



Charlottesville Albemarle
Convention & Visitors Bureau

Operations Plan
For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

Executive Summary

The Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau (CACVB) is a destination organization solely funded by a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax in Albemarle County and Charlottesville. The CACVB is a government agency that provides visitor information, promotes community assets to visitors, and increases economic mobility and growth through the visitor dollar. It improves the quality of life for residents and supports tourism activities through collaboration among the city, county, tourism industry, and community partners.

Since being reformed in 2019, the CACVB has received international recognition for its innovative promotional efforts. The CACVB has also taken on an increased role in the community by creating the region's first tourism master plan, expanding workforce development, providing education and resources to tourism businesses, and convening businesses, non-profits and government across industry sectors for greater collaboration and alignment. Through intentionally inclusive promotion and partner education, the CACVB shows the visitor how our community wants to engage with them and leads the community in inviting visitors and residents into more welcoming spaces.

[Destination 2045: Crafting our Tourism Future Together](#), the community's inaugural tourism master plan, was completed in June 2024, approved by the CACVB board, and outlines the priorities for a sustainable regional tourism economy through 2045.

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Background

The Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Board (CACVB) is a destination organization that was established through an Agreement made and entered into on July 1, 2004. The “Charlottesville-Albemarle Agreement for Operation of A Joint Convention And Visitors’ Bureau” was authorized by adopted ordinances by the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, with then-City Manager, Gary O’Connell, and then-County Executive Robert Tucker, Jr. This Agreement under Section 1 both established the CACVB and stipulated the functions charged to the CACVB.

This Agreement was reestablished and reauthorized on February 25, 2022, with a third amended operating agreement, including an adjusted Executive Board structure, fund balance provisions, and diversity, equity and inclusion language. The Executive Board is enabled as a joint exercise of the powers vested in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville pursuant to Virginia Code §§15.2-940 and 15.2-1300. The purpose of the CACVB is to promote the resources and advantages of the County, the City and the region pursuant to the terms and conditions of the updated Agreement, including the marketing of tourism, as well as the marketing of initiatives that: attract travelers to the City and the County, increase lodging at properties located within the City and the County, and generate tourism revenues within the City and the County.

The CACVB is solely funded by a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) generated by guests staying overnight in City and County lodging properties, equal to 30% of the first 5% of the TOT for each locality. In FY25, each locality collected a 9% TOT, which means that of all the lodging tax revenue collected in the City and the County, 16.67% was invested back into the CACVB to continue growing this revenue stream and industry sector. This investment allows the CACVB to engage in more robust promotion and development of the destination, driving more overnight visitation, creating a positive feedback cycle that has a significant economic impact on our community. It should be noted that when the TOT percentage increases, the additional tax revenue goes into the general fund and does not get invested back into the CACVB. The CACVB operates on the TOT collections from two years prior. Therefore, the FY26 budget is based on TOT collections from FY24 (July 2023-June 2024) and will increase to \$2,924,284.

The CACVB Executive Board is composed of 15 voting members:

1. One member of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors;
2. One member of the Charlottesville City Council;
3. The Albemarle County Director of Economic Development or their designee;
4. The Charlottesville Director of Economic Development or their designee;
5. The Executive Vice President or Chief Executive Officer of the University of Virginia or their designee;
6. One tourism industry organization representative appointed by the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors;
7. One accommodations representative appointed by the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors;
8. One food and beverage representative appointed by the Albemarle County Board of

- Supervisors;
9. One tourism industry organization representative appointed by the Charlottesville City Council;
 10. One accommodations representative appointed by the Charlottesville City Council;
 11. One food and beverage representative appointed by the Charlottesville City Council;
 12. The President or Chief Executive Officer of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce or their designee;
 13. One representative of the arts community jointly appointed by the Executive Board members of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and the Charlottesville City Council;
 14. One representative of the recreation community jointly appointed by the Executive Board members of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and the Charlottesville City Council; and
 15. The President or Chief Executive Officer of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation or their designee.

The Board of Directors holds public board meetings a minimum of six times per year.

