

# DESTINATION FORWARD:

ADVANCING STEWARDSHIP IN U.S. TOURISM PLANNING

A National Study of How Destination Stewardship Plans Foster Sustainable Tourism



2025

International Institute  
of Tourism Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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Cover image: Park City, Utah and the “Savor the Summit” outdoor dining event for Park City’s residents & visitors. Image credit: Park City Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau

**DISCLAIMER:** This publication presents findings from an independent analysis of 35 local destination stewardship plans across the United States. While it highlights common themes and lessons learned, each destination operates within its own unique context. The selection of plans, as well as the inclusion or interpretation of specific elements, should not be viewed as an endorsement or critique. Plan selection is the sole responsibility of the authors. The views expressed are also those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the destinations studied or any affiliated organizations. Readers are encouraged to consult the original plans for full context (See Appendix 1). As additional context, it is important to note that the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies and Coraggio Group facilitated the planning process for several of the destinations included in this study.

## Acknowledgements

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The principal investigators and lead authors—Seleni Matus, Executive Director of the GW International Institute of Tourism Studies, and Salvador Anton Clavé, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Director of the Research Group in Territorial Analysis and Tourism Studies at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili—extend their sincere gratitude to the many individuals and organizations who contributed to this effort.

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**A complete list of participating individuals and organizations is provided in Section 10 of the full report.**





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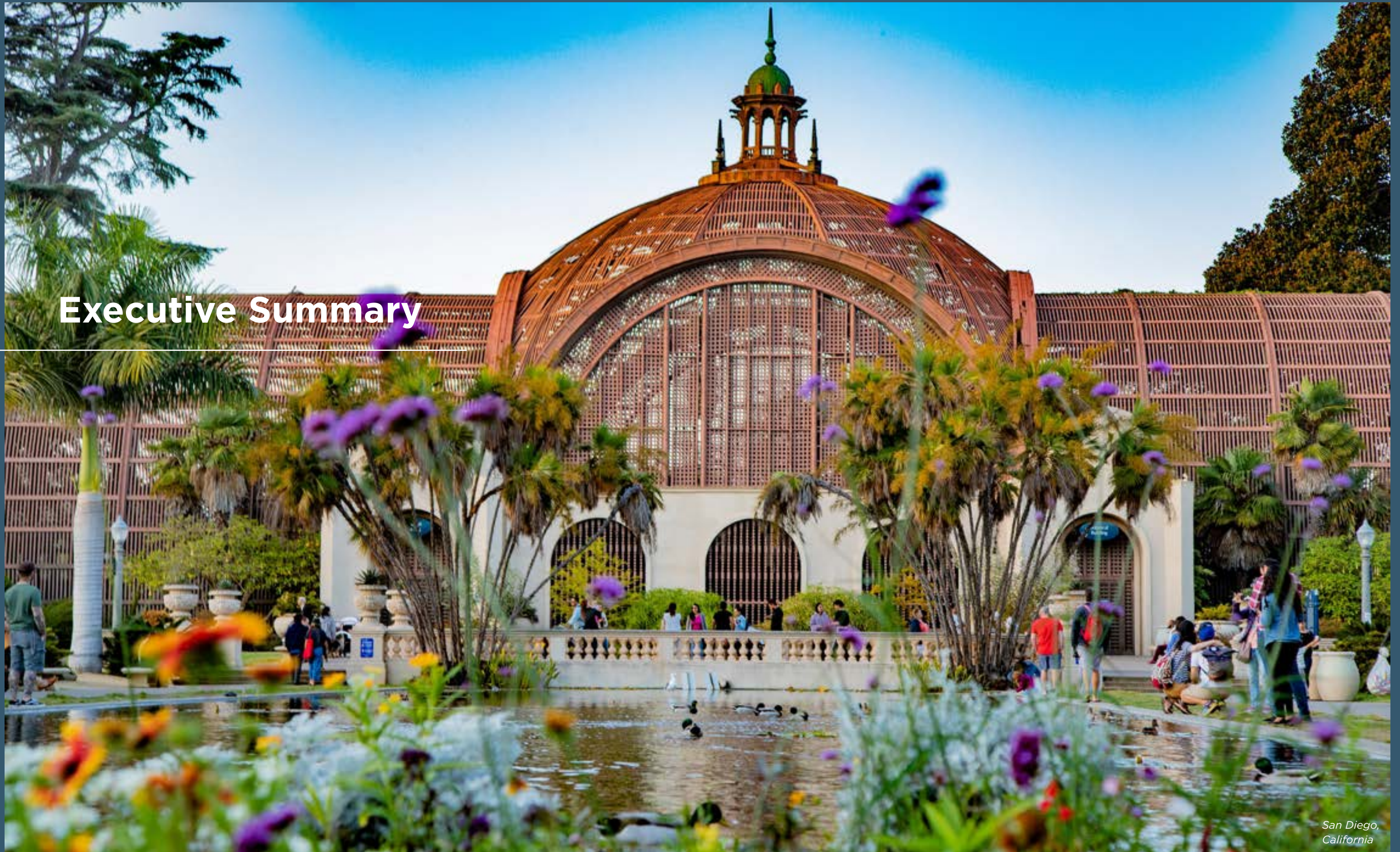
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# Executive Summary







Truckee, California

# 1.1 Introduction to the Destination Forward Study

Visitor destinations across the United States of America (U.S.) are at a turning point.

Over recent years, they have faced increasing pressure from communities to reimagine how tourism is managed.



*In Sedona, we were getting a lot of pressure to answer the questions around how much is too much tourism? Are we growing too fast?*

— Jennifer Wesselhoff, President & CEO, Park City Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau, and former CEO of the Sedona Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau



The COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of tourism amplified and accelerated these pressures. Managing growth with inadequate infrastructure, persistent workforce gaps, housing accessibility and affordability challenges, and the impacts of climate change have all made change not just necessary but urgent.



*Big Sur residents and workers care deeply for this place and speak up when the land needs protection. Our success depends on listening to our community and maintaining a flexible, responsive plan that meets the needs of locals, visitors, and the environment.*

— Rachel Goldberger, Program Manager, Community Association of Big Sur (CABS)

In response, destination leaders began embracing a new planning mindset. A new generation of tourism plans has emerged, often called destination stewardship, destination management, or even destination sustainability plans, among other terms. Many such plans and strategies have been developed across the U.S. at significant cost, and with aspirational goals to put sustainability and community well-being at the center of how tourism is developed and managed.

**Destination Forward is the largest study of its type to date, determining if, how, and why such plans and strategies shape a more sustainable future for tourism, for destinations and for local communities.**

**Destination Forward seeks to answer these fundamental questions:**

*What steps and processes define effective destination stewardship strategies?*

*How, when, and why do such plans empower real action and change?*

*What are the appropriate roles of the Destination Organization, government agencies, and industry organizations in this process?*

This major research study was led by the George Washington University (GW) International Institute of Tourism Studies, with support throughout the process from Miles Partnership and the Coraggio Group. A summary of the authors, contributors, and the many individuals and organizations who contributed to this study is included in the acknowledgements.

