



## 2023-2024 POLICY AGENDA

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce serves as the leading voice for business and a balanced economy in our region, advocating for policies at the local, state, and federal levels that reflect the needs of the region's economy. The Policy Agenda is developed in coordination with the Chamber's Advocacy and Policy Committee and guides the Chamber's advocacy work.

### Housing

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce supports policies that incentivize our community to develop and maintain a diverse mix of housing types to fill the housing needs of residents across age, race, and socio-economic status.

#### City & County

- \*Remove barriers within the zoning and approval process to increasing housing stock while incentivizing increased density along transportation corridors. *Update: The City and its partners released a Missing Middle Housing study to identify regulatory and policy barriers to increasing housing supply, as well as develop recommendations for adapting and improving regulations. Chamber staff serves on the Advisory Working Group for the study.*

#### State

- Increase funding for NC Housing Finance Agency, the NC Housing Trust Fund, and the NC Workforce Housing Loan Program.

### Opportunity & Prosperity

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce supports policies that increase opportunity and economic mobility for our community members, through encouragement of a balanced and sustainable economy and the reduction of barriers to fulfilling employment.

#### County

- \*Hold a Mixed Beverage Election in order to increase opportunities for businesses. *Update: The Mixed Beverage Election is included as a possible policy to be considered in the Buncombe County Comprehensive Plan passed by Buncombe County Commission.*

## State

- Reduce barriers to affordable health insurance and increase access to healthcare for NC's workforce through the expansion of Medicaid. *Update: On December 1, 2023, North Carolina expanded Medicaid, improving the lives of over 600,000 people able to access healthcare while also increasing the current workforce our growing region needs to remain competitive.*
- \*Fund site development programs that encourage communities to attract relocation and expansion projects from employers in high demand industries to our region. *Update: The North Carolina legislature created a new site select program to help identify economic development project sites under 1,000 acres. The Chamber continues to advocate for investment in site development.*
- Expand affordable access to quality childcare and pre-k education. Continue investment in education to support the current and future workforce of our region. *Update: North Carolina allocated funds to establish a Tri-Share Childcare pilot program in three counties. Stabilization grants for early childhood workforce compensation is extended through June 2024. The Chamber continues to advocate for investment in accessible, quality child care.*

## Local, State, & Federal

- Alleviate workforce shortages through policies that remove barriers to hiring, including for those individuals who have been justice-involved and community members who have been disconnected from rewarding opportunities.

## Public Safety & Cleanliness

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce supports policies that foster a community that is welcoming, clean, and safe.

### City

- \*Study the feasibility of Business Improvement Districts in Downtown, the River Arts District, and West Asheville. *Update: Plan and implement a BID in Downtown Asheville. Based on the results of the feasibility study, the Chamber is advocating for the creation and implementation of a BID in Downtown Asheville.*

## Infrastructure

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce supports policies that increase our region's competitiveness and quality of life through the modernization and maintenance of infrastructure including transportation, water and sewer systems, the energy grid, and broadband.

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## State

- Implement Carbon Plan mandated by House Bill 951 “Energy Solutions for North Carolina” to ensure reliability and affordability of energy while meeting the stated carbon reduction goals.

## Local, State, & Federal

- Support appropriations for infrastructure projects in Western North Carolina. *Update: Buncombe County, the City of Asheville, Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, and the Tourists team have agreed to fund necessary upgrades to McCormick Field.*

\* Priority item