The CACVB maintains administrative offices at 3510 Remson Court, Suite 102, in Albemarle County, Virginia. These offices also serve visitors and host partners as needed.

Mission Statement & Value Proposition

Being a government-based destination organization, the CACVB serves the broad interests of the greater Charlottesville community in many areas beyond lodging, including dining, retail, agritourism, entertainment, heritage, outdoor recreation, arts, festivals, weddings, special events, and transportation. According to a study conducted in 2023, 25% of retail and restaurant sales were made by visitors to our region. Therefore, the visitor dollar makes the difference between those businesses failing and succeeding (Zartico 2023). In other words, lodging tax revenue invested in the CACVB goes to support not only accommodations, but also many other industry sectors generating additional tax revenue: sales, meals/food & beverage, real estate, etc.

According to [recent research by Destinations International](#) (the association representing destination organizations worldwide), “visitor-supported businesses tend to be smaller/local/non-chain types of businesses that are more likely to outsource services like payroll and use local insurance, real estate agents, or building service companies. Tourism businesses are employment-intensive and have more insurance needs than areas like manufacturing which are less labor-intensive.” The CACVB focuses on this local impact through a broadly defined visitor economy to provide equitable access to the visitor dollar.

Annually, the Virginia Tourism Corporation via Tourism Economics (and in coordination with the localities) compiles [economic impact numbers](#) that provide relevant and quantifiable data for our region. The CACVB’s efforts helped to stimulate more than \$956 million dollars of combined direct visitor spending in our community in 2023 (most recently available year). This economic

activity sustained local businesses by supporting 7,066 people who work in the tourism industry. Below is the tourism industry economic impact data for Charlottesville and Albemarle County in calendar year 2023:

Direct Visitor Impact 2023

Locality	2023 Direct Impacts									
	Direct Visitor Spending, 2023 (in millions)								Employment	Local Taxes (in millions)
	Lodging *	F&B	Retail	Recreation	Transport **	Total Spending	Total Spending % Change (2023/2022)	Spending Share of State		
ALBEMARLE	\$120.5	\$168.2	\$55.5	\$93.1	\$114.0	\$551.3	7.8%	1.7%	3,715	\$26.3
CHARLOTTE SVILLE CITY	\$89.3	\$167.1	\$48.8	\$65.6	\$35.1	\$405.9	3.5%	1.2%	3,351	\$20.8

*Lodging includes those owning a second home

**Transportation includes both ground and air transportation

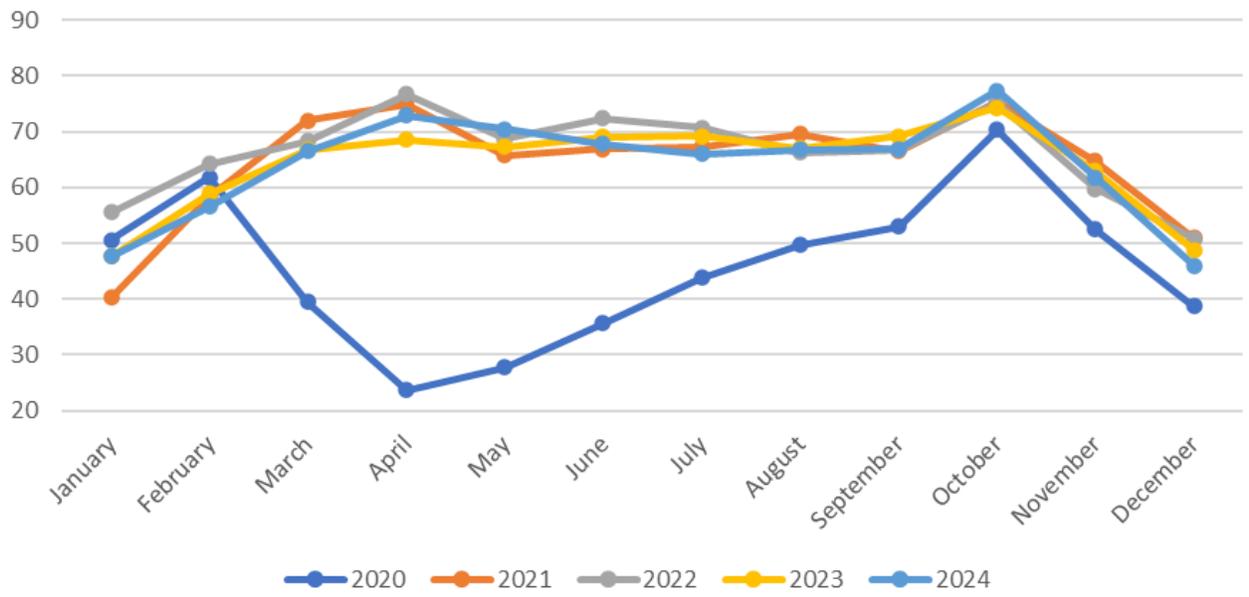
Looking at the local tax revenue collection in another way, in Albemarle County, the starting annual salary of a schoolteacher is \$50,000. This means that the \$26.3 million in local tax collection directly attributed to visitors in Albemarle County could fund 526 teachers.