*Growing community concerns sparked a critical shift: destination organizations began asking, “What kind of tourism do we want, and who is it really serving?”*

**Lead Researchers**

International Institute  
of Tourism Studies  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

**In Collaboration With**

 coraggiogroup





Park City, Utah

## 1.2 The Destination Plans Studied

**This first edition of the Destination Forward study focuses on cities, counties, and regions across the U.S., providing a wealth of insights and practical guidance for tourism, community, and government leaders.**

Destination Forward first reviewed and assessed a wide cross-section of plans and strategies across the U.S., looking for examples of destination stewardship plans. Thirty-five destination plans and strategies were identified based on four criteria that define the key elements of Destination Stewardship:

- 1** A holistic approach to stewardship that balances the needs of visitors and residents and ensures mutual benefits.
- 2** Alignment with global sustainability principles.
- 3** Broad stakeholder engagement and involvement.
- 4** Multi-sectoral (Public-Private-People) collaboration.

**The destinations included in this study represent a diverse cross-section of the U.S. tourism landscape**, ranging from the major cities of Los Angeles and San Diego to mountain towns including Vail, Aspen, Breckenridge, and Sedona and remote island destinations including Ketchikan, Maui, Kaua'i, and the San Juan Islands. These destinations are categorized into five types, color coded throughout the study: **Mountain (12)**, **Coastal (6)**, **Island (6)**, **Urban (8)**, and **Rural (3)**.



***Of the 35 destination stewardship plans analyzed in this study, nearly 89% (31 plans) were completed within the past five years (2020–2024). The remaining four plans, Breckenridge, San Luis Obispo, Sedona, and Tucson, were completed in 2019, just before the global pandemic. The San Juan Islands published a preliminary draft in 2023 but has not completed a final plan.***



## 1.3 Approach & Methodology

The study assesses the core elements of these plans and explores how they are helping communities put sustainability into action. It analyzes each plan's vision, goals, and actions. The research process assessed plans against the defined principles of Destination Stewardship, applying a framework that builds on and goes beyond the longer-established concepts of Destination Management. We also spoke directly with the destination organizations that spearheaded the plans and with the consulting firms that supported them. This included facilitating six focus groups. We discussed what inspired each plan's development, what lessons were learned, and how the plans are being implemented today. See the full report,



### Defining Destination Stewardship:



***An approach to destination governance that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination.***

— World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)



***A process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their place.***

— Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)



San Luis Obispo,  
California



## 1.4 Assessing the Plans & Strategies - Key Findings



### Gallery of Good Practices

Throughout the Executive Summary and full report, we highlight practical examples of how destinations across the U.S. are putting destination stewardship principles into practice. These examples stand out not just for the results they've achieved, but for how they've achieved them—by thinking creatively, working collaboratively, and grounding their efforts in local values. Look for these Good Practice examples for practical insights and recommendations.



See the full report for more detailed case studies highlighting the plans and actions that Destination Organizations in the study group undertook as part of their Destination Stewardship plans.



## 1.4.1 The Evolution of Destination Organizations

“

***During the yearlong planning process, our San Diego Tourism Stewardship Plan steering committee examined workforce development, sustainability, and overall place equity—areas that extend well beyond the scope of a traditional destination sales and marketing organization.***

— Kerri Verbeke Kapich, Chief Operating Officer, San Diego Tourism Authority

San Diego,  
California



Eighty percent (80%) of all destination plans included in the study were commissioned by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). This reflects the growing trend of DMOs repositioning themselves as Destination Marketing and Management Organizations (DMMOs), reflecting their expanded focus and commitment to destination stewardship principles. As the study reflected, this evolution is not about overreach—it is about ensuring “agency and relevance.”

Destination Forward offers valuable insights, examples, and recommendations on the evolving role of destination organizations as they transition from traditional tourism marketing and management to a wider role of destination stewardship, including taking more direct responsibility in sustainable tourism.

## 1.4.2 Planning Reflects Local Community and Destination Brand Values

Destination Stewardship plans were often launched to ensure that tourism strategies reflect local priorities and values. “Bottom-up” planning was a defining feature of these efforts, where the plans were shaped by the wider community rather than imposed from the top down. An increasing range of destinations view their plans as a natural extension of long-standing sustainability values embedded in the identity of their communities, their destination and tourism “brand.”



Ketchikan,  
Alaska



Park City,  
Utah



Maui -  
Hawai'i



### 1.4.3 Plans Emphasize Community

“

*The key takeaway from us was really becoming more of a community-centric organization based on the premise that what's good for residents will always be good for visitors, but that the converse doesn't always hold true.*

— Adam Burke, CEO, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



Local residents and the community were the most common focus of these plans, with a strong emphasis on community well-being and quality of life. For example, Sonoma County and Sedona emphasize resident quality of life as central to their tourism vision. Visitors were also commonly referenced as a priority stakeholder group. Even in a more challenging political environment for advancing sustainability goals more generally, a focus on serving the needs of both the community and visitors retains nearly universal support.

Hocking Hills, Ohio



#### Enhancing the Resident & Visitor Experience

Big Sur, Breckenridge, and Hocking Hills all have specific programs to engage, inform, and empower local residents and visitors. B Like Breckenridge encourages visitors and locals alike to act as stewards of the mountain community, and in Hocking Hills, the Hocking Hills Tourism Association runs an impactful grant program twice a year, the Destination Investment Fund (DIF), to support key community projects in future planning.

Breckenridge, Colorado





## 1.4.4 Limited Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Planning

Only 40% of plans have any mention of “greenhouse gas reduction” or “climate adaptation,” and only 9% and 11% offered a detailed discussion.

Despite the political challenges in the U.S., the accelerating impacts of climate change (e.g., extreme weather events) have significant risks for every destination. Even without more comprehensive action, climate change adaptation, resilience, and disaster planning and preparedness must be priorities in future planning.



### Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Action

Truckee, Durango, and Vail are three of only a few destinations in the study groups that have established significant environmental sustainability programs, including initiatives addressing climate change. Visit Durango launched a food waste reduction program and funded the expansion of public transport options in the community. Vail's *Stewardship Roadmap* prioritizes decarbonizing its snowmelt system, the town's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

## 1.4.5 Work Needed on Social and Cultural Sustainability

Social and cultural sustainability was included in 70% of plans, yet none addressed it comprehensively. Destinations with strong Indigenous communities were among those that had plans with the greatest attention to this area; Taos and Moloka'i were among those referencing cultural integrity and heritage preservation as important goals.





# 1.5 Plan Outcomes & Implementation - Areas of Action

## 1.5.1 Crowding and Congestion

Congestion and overcrowding management were addressed in over three-quarters (77%) of the plans assessed, reflecting a common concern among residents and visitors. This area was one where specific actions and follow-up implementation steps were among the most common. For example, Big Sur, Ketchikan, and the San Juan Islands have been working on tactics such as shuttle systems, zoning changes, visitor and vacation rental caps.



## 1.5.2 Helping Solve the Housing Puzzle

Housing affordability stood out as a critical economic and community issue, appearing in over three-quarters (77%) of plans, with over a third including comprehensive actions. Across nearly every destination, housing challenges were highlighted as a primary concern, usually accelerated by tourism growth.

