website teams. Additional efforts include internal page development, content development, new and updated directories, a new calendar, SEO, and more. Transition to the new site will begin in Q2, with an announcement and official launch in January.

## Current Website + Fall Foliage Map

Normal maintenance and enhancing of the current website continue. Seasonal landing pages and new blogs are being published to the current website. An interactive fall foliage map was published and promoted on social media beginning in September.

# Marketing Billboards & Signage

## 280 Billboard

Brevard and Transylvania County's local brand board on Highway 280 was updated in July for summer. A new billboard was installed in late September for Fall.

## Interstate Billboards

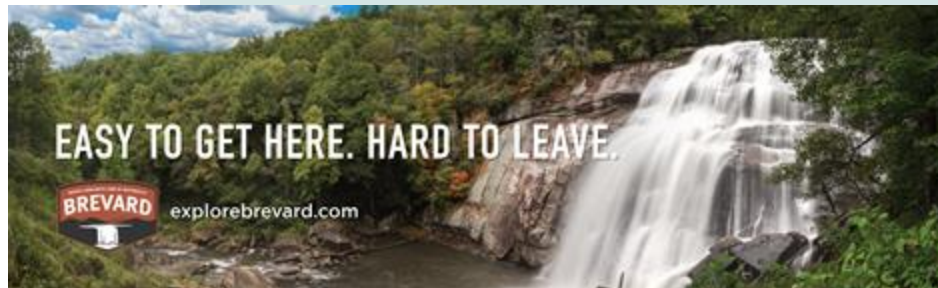
The FY25 marketing plan called for a reduction from four billboards to two. One, located on Highway 280 as visitors enter Transylvania County, claims our destination and it's natural landmarks. The second, at a strategic location on Interstate 26 near the Asheville Airport, uses iconic outdoor images to remind approximately 253,000 drivers per week of the incredible outdoor opportunities found just down the road in Brevard and Transylvania County.

## Kiosks

Additional kiosks to be completed in FY25 include Downtown Brevard, Pisgah Ranger Station, Sliding Rock, Gorges Visitor Center, and Champion Park



280 Billboard



I 26 Billboard

# Marketing Public Relations

During first quarter, our team engaged with journalists, responded to press inquiries, attended a Media Mission trip to New York City, hosted the Visit NC team for an immersion trip to Transylvania County, and explored earned media opportunities. These efforts have resulted in excellent press showcasing the area.

## New York City Media Mission

In September, on behalf of Explore Brevard, Market Connections' Mark Johnson traveled to New York City to meet with 24 travel and food writers. Visit NC organized the two-day Media Mission trip that included representatives from eight destinations. Connections were made with writers and content producers. [One article](#) has already been written that included Brevard.

## Visit NC Immersion Trip

In September, Wit Tuttell, Visit NC Executive Director and nine other Visit NC staff spent two days on an immersive trip to learn about Brevard and Transylvania County. Executive Director Clark Lovelace, Marketing & Communication Specialist Mollie Gordon and Market Connections' Mark Johnson lead the Visit NC staff on a walking tour of Downtown Brevard. The next day, the group explored Pisgah National Forest, the Pisgah Inn and Brevard Music Center. County Planning Director Jeff Adams, graciously allowed the use of and drove one of the Transylvania In Motion shuttles for the group.



# Marketing Articles & TV Coverage

**Single Tracks** July 8, 2024

[How North Carolina's DuPont State Recreational Forest is coping with a 10x increase in visitation](#)

**Only In NC** July 12, 2024

[Take A Ride Down A Waterfall Sliding Board In The Pisgah National Forest In North Carolina](#)

**Single Tracks** July 24, 2024

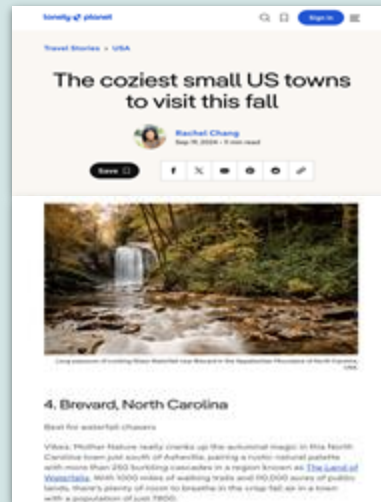
[The new Butter Gap trail creates a fantastic 15-mile loop in the Pisgah National Forest – all year long](#)

**The Travel** September 12, 2024

[8 National Forests That Rival Zion National Park](#)

**The Lonely Planet** September 19, 2024

[The coziest small US towns to visit this fall](#)







On YouTube, a view is counted on when a user watches a video for a minimum of 30 second.

# Marketing Trailblazers Campaign

The Trailblazers Campaign launched in September and features local trailblazers sharing what makes the area special to them. Videos were featured on social media with boosted posts, EB.com, and Youtube.



