

VISIT ESTES PARK: DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP PLAN

September 2024



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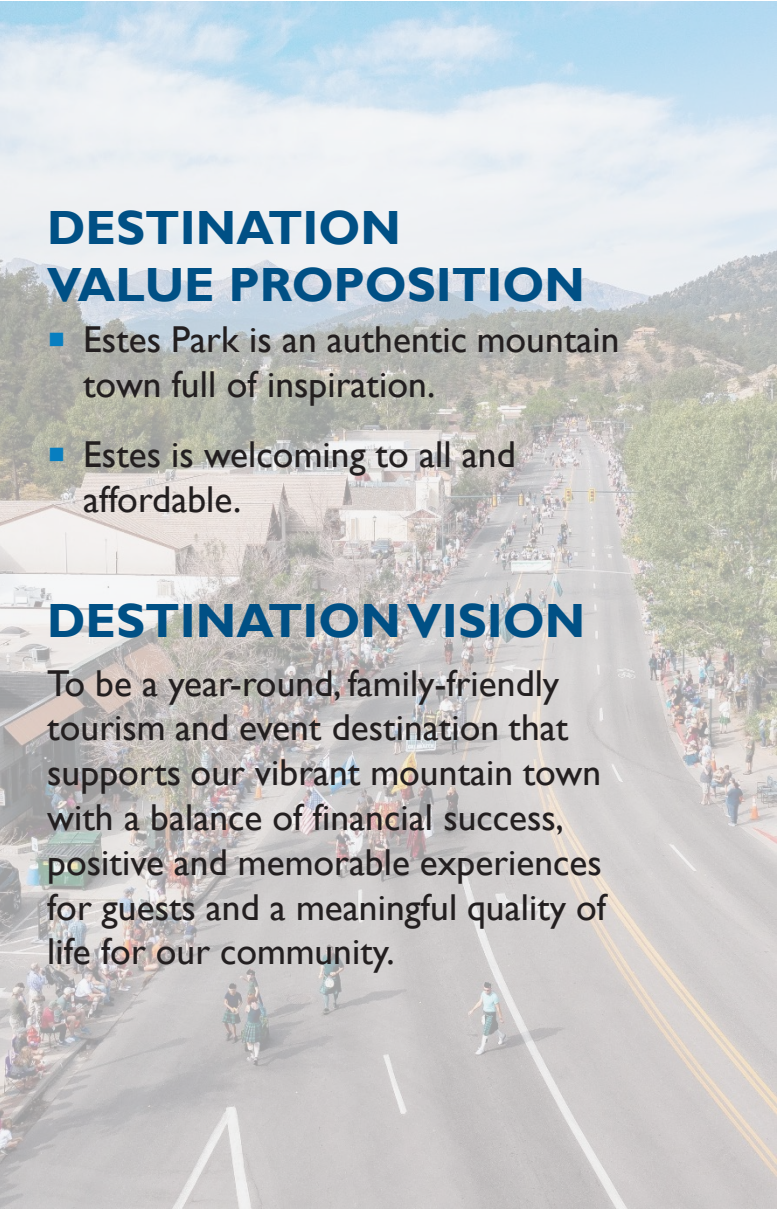


WHY PLAN

The Destination Stewardship Plan documents and brings forward the stewardship goals of the 2024 Operating Plan and provides a framework to ensure Visit Estes Park's destination promotion and management efforts:

- Maintain the town's unique character and sense of place;
- Manage sustainable visitor growth, events, and destination development initiatives to drive economic opportunity and support the town's workforce; and
- Evolve the destination and the experiences it offers so that Estes Park continues to be the basecamp of choice for Rocky Mountain National Park and an internationally recognized year-round destination.



An aerial photograph of a mountain town street, likely in Estes Park, Colorado. The street is lined with houses and trees, and a large group of people is running along it, suggesting a marathon or race. The sky is blue with some clouds.

DESTINATION VALUE PROPOSITION

- Estes Park is an authentic mountain town full of inspiration.
- Estes is welcoming to all and affordable.

DESTINATION VISION

To be a year-round, family-friendly tourism and event destination that supports our vibrant mountain town with a balance of financial success, positive and memorable experiences for guests and a meaningful quality of life for our community.