“

**One of the goals in our management plan is to have 47% of the working population being able to live in in the town within the town boundaries, which is an aggressive goal.**

— Lucy Kay, CEO and President, Breckenridge Tourism Office

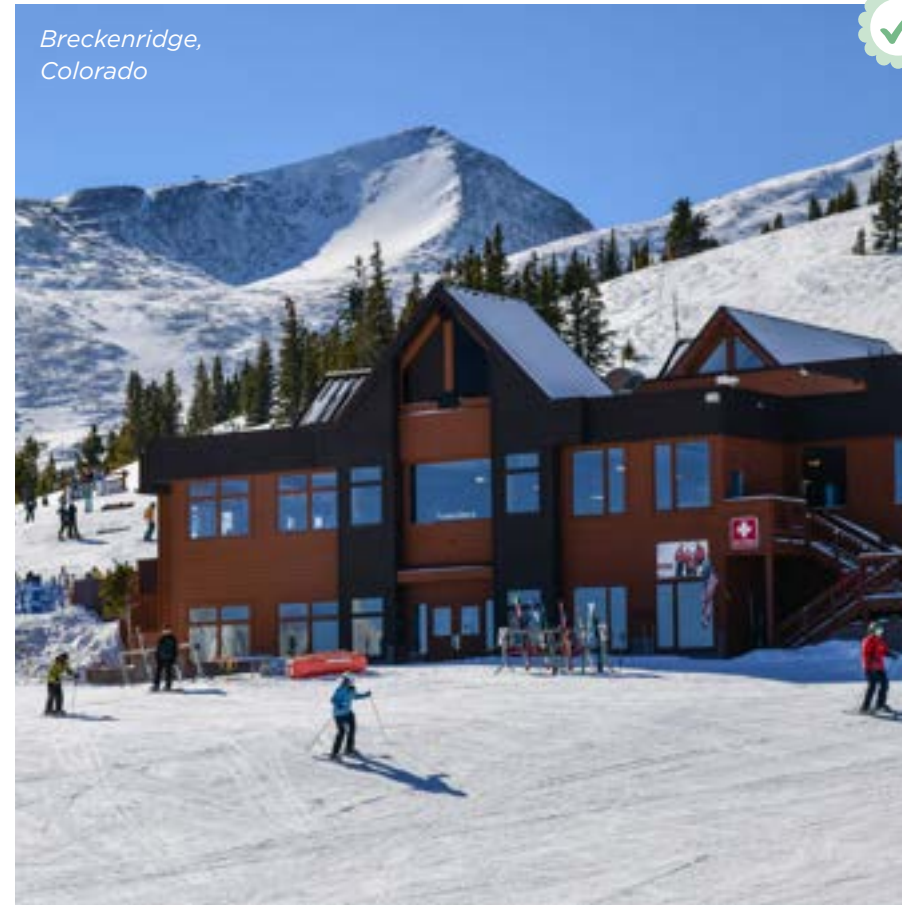
Whitefish,  
Montana



### Housing & Workforce Development Programs

Breckenridge, Vail, Park City, and Whitefish are among a wide range of destinations to offer active, dedicated programs to address workforce development and/or affordable housing for tourism and hospitality workers. Park City has a regional approach with partners to foster more rental accommodation. Breckenridge and Vail have made significant financial and policy commitments to workforce housing through multi-pronged approaches, including STR regulation, tax measures, and housing development funds, and Whitefish has a voluntary Tourism Improvement District Levy that has raised over \$389,000 for local housing initiatives.

Breckenridge,  
Colorado



Given the urgency of this issue and the wider political impact of housing issues, this is perhaps the most pressing issue for Destination Stewardship planning and action to be seen to be addressing. In the U.S. a number of states, including Colorado, South Carolina, and Florida, have implemented or are considering plans to divert bed tax revenues to government-led initiatives in housing (amongst other government programs), but often with no specific input from, or partnership with, the tourism industry.



### 1.5.3 Strengthening Local Economies and Tourism Workforce

Tourism employment was addressed in almost three quarters (71%) of plans, and workforce development in an equal proportion, often with a focus on retention, training, and labor pipeline improvements. For example, destinations like San Luis Obispo and the Outer Banks have incorporated detailed strategies to support local workers, signaling that good-quality, year-round jobs are foundational to a sustainable visitor economy.



#### Supporting Tourism Start Ups, Entrepreneurs & Events

San Diego and Taos are among a number of destinations in the study group with programs to support tourism startups, locally owned businesses, or local events. The San Diego Tourism Authority launched a highly successful 'Tourism Accelerator' for local entrepreneurs and businesses. The Taos Destination Stewardship Network (DSN) runs a Cultural Events Fund, managed by the Taos MainStreet organization, to support new and expanded local events.

### 1.5.4 Fostering Collaboration Amongst Stakeholders

The Destination Forward study emphasizes the critical importance of alignment and collaboration amongst stakeholder groups emerging from the planning process. A range of destinations are embracing shared governance models through implementation committees, action teams, and stewardship councils. These groups often include tourism leaders, city officials, nonprofit partners, and community representatives. A few examples:

- Jackson Hole/Teton County and Taos created stewardship councils of diverse stakeholders and community leaders and include action teams that are working on specific quick-win initiatives.
- The Outer Banks and Door County created formal committees comprising diverse community members and organizational partners.
- Santa Monica, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo emphasized structured coordination across municipal departments, with some establishing dedicated governance structures (e.g., a Destination Stewardship Council).



#### Governance & Cross-Sector Collaboration

Jackson Hole, Los Angeles, and Lake Placid each have established innovative new governance structures and partnership models to implement their plans and manage tourism in their destinations. This includes Jackson Hole's Destination Stewardship Council (DSC), Lake Placid's ROOST (the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism), and Los Angeles' Community Advisory Board.

“

*...the initiatives we're still having the greatest challenge with are those that involve entities with which we can only act as a partner. These are programs operated by entities not generally considered in the tourism ecosystem [like transportation].*

— Lucy Kay, CEO and President, Breckenridge Tourism Office



## 1.5.5 Hiring Dedicated Staff to Champion Implementation

Effective implementation has often relied on new roles focused exclusively on destination management and implementation of the stewardship plan. These positions serve as anchors for implementation, ensuring accountability, continuity, and internal and external coordination. In a range of destinations existing staff transitioned into new destination management roles illustrating the wider responsibilities of the DMO.



*Outer Banks, North Carolina*



*Door County, Wisconsin*



*Lake Placid, New York*

Destinations such as Outer Banks, Door County and Lake Placid hired Community Engagement Managers, Economic Development Directors, or Stewardship Coordinators to help with implementation.

## 1.5.6 Embedding Implementation of the Plan Into Broader Government Policies & Structures

The Destination Forward review also highlighted the importance of effective implementation of integrating the destination stewardship plans into broader institutional policies and structures. This is often critical to ensuring alignment, continuity, and effective follow-up.



*Ketchikan, Alaska*



Ketchikan integrated its tourism plan into the borough's comprehensive planning process.

*Glacier Country, Montana*



Glacier Country shifted its approach, moving away from framing the plan as a standalone program and instead embedding it as a guiding framework for the entire organization.



