

November 27, 2019

Dear Mayor Lyles and Charlotte City Council Members,

I'm pleased to present you with the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19). At the CRVA, we feel incredibly fortunate to represent the city's visitor economy and to manage the City-owned venues with which we are entrusted. For the one in nine residents whose jobs are dependent on a vital and healthy tourism industry and the millions of guests who experience Charlotte through travel, it is a responsibility we do not take lightly.

A strong partnership with the City is a fundamental aspect of our success in growing Charlotte's market share of the visitor economy. Working together this year, we hosted strategic events like the NBA All-Star Weekend that drew national and international attention to our region, invested in critical infrastructure projects at the Charlotte Convention Center and Bojangles' Entertainment Complex that will pay dividends for years to come, and improved the perception of the city through a \$5 million investment in strategic marketing and place branding.

Through our combined efforts, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the entire region once again led the Carolinas in tourism impacts: 29.2 million visitors, \$7.4 billion in direct visitor spending, 141,000 hospitality-related jobs, and \$371 in individual tax savings for residents.

Our strategic approach, evidence-based decision making, thoughtful management of resources, disciplined execution, and emphasis on developing and sustaining an employee-first culture is a proven combination for maximizing the region's economic potential through visitor spending. This, in turn, creates jobs and opportunities for our community.

I encourage you to read more about our successes, initiatives, programs and progress outlined in this document. We welcome the opportunity to address any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Murray', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Murray  
Chief Executive Officer  
Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA)

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

The CRVA's current five-year Strategic Plan for FY2019--23 builds on the momentum and success of its previous iteration, which guided the organization to achieve significant gains for the hospitality industry and the city, to the benefit of local businesses and residents alike. The collaborative nature of our work demands strong relationships, continually focused on our vision and mission with growing Charlotte's market share of the visitor economy at the forefront of our efforts.

**Mission:** Embracing an inclusive, employee-first culture, the CRVA is the trusted leader of Charlotte's visitor economy, which elevates community prosperity through destination-defining infrastructure, impactful branding and job growth.

**Vision:** Charlotte will be recognized as the most sought-after city in the Southeast, known for its undeniable energy, passionate people and captivating experiences.

The multi-faceted aspects of our industry, coupled with the dynamic growth of Charlotte, challenges us to maintain a strategic focus that is equally aspirational, competitive, data-driven, and disciplined. We have high expectations for ourselves and our ability to generate significant convention and visitor activity, resulting in an economic impact that drives community prosperity. Seeking to ensure continued growth in the region's visitor economy is a competitive mindset that compels ongoing investments in infrastructure, resources and workforce development.

Establishing key performance indicators and measuring progress against our competitive set requires that we leverage data to guide decision-making and resource allocation to produce the highest returns on investment. A strategy-driven Balanced Scorecard (BSC) that's updated annually is the primary measurement tool with 21 clear achievement targets that are regularly assessed. Several of the BSC targets are directed at driving competitiveness by measuring the organization and city against its competitive set of Austin, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville and Tampa. Staying disciplined in process, execution, review and the evolution of measurement is one of the most important aspects of our strategic approach.

The CRVA has recently initiated strategic conversations which seek to grow the impact of our work through enhanced operational effectiveness between the Board of Directors and the CRVA Executive Team. The scope of the discussions encompass a critical look at how governance oversight and executive operations complement each other, establishing clearly-defined roles, processes and policies that both guide and protect the organization. The end result is a healthy business framework that fully leverages the skills, knowledge and talent of the Board members and Executive team within established and agreed-upon influence roles. As a result of these conversations, the Board will be aligned and empowered to direct, protect, and enable the work of the CRVA, while the Executive Team will be aligned and empowered to lead, manage and accomplish the work of the organization. We believe this crucial alignment will provide for the CRVA's long-term sustainability and give Charlotte a competitive edge by establishing a clear path to future prosperity for the region through the visitor industry.

We believe that listening to our employees and empowering them to deliver memorable customer experiences is key to our success in ensuring the Charlotte visitor economy continues to thrive. We fully subscribe to the concept that by putting employees first, they will thrill and delight the CRVA's customers. The unwavering commitment to our core values and our "employee first" culture results in above-average levels of employee engagement, as confirmed by our annual employee survey. Our engagement scores remain strong with 82% favorability marks, which is above average in comparison to top-rated national organizations across various industries, including hospitality, technology, manufacturing, service and healthcare. CRVA customer experience ratings, as expressed in a Net Promoter Score, rival that of some of the most well-known companies and brands, signaling the influence and importance of our staff in our success.

