

Town of Vail wants to be sustainable tourism destination

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

Born from an idea that corralled local businesses to embrace energy-saving strategies, the resort-anchored town of Vail trying to become the continent's first sustainable tourist destination certified through the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

So, first, what is "sustainable tourism?"

"It's tourism that is compatible with the community," said Magdalena Muir, a Canadian professor of energy science and an auditor with Green Destinations. She spent a week measuring Vail's progress toward involving uniting locals and guests in efforts to build a vibrant economy anchored in a healthy ecology.

Many communities have tourism imposed on them, especially in purpose-built resorts like many Colorado high-country destinations, and that can lead to an us-versus-them mentality pitting locals against visitors. Engaging the community in the mission of driving tourism can help reduce that friction, Muir said.

Sustainable is the hot new buzzword in tourism circles – especially as hosting visitors becomes a roaring economic engine of many rural and urban economies while locals desperately fight to protect the resources and appeal that draw the outsiders.

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