



2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Preserve, Enrich, and Sustain: A Path to Preserving Vail's Cultural Heritage

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Vail, Colorado

Country: United States of America

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Position: Environmental Sustainability Coordinator

Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module "Good Practice Story".

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org

DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

A destination is so much more than what visitors see in the here and now of their visit. A myriad of factors goes into shaping and cultivating the values, customs, traditions, and lifestyle a destination embraces and visitors are drawn to experience. Cultural heritage celebrates the people, places, and programs that help a place evolve into its current state and deepens a sense of identity, community, and unity of those who inhabit and visit. During Vail's initial certification process to become a Sustainable Destination through the Mountain IDEAL standard, the Green Destinations auditor noted Vail was not fully compliant with criteria around cultural heritage preservation and provided a conditional certification requiring corrective actions for the related criteria. Celebrating and preserving the history and culture that shapes a destination is critical. Vail had a few programs in place, such as the Art In Public Places program that assembles a collection of works of art in public places which is educational, attractive to residents and guests, and celebrates history through art. The Colorado Snowsports Museum houses priceless artifacts that tell the story of the birth, rise, and explosion of skiing and snowboarding in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, including Vail. Celebrating these stories is vital to preserving the legacy of the sport and showcases Vail's history and development as a ski town. However, the Vail Destination did not have a formal overarching program in place to preserve, protect, and celebrate its overall tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage. While relatively young, established in 1966, Vail has a rich history with a cast of characters who influenced the mountain lifestyle that exists today. Founded as a ski area, Vail was influenced by the love and challenge of adventure, connection to nature, ability to adapt and persevere in the harsh mountain environment, and ability to celebrate life with exuberance and fun. Much of the architecture was influenced by European ski areas visited by the founders of Vail, 10th Mountain Division soldiers, during World War II. After the war, they returned to the Vail area where they had trained in backcountry survival training to found Vail Mountain and the Town of Vail. Prior to its founding, Vail was inhabited by sheep ranchers, miners, and the Ute Native American Tribe, who hunted and gathered in the surrounding mountains. These different groups have all helped shape this place. There are several historic and iconic buildings and structures that exist, including a one room schoolhouse from 1928 that is now part of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, the iconic clock tower in the heart of Vail Village, and the Vail Interfaith Chapel that has been a community pillar and gathering place for over 50 years. However, there is limited awareness surrounding Vail's history, especially the pre-ski history of the area by most residents and visitors. Few are aware of historic significance of some buildings while others do not know that environmental stewardship was written into the initial town charter to protect the natural beauty and resources that surround Vail. Celebrating historical legacies of those who came before recognizes contributions made and provides an opportunity to learn and grow from past trials and tribulations. To build awareness, formalize a structure and path forward, and become fully compliant in the required criteria as a Sustainable Destination, Vail created the Cultural Heritage Committee to develop an overarching program to preserve, enrich, and sustain Vail's cultural heritage and legacy.

Methods, steps and tools applied



The feedback during the 2017 Sustainable Destination certification process that Vail was not fully compliant with the criteria related to cultural heritage preservation and corrective actions were required to achieve full certification was the initial catalyst to bring together Vail's existing foundational work and identify new actions across multiple disciplines to create and advance the mission of the Cultural Heritage Committee with strategic intent and focus. In addition, as part of the Community and Sustainability focus areas of the Vail Town Council Action Plan, the priority for creating a cultural heritage preservation program was set forth. With these two driving factors in place, there was a staff-driven effort to form the Cultural Heritage Committee with representation from multiple departments including the Town Manager's Office, Vail Public Library, Art in Public Places, Environmental Sustainability, Economic Development, Communications, and Community Development. Partner agencies and organizations, such as the Colorado Snowsports Museum and the Eagle County Historical Society, have also participated and provided input. Meetings have been held monthly since August 2019 and have been facilitated by the Vail Public Library and the Town Manager's Office.

In 2021 the committee developed a mission, vision, and strategies to guide the work of the committee. The mission statement is: To preserve, enrich, and sustain the cultural and historic legacy of Vail. The established vision statement is: Connecting Vail's past, present, and future to create a legacy that inspires future generations to celebrate and sustain our community, its history and heritage. In addition, the group identified five areas of focus including: Art and Cultural Heritage, Archival Development, History and Legacy, Natural Landscapes, and Community and Local Government. Each are further explained below.