## **SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **BOJANGLES' COLISEUM**

In FY19, Bojangles' Coliseum hosted a total of 117 events compared to a budgeted event volume of 99 events, which represents an increase of 10 events over the previous year. Highlights include notable events such as The Avett Brothers, Sesame Street, the Queen City Music Festival and NBA All-Star Week activities including NBA All-Star Practice/Media Day and the NBA All-Star Celebrity Game.

The venue also hosted the Charlotte Checkers hockey team, 2019's Calder Cup Champions. Winning the AHL League Championship was an amazing accomplishment by the Coliseum's anchor tenant and supported strong attendance throughout their season, including a run to the playoffs for the third consecutive year. Momentum from the championship is also strongly impacting season ticket sales for the upcoming season. Popular promotions like "Pink in the Rink," "Wrestling Night," "Miracle Night," "Pooch Party" and "Saturday" continued to be fan favorites. This year also marked the return of arena football featuring the Carolina Energy of the American Arena League. In its second year playing at the Coliseum, the team finished the regular season undefeated and narrowly missed winning the league championship.

Graduations continue to be a staple at the Coliseum with 14 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' (CMS) high school graduations, as well as ceremonies for Central Piedmont Community College, the University of Phoenix and Johnson C. Smith University. In total, the venue welcomed 341,000 visitors for all events during the year.

Construction began on a connector building between the Coliseum and Auditorium in FY19. This exciting project is expected to be complete in March of 2020. The enhancements will provide additional restroom capacity, concession offerings, rental opportunities, circulation space between the venues and connectivity for both staff and productions utilizing the venues.

### **OVENS AUDITORIUM**

In FY19, Ovens Auditorium hosted a total of 127 events compared to a budgeted event volume of 105 events. The venue welcomed a variety of performers from singer/songwriters, magicians, artists, comedians, dancers and more. Some of the most popular events were Aziz Ansari, Bob Dylan, Ghost, John Mellencamp, Dancing with the Stars, Mike Epps, and PJ Masks. The CRVA successfully collaborated with Blumenthal Performing Arts to host A Christmas Story: The Musical and the venue has six weeks of Broadway on the schedule in FY20.

Like Bojangles' Coliseum, Ovens Auditorium also has rich history in hosting graduations and recitals. The venue held nine CMS high school graduations. During all of these performances and community events, Ovens welcomed more than 190,000 visitors.

### **BOJANGLES' ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX BRANDING REFRESH**

The CRVA successfully negotiated an agreement to name the campus of Bojangles' Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium the Bojangles' Entertainment Complex. The 10-year, \$2.85 million agreement, which included interior and exterior signage featuring the new identity, underscored Bojangles' deep commitment to the economic growth and development of Charlotte, particularly in the eastern part of the city. With the renewed naming rights, connector facility construction and a surge in event volume, the CRVA team leveraged the timely opportunity to complete a brand refresh. A new logo, creative and social media assets were developed and deployed in an expanded paid media campaign. A best-in-class website was also created, which offers new booking resources through an online promoter guide, information for event space rentals and catering, as well as media resources and assets. The site features new integration with the CRVA ticketing partner, Ticketmaster, providing

enhanced content management capabilities that streamline the way our team coordinates new show announcements, on-sales and event-related content.

## **BOJANGLES' ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX CONNECTOR**

In the previous fiscal year, Charlotte City Council approved a highly functional connection between Bojangles' Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium that solves for kitchen and production space, usable special event and promoter space within Bojangles' Coliseum, additional restroom capacity and concessions outlets, increased circulation space for both facilities, and storage and office space for both venues. A 6,000-square-foot multipurpose hospitality space was also part of the connector plans. The project is now nearing completion both on-time and on-budget with a scheduled opening in Q1 2020, which will make the historic complex more competitive for promoters and enhance the overall customer experience for its guests.

## **CHARLOTTE CONVENTION CENTER**

During FY19, the Charlotte Convention Center hosted 272 events with 252,360 in total reported attendance, including 32 conventions and trade shows, 20 assemblies, 20 consumer shows and 200 local events. These events enabled the Convention Center to surpass budget by 5.7% and generate approximately \$17 million in revenue for the year.

Noteworthy events hosted by the venue in FY19 included Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, International Facility Management Association, International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association, Association of Energy Engineers, Tree Care Industry, Special Operations Medical Association and Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America. The Center also hosted several events during the week of the 2019 NBA All-Star Game including Jr. NBA which celebrated youth basketball.