## 1.5.7 Using Data and Sharing Information in Implementation

Data-driven decision-making and reporting on progress are foundational to effective implementation. Results are assessed against the plan's goals (etc).



*Big Sur, California*

*Big Sur invests in real-time traffic monitoring to improve tourism impact analysis and help agencies manage traffic and parking issues.*



*Breckenridge, Colorado*

*Breckenridge, Colorado, uses its long-running resident sentiment research to assess progress against its plan and identify emerging 'hot button' issues.*

*San Juan Islands Draft Destination Management Plan*



*Engage San Juan County*

### When Plans Are Not Implemented

Destination stewardship plans can suffer from poor or little implementation for a range of reasons. This includes changes in political leadership and priorities, a lack of support and alignment from key government agencies and stakeholder groups, and inadequate funding and resources. Addressing these potential problems during the planning process is key, but if a plan's implementation is stalled or shelved, there are still opportunities for progress. This includes implementing specific, smaller parts of the plan to demonstrate progress and build broader support for action and the benefits of destination stewardship plans.

*Washington State Ferry in the San Juan Islands*



*Engage San Juan County*

For example, while the San Juan Islands paused development of its draft plan (based on feedback from key stakeholder groups), the planning process itself has helped surface and inform local policy conversations around vacation rentals, camping regulations, and infrastructure needs.



### Video Short Stories

Throughout the full report you will see links to short videos from a range of the destinations illustrating case studies and examples. Or see the full playlist [here](#).



# 1.6 Takeaways & Recommendations

In Destination Forward, there are six critical takeaways for Destination Organizations and our partners:

1. Strategic Intent Often Outpaces Tactical Follow-Through
2. Destination Organizations Are Redefining Their Roles
3. Community Well-being Is Now at the Heart of Stewardship Tourism Planning
4. Social and Economic Equity: Still More Talk Than Action
5. Environmental Aspirations Outpace Implementation
6. Funding, Authority, and Capacity Are Core Constraints

See the Full Report, Page 84, for details on each of these 6 takeaways.

Three critical themes run through Destination Forward's takeaways and recommendations that we can learn from and act upon:

## 1. The Evolution of the Destination Organization

Destination Stewardship plans are accelerating the evolution of Destination Organizations into Destination Marketing and Management Organizations. This pivot is driven by a growing sense of urgency that tourism needs to be better managed. To make this evolution successful, and for Destination Organizations to remain relevant, they must move beyond short-term fixes and invest in new, long-term governance structures, new skills and capabilities, plus innovative partnerships with other agencies. There's no one-size-fits-all model—each destination will need to design a system that works in its unique context.

## 2. Turning Aspiration Into Action: Detail, Authority, Resources

Destination Stewardship plans outline aspirational goals in community, social, and economic outcomes, as well as environmental sustainability; however, a lack of detailed tactics and resources for follow-up is a major weakness in implementation. For Destination Stewardship plans to be impactful, they require far more detailed implementation roadmaps, deeper collaboration with other agencies, and the authority and resources to turn aspirations into action. This includes sufficient, resilient, dedicated funding—reinvesting a greater share of the significant tax revenues that our sector creates.

## 3. Community Centered Tourism is the Biggest Priority

Most Destination Stewardship plans prioritize issues like managing crowding and congestion, housing affordability, workforce development, and other community issues, demonstrating that tourism can contribute to a community striving to be a great place to live and work, as well as to visit. For many practical and political reasons, community is the 'sweet spot' for Destination Stewardship plans and Destination Organizations, and tourism management can help address the challenges of growth, equity, and affordability faced by many communities. Putting the community at the center of Destination Stewardship plans and actions will continue to be critical to the short and long-term relevance of Destination Organizations.

“

*We're continuing our work very intentionally around building community, creating a great Vail experience for everyone, protecting our environment, creating housing, and then also marketing responsibly and doing our very best to educate guests on our community values.*

— Mia Vlaar, Director of Tourism & Economic Development, Town of Vail



Vail, Colorado



Hocking Hills, Ohio

This report highlights what's working, what still needs to improve, and how destination stewardship and management plans are helping shape a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for U.S. tourism destinations.

**The Destination Forward study underscores one clear truth: stewardship is no longer optional.** It is a necessary framework for navigating the complexities of today's visitor economies—and for building a tourism future that truly serves people, place, and planet.



# Introduction





Tourism destinations across the United States of America (U.S.) are at a turning point. Faced with the complex impacts of tourism on local economies, communities, and natural resources, destination organizations are reimagining how tourism is managed. Persistent workforce gaps, limited access to affordable housing, climate change, and shifting travel patterns have made change not just necessary but urgent.



Taos, New Mexico

The pandemic was a wake-up call. While many destinations were already feeling the impact of tourism before COVID-19, the pandemic served as a catalyst. Recovery brought a wave of visitors—often more intense and less predictable than before—putting sharper pressure on infrastructure, ecosystems, and community well-being. Growing community concerns sparked a critical shift: destination organizations began asking, *What kind of tourism do we want, and who is it really serving?*

In response, destination leaders began embracing a new planning mindset. A new generation of tourism plans emerged, often called destination stewardship or destination management plans. These plans go beyond traditional marketing and management strategies. They offer a bold, long-term vision that puts sustainability, equity, and community well-being at the center. These plans aim to balance the needs of visitors, residents, and the environment, while also ensuring that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed. They embed sustainability throughout—not as a side goal, but as the foundation for decision-making. They engage diverse voices and build strong partnerships across sectors for plan development and implementation.

This report—led by the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies, in collaboration with Miles Partnership and Coraggio Group—is the largest ever study of its type to determine if, how, and why such plans and strategies shape a more sustainable future for tourism.

Destination Forward shares insights from a national study of 35 local U.S. destination stewardship and management plans. We assess the core elements of these plans, and explore how they are helping communities put sustainability into action. We analyzed

each plan's vision, goals, and actions using a rigorous framework grounded in global good practices. We also spoke directly with the destination organizations that spearheaded the plans and consulting firms that supported them to understand what inspired their development, what lessons were learned, and how the plans are being put into action today.

The results are promising—and highlight the evolving role of destination organizations. It's about agency, relevance, and impact. Across the country, new destination management networks are taking shape, destination organizations are earning a seat at key decision-making tables, and residents are being brought into the conversation like never before. This report highlights what's working, what still needs to improve, and how destination stewardship and management plans are helping shape a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for U.S. tourism destinations.

What kind  
of tourism  
do we want,  
and who  
is it really  
serving?



## 2.1 Background on Destinations Included in Study

The destinations included in this study represent a diverse cross-section of the U.S. tourism landscape—ranging from major cities to rural communities, remote islands, and mountain towns. Destination organizations that spearheaded the development of the destination stewardship plans confirmed during focus groups that rising resident concerns, resource strain, and unbalanced growth were central motivators for rethinking tourism strategies.