Arts and Cultural Heritage: The Town of Vail sponsors the Art in Public Places (AIPP) program. An essential 2021 AIPP and Cultural Heritage Committee strategy includes the identification and documentation of Vail's public art. There is discussion of creating a virtual recorded audio tour and virtual art collection map of Vail's public art. Vail historic built environments need standards for identification, as well as interpretive signage for key examples of legacy or historic architecture. The Randy Milhoan Summervail Art Workshop materials are valued as important cultural heritage. The Milhoan collection needs to be organized, curated, and archived. There is discussion of repurposing the historic Anholtz house in Ford Park for a working artist studio. Preserving the music and performing arts culture, including the support of Bravo Vail, is an important focus.

Archival Development: Digitization of oral histories, images, and other cultural heritage materials is a primary objective of the Cultural Heritage Committee. Digitization enables cultural heritage resources to be accessed online and searched by the public. Since digitization is not preservation, select original tangible artifacts are archived in a small records repository at Vail Public Library. There is discussion of expansion of the Vail Public Library Local History Archival Repository within the library, as well as creation of a multi-organization archives that includes climate-controlled storage.

History and Legacy: Connection of the past, present, and future can be achieved with the identification, documentation and collection of Vail local history and cultural heritage. Vail Valley Voices, a Vail Public Library oral history program, captures the stories and collective legacy of pivotal individuals. The Vail ski legacy and mountain town culture are retained by the Colorado Snowsports Museum and other entities. The need for more interpretive signage for natural and built environments is identified, as is the need for more historic backstory and context featuring the Ute Native American tribe. The Nuche, which is the Ute self-designation, were the indigenous people of the Gore Creek Valley area.

Natural Landscapes: Preservation of the landscape, watershed, and iconic vistas of, as well as place-making study of geography for, the Gore Creek Valley area are primary objectives of the Cultural Heritage Committee. Environmental stewardship and watershed conservation are key values. Stewardship of wildlife and native plant communities are inclusive within the key values. Betty Ford Alpine Gardens collaborates with various native plant organizations in studying and conserving our delicate alpine setting.

Community and Local Government: Partnerships and collaborations among civic, nonprofit, service and other entities are crucial when maximizing community assets and contributions or organizing events and programs. Documenting oral histories, collecting stories, and creating compilations of town department personnel, town managers, and elected officials are important objectives.

The Town of Vail may choose to use the Cultural Heritage Committee to review proposals about projects or programs that support the development of preserving Vail's legacy and consider seed funding for projects that meet the committee's mission and a set of identified criteria. The Cultural Heritage Committee would then forward these opportunities to the appropriate channels for funding approval. The Cultural Heritage Committee will continue to organize the structure of the program, develop processes and programs for implementation with the focus to preserve, enrich, and sustain the cultural and historic legacy of Vail into the future.

Key success factors

The collaboration and engagement of different departments within the Town of Vail and community organizations has been critical to the success of the Cultural Heritage Committee. The current committee members have accepted the role and work associated with the committee because of their passion and drive to develop a successful program. Through teamwork, creativity, and collaboration, the committee has made great strides in its short time working together and will continue to do so to develop a robust cultural heritage preservation program in Vail. The Cultural Heritage Committee will continue to expand its collaborative network with other entities as it continues to grow. The committee intends to pursue initial conversations with Vail Resorts, Inc. to determine if there is interest and a role for Vail Mountain representatives in this preservation effort as well as continue to collaboratively sustain the Guest Experience initiatives and the events that bring Vail's history to life. There will also likely be a collaboration with Town of Vail's Boards and Commissions and opportunities might develop with Art in Public Places, Commission on Special Events, and occasionally the Vail Local Marketing District. The committee has worked hard to develop guiding mission and vision statements as well as strategies and key focus areas. These will continue to guide the committee's work to ensure all projects and initiatives considered are within the designated scope of work to preserve the cultural heritage of Vail.

Lessons learned

The work associated with a new committee such as the Cultural Heritage Committee requires significant resources, including time and capital. Currently the committee has divided the workload required to research and execute projects through smaller sub-committee groups. Spreading the workload out among all committee members has been helpful, but in the future having a full-time position allocated to coordinate the work of the committee would be ideal.