The convention center expansion project is critical to the long-term viability and success of the city's meetings and tradeshow market. Work during FY19 related to design refinement and coordination with the City and construction partners on managing cost in an extremely competitive construction environment. Following the Charlotte City Council vote in September to approve additional funding, work has begun in earnest on the \$126.9 million initiative.

Years of data, surveys, research and feedback from meeting planners served as the foundation for the scope of the project. The addition of more than 50,000 square feet of meeting room and pre-function space, along with 15 additional breakout spaces, will increase the city's competitiveness and expand our capacity for hosting larger scale and citywide conventions. The overstreet pedestrian bridge linking the Center to the Westin Charlotte, Whole Foods, LYNX Blue Line light rail Stonewall Station and new restaurant and retail development has created considerable interest and excitement.

At a time when many of our competitor cities are also investing heavily in expanding their convention spaces, the anticipation of this project's completion in 2021 is already paying dividends. The CRVA is ahead of historical booking pace for citywide events by 50% in FY23 and by 67% in FY24.

## **SPECTRUM CENTER**

The CRVA continued its effective partnership with the Charlotte Hornets for back-of-house services at Spectrum Center in FY19. The level of accomplishment is determined mutually by the effectiveness and economic expenditures the CRVA supports through engineering, facility operations, maintenance, cleaning and security. Team responsibilities enhance the experience the Charlotte community and visitors have at the arena as a whole. In FY19, the CRVA invoiced the Hornets for \$8 million in support of 120 events. Aside from the Hornets' regular season, these events spanned Marvel Universe Live!, Fleetwood Mac, WWE, Pink and more.

The third quarter of FY19 was an exceptionally busy period of time for the venue. Over four consecutive weeks Spectrum Center played host to the NBA All-Star Game and both the CIAA and ACC's conference basketball tournaments. During this stretch, Charlotte was truly in the national spotlight and the collective efforts of the CRVA and Charlotte Hornets teams ensured these high profile events were successful.

In addition to delivering back-of-house services, the CRVA provided support to the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) at the facility. This past year, finishing the last of the current CIP projects included the arena's piping project and the Trade Street plaza roof project.

Planning is already in motion for the Republican National Convention set to take place in August of 2020. This strategic event for Charlotte will feature Spectrum Center as host. The CRVA team will be a key partner with the Hornets, RNC Committee on Arrangements and RNC Host Committee as preparations continue in FY19 for this strategic event.

## **NASCAR HALL OF FAME**

The NASCAR Hall of Fame continues to build on a balanced business model to support its vision of operating a premier sports hall of fame, being a leader in defining what it means to honor a sport and serve as a defining destination asset for the Charlotte region. Operating revenue in FY19 totaled \$7.24 million, up 5.8% from FY18.

The landmark strongly contributed to the local economy through \$31.5 million in direct spending and \$58.3 million in economic impact in FY19. A large piece of this direct spending is achieved from visitors. Guests continue to visit from all 50 states and multiple countries annually. More than 90% of the NASCAR Hall's guests travel more than 50 miles and over 70% travel more than 200 miles or more. More than half of all attendees traveled at least 440 miles with an average distance of 564 miles. Approximately 37% indicate that their primary reason for visiting Charlotte is to explore the attraction, while 62% of visitors stay overnight for an average of three days. Travel parties averaged 2.6 people and spent more than \$830 on average per party. This demonstrates what a "bucket-list" experience the NASCAR Hall of Fame has become and validates the investment the community, in particular the hotel community, made in this one-of-a-kind destination venue.

The NASCAR Hall continues to be a highly sought after event venue hosting more than 300 events for conventions and regional and local groups alike, leveraging the unique and immersive NASCAR experience the building provides. This volume of events has remained consistent over the last four years. The interest from various groups resulted in the development of a "Hot Pass Tuesday" program on a trial basis which enabled the team to test its ability to meet the increasing community, civic, education and corporate group demand without negatively impacting the individual guest experience. The trial group program proved very successful and will continue from mid-September through mid-May into the future. In addition, the NASCAR Hall continues to be the choice destination for NASCAR industry announcements, press conferences, paint scheme unveils, media events and sponsorship announcements that provide unique, insider access and enhance our guests' experience.

