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## **Town of Vail Moves to Create One of First Destination Stewardship Plans in U.S.**

*Aim is to advance sustainability goals, while building economy in step with local priorities*

With a unanimous vote of its Town Council, the Town of Vail is forging ahead with one of the nation's first destination stewardship plans, putting the world-famous mountain resort on a path to align its thriving tourism economy with community priorities and enhance its global reputation as a sustainable destination for travelers.

To complete the plan, Vail selected a first-time consortium of three leading tourism organizations. Better Destinations of Denver and MMGY NextFactor of Vancouver will share overall project leadership. The Travel Foundation, an international NGO focused on improving impacts of tourism, will support the town in further strengthening its globally recognized sustainable tourism initiatives.

"By being among the first to make destination stewardship the focus of a planning process, Vail is signaling a commitment to deciding what kind of destination it wants to be and involving local stakeholders every step of the way," said Better Destinations Founder and CEO Cathy Ritter.

"Our work will center on engaging with the community to identify priorities and create a shared vision for a tourism economy that delivers real benefits for both locals and guests, while offsetting impacts of visitation in meaningful ways."

"In recent years there has been a growing need for, and interest in, greater stewardship, accelerated during the COVID crisis," said Jim McCaul, Senior Vice President of Destination Stewardship at MMGY NextFactor. "Destination stewardship is an approach that balances and meets the needs of both visitors and residents and operates with legitimacy and consent from the community."

Set to launch immediately, the planning process will create numerous opportunities for both full- and part-time residents, business stakeholders, nonprofits, governmental bodies, public land managers, and others to participate. Consultations will include 1:1 interviews, focus groups, and public visioning workshops.

The goal is to create a 10-year vision and management plan harnessing Vail's tourism economy to deliver a high quality of life for residents along with quality guest experiences. The town is seeking ways to attract visitors who will support and respect the destination, while encouraging more equitable access to all that Vail offers. Another priority is to more fully celebrate the town's remarkable history and the role it has played in Colorado's history of winter sport.

Currently, the Town of Vail and Vail Resorts share responsibility for managing and marketing the destination. Vail Resorts manages winter season marketing, while the Town's Vail Local Marketing District generates about \$4 million annually from a 1.4 percent lodging tax. The Town uses the proceeds to market natural attractions, local businesses, and special events outside of the winter season.

The town's point person for the project is Mia Vlaar, Director of Economic Development, with support from Kristen Bertuglia, Director of Sustainability. Also playing key roles in the planning process are the town's six key community partners: the U.S. Forest Service, Vail Resorts, Eagle River Water and Sanitation District, Vail Recreation District, Holy Cross Energy, and Walking Mountains Science Center of Avon.

The planning timeline aims at securing the Town Council's approval of the completed destination stewardship plan by December 31, 2022. This will allow Vail to fulfill a requirement of its ongoing certification as a Sustainable Tourism Destination, first attained in 2017 under the Mountain IDEAL standard, a framework recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Vail was the first global mountain destination to achieve that standard, and to date shares that status only with Breckenridge.

"Our work on this project will help Vail answer some of the big questions about the future of tourism in the community," said Jeremy Sampson, CEO of the Travel Foundation. "Our Optimal Value Framework will help the Town analyze how tourism can best deliver both quality experiences for visitors and quality of life for residents, with a particular focus on identifying actions that will maximize benefits for the community while minimizing the burdens."

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### **Better Destinations**

[Better Destinations](#) is a consultancy founded on a belief that healthy visitor economies grow from addressing a holistic range of considerations and engaging stakeholders in shaping destination priorities. The consultancy draws upon CEO Cathy Ritter's decade of experience as state tourism director for both Colorado and Illinois and record of creating insight-led solutions.

### **MMGY NextFactor**

[MMGY NextFactor](#) is an industry-leading consulting firm specializing in travel and tourism. Its team of experts has delivered insights and strategies to more than 250 destinations across the globe. In 2019, the firm joined forces with MMGY Global, the world's largest integrated marketing company specializing in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries.

### **The Travel Foundation**

[The Travel Foundation](#) is a leading global sustainable tourism organisation that works in partnership with governments, businesses, and communities to develop and manage tourism to maximise its benefits for communities and the environment. Founded in 2003, it has since worked in around 30 countries around the world.