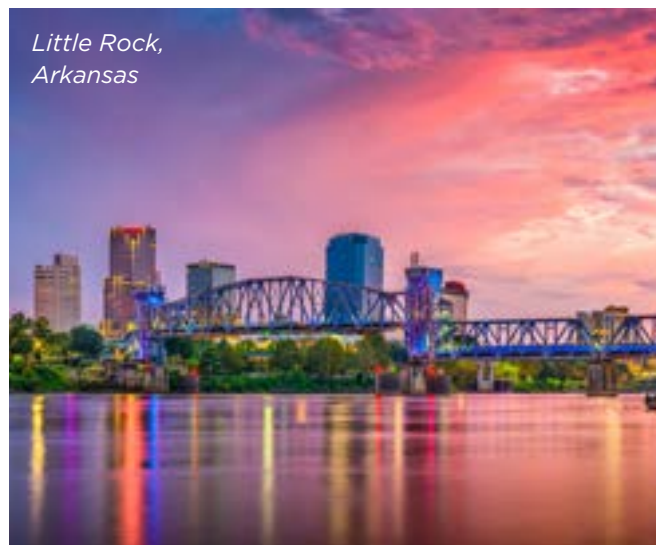
In many cases, planning efforts were launched to ensure that tourism strategies reflected local priorities and values. A defining feature of these efforts was the emphasis on bottom-up planning, where the plans were shaped by the wider community rather than imposed from the top down. Strong stakeholder engagement and local leadership played a key role in developing stewardship plans aligned with residents' needs and their long-term vision for tourism. Several destinations, particularly those on the West Coast, viewed their plans as a natural extension of long-standing sustainability values embedded in the identity of their communities—and of their “tourism brands.” In these destinations, the planning process was not just a response to current pressures, but a reaffirmation of sustainability as part of their DNA.



*Maui, Hawai'i*



*San Juan Islands,  
Washington*



*Little Rock,  
Arkansas*

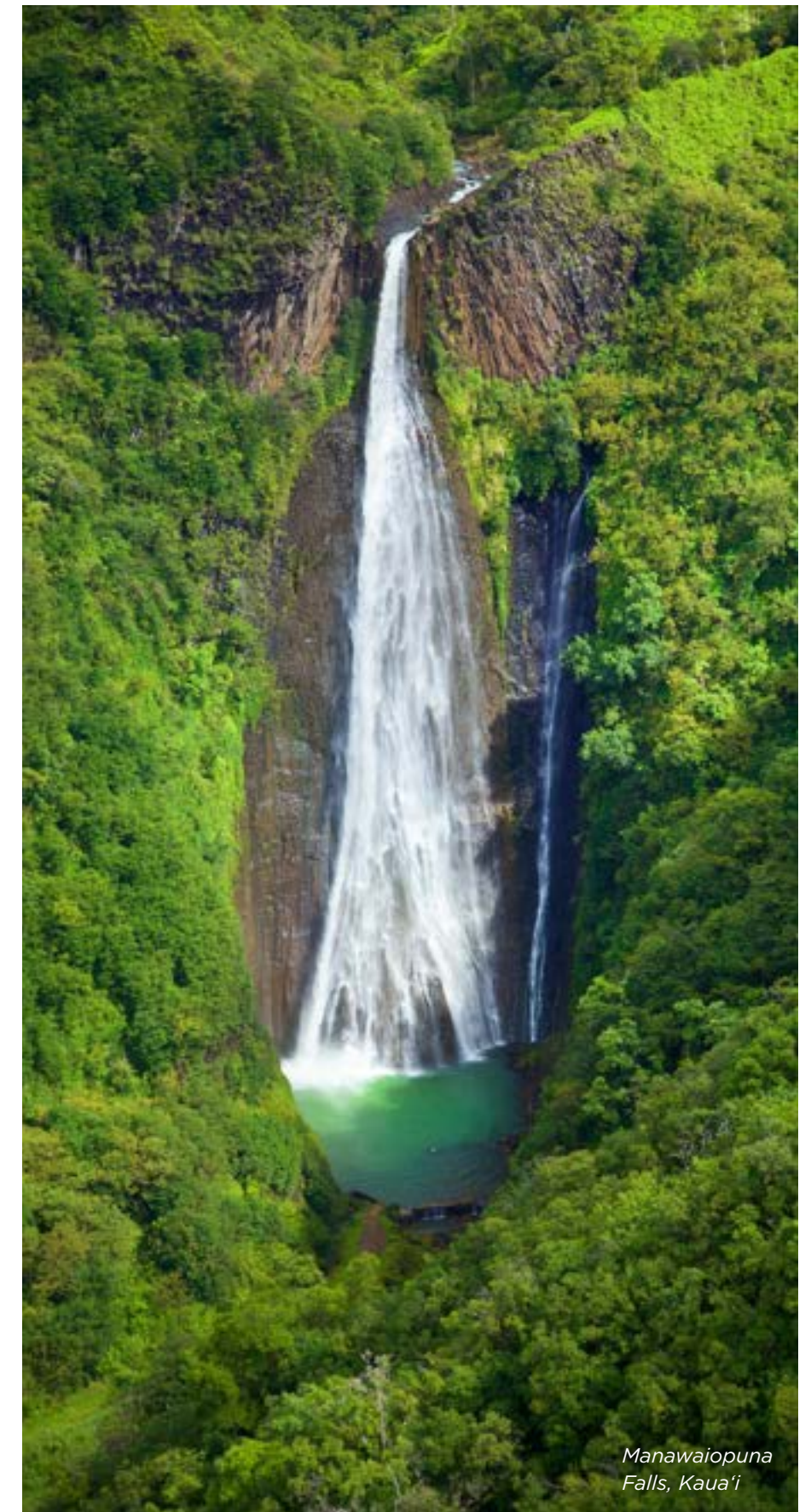


*Lake Placid,  
New York*

Of the 35 destination stewardship plans analyzed in this study, nearly 89% (31 plans) were completed within the past five years (2020–2024). This wave of recent planning activity signals a strong and timely response by destination organizations to address growing community concerns, post-pandemic challenges, and the need for more sustainable tourism strategies. The remaining 4 plans were completed six years ago in 2019 prior to the global pandemic. These early adopters of destination stewardship include Breckenridge, San Luis Obispo, Sedona, and Tucson.

The destinations in this study vary widely in both population size and annual visitation. Some destinations such as Vail and Lānaʻi, have fewer than 5,000 residents. Others, such as Santa Monica and San Diego County, are home to millions. Annual tourism arrivals also vary significantly—from under one million to more than 30 million annual visitors.

***While tourism is a vital economic driver in all destinations, each faces unique challenges tied to its geography, infrastructure, and growth patterns.***



*Manawaiopuna  
Falls, Kaua'i*



Destinations were classified into five geographic typologies adapted from Sarantakou (2023)<sup>1</sup>. The number of destinations in the study that fall under each category is indicated in parentheses.

- **Mountainous destinations** (12) are regions with an average elevation above 1,000 meters. They include Aspen, Jackson Hole/Teton County, Lake Tahoe, and Sedona.
- **Coastal destinations** (6) are located within 10 kilometers of a coastline to a major lake or the ocean. These include Door County, New Smyrna Beach, Outer Banks, and Sonoma County.
- **Island destinations** (6) are defined as areas with a minimum surface area of 1 km<sup>2</sup>, located at least 1 km from the mainland, and with a permanent population of more than 50 residents. Destinations include Kaua'i, Ketchikan, Maui, and San Juan Islands.
- **Urban destinations** (8) are cities where the majority of the population resides in a dense urban core with at least 50,000 residents, based on indices related to population, density, and urbanization. Examples include Little Rock, Los Angeles, Tucson, and Olympia.
- **Rural destinations** (3) include areas that do not fall into the other defined categories. Destinations are Hocking Hills, Lake Placid, and Whitefish.