The NASCAR Hall's education program continues to thrive and grow serving over 15,200 students in FY19, an increase of 175% from FY15, when the initiative expanded. Providing curriculum-focused, authentic learning experiences that specifically address over 150 state and national standards, the education offerings include 30 unique programs from which teachers may select, covering pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Programming geared at avid NASCAR fans and local family audiences, including the Racing Insiders Tour, Breakfast with Santa, Not Too Spooky Hall, Easter Egg 400 and Father's Day special, continue to be popular -- further establishing the NASCAR Hall's appeal to diverse audiences.

In February 2019, the NASCAR Hall remained steadfast in its mission to honor the history and heritage of NASCAR by inducting another class of icons: Davey Allison, Jeff Gordon, Alan Kulwicki, Roger Penske and Jack Roush. To date, the NASCAR Hall has inducted 50 icons and this past May, announced five more for induction in winter 2020, which will bring the total to 55 inductees. Jim Hunter was honored as the Landmark Award recipient for contributions to NASCAR and Steve Waid as the Squier-Hall Award recipient for media excellence.

The newly-redesigned NASCAR Hall of Fame website launched just one day prior to Voting Day and the Class of 2020 announcement. The new site features impactful photos and design to help tell the stories of the legends of NASCAR and spotlight the importance of the NASCAR Hall's mission to preserve the history and heritage of the sport. The design is 100% responsive, providing the visitor with a complete and easy to view experience on any screen size, including mobile and tablet. With an updated infrastructure, the site can also provide new resources to support various programs and initiatives, including the NASCAR Hall of Fame Foundation, educational programming, group sales, venue/event sales, corporate partnerships and media relations.

With a commitment to constantly evolving and refreshing its exhibits, the NASCAR Hall completed all the design and development of the initial phase of a significant update of our hands-on interactive elements which have been installed in early FY20. Some of these enhancements include: a revised Race Week gallery; transitioning to Inside NASCAR featuring 75% new graphics, new larger interactive stations and new physical displays; addition of a new learning laboratory for the education program; and installation of new interactive hardware and software.

Continuing to be the preferred location to highlight milestones in NASCAR history, the NASCAR Hall of Fame was asked to partner with Richard Childress Racing to mark their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of operations and be the signature location for this celebration. The next generation of Glory Road -- the building's iconic exhibit of 18 historically significant cars -- is set for implementation in January 2020. An exciting industry partnership will be announced at the end of 2019 or early 2020.

## **VISIT CHARLOTTE**

In FY19, the CRVA's sales and services team -- Visit Charlotte -- booked 528 events for future years, totaling 443,298 room nights. Of the 528 events, 44 were booked for the Charlotte Convention Center and will generate 162,573 room nights. Youth and amateur sports accounted for 212,261 room nights, representing 48% of the total. The venue sales team booked \$1.5 million in event revenue at CRVA-managed venues, predominately at the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Smaller meetings also played a significant role in exceeding the FY19 goals, contributing 64,727 room nights or almost 15% of the total bookings.

While House Bill 2 (HB2) was replaced with HB142, North Carolina still remains under a travel ban from six states with California and New York having the largest impact. Public employees from those states with conferences and conventions held in Charlotte are impacted by these travel bans, which are still in place due to states indicating that HB142 did not go far enough in protecting individuals against discrimination. The sales team is still finding that conventions with a high percentage of public employees as attendees are choosing not to come to Charlotte because of the potential for decreased attendance, amounting to 15% in some cases.

The destination services team provided support to 25 citywide events that utilized the Charlotte Convention Center as well as 54 sporting events and 78 events that took place at the Spectrum Center, Bojangles' Coliseum and area hotels. Citywide convention events that attracted a high volume of visitors included Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, International Facilities Management Association, Metalcon 2018, Tree Care Industry Association, National Science Teachers Association and North Carolina HOSA Future Health Professionals.

Sporting events hosted in Charlotte during FY9 consisted of professional, collegiate and amateur events. Single events with heavy attendance included the NBA All-Star Game, 2019 New York Life ACC Tournament, NCAA Women's Regional Basketball Tournament, International Champions Cup, CONCACAF Gold Cup Match and Powerade State Games. Annual events such as ACC Football Championship, Belk Bowl, Universal Spirit's National Cheerleading Championship, Palmetto Volleyball, Queen City Classic and CIAA Men's & Women's Basketball Championship generated a high demand of visitors to the Queen City.