Tourism’s positive economic impact is felt well beyond the City and County lodging properties. Indirect and induced economic impact of the tourism industry accounts for \$1.43 billion in spending, 9,694 jobs, \$503.1 million in labor income and \$60.1 million in local tax revenue (that lessens the burden on residential contributions) for Charlottesville and Albemarle County combined. A \$1.43 billion economic impact makes tourism one of the most important and vital industries in Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

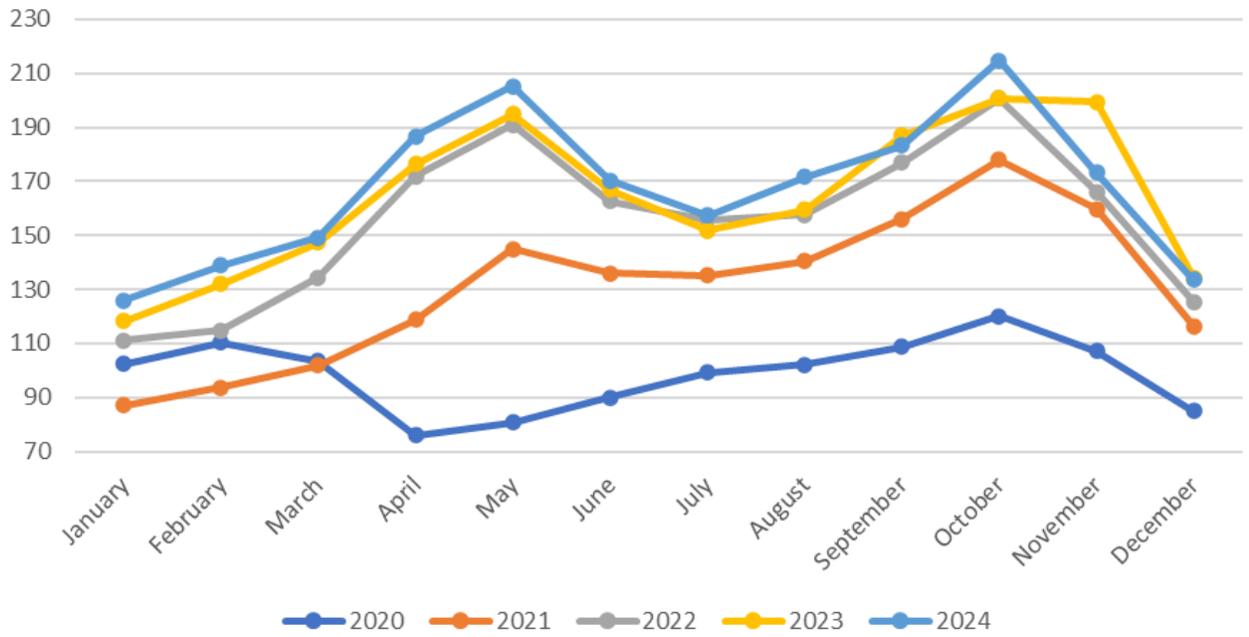
In the years following COVID, the region’s tourism demand recovered relatively quickly. As you’ll see from the charts below, demand is starting to fall back into seasonal patterns with minimal growth. As costs to do business have continued to increase and workforce has remained limited, the potential for growth has been stymied. Destination 2045: Crafting our Tourism Future Together recognizes the hurdles that exist to long-term tourism industry growth and sustainability.