Some projects have significant costs associated with them and funding mechanisms are critical. Funding for this work now appears in the Vail Town Council programs annual budget and additional funding has been secured through grants. However, to complete many of the projects and initiatives set forth by the committee, additional funding is necessary. The committee will identify additional funding including exploration of resource opportunities through grants and state and regional partnerships to develop cultural, historical, and preservation projects. The committee will also pursue mutually beneficial relationships and community partnerships that will help promote the established committee. Another funding strategy the committee will explore is the formation of a Colorado Creative District, a program offered by the State of Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. The formation of this kind of district places emphasis on creating programs that contribute to the community's economy with programs that focus on creativity, culture, and the arts. Once certified as a district, there would be more grant and funding opportunities available.



Housing artifacts can also be a challenge. Many require climate-controlled environments, which take time resources and space to develop. The Vail Public Library is looking into potential storage options that would allow for them to serve as the local repository of archives and artifacts.

Federal and State historic designations can be very difficult to achieve and require compliance with many criteria, including an unaltered state and age of a structure. Given how young Vail is, there is an interest in providing some form of designation to specific buildings that have been pivotal in Vail' history. Therefore, Vail is interested in developing a town specific designation to provide a local historic designation option for historic and iconic buildings. The committee will explore criteria and policies to support the creation of a local historic designation program.

Results, achievements and recognitions

The Vail Town Council approved the establishment of a Cultural Heritage Committee and allocated budgeted dollars towards cultural heritage preservation programming.

Several projects have been established or further developed through the work of the Cultural Heritage Committee. The Vail Public Library has been working on the Vail Trail Digitization project, which includes the digitization and storage of the first newspaper in Vail, which was in print from 1965 to 2003. The Vail Public Library has secured nearly \$20,000 of funding through Friends of the Library and additional grants secured through Holy Cross Energy and History Colorado for this initial work on the project. The overall budget to complete the digitization project is estimated at \$108,252. The newspaper from the years 1965-1973 have been digitized and can now be found in the online catalog of the Vail Public Library. In 2021 the newspapers from 1973-1981 are being digitized and stored. Additional funding to complete the project still needs to be secured so that all the content and history are preserved and stored in perpetuity.

As part of the Cultural Heritage Committee, the Vail Public Library has also been furthering the Vail Valley Voices Oral History project. To date 44 oral histories of Vail pioneers and changemakers have been recorded and ingested in the Vail Public Library online digital archives. These oral histories capture and celebrate the stories of many of the early pioneers in Vail who helped shaped what the community has become today.

The Cultural Heritage Committee is working closely with the Summervail Art Workshop Legacy Project to implement an action plan that preserves the heritage and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Summervail Workshop for Art and Critical Studies, which ran from 1971-1984. The Summervail Art Workshop for Art and Critical Studies was the beginning of the arts and cultural movement in Vail, which inspired art, dance, music, galleries, classes, art education, lecture series, and interactive learning for over 14 years. This became an invaluable treasured and historical asset to the Vail Destination and to the art world. The 50th anniversary celebration will be held in July 2021 and the Vail Town Council allocated funding to support the celebration.

The committee is also rekindling Vail's Global Friendship Exchange Program, a program that endeavors to identify and cultivate relationships with peer resorts in which challenges, opportunities, and best practices are shared in the spirit of mutually beneficial partnerships and friendships. Currently, Vail is engaged with San Miguel, Mexico and Yamanouchi, Japan and working to re-engage St. Moritz, Switzerland in the program.

During the December 2020 Sustainable Destination recertification process, the auditor was very impressed with the development of the Cultural Heritage Committee and indicated that significant progress had been made in support of the related cultural heritage preservation criteria. The auditor acknowledged that the Cultural Heritage Committee is a very active group with a program now in place to protect and preserve the tangible and

intangible heritage of the destination. As a result of the committee's work, the Vail Destination is now fully compliant in this category for the recertification audit.

The results and achievements listed are just a few of projects in the pipeline for the Cultural Heritage Committee. The continued development of the Cultural Heritage Committee and its programs and initiatives will ensure that the cultural and historic legacy of Vail is preserved, enriched, and sustained into the future.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL

Vail Art in Public Places - <https://www.artinvail.com/>

Colorado Snowsports Museum - <https://www.snowsportsmuseum.org/>

Vail Trail Digitization Project - <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/> or vail.marmot.org (search Vail Trail)

Vail Valley Voices Oral History Project - <https://vail.marmot.org/Union/Search?basicType=&genealogyType=&view=list&lookfor=vail+valley+voices&basicType=Keyword&genealogyType=GenealogyKeyword&searchSource=islandora>

Summervail Legacy Project- <https://www.sawlp.org/>

Photos sent via WeTransfer