This typology offers a structured lens to examine how local contexts shape the development and focus of destination stewardship plans. While these destinations differ in scale and setting, they share a common commitment to redefining tourism's role—shifting from promotion alone to long-term stewardship grounded in community values.

The map below highlights all destinations featured in the study. For a full overview—including administrative boundaries, population, and key details about each plan—see Appendix 1.

FIGURE 2-1 MAP HIGHLIGHTING 35 DESTINATIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY



## 2.2 Defining Destination Stewardship

Around the world, and across the U.S., destination stewardship has gained momentum as destination organizations and communities respond to the urgent need to manage tourism in ways that protect local culture, support long-term economic vitality, and safeguard natural resources. Yet, despite this growing traction, destination stewardship remains less defined in academic literature and is shaped largely by practice-based insights and definitions found in grey literature.

**The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) defines destination stewardship as “an approach to destination governance that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination.”<sup>2</sup> At its core, it is a commitment to inclusive governance that brings together public, private, and community stakeholders.**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), whose framework has been increasingly referenced in U.S. stewardship planning, defines destination stewardship as “a process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their place.” This definition highlights key elements such as community buy-in, collaborative governance, and systems for measurement and accountability.<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, the long-standing concept of destination management has been widely documented in industry practice and academic literature.

*According to UN Tourism, it involves “the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination,” using strategic integration to avoid duplication and enhance sustainability and competitiveness.*

The UN Tourism emphasizes that “destination management calls for a coalition of many organizations and interests working towards a common goal.”<sup>4</sup>



Entries compiled in the Encyclopedia of Tourism Management and Marketing (2022), a leading reference in the field, reinforce this systems-based perspective. Sanz-Ibáñez and Anton Clavé (2022) note that destinations are “complex systems with multiple highly interconnected and interdependent social, environmental, and technical elements.”<sup>5</sup> Del Baldo and Aureli (2022) define destination management—typically led by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)—as a set of actions “to pursue a balance among economic growth objectives, tourist experience maximization, respect and protection of the natural environment, and enhancement of the well-being of the hosting communities.”<sup>6</sup>

Reinhold and Beritelli (2022) highlight a central challenge: “DMOs often lack control of strategic resources and processes within destinations while being mandated with the pursuit of destination-level strategies.”<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, Day (2017) observes that “while legislation and regulation can require action in specific directions, the implementation of many elements of the destination plan requires voluntary participation of stakeholders.”<sup>8</sup>

As seen in Table 2-1, the definitions of *destination management* and *destination stewardship* share several core elements—such as multi-stakeholder collaboration, strategic coordination, and a focus on sustainability—and both concepts emphasize the importance of working across sectors to manage tourism’s impacts and benefits, also recognizing that destinations are complex systems requiring integrated approaches.

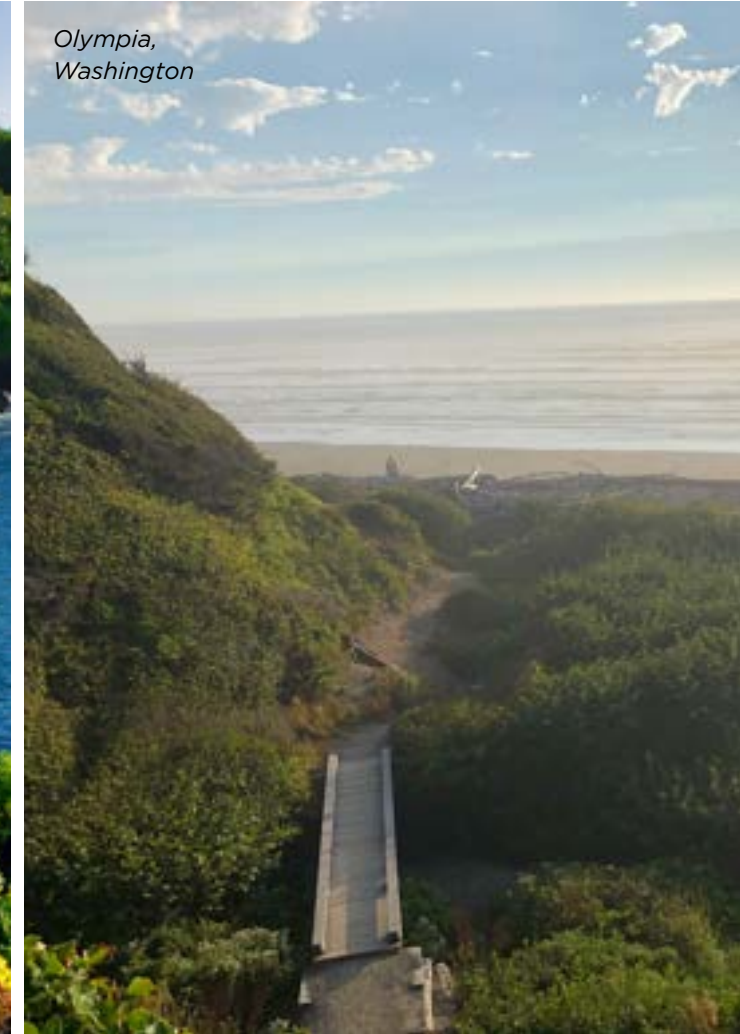
**Destination management is generally framed around optimizing the performance, competitiveness, and service delivery of a destination, often led by DMOs and rooted in tourism industry structures. In contrast, destination stewardship prioritizes protecting the long-term integrity of a place—culturally, environmentally, and socially—and elevates the role of local communities in decision-making. It goes beyond tourism to include broader goals for preserving the character and well-being of the destination.**



Little Rock,  
Arkansas



Maui, Hawai'i



Olympia,  
Washington

**TABLE 2-1 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT VS. DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP**

Category	Destination Management	Destination Stewardship
<b>Main Focus</b>	Tourism performance, competitiveness	Place integrity
<b>Scope</b>	Tourism sector	Broader community and environmental context
<b>Leadership</b>	Usually led by DMOs	Shared among public, private and community actors
<b>Community Role</b>	Consulted or involved	Central to decision-making
<b>Shared Elements</b>	Multi-stakeholder collaboration, strategic coordination, sustainability	








# 2.3 Destination Stewardship Plan Selection Criteria

The plan selection criteria for this study reflect the defining elements of destination stewardship described in Section 2.2. These criteria, shown in Table 2-2, served as the foundation for identifying plans that embrace inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven approaches to tourism.

We began with a broad scan of more than 50 tourism plans from across the United States and narrowed the list to 35 that met our destination plan selection criteria.\* Even though not all the selected plans are labeled as destination stewardship, they incorporate the key selection criteria elements that allow us to identify the particular stewardship approach beyond traditional management or other types of destination plans. Interestingly, only 29% of the selected plans explicitly include the term destination stewardship in their title, while 40% use destination management and the remaining 31% include other terms—yet still demonstrate strong alignment with the study’s stewardship criteria.