PLAN GOALS

- Provide a long-term framework for Visit Estes Park to sustain the area's vibrant, year-round tourism industry.
- Ensure that the visitor economy evolves in a sustainable way that not only attracts more higher-spend visitors and enhances the overall quality of the visitor experience, but also continues to contribute to the town's well-being and protects its authentic mountain character.
- Actively engage the larger community—beyond the tourism vertical—so that they understand and support Visit Estes Park's efforts to steward the destination and continue to work to promote the Estes Valley to visitors who share our love of the community.

Striking the right balance between enhancing the visitor experience, promoting economic vitality and preserving the quality of life in the Estes Valley.

— 2024 Operating Plan

PLAN DEVELOPMENT & INPUTS

Current State



- Destination performance
- Hospitality product and infrastructure (including events)
- Anticipated developments
- Long-term community needs
- Current operating plan goals

How we need to evolve



Imperatives to get there

- Balance long-term destination competitiveness (economic impacts) with social and environmental needs
- Consult best practices and models used elsewhere

- High-level strategies
- Needed partners
- Desired outcomes

Plan Pillars



Collaboration



Innovation



Empathy



Passion



Resilience

BRIDGING CURRENT EFFORTS TO THE LONG-TERM VISION

The foundations for creating the Destination Stewardship Plan tie back to processes and initiatives initiated by the Colorado Tourism Office.

Visit Estes Park participated in the Restart grant program and the statewide Destination Stewardship Plan development process.

- Understanding the local hospitality industry's desire to be more aligned with the community was a key output of the Restart program.
- The goals and imperatives of Visit Estes Park's Plan mirror many of the themes espoused in the statewide plan.

Restart Foundations

DESTINATION		COMMUNITY	
Work with stakeholders to create a resilient and stable economy for Estes Park.		Collaborate with the community to instill a shared sense of pride and ownership in Estes Park.	
Stakeholder Engagement		Resident Sentiment	
Business Support		Housing & Workforce	
Visitor Management		Priority Support	
Product Development & Placemaking		Destination Stewardship	
ORGANIZATION			
Prepare Visit Estes Park to deliver a high quality of service to the community.			
Board & Staff Development		Visitor Management	
Visitor Development		Community Relations	

BUILDING ON ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Even before it took an active role in the 2022 campaign to increase the local lodging tax to help support the community's workforce housing efforts, Visit Estes Park recognized that it needed to evolve its mandate from merely attracting visitors to ensuring that tourism benefits the local community and preserves the Estes Valley environment and culture.

Engaging the community beyond the traditional tourism vertical and placing the long-term quality of place for Estes Park are central tenets of the Destination Stewardship Plan. This includes involving residents in tourism planning and ensuring that they see tangible benefits from tourism activities. By fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that tourism development aligns with community values, Visit Estes Park can create a more resilient tourism economy and strengthen the Estes Valley's competitiveness as a destination of choice.

The Destination Stewardship Plan sets a long-term framework for Visit Estes Park to attain its goal of striking the right balance between enhancing the visitor experience, promoting economic vitality and preserving the quality of life in the Estes Valley.

The imperatives, goals and strategies recommended in the plan are offered for the first 3-5 years of Visit Estes Park's stewardship efforts. Visit Estes Park should revisit the plan and imperatives annually and make adjustments as needed.



The Destination Stewardship Plan is meant to complement Visit Estes Park's annual operating plans. Applicable goals for the stewardship imperatives will be included in each operating plan.

IMPERATIVES

To ensure that Estes Park’s visitor economy evolves in a way that not only attracts more higher-spend visitors and enhances the overall quality of the visitor experience, but also cultivates the town’s authentic character and contributes to the town’s quality of place, Visit Estes Park will need to address four imperatives

- The first two imperatives are already integral parts of Visit Estes Park’s work plan. The goals and strategies tied to the imperatives are continuations of the strong base already in place.
- The second two imperatives are addressed in Visit Estes Park’s current work; the goals and strategies tied to the imperatives are focused on engaging the larger community more intentionally and systematically.

Continue and Deepen

Provide Best-in-Class Visitor Experiences

Continue to provide an excellent visitor experience and evolve the product to attract target audiences who appreciate and seek the quality, authentic experiences that Estes Park offers

Optimize the Positive Impacts of the Visitor Economy

Ensure that the visitor economy continues to drive the Estes Valley’s economic vitality and provide opportunities for engagement from all destination stakeholders

Collaborate and Expand

Share Estes Park Responsibly

Prioritize the needs of residents when encouraging enhancements to the community’s product and work to grow visitation in a way that will ensure the community remains vibrant and true to its character

Steward the Environment and Culture

Lead the visitor economy in adopting and implementing practices that protect the Estes Valley’s natural resources and ensure the area’s long-term vibrancy

PROVIDE BEST-IN-CLASS VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Imperative

Continue to provide an excellent visitor experience and evolve the product to attract target audiences who appreciate and seek the quality, authentic experiences that Estes Park offers

Long-term Impact

Visit Estes Park cultivates target audiences who appreciate and respect the destination's authenticity and produce overnight stays year-round and higher visitor spending.