Visitor Info Center operations, which include the convention center, Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, and an Uptown location on the Wells Fargo Plaza, responded to 299,028 requests for assistance via walk-in traffic, phone and internet inquiries. The Official City Guide, a CRVA publication, is the most requested resource, while the locally-made product offerings at the Uptown and convention center locations create additional opportunities for both visitors and locals to support area businesses and help promote the Charlotte brand. Since opening in spring 2018, the Uptown location has featured 60 local businesses via pop-up storefronts and other promotional exposure opportunities.

In FY19, more than 650 regional companies engaged with the CRVA through its Partners in Tourism (PIT) membership program. This advocacy and business development initiative is a way for those companies to leverage the power of the CRVA and the hospitality industry to grow their business through conventions, meetings, and business-to-business opportunities. PIT also provides educational sessions across a variety of topics as a way to help build capacity and operational effectiveness of member companies.

## **CHARLOTTE FILM**

In FY19 the Charlotte region played host to the soon-to-be-released Hallmark TV movie *A Christmas Love Story*. The region also hosted the feature film *The 24<sup>th</sup>*, which was co-written and directed by 2019 Academy Award winner screenwriter Kevin Willmott.

Commercial highlights include, but are not limited to, commercials for Bank of America, Doritos, Ford Trucks, General Tire, Food Lion, HULU, Lowe's, Pepsi, Oscar Mayer, CPI, 3M/Staples, Atrium Healthcare, NC Lottery, Smithfield Bacon, Terminix and Toyota.

A sampling of reality shows filmed in the region include 90 Day Fiancé (TLC), America's Got Talent (NBC), Delicious Destinations (Travel Channel), House Hunters (HGTV), Kate Plus Date (TLC), Married At First Sight (Lifetime), My Big Fat Fabulous Life (TLC), Ugly Delicious (Netflix), To Have and To Hold (OWN), True Life (MTV), and Racing Wives (CMT). Charlotte was also used as a photography backdrop for brands such as Belk, Matrix Fitness, Lowes, Danao Living and Wendy's.

Total film-related spending in the Charlotte region was \$18,793,340 with 6,935 hotel rooms booked and 2,172 crew positions filled. The film office responded to 200 leads for a wide array of potential projects.

## **OPERATIONAL SUMMARY**

### **CAPITAL SUMMARY FOR VENUES**

In FY19, approximately \$8.0 million was invested in capital improvements for CRVA-managed venues. Noteworthy projects included schematic designs for future expansion at the Charlotte Convention Center, audio/visual interactive upgrades at the NASCAR Hall of Fame, a fall arrest system for stage rigging at Bojangles' Coliseum, dressing room and food and beverage upgrades at Ovens Auditorium, and venue signage and security upgrades at Spectrum Center.

### **FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

For FY19, CRVA venues generated revenues of \$44,839,179 and received external financial support totaling \$35,956,638. Operational and capital expenses for the fiscal year totaled \$81,172,227. The resulting \$376,410 deficit reduced the CRVA fund balance.

As of June 30, 2019, after adjusting for non-cash items, the CRVA pre-audited working fund balance is \$17,871,905. The final audit is available as of November 2019.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

### **VISITOR SPENDING**

The economic impact of tourism in the Charlotte region increased 5.6% in 2018, marking another year of impressive growth that directly supports and enhances quality of life within the community.

In 2018, the Charlotte region hosted approximately 29.2 million visitors, an increase of 900,000 from 2017, according to research firm Longwoods International. The Charlotte MSA, which represents seven counties in North Carolina and three in South Carolina, also continues to boast the largest number of direct tourism employees and the largest payroll in the state. The leisure and hospitality industry represents one in nine or 140,800 jobs and is the fourth largest industry in the region, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Mecklenburg County led all of North Carolina's 100 counties in domestic travelers' expenditures at nearly \$5.7 billion, an increase of 5.6% over 2017. Mecklenburg County represents 22.4% of all domestic travelers' expenditures in the state and is the number one county in terms of travel spending. Visitor expenditures in Mecklenburg County are higher than visitor expenditures in all other tourism-centric destinations in the Carolinas. Visitors to Mecklenburg County spent nearly 2.5 times or \$3.3 billion greater than Wake County-Raleigh (\$2.4 billion), the second largest visitor economy in North Carolina and more than 4.6 times or \$4.46 billion greater than Buncombe-Asheville (\$1.21 billion).

Approximately 53,300 jobs in the tourism sector in Mecklenburg County are supported by visitor spending. The growth in visitor spending supported the creation of 1,050 new jobs in Mecklenburg County. State and local tax revenues from travel to Mecklenburg County totaled \$406.03 million, representing a \$371.18 tax savings for every county resident.