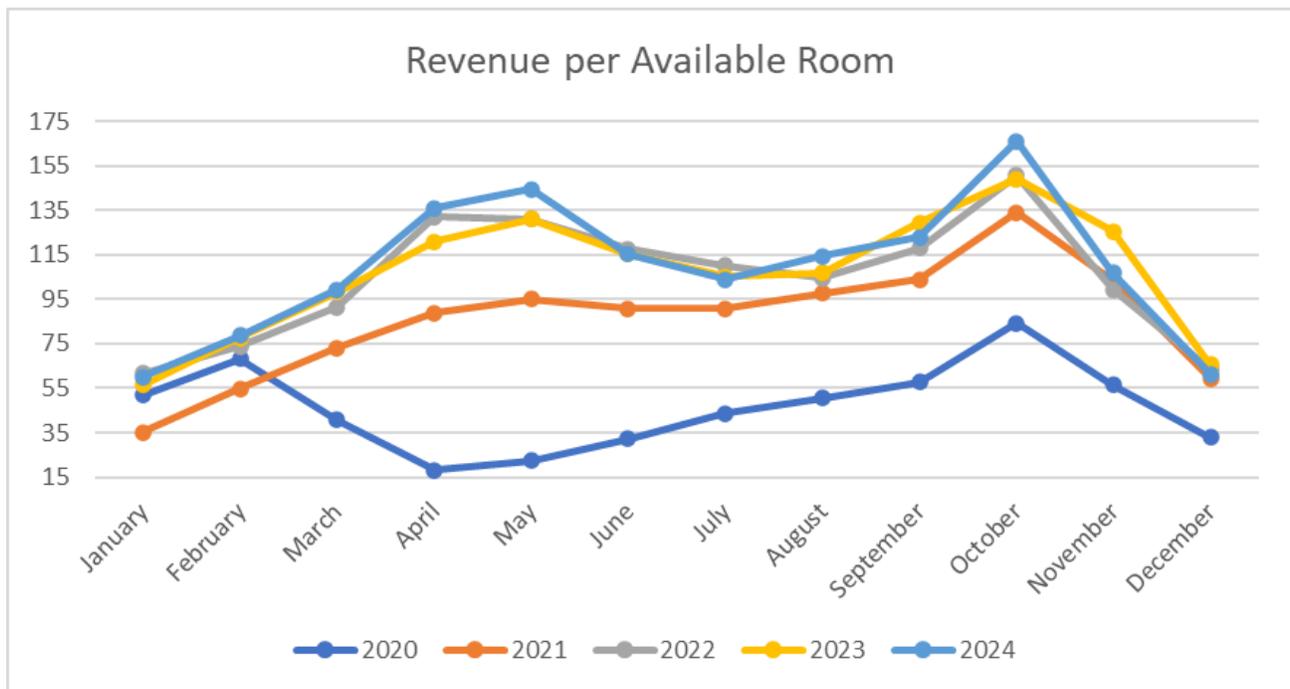
Hotel occupancy is a measure of how full our hotels are each month. ADR is average daily rate, or the cost for each of those rooms. RevPAR is revenue per available room and is calculated by multiplying ADR by occupancy for a picture of hotel revenue. This data is sourced from CoStar.

Hotel Occupancy Rates



Average Daily Rate





Mission

The mission of the CACVB is to enhance the economic prosperity of City and County by promoting, selling and marketing the City of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle as one destination, in pursuit of the meetings and tourism markets (as defined by the operating agreement).