Goals	Desired Outcome	Timing
Continue to curate and support large-scale events that reflect community character and that draw visitors during off-peak and need periods	• Allow attendees to experience a facet of the Valley's unique and authentic character • Encourage overnight visitation in the off-season/non-peak periods and optimize the year-round use of the area's hospitality infrastructure	Ongoing
Provide thought-leadership for the community, municipal leadership, and hospitality partners on how to evolve the destination's product in a way that preserves the Estes Valley's character organically.	Share examples of how similar communities have evolved their product to appeal to audiences that are aligned with the communities' values and desire to be a steward and host of their place	Short-term
	Identify stronger connections to other industries/activities within the Estes Valley and leverage that activity to create more overnight demand (e.g., Work with the Sundance Institute to establish its presence in Estes Park and support)	Short-term
	Manage current and future lodging/accommodations supply growth in ways that address emerging consumer preferences and balance long-term sustainability.	Medium-term
Present/share the shared vision for Estes Park and continue to integrate messages of inclusion, sustainability, and preserving the area's character at all levels of guest communications	Through its various destination management efforts, Visit Estes Park demonstrates the need and positive results of strategic destination management and collaboration with the community to reach shared goals	Ongoing

OPTIMIZE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Imperative

Ensure that the visitor economy continues to drive the Town's economic vitality and provide opportunities for engagement from all stakeholders in the community

Long-term Impact

Destination partners (local hospitality industry) are actively engaged in Visit Estes Park's promotion and management efforts; Visit Estes Park is appreciated as a critical resource in continuing to develop and care for the Estes Valley destination

Goals	Desired Outcome	Timing
Continue to brand and market the destination to targeted visitors who appreciate the Town's authentic mountain character and respect for the environment	Promotion efforts amplify the Valley's allure and authenticity, but also nurture the brand attributes and align tourism to the community economically, culturally and environmentally.	Ongoing
Actively outreach to all destination stakeholders to be inclusive and provide opportunities to engage with tourism	Continue to build out tool-kits and messaging for destination partners to actively participate in Visit Estes Park's marketing, paid media, social media, and PR efforts	Ongoing
Work to disperse visitors to Estes Park across the broader Estes Valley during peak visitation periods to moderate congestion	During peak season or times when the destination is over-capacity, visitors are encouraged to stay in Estes Park but explore other areas of Northern Colorado to disperse visitation and lessen negative impacts of visitation	Medium-term; after carrying capacity work accomplished

SHARE ESTES PARK RESPONSIBLY

Imperative

Prioritize the needs of residents when encouraging enhancements to the Town's product and working to grow visitation

Long-term Impact

Residents and the community appreciate the role of tourism in supporting local initiatives and creating a safe, accessible, and inclusive place and the long-term vision of all to create a vibrant community that celebrates the Town's culture and heritage.

Goals	Desired Outcome	Timing
Develop a comprehensive analysis of the Town's carrying capacity (including parking, transportation networks, shared transit, trails, and water, etc.)	Create an inventory/map of Estes Park's destination assets and hospitality infrastructure that is updated on a regular basis and sets the context for destination development discussions	Short-term
	Use data to inform need periods for events and periods where dispersing visitors would be most advantageous	Short-term
	Understand areas of stress or overuse throughout the year and where VEP destination development is most needed	Short-term
Build a shared, long-term vision for how tourism should contribute to Estes Park's quality of place	Using the destination stewardship plan as a framework and Wayfinder as an organizing tool, engage destination partners and the community in a session to agree on shared priorities	Short-term
	Define clear roles for VEP in nurturing the Estes Valley's quality of place and identify key partners needed beyond tourism promotion and destination management	Medium-term
Build a baseline understanding of resident sentiment and goals for tourism; update as appropriate to measure success in positioning the visitor economy as a positive contribution	Understand current resident concerns over tourism and track areas and issues where VEP can have a positive impact or where it needs to mitigate issues	Medium-term