## **BASKETBALL TRIFECTA**

Between February 15 and March 16 this year, Charlotte hosted a “basketball trifecta” of events – the NBA All-Star Weekend, CIAA Men’s and Women’s Tournament and the 2019 New York Life ACC Tournament – which contributed a combined \$167 million in economic impact to the region, including \$93.5 million in direct visitor spending.

The 2019 NBA All-Star Weekend is the largest single sporting event the city of Charlotte has ever hosted, with an \$87.7 million economic impact to match. The influx of players, fans and media created ripple effects across a broad spectrum of the regional economy, generating \$48.7 million in direct spending on lodging, food and beverages, transportation, retail, recreation and goods and services providers.

The CIAA, the nation’s oldest African American athletic conference, is headquartered in Charlotte and has held its tournament week in the community for 15 consecutive years. The men’s and women’s tournament week offered a dynamic pairing of basketball with intellectual, cultural, social and recreational opportunities, leading to a total economic impact of \$43.7 million. The 2020 tournament will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the event.

The ACC includes 15 colleges and universities, all of which participated in the five-day tournament that had a \$35.6 million total economic impact on the Charlotte region. More than 24,000 visitors came to Charlotte for the tournament, which produced approximately 30,000 hotel room nights, and contributed an estimated \$19.2 million in direct spending to the local economy.

## **INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONS CUP SOCCER**

The CRVA partnered with the Carolina Panthers and Relevant Sports Group (RSG) at a press conference to announce a five-year agreement to host ICC matches at Bank of America stadium every summer through 2024. The deal is the first multi-year contract between RSG and a host city. Attendance for past ICC matches in Charlotte ranged between 54,000 and 69,000 fans, drawing many visitors to the region to watch some of the best European clubs and players compete in the summer league. The ICC, which has been conducted with anywhere between eight and 18 clubs, featured 12 teams this summer from six countries: England, Spain, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Mexico. The five year commitment to Charlotte further supports the city’s growing reputation as a soccer destination.

## **ACC BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP**

The CRVA partnered with the Charlotte Knights, Charlotte Sports Foundation, Center City Partners and City leaders in successfully winning the bid to host the 2020 ACC Baseball Championship at BB&T Ballpark. The May event will mark the first time that championship will be held in the region since 2001 when the games were held at Knights Stadium in Fort Mill, SC. The ACC Championship will draw fans from 12 of the 15 ACC schools who participate in the tournament. The CRVA continues to secure high-profile amateur and collegiate sporting events that generate significant visitor travel to the area.

## **CHARLOTTE PLACE BRANDING**

For more than a decade, we prided ourselves on the statement that ‘Charlotte’s got a lot.’ And while this continues to ring true, we found that Charlotte had hit a noticeable stride in recent years and become so much more than the assets which once defined us.

While destination branding has long been one of the CRVA’s top priorities, and our efforts had results-driven success, we knew that our community had to come together and make a commitment to evolve into a unified place brand to benefit both

the visitor economy and economic development. Destination branding is solely centered on the attraction of visitors, where place branding works to achieve a higher level of connectivity, recognition and elevated perception among many audiences. Place branding is about bridging gaps. Gaps between a place's identity, its product offerings and image - the perceptions people have through personal experiences when they visit.

Because it takes many speaking with one voice to make real impact, our partners served as the invaluable backbone of our place branding efforts. These stakeholders spanned a number of industries and people – from the City of Charlotte to the Charlotte Chamber and Charlotte Regional Partnership (now the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance) to economic development agencies like Center City Partners and others who have a stake in the livability and economic prosperity of our region. All were essential to collaborate with to tell the story of Charlotte.

In such a highly competitive environment, place branding can help build competitive identity, influence perceptions and capture the hearts and attentions of visitors. Place branding is above all about the distinctiveness of place. It addresses what makes our community unique when compared to other places and competitors.

At the heart of our brand work is a brand promise, developed collaboratively with input from our strategic partners across Charlotte. As the city has grown and come into its own, we've found that the real soul lies in our increasingly diverse community and the people who are shaping those experiences. Our brand promise positions us to tell our stories through the people who are making this city and region what it is.

Place branding is often criticized as being a top-down practice, reflecting the interests of a select group of powerful stakeholders. More than anything, we believe Charlotte's brand is meant to be owned by the visitors and residents who love and advocate for this city. While the CRVA spends millions to market our destination annually, we believe the true power of the brand lies within the people who embrace it.