TABLE 2-2 DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP PLAN SELECTION CRITERIA

Criterion		Description
	<b>Holistic Stewardship Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embrace a holistic approach to assessing and addressing tourism impacts that integrate environmental conservation, cultural preservation, resident quality of life, and economic sustainability.</li><li>• Strive to balance the needs of visitors, local communities, and the environment.</li><li>• Multi-year strategy</li></ul>
	<b>Alignment with Sustainability Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrate sustainability as a cross-cutting theme throughout the plan, rather than treating it as a standalone section.</li><li>• Emphasize environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and management dimensions of sustainability.</li></ul>
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate broad stakeholder engagement, including the public sector, tourism associations, businesses, nonprofits (directly or indirectly supporting tourism), local communities, and marginalized and Indigenous groups.</li></ul>
	<b>Multi-sectoral Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster strong partnerships across tourism, transportation, public lands, economic development, and conservation—bringing stakeholders together to co-create solutions and share responsibility for plan implementation.</li></ul>
	<b>Local Scale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on the local scale (e.g., county, city, or specific tourism destination).</li></ul>

\*Please see Appendix 1 for the complete list of destinations included in the study.



# 2.4 Evolution of DMOs

Eighty percent (80%) of all destination plans included in the study were commissioned by DMOs. As they embrace destination stewardship, many are making a fundamental shift—from primarily promoting tourism to actively managing its impacts and benefits. This evolution reflects a growing emphasis on balancing the outcomes of tourism for both visitors and the local communities. In doing so, DMOs are stepping into broader roles that include long-term destination development, community engagement, and cross-sector coordination to sustain the identity, well-being, and resilience of the places they serve.

This evolution in role and mindset came through clearly in the focus groups conducted for this study. As DMO leaders discussed how they are implementing their destination plans, many emphasized that embracing stewardship is expanding their responsibilities—adding community relationship-building, visitor management, and cross-sector coordination. This shift has required them to build trust with residents, engage in inclusive decision-making, and address complex challenges like workforce housing, sustainable transportation, and equitable access to recreation. As a result, there is a growing trend of DMOs repositioning themselves as Destination Management and Marketing Organizations (DMMOs). The DMOs in Breckenridge and Durango have done just that, reflecting their expanded focus and commitment to stewardship.

*While these responsibilities may appear to push the boundaries of traditional DMO mandates, focus group participants emphasized that this evolution is not about overreach—it is about agency and relevance.*



As one participant observed, DMOs now have agency, but not always authority. The authority to enact structural change—particularly in areas like infrastructure, transportation, or climate resilience—still rests primarily with government entities. However, by gaining trust and a seat at the table, many DMOs are becoming influential advocates within local governance networks.

In some destinations, DMOs are choosing not to take on expanded roles in stewardship and management. Instead, the public sector is stepping in to lead. In Sedona, Arizona, for example, the nonprofit DMO—the Sedona Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau—chose not to renew its contract with the city in spring 2023, after serving as the official DMO for more than 20 years. As a result, the City of Sedona designated itself as the official DMO and assumed full responsibility for the development, promotion, and management of the local tourism industry.



Sedona,  
Arizona



Door County,  
Wisconsin



Jackson Hole,  
Wyoming

Similar to the evolution taking place within DMOs, local governments that embrace destination stewardship are also stepping into more active roles in managing tourism—especially in communities facing challenges related to sustainability, resident well-being, and visitor impacts. In Sedona's case, the public sector's authority to enact policy and coordinate across departments made it better positioned to implement responsible visitation strategies and long-term stewardship initiatives.



Aspen,  
Colorado

This evolution in the role of DMOs is also supported by recent industry research. In their *Navigating Your Stewardship* white paper, Miles Partnership and Coraggio Group (2023) highlight a growing pivot: destinations are redefining their roles—from promoters to caretakers—and taking responsibility for stewarding the identity, well-being, and long-term future of the places they represent.<sup>9</sup>

This pivot is further recognized by the UN Tourism, which notes that while DMOs have historically focused on marketing, “their remit is becoming far broader, to become a strategic leader in destination development.”<sup>10</sup> This broader mandate involves coordination, strategic planning, and the integration of diverse stakeholders under shared governance frameworks—a model that many U.S. destinations are beginning to adopt.

A common feature across many of the plans assessed was the use of resident surveys to gauge community sentiment toward tourism. In several cases—such as Jackson Hole, Wyoming—resident response rates were notably high. In Taos, outreach efforts successfully engaged voices that are often underrepresented in local tourism planning, including members of the Hispano community, Taos Pueblo, and Latino immigrant populations. While the level of resident interest and involvement varies by context, there is growing recognition that community engagement is essential to the legitimacy and long-term success of stewardship destination plans.

Focus group participants noted that in destinations where DMOs have actively built trust with residents, engagement has increased—and with it, the effectiveness of plan implementation. However, a key question remains: how is community engagement being sustained over time, particularly during the plan implementation phase? Without consistent and meaningful community involvement beyond plan development, there is a risk that momentum will fade and public support may diminish.

How is community engagement being sustained over time, particularly during the plan implementation phase?



# Plan Analysis Methodology

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*Santa Monica,  
California*

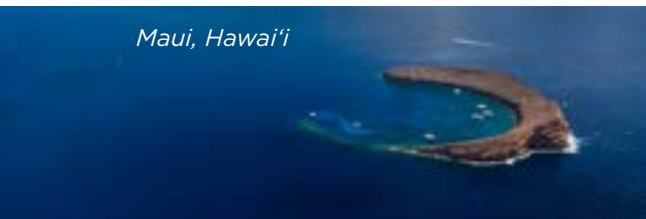


The overarching objectives of the study were to:

- Analyze how destination plans align with key sustainability themes across environmental, economic, social/cultural, and management dimensions; and
- Evaluate how these plans shape policy and practice at the local level, especially in terms of fostering sustainable tourism, strengthening collaborative governance, and centering local communities in tourism development.

The comprehensive analytical framework which was used to analyze all 35 plans included in this study captured the distinctive elements of destination stewardship, destination management, and sustainable tourism. The sustainability themes embedded in this framework were informed by leading global standards and expert sources, including:

- The Global Sustainable Tourism Council’s Destination Criteria v2.0 (2019)<sup>11</sup>
- The UN and UNWTO Guiding Principles for Sustainable Investment in Tourism (2025)<sup>12</sup>
- The World Economic Forum’s Ten Principles for Sustainable Tourism (2022)<sup>13</sup>
- The Responsible Tourism Institute’s Guide to Sustainable Tourism (2020)<sup>14</sup>



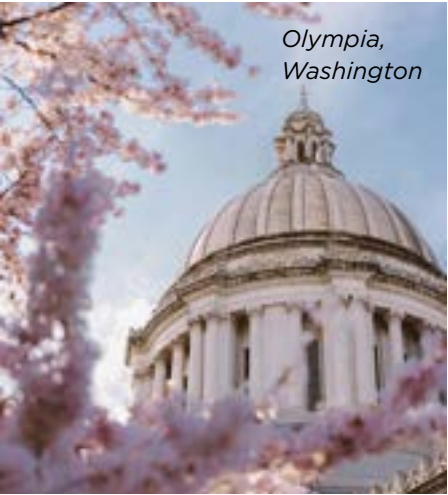
Maui, Hawai’i

In addition, several academic studies and peer-reviewed papers helped shape the framework, including works by González et al. (2018)<sup>15</sup>, Wanner et al. (2020)<sup>16</sup>, and Schönherr et al. (2023)<sup>17</sup>. Collectively, these sources provided a solid foundation for identifying the environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and management dimensions that define effective destination stewardship and management planning.

