



**2014-15 Program of Work Status Update
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce**



Ongoing Work in Priority Areas During 2014-15:

Jobs

Job recruitment in targeted industries

Job retention/expansion

Support of entrepreneurs

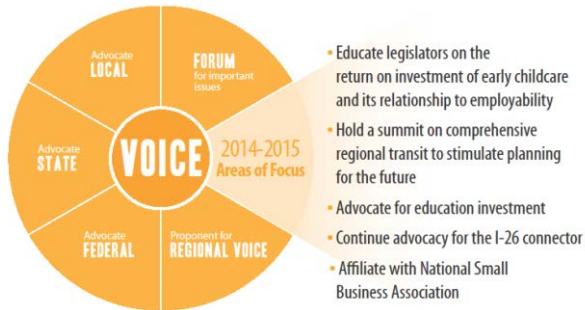
Talent development

Marketing AVL as tourism destination

Status:

- *Reached \$1.1 billion announced projects investment.*
- *Completed four equity investments in companies through Asheville Angels.*
- *Responded to 400+ research requests.*
- *Executed the Annual Metro Economy Outlook with keynote speaker, Greg Ip, Editor of The Economist.*
- *Hosted 23 executive community visits by prospect companies.*
- *White Labs announced its East Coast Headquarters in Downtown Asheville. \$8.1M investment and 65 new jobs.*
- *Existing project pipeline of new-to-area projects currently represents a total potential of \$1.37B in new investment and over 9,000 new jobs.*
- *Five local companies announced expansions:*
 - *Wicked Weed Brewing \$5M, 82 employees*
 - *Highland Brewing \$5M, 15 employees*
 - *Linamar \$115M, 150 employees*
 - *Hi-Wire Brewing \$1.62M, 15 employees*
 - *AVL Technologies \$7.6M, 75 employees*
- *Nearly 100 manufacturers gathered for the Manufacturing Excellence Summit where seven speakers discussed topics relevant to the next decade in manufacturing.*

- *Launched new Foodtopia campaign including new print advertising and “Meet the Foodtopians” website.*
- *Total lodging revenue increased 14 percent.*
- *Multi-dimensional marketing plan generated 4 million website visits and more than 500,000 video views.*
- *Media relations efforts resulted in 650 significant stories with reach of more than 6 billion impressions.*
- *Implemented new advertising targeting meeting planners and debuted new Meeting Planner Guide.*
- *The CVB Sales Team issued more than 700 sales leads to hotel partners, with almost 400 bookings worth more than 60,000 room nights.*
- *Assisted more than 500 groups meeting in Asheville*
- *Redesigned Visitor Center’s Asheville Shop to reflect a more sophisticated look.*
- *A more focused approach on locally designed and locally made merchandise has created a very unique and inviting shopping environment.*
- *Working with local artisans and companies to create unique and some exclusive designs for the shop.*
- *Distributed 949 relocation leads to community partners.*
- *Served 195,000 visitors through the Asheville Visitor Center.*
- *The 2015 Homecoming Job Fair set records for attendance and employers with more than 110 employers and thousands of job seekers.*
- *EDC site ranks on page 1 for key search terms.*
- *Created an online decision tree with resources available for businesses or startups.*
- *Participated in Students at Work Week and Hospitality and Tourism Day*



Voice

Forum for important issues
Advocate for business – local, state and federal
Proponent of regional voice

- *Created the Advocacy and Policy Committee to represent the voice of business, actively engaging 60+ participants.*
- *Created the Call to Action Committee, comprised of 133 participants to be the grass roots advocacy arm of the Chamber, helping to pass graffiti, transportation funding and economic development legislation.*
- *Convened three updates of the North Carolina General Assembly to keep Chamber members up-to-date on the happenings of the legislative long session.*
- *Hosted sold-out 2015 Legislative Luncheon with more than 220 participants to present the legislative priorities of the chamber to the WNC Delegation.*
- *Conducted regular meetings with city, county, state and federal elected officials letting them know the priorities of the Chamber and its members.*
- *Hosted candidates' forum to educate members on candidates for Buncombe County Commission, Buncombe County Sheriff, and District Attorney.*
- *Partnered with five regional chambers to take 50 WNC business leaders to Raleigh for our annual Legislative Visit to discuss regional priorities legislators.*
- *Produced and maintained legislative bill tracker to keep members informed on the status of bills that affect business and Western North Carolina.*
- *Spent time on the ground of the North Carolina General Assembly meeting with elected officials to discuss top priorities of WNC.*
- *Coordinated and co-hosted gathering of North Carolina/South Carolina I-26 corridor Chamber executives and business leaders to discuss mutually beneficial business opportunities.*
- *Hosted visit by Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond President Jeff Lacker.*