A logo is a mark that should create some kind of connection with a brand and build recognition, recall and differentiation. Look around Charlotte and you'll see the "Crown" symbol found on street signs, T-shirts, business names, local universities and even tattoos on certain Charlotte residents. When considering the visual execution of our brand promise, it became increasingly important for us to tap into a brand adoption that was already authentically and rapidly taking shape.

When designing the Charlotte brand marks, we sought to encapsulate the city's most organically adopted symbol into its logo – the crown – in recognition of its nickname, the Queen City. By adding sectional color-blocking layers, marks took on a more energetic form, representing the diversity of culture, industry and opportunity that Charlotte has to offer. There's a full suite of brand marks intended to provide versatility in usage and represent the monikers "CLT" and the "QC."



While the logo or brand mark is but one element of our visual display, the core of the brand emphasizes memorable experiences over assets, game-changing people over places, and the soul of the city over its picturesque skyline. It's about

how the people of this city make you feel, and it celebrates a culturally diverse place where everyone has the opportunity to make Charlotte their own.

Beginning in early March 2018, the CRVA rolled out an extensive paid media campaign targeted within 12 strategic markets. The CRVA's paid media investment seeks to generate awareness for the destination and inspire travel – both early phases in the customer journey which lead to conversion.

Since 2018, we have injected more than \$7 million into our media buy markets focusing on four key themes to help guide our brand messaging and reach our target audiences. Using key travel research data about Charlotte, we identified our top target audience segments who share similar motivations for travel. The four themes of Culinary, Arts & Culture, Diversity & Inclusion and Outdoor Recreation & Adventure help connect people to Charlotte and inspire them to experience the city.

Charlotte's print campaign features strong visuals, leading with experience and people first; locations are also geo-tagged. And standing on the shoulders of 'Charlotte's got a lot,' our copy expands on our headlines, embodying the "a lot" the city has to offer.

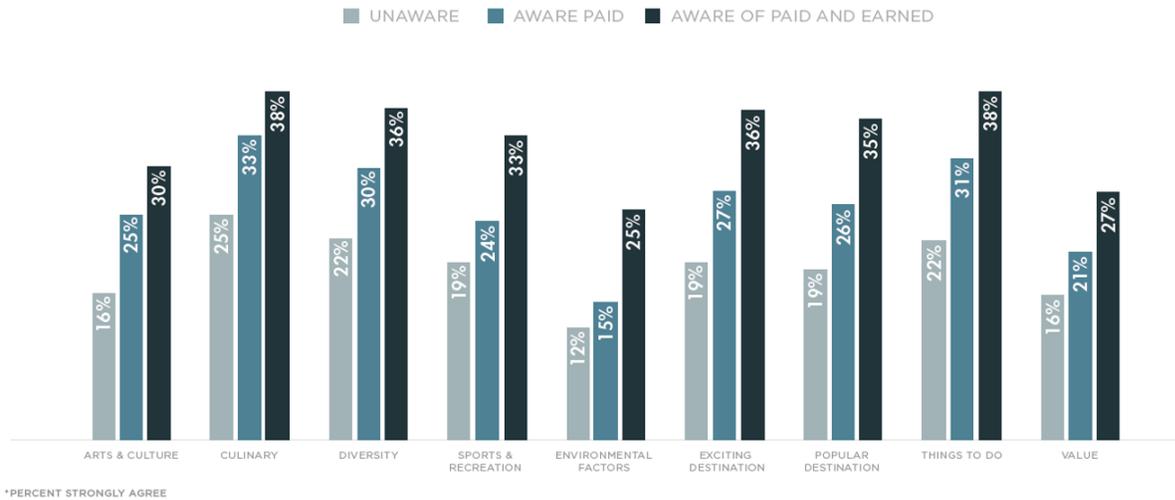


Additionally, we have developed a series of advertorial-style ads which aid in our ability to emphasize our memorable experiences through the stories of our people.



The CRVA's paid advertising and earned media efforts are changing perceptions, positively impacting Charlotte's image. With recall of just one paid or earned placement, we know our efforts are able to positively impact perceptions of Charlotte's image in some cases by almost double.