**Woody Platt**  
Member & Founding Member of Deep Creek Rangers



**Catalina Noreña**  
Co-owner of Cuda de Espinosa



**Matthew Bushce**  
Spring Creek & Packer Restaurants Owner/Partner



**Jeanne & Dana Hawkins**  
Owners of Pigeon Rock Lodge



**Kelly Holdbrooks**  
Executive Director of Southern Highlands Museum



**Billy Smith**  
Co-owner, Art Director & President of Transylvania Community Arts Council



**John Taylor**  
Owner of G.A. Tappan Tap



# III. Digital Marketing & Web Traffic Report



## Quarterly Report: July - September 2024



1

## Traffic Overview

Overall traffic to the website is up 11.0% compared to last year, with Facebook/IG traffic up 90.0% and referral traffic from visitnc.com up 18.6%.

2

## Top Pages

The top pages besides the home page were the eat-drink page, events calendar, and lodging. The top 10 waterfalls page was the 5th most viewed page this quarter.

3

## Organic Traffic

Organic traffic was up 20.1% compared to last year. Waterfalls-related clicks are the top searched keywords outside of brand keywords.

**Google Search**

Clicks  
3,691

**Facebook/IG**

Impressions  
1,434,090

**YouTube**

Video views  
31,834

**Display -  
Prospecting &  
Retargeting**

Impressions  
721,114

**Native Content  
Activation**

Clicks  
4,076

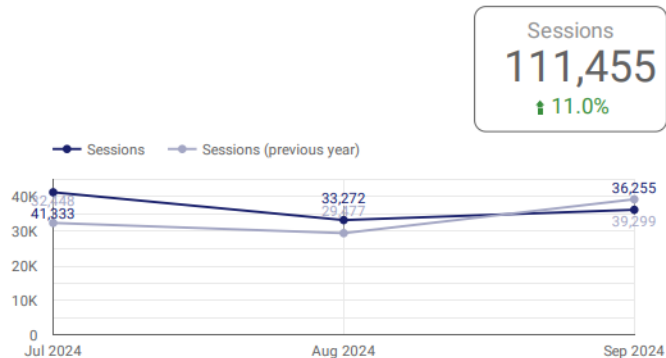
**Pre-Roll Video**

Video completed  
168,593

**Pacing Details:**

- Scaled pacing commensurate with travel seasonality.
- Paused all ads on 9/27/24.

## Traffic to the Website



## Top Visited Pages

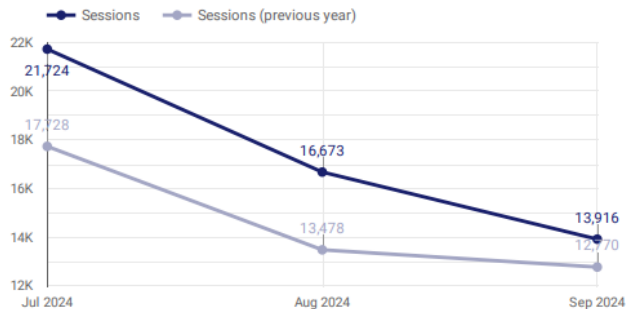
Page path	Views	% Δ
1. /	55,435	90.4% ↑
2. /business-categories/eat-drink/	12,119	-40.6% ↓
3. /events-calendar/	8,772	1.9% ↑
4. /business-categories/lodging/	8,565	-36.8% ↓
5. /top-10-waterfalls/	7,608	-14.5% ↓
6. /the-great-outdoors/waterfalls/	5,632	-23.7% ↓
7. /get-out-guide/	5,369	96.7% ↑
8. /the-great-outdoors/	4,204	57.2% ↑
9. /festivals-events/	3,939	-22.1% ↓
Grand total	233,010	-6.7% ↓

## Top Sources of Traffic

Session source / medium	Sessions	% Δ
1. google / organic	48,134	22.8% ↑
2. (direct) / (none)	13,037	-3.3% ↓
3. MediaOne / facebook	10,196	90.0% ↑
4. MediaOne / native	5,683	-20.1% ↓
5. MediaOne / display	4,088	-48.4% ↓
6. MediaOne / google	3,973	-28.4% ↓
7. visitnc.com / referral	3,960	18.6% ↑
8. storage.googleapis.com / referral	3,393	68.3% ↑
9. fb / paid	2,891	-
10. bing / organic	2,091	1.0% ↑
11. RomanticAsheville.com / referral	1,838	-
12. m.facebook.com / referral	1,520	-49.0% ↓
13. yahoo / organic	1,279	7.0% ↑
14. duckduckgo / organic	1,207	-9.5% ↓
15. (not set)	917	187.5% ↑
16. cityofbrevard.com / referral	639	96.0% ↑
17. headwatersoutfitters.com / referral	602	-43.6% ↓
18. blueridgeparkway.org / referral	547	23.2% ↑
19. facebook.com / referral	452	118.4% ↑
Grand total	111,455	11.0% ↑