Value Proposition

The CACVB performs above and beyond its basic mission. Not only does it serve the functions outlined above, but it also plays a vital role in workforce development and training, convening stakeholder groups, providing economic insight and tourism expertise to the city and county, and growing the local economy through economic mobility and equitable access initiatives. As the needs of the community and the tourism industry change, the CACVB adjusts to fill gaps and support the connectivity of Albemarle County, Charlottesville, the University of Virginia and the tourism industry.

The CACVB's overarching promotional strategy strikes a balance between paid, owned, and earned media efforts. Each type of media serves a very distinct purpose in moving potential visitors to action. From the inspirational phase to the consideration phase, and ultimately to the booking phase, each step of the visitor journey is influenced by the CACVB's marketing and communications efforts.

From a paid media perspective, the CACVB placed **nearly 120 million advertising impressions** through robust digital and print marketing campaigns in calendar year 2024. This more than doubled the number of advertising impressions placed in calendar year 2023, due in part to one-time funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Tradeshaw attendance and direct sales promotion is another form of paid media. From July 24,

2024, to February 17, 2025, the Sales Manager provided opportunities to our lodging and event properties through 71 requests for proposals with an estimated \$1.5 million dollars in potential revenue. During this same time, 10 different area site visits were hosted for meeting planners and tour operators with more than 80 total attendees. The CACVB attended 9 tradeshow with 115 individual appointments. A few of the larger shows included the [Student Youth and Travel Association](#) and the [American Bus Association](#). The Sales Manager held 30 partner visits, and 527 destination welcome bags were provided to conference and group event attendees.

The CACVB's website is one of its most powerful digital marketing tools and a significant part of its owned media portfolio. In calendar year 2024, the CACVB website saw nearly 800,000 users and 3.2 million pageviews, the latter representing a 64% year-over-year increase. Average engagement time per active user increased by more than 11% compared to 2023, meaning users were staying on the website longer and engaging with content in a more meaningful way. The website generated more than \$52,000 of advertising revenue in calendar year 2024, which more than offsets the approximately \$30,000 annual cost of maintaining www.visitcharlottesville.org. The CACVB's social media channels are also powerful communications tools used to encourage and inspire future visitation. In 2024, these channels generated more than 4 million organic impressions, 279,000 engagements, and nearly 95,000 post link clicks.

Earned media is a vital piece of any successful promotional strategy. Stories generated from the CACVB's public relations efforts are third-party, editorial endorsements that appear in some of the top travel publications in the country and the world. These positive stories help inspire and encourage future visitation to the region and also help shape and influence the perception of our community. The CACVB was able to secure coverage in many top-tier travel publications in calendar year 2024 including: *Travel + Leisure*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *The Local Palate*, *Southern Living*, and many more. The earned media strategy in 2024 focused on leveraging the *Wine Enthusiast* Wine Region of the Year global accolade, which was announced at the end of 2023. The CACVB accepted this award at the Wine Star Awards event in February 2024 and used this achievement to secure significant coverage of our wine region throughout the year.

Our Community and Visitor Engagement team is comprised of Visitor Services and Destination Development. This team leads our community and visitor outreach, helping our visitors plan their trips and our partners to collaborate. By learning from the visitors and leveraging partnerships, the Engagement team's work informs much of the future promotional strategy. Visitor Services manage the mobile visitor center, serve walk-in visitors to the CACVB office space, fulfill brochure requests, respond to visitor inquiries and more. Destination Development is the process of evolving the community's supply side of tourism in order to meet the area's tourism demands. The CACVB participates in discussions around supporting infrastructure, including accommodations, transportation, and technological advancements, and also intangible aspects like workforce development and partnership among existing tourism-related entities. Destination development is necessary as the demand for a destination increases to ensure it is strategically executed.