STEWARD THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOWN CULTURE

Imperative

Lead the visitor economy in adopting and implementing practices that protect the Valley's natural resources and ensure the area's long-term vibrancy

Long-term Impact

Residents and the community appreciate Visit Estes Park's strategic commitment to protecting the environment and culture of the Valley and stewarding the long-term vitality of the place it shares with visitors

Goals	Desired Outcome	Timing
Continue to support the Do Estes Right Campaign as the key mechanism for encouraging responsible visitation in the Estes Valley	Evolve efforts to embrace the broader definition of stewardship that leverages the visitor economy and set a framework for how VEP supports and enhances the effort	Short-term
	Through the campaign and other town efforts, engage in regional efforts to protect the Estes Valley and pool resources/initiatives accordingly	Medium-term
Share best practices and case studies available through the tourism industry to support efforts by others in stewarding the Valley's environment	Use the case studies, resources, and best practices shared within Wayfinder with relevant partners	Medium-term
	Share data collected for promoting and managing the destination as needed	Medium-term
Engage the community, "unusual suspects" and indigenous communities in efforts to nurture and safeguard the Town's mountain character, and cultural identity and heritage	VEP is actively engaged in community conversations to preserve the town's character	Medium-term
	Members of the community beyond the tourism and hospitality industry appreciate efforts to evolve the destination and nurture the Town's character for authentic visitor experiences	Medium-term
	The VEP toolkits add elements to support destination stakeholders to tell their authentic historical and cultural stories	Medium-term

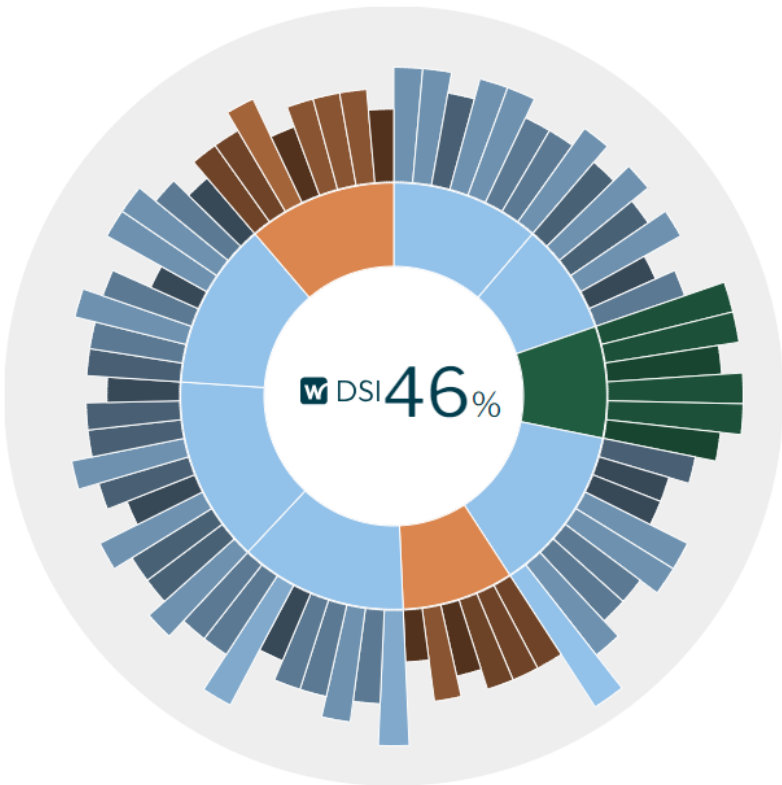
WAYFINDER: INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Visit Estes Park employed Wayfinder, an industry-led destination management framework to visualize areas where the organization needs to be involved and supportive as it continues its destination stewardship efforts.

Wayfinder allows Visit Estes Park to understand where it currently stands along nine key modules/components of stewardship success. The platform also allows partners within the community to identify areas for collaboration and can set shared key performance indicators so that each partner (and Visit Estes Park) can monitor the community alignment and progress in caring for and responsibly developing the destination and community.

The Destination Stewardship Indicator to the right captures a self-assessment prior to implementing the imperatives of this plan.

Initial Destination Stewardship Indicator



Modules

Management Structure & Framework



Stakeholder Engagement



Brand, Marketing & Communications



Destination Development



Resiliency, Risk & Crisis Management



Economic Prosperity



Environmental Preservation & Ecological Balance



Identification & Preservation of Culture & Heritage



Social Wellbeing