## Organic traffic overview:

Sessions  
**52,529**  
± 20.1%

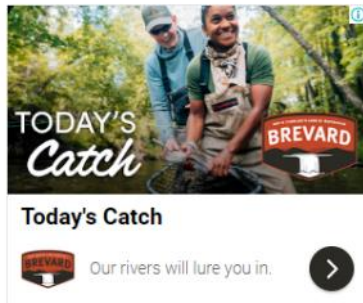
## Keyword Rankings:

Query	Average Position
brevard	4.8
brevard nc	6.1
brevard waterfalls	1.6

	Query	Impressions	Clicks	Site CTR	Average Position
1.	brevard nc	103.3K	2,849	2.76%	6.06
2.	brevard	34K	822	2.42%	4.81
3.	things to do in brevard nc	9.9K	813	8.18%	4.66
4.	brevard north carolina	17.1K	621	3.64%	5.37
5.	brevard waterfalls	1.2K	376	30.4%	1.62
6.	downtown brevard nc	1.3K	344	26.75%	2.89
7.	downtown brevard	1K	323	32.24%	2.88
8.	brevard restaurants	4.1K	272	6.67%	2.45
9.	brevard nc restaurants	3.4K	261	7.7%	2.57
10.	brevard nc events	542	258	47.6%	1.65
11.	waterfalls near brevard nc	871	234	26.87%	1.89
12.	explore brevard	332	228	68.67%	1
13.	brevard nc waterfalls	853	223	26.14%	1.69
14.	brevard, north carolina	7.2K	215	2.97%	5.08
15.	restaurants in brevard nc	2.9K	208	7.21%	2.21
16.	restaurants brevard nc	4.1K	186	4.56%	2.85
17.	waterfalls in brevard nc	555	183	32.97%	1.57
18.	waterfalls brevard nc	481	174	36.17%	1.55
19.	brevard, nc	6K	173	2.89%	4.59
20.	cedar mountain nc	3.7K	164	4.43%	3.59
21.	things to do in brevard	1.5K	150	10.34%	3.01
22.	things to do brevard nc	1.2K	134	11.07%	3.61
23.	brevard nc hotels	3.4K	128	3.79%	2.03
24.	waterfalls near me	9.1K	117	1.28%	16.99
25.	hotels in brevard nc	2.9K	106	3.68%	2.04



## Top Native Ad:



## Top Pre-roll Ad:

Heart of Adventure



## Top Meta Ads:

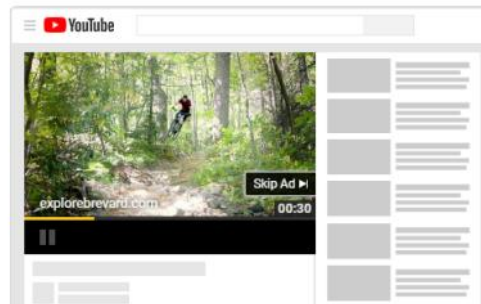


## Top Display Ads:



## Top YouTube Ad:

Be Cool



\*Top digital ads based on a combination of CTR and post-click performance on the website.

\*Top video ads based on completion rate.



## IV. Visitor Reports + Insights

## Key Insights

This report utilizes data from mobile devices and credit card receipts to show key data on visitors, including place of origin, spending patterns, movement through the destination, and more. It is produced by Zartico, a leader in using data science to enable strategic planning by destination leaders, via a paid program offered by Visit NC to counties/cities throughout the state.

The data and format have changed this year. With that in mind, in this report and moving forward, we will provide a link to a year-to-date report that provides this information in a comprehensive and clear manner.

[Zartico Report \(through September 2024\)](#)







# FY25 Q1 Trending & Tourism Insights

Occupancy tax proceeds are up 2.5% over the prior year based on the first two months of returns. Expectations were for a relatively flat year, so it is a good sign to be a little ahead early on.

Looking ahead, external factors like the election and the economy create some unknowns as it relates to disposable income and travel in general. That said, heading into the second quarter of the fiscal year, we were optimistic about a strong fall and holiday season. We added a new tool, an interactive fall foliage map, and recently finalized a plan to generate social media ready photos and videos in each season. Also, the marketing plan included additional dollars for holiday promotion to make a strong push for daytrip shopping and overnight visitation in November and December.

Ultimately, Hurricane Helene hit at the end of the quarter and drastically changed these plans and our expectations. As indicated earlier, details on the initial aftermath and beyond will be shared in the next report.