In calendar year 2024, Visitor Services had a total reach of 72,500 visitors. This number included pre-trip planning services, services provided through its two mobile visitor centers, mail requests,

and bulk order fulfillment. The largest portion of that reach came from brochure distribution. The team of two Travel Specialists on the Visitor Services team also fielded more than 2,000 calls and emails. The CACVB operates two Mobile Visitor Centers that are stationed at 10 locations in the city and county. The Mobile Visitor Centers also provide visitor support at special events throughout the year. 44% of in-person engagement happened at events in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, as well as trips to Virginia Welcome Centers. In November, the team hosted 31 Virginia Welcome Center staff from the Virginia Tourism Corporation for a familiarization tour of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. The goal of this tour was to better familiarize Virginia Welcome Center staff with our destination, so they can make better-informed recommendations to their visitors throughout the state.

In FY25, Destination Development assisted our partners in bringing \$60,000 of grant funding to our community. These funds are then used for marketing and event production for events with more than 500 attendees. The CACVB secured state grant funds to support VA250 efforts (\$10,000) and accessibility initiatives (\$10,000). With assistance from key partnerships like Wheel the World, the CACVB launched the [Accessible Travel](#) webpage and was awarded [TravelAbility's 2024 SuperStar](#) award. The CACVB supports partners in building a more welcoming destination through its annual [Tourism for All Cohort and Conference](#). In FY25, the CACVB successfully graduated all cohort members and raised conference registration by 56% year-over-year and attendance by 17%. (The original date had to be rescheduled due to snow.) Destination Development continues to support workforce development through partnerships with Albemarle County Public Schools, the City of Charlottesville, PVCC, and UVA Pipelines & Pathways. The Senior Stay Day saw more than 400 high school students and approximately 150 job seekers and included 97 exhibitors/employers. The tourism industry was represented by accommodations, food & drink, things to do, and outdoor recreation.

The CACVB staff convenes stakeholders and acts as subject matter experts, as needed. Destination Development plays a continuous role in the discussion around outdoor recreation, specifically around the connectivity of the river park system. A Destination Development Manager served on a panel at the Rivanna River Basin Commission Conference and was highlighted by the [Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce for the trails and outdoor routes created through Ride with GPS](#). Destination Development also supported Capital Region USA's Global Travel Exchange by leading a tour of Downtown Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, hosting several dozen international tour operators. The team actively meets with the Charlottesville Ale Trail, Monticello Wine Trail, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, and other local stakeholders.

Vision, Values, & Equity

Vision

The CACVB envisions a future where tourism enriches the local community, providing inclusive, seamless connections and welcoming, memorable experiences.

Values

To uphold the values of resiliency, unity, diversity, creativity, and responsibility, and let these ideals lead the work we do.

Equity and Inclusivity Statement

At the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau, we believe in the power of diversity and inclusion to enrich our community and enhance every visitor's experience. We welcome visitors from every corner of the globe, embracing the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and identities that make our area vibrant. Whether you are here for a short stay or a long visit, we strive to ensure your experience is memorable, accessible, and inclusive. The CACVB pledges to actively promote a culture where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to explore and enjoy all that our destination offers by creating inclusive content, sharing diverse local stories, and providing equitable opportunities for local partners in our work. We here at the CACVB would like to be the first to welcome you to visit our community in the heart of Central Virginia, where diversity thrives, and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do.

Organizational Structure

The CACVB currently employs 11 full-time staff:

- Executive Director, Courtney Cacatian
- Director of Marketing & Public Relations, Brantley Ussery
- Marketing Manager, Amanda Vierrether
- Social Media and Content Manager, Sabrina Combs
- Sales Manager, Teresa Lamb
- Director of Visitor and Community Engagement, Cassie Ivey
- Destination Development Managers – Carla Mullen and Chris Ridder
- Travel Specialists – Rami Gadow and Ethan Wagner
- Finance Administrator, Kathy O'Leary

Strategic Plan

In 2023, the CACVB hired SIR, a research firm based in Richmond, to lead the community's first tourism master planning process. The tourism master plan looks toward the long-range view and encompasses work beyond the mission and scope of the CACVB to include the tourism industry, City, County and University of Virginia. The process included a competitive analysis; an updated past and prospective visitor study to compared to the 2020 results; and stakeholder engagement including focus groups, interviews and a survey. The research can be found on the CACVB's [research page](#). In October 2024, the CACVB Board passed the [FY2026 – FY2029 strategic plan](#), based on the findings of [Destination 2045: Crafting our Tourism Future Together](#), the tourism master plan.