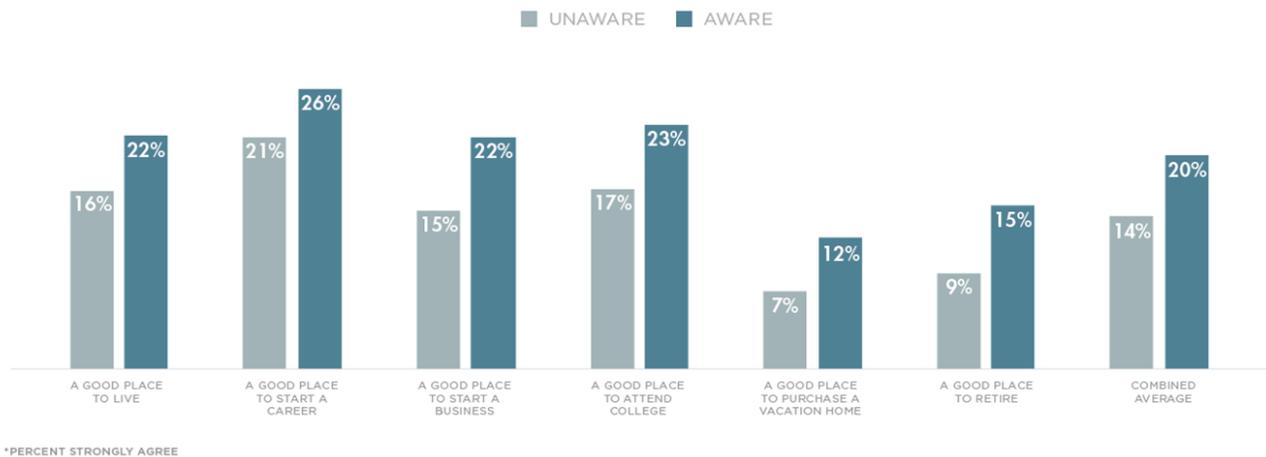
## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ADVERTISING IMPACT ON CHARLOTTE'S IMAGE



We also know that cities and states that prioritize destination marketing and coordinate these efforts with economic development initiatives have experienced significant site relocations and new investments as a direct result. Place branding is about bringing community together.

Through research, we know that destination marketing also has what's referred to as a "halo effect" on economic development. When asked about attributes like Charlotte being a "good place to retire, purchase a second home, attend college, live, start a business or a career," the perception of Charlotte was significantly positively changed with recall of at least one of our paid advertisements or one earned media article. And these attributes are never mentioned in any of our ads.

## DESTINATION MARKETING HALO EFFECT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



One of the first collaborative marketing/communications efforts involving the place brand came through the launch of a marketing program the CRVA developed to support the efforts of our economic development partners. The CRVA invested in a Research, Media Relations and a Digital Ambassador Program and produced an advertisement to support the region's economic development efforts to reach targeted sectors and industries.

Every two years we engage in a Return on Investment study with Longwoods International, a respected leader in destination marketing research.

Using our 2018 paid advertising spend, Longwoods found that our efforts raised the 'Destination Profile' and positively changed perceptions across our key themes by 38%. More than 55% of respondents said they were more likely to take an overnight trip to Charlotte after seeing just one of our ads. Based on a \$5 million advertising spend, our efforts generated 3.3 million new visits, resulting in \$670 million in economic impact, \$370 million in visitor spending and \$20 million in new Mecklenburg County taxes.

# ADVERTISING GENERATES IMPRESSIVE RETURNS



\*STUDY BY LONGWOODS INTERNATIONAL; FY19 CRVA ADVERTISING SPENDING

More than half of the people who visit Charlotte are visiting friends and relatives. And we believe the true power of the brand lies within the people who embrace it – our visitors and residents serve as passionate brand ambassadors. We strive to design merchandise bearing the brand mark as a direct reflection of the city and our people.

We encourage you to stop by our Visitor Info Center located on the Wells Fargo Plaza to see more.

## CRVA REQUESTS FOR CITY SUPPORT

The City and CRVA should continue to work collaboratively on the future of Charlotte as a destination of choice for visitors, conventions, and special events. Through this partnership, plans should continue to be created to invest in assets that spur this development. Spending that supports the visitor economy continues to be a vital catalyst in ensuring Charlotte is an attractive place to live, work, play and visit. Tourism and hospitality produces approximately \$7.4 billion annually in direct visitor spending in Mecklenburg County. In turn, this visitor spending has supported major events that also generate economic impact as well as the creation of some of Charlotte’s most notable assets. These assets include, but are not limited to: BB&T Ballpark, Levine Center for the Arts, Bank of America Stadium and Spectrum Center. The CRVA strives to be a careful steward of the dollars entrusted to it and encourages the City to support the tourism industry and the long-lasting dividends it continues to help generate for the Charlotte region.