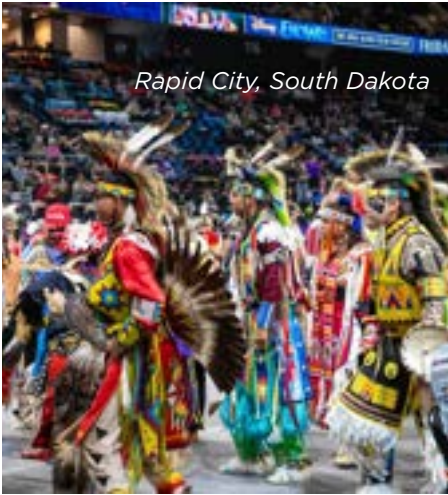
As detailed in Table 3-1, the study evaluates three primary elements of destination plans: vision statements, goals, and actions, with the aim to analyze how effectively a destination’s sustainable vision is translated into actionable initiatives. Of the three elements analyzed, the “goals” and “actions and tactics” components were further broken down into four key pillars to assess all dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and cultural, environmental, and tourism and resilience management.

TABLE 3-1: COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

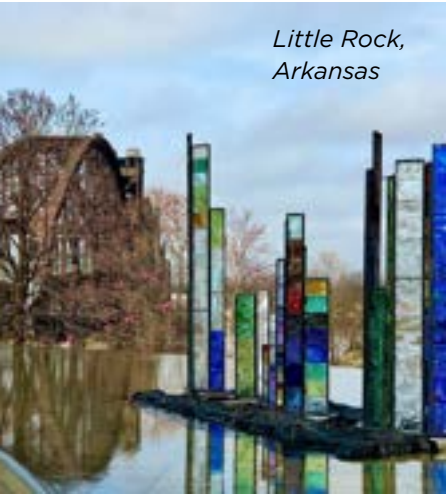
Index	Elements	Pillar
Destination Stewardship Plan Analytical Framework	1. Vision Statement	1. Sustainability
	2. Plan Goals	1. Economic
		2. Social and Cultural
		3. Environmental
		4. Tourism and Resilience Management
	3. Plan Actions and Tactics	1. Economic
		2. Social and Cultural
		3. Environmental
		4. Tourism and Resilience Management



Olympia, Washington



Rapid City, South Dakota



Little Rock, Arkansas

A predetermined set of themes was associated with each pillar to ensure comprehensive evaluation of its core components. Each theme was systematically scored against the standardized rating scale outlined in Table 3-2. For a full list of the key themes scored for plan visions, goals, and actions and strategies, please see Appendices 2-4.

TABLE 3-2: THEMATIC RATING SCALE

Score	Significance	Description
0	No Reference	The topic is not included in the plan.
1	Implicit Reference	The topic is suggested or alluded to without being explicitly stated.
2	General Mention	The topic is briefly acknowledged with minimal elaboration.
3	Detailed Discussion	The topic is thoroughly addressed with specific details.

From these scores, both aggregate and average metrics were calculated to support vertical (intra-destination) and horizontal (inter-destination) analyses—revealing patterns across key themes, pillars, and dimensions, as well as across different destinations.

Lastly, four focus groups were conducted with 31 leaders from organizations that commissioned the tourism plans in 29 of the 35 destinations included in the study. These discussions aimed to better understand the factors

that motivated plan development, the organizations’ roles in shaping and implementing the plans, and the resulting changes in policies and practices being carried out as a result. Two additional focus groups were held with the consulting firms that assisted destinations in developing the plans to gain similar insights and explore lessons learned from the planning approaches they employed.

This report presents an initial set of findings on how sustainability themes are embedded in the

vision, goals, and actions of local destination stewardship and management plans. Future reports will go deeper—exploring how destinations are progressing in implementing their plans and which key performance indicators (KPIs) they’re using to track results. These next stages of analysis will look beyond completion to examine how success is being measured and how destinations are advancing toward a more sustainable, resilient, and adaptive future.



## Key Findings





All key elements of the 35 plans included in the study were assessed against a list of key themes as described in the Section 3. The main findings below highlight how the plans aligned to key themes through their visions, strategic goals and concrete actions. The findings shared here represent an important early step in an ongoing research effort. They will be revisited over time, and the research will generate new, practical insights.



# 4.1 Plan Vision

Of the 35 destination stewardship plans analyzed, 33 included formal vision statements—high-level expressions of long-term aspirations and intent. Many of these statements touched on core themes such as community, visitors, sustainability, and collaboration, though often only at a general level. The key findings are presented below.

**Community Well-being Appears in Most Vision Statements**

References to the community are the most common, with 88% of plans mentioning community needs or well-being. For example, Sonoma County and Sedona emphasize resident quality of life as central to their tourism vision. However, even among these, no vision statement offered a detailed articulation of community interests—reflecting the inherently high-level nature of vision setting.

Mentions of visitors are also widespread (79%). Most destinations like Outer Banks, Durango, Breckenridge, and Los Angeles included visitors in a more balanced and meaningful way, ensuring their needs are recognized alongside community well-being and resident quality of life.

**Visitor Inclusion Often Framed in Balance with Community Well-being**

**Inclusion of Business Sector is Inconsistent in Vision Statements**

Mentions of the business sector were inconsistent across the plans. While Oceanside, Santa Monica, and San Luis Obispo County acknowledged the business community in their vision statement, 39% of plans did not mention it at all.





Few Vision Statements Reflect all Dimensions of Sustainability

References to the three dimensions of sustainability—environmental, economic, and social/cultural—were present in a majority of vision statements:

- **Environmental sustainability was mentioned in 61% of plans, with Durango and Vail offering more specific environmental focus.**
- **Economic sustainability appeared in 64% of vision statements, with destinations like Grand County and Lake Tahoe among the few that explicitly linked tourism to entrepreneurship or positioned it as a key pillar of local economic development.**
- **Social and cultural sustainability was included in 70% of plans, yet none addressed it comprehensively. Taos, Moloka'i, and Sedona were among those referencing cultural integrity and heritage preservation.**

A collaborative approach to tourism planning was mentioned in 64% of vision statements. However, only Ketchikan stood out for articulating a comprehensive and actionable vision for collaboration, emphasizing the role of shared governance and joint implementation.

Collaboration  
Mentioned Often, but  
Only Ketchikan Offers  
a Clear Vision

Very Few Vision  
Statements Align  
Community, Business,  
and Visitor Needs

Alignment across community, business, and visitor needs emerged as the weakest area overall. While many vision