Critical Business Imperatives

The CACVB strives to optimize tourism economic impact in Charlottesville and Albemarle County for the betterment of the community. Some parts of its work are ongoing and essential; therefore, they continue regardless of which strategic plans are in place. These areas of its work are called its critical business imperatives:

- **Overnight Stays:** The CACVB's mission is to attract visitors to stay overnight, resulting in lodging taxes for Albemarle County and Charlottesville. A portion of this tax is earmarked for funding the CACVB and is its only source of funding. All CACVB efforts serve to enhance and entice additional overnight stays.
- **Visitor Spending:** After attracting visitors to Albemarle County and Charlottesville, the CACVB promotes additional activities beyond their initial interests, boosting spending at local restaurants, attractions, and tourism businesses, as well as promoting repeat visitation. Longer stays increase visitor spending, significantly contributing to sales and meals/food and beverage tax revenue growth. This activity is primarily promoted through our mobile visitor centers.
- **Mid-week Business:** The CACVB targets need times at accommodations, including shoulder seasons and especially weeknights, to attract longer stays, promote meetings and events, and collaborates with tour operators to enhance visitor product. Key metrics include hotel occupancy, revenue per available room, increased product offerings with tour operators, and bookings of group business, including meetings and events.
- **Research:** As the destination organization, the CACVB identifies research opportunities that can inform the work of its accommodations and other partners within the tourism industry as needs arise. This research is provided to the community for its use. Examples include STR lodging charts with hotel occupancy/average daily rate/revenue per available room, prospective/past visitor surveys, and more.
- **Leadership, Governance & Transparency:** The CACVB, funded by City and County lodging taxes, must use these funds transparently and efficiently. It aims for high performance and leadership at all levels. Among these aims are open board meetings and oversight, public and sound financial reports, alignment with County policies and procedures, and frequent communication to the community and industry partners.
- **Promotion:** The Marketing and Sales teams generate robust destination promotion efforts through owned media (website/social media), earned media (public relations) and paid media (advertising/sales). Through this outreach, the CACVB inspires potential visitors to travel to Charlottesville and Albemarle County, generating lodging, sales and meals/food and beverage tax. This outreach is specific to target markets and measurable results based on budgetary restrictions.
- **Partner Engagement & Development:** The CACVB relies on tourism partner information, relationships and participation to grow the tourism economy. The Destination Development team builds relationships with industry partners to foster strategic partner growth, identify funding, opportunities for collaboration and promotion, networking, action planning, workforce development and more.
- **Visitor Services:** Visitors need assistance planning their trips and finding things to do once they arrive. The CACVB's Visitor Services team directly assists and educates visitors through email, phone calls, visitor materials, and onsite through its mobile visitor centers by providing recommendations, maps and brochures. The Mobile Visitor Centers (MVCs) are stationed throughout Albemarle County and Charlottesville to reach visitors where

they are and promote exploration throughout the community. The MVCs are supported by the CACVB's office space.

Destination 2045 Goals

The strategic plan mirrors Destination 2045's long range goals:

- **Amplify Visitor Experiences:** Promote and enhance the visitor experience through targeted marketing of the region's unique cultural and natural attractions.
- **Foster a Welcoming Community:** Champion DEI by ensuring tourism benefits the community and visitors, promoting inclusive participation and equitable opportunities.
- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Cultivate robust partnerships with local stakeholders, businesses, and the community to enhance storytelling and experiences.
- **Enhance Local Quality of Life:** Ensure tourism efforts directly contribute to community well-being.
- **Boost Sustainable Economic Growth:** Drive economic growth by attracting a diverse range of tourists and encouraging investments in local businesses, workforce, and tourism-related infrastructure.

FY2026 Proposed Budget

The FY2026 budget has a slight increase over the FY2025 budget. Most of these additional funds will go to Advertising and Promotion with some covering escalating healthcare costs.