Prosperity

Connection opportunities

B2B relationships

Savings

Marketing

Recognition

Education

Status:

- *More than 1,350 registrants showed their commitment to fitness at the Chamber Challenge.*

- *Presenters from local businesses shared their expertise with fellow members in monthly educational workshops.*
- *Member businesses were referred more than 11 million times through the online business directory.*
- *Weekly e-newsletter with 7,000+ opt-in recipients keeps members connected to the Chamber and each other.*
- *180 golfers participated in annual Chamber Classic Golf Tournament.*
- *Fostered business connections at monthly networking events with more than 1,900 attending.*
- *Expanded from two to three Professional Networking Groups meeting weekly to allow members to exchange leads.*
- *Recognized 46 local businesses that represent over 2,341 jobs in the Sky High Growth Awards*
- *Organized third annual Asheville Restaurant Week with 49% growth in website visitation and 9.5% growth in reservations at local restaurants through Open Table.*
- *Conducted 55 ribbon cuttings to celebrate important benchmarks for local businesses.*
- *Collaborated with Asheville Rides for monthly bike rides out of the Chamber’s parking lot.*



Operations

Financial stewardship

Continued campaign expansion

Investor relations

Status:

- *Had a pristine audit*
- *Will end the year in the black!*
- *Added \$95,000 to reserves.*

- *With support from community volunteers, Total Resource Campaign secured sponsorship and advertising commitments exceeding \$587,000.*
- *According to AVL 5x5 investors, 91.67% rated the EDC's efforts as very/moderately effective. This is up from 67 % in 2010.*
- *Made the decision to move medical staff benefits to a Captive insurance program as a hedge against dramatic cost increases.*
- *Updated Business Continuity Plan for Chamber in case of an emergency.*
- *Hosted multiple communities on Intercity Visits.*
- *In August, 2014, the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce was recognized as a Chamber of the Year finalist by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.*

Areas of Special Emphasis during 2014-15:

Jobs

-Develop AVL 5x5: Vision 2020

Status: Plan will be done in July and we will have approached our top 15 investors by then as well. Thus far we have significant increases from private sector, reduced funding from the County, increased funding from the City. The plan will be vetted and prioritized during the summer. We must raise the remaining funds in Fall 2015.

-Strengthen relationships between business leaders along the I-26 corridor

Status: Held our first joint event with the Greenville, Spartanburg, Greer and Hendersonville chambers in the spring. Meeting to organize next steps in July.

-Expand tourism sales and marketing reach

Status: We have expanded from 4 to 9 markets with existing budget. We will seek further penetration in all 9 markets pending room tax change.

Voice

-Educate legislators on the ROI for early childcare and its relationship to employability

Status: Working with NCBCE and Smart Start on an event in August with Governor.

-Hold a transit summit to stimulate planning for the future

Status: Holding over to combine with other barriers to employment, including housing affordability and childcare.

-Advocate for education investment

Status: Included in legislative agenda and budget (so far) this year.

-Continue advocacy for the I-26 connector

Status: Met with NCDOT; on course; will incorporate multi-modal planning in advocacy next year.

Prosperity

-Conduct a "Membership ROI" campaign

Status: Working with the Membership Committee, began preparations for the campaign in the spring of 2015 with plans for completion over the coming months.

-Grow women leaders through YPA

Status: Held a very successful Lunch and Learn with former Woman Entrepreneur award winners.

-Take meetings to members

Status: Successfully partnered with WABA and Park Partners on Lunch and Learns.

-Amp up Small Business Week

Status: Had excellent attendance with over 400 participants in the week's events. Revealed results of the Business Friendliness Survey and shared with elected officials.

Operations

-Investigate full accrual basis for accounting

Status: The Finance Committee investigated the accrual basis of accounting and determined that it was more appropriate to retain a modified cash basis because of our campaign structure.