FY25 – FY26 Comparison

<u>Revenue Detail</u>	<u>FY25 Budget</u>	<u>FY26 Budget</u>
Contributions from City	1,522,235.00	1,510,806.00
Contributions from County	1,150,441.00	1,373,478.00
Miscellaneous Income (Website)	40,000.00	40,000.00
Total	2,712,676.00	2,924,284.00

Please note that the CACVB Executive Board has not yet approved the FY26 budget. Below is a summary based on the proposed budget, presented by the Executive Director at the February 2025 meeting. Final approval will take place by May 1.

FY2026 Financial Plan Summary, Administrative

The administrative functions required for the daily operation of the CACVB, and the products and services needed to conduct business, are covered in this section. In February 2024, the CACVB moved its administrative office from its temporary location to 3510 Remson Court, just off 29N.

Albemarle County, acting as the fiscal agent for the CACVB, provides some essential services,

including human resources, limited information technology, finance, and legal support. This support is reflected in the GF Admin Charges line item and consists of 2% of the CACVB budget annually, per the operating agreement. The CACVB maintains its own insurance, software, equipment rentals, etc., and is responsible for purchasing some essential County hardware and software outside of the fiscal agency fee.

Expenses - Salaries	1,294,790.00		1,393,865.00
Expenditures - Administrative			
Insurance Liability	5,118.00		6,000.00
Equipment Rental	3,000.00		3,000.00
Lease	56,000.00		56,000.00
Janitorial Services	7,000.00		12,000.00
Education & Training	25,000.00		28,000.00
Local Travel (Mileage Reimbursement)	5,000.00		5,000.00
IT Related Fees	19,206.00		21,658.00
Office Supplies	4,000.00		4,000.00
Meals	4,000.00		4,500.00
Other Contractual Services	3,000.00		3,000.00
Machinery/Furniture (Non-Cap)	10,500.00		5,000.00
Professional Services	10,000.00		5,000.00
GF Admin Charges	53,454.00		58,486.00

FY2026 Financial Plan Summary, Promotion and Engagement

CACVB will be acting on its FY2026 – FY2029 strategic plan in FY2026. This plan integrates the engagement team (destination development and visitor services) and promotional team’s (marketing, public relations and sales) efforts. Below are the priorities for the first year of the strategic plan with a summary of the budget below.

- **Amplify Visitor Experiences:**
 - Develop a brand that creates a distinct identity for the Charlottesville-Albemarle region and builds visitor recognition of our destination and its assets.

- **Foster a Welcoming Community:**
 - Identify and promote visitor experiences that remove barriers and provide equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their disabilities.
 - Develop ambassadors through an extension of Tourism for All programming to instill pride and inclusion when welcoming visitors in our destination.
- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:**
 - Develop a promotional campaign alongside food and beverage partners to strengthen relationships and promote Charlottesville and Albemarle County as a premier culinary destination.
 - Coordinate VA250th efforts that showcase our destination's focus on revolutionary history through tours, programming, events, and exhibitions.
- **Enhance Local Quality of Life:**
 - Create a formal destination strategy for responding to global, national, and local threats that takes into considerations visitors and community members.
- **Boost Sustainable Economic Growth:**
 - Complete a thorough investigation of midweek business to create foundational research, possibly leading to a conference center feasibility study.
 - Collaborate with downtown businesses and associations to improve the vibrancy of the Downtown Mall for its 50th anniversary (2026).

Expenditures - Marketing-Related			
Advertising & Marketing	967,108.00		1,109,415.00
Website Development	30,000.00		31,000.00
Printing	45,000.00		45,000.00
Postage	11,000.00		13,000.00
Research	75,000.00		30,000.00
Non-Local Travel	30,000.00		35,000.00
Dues/Subscriptions	25,000.00		25,000.00
Telephone - Toll-Free & Cell	14,500.00		15,360.00
Van Expenditures (Maintenance, Fuel, etc.)	15,000.00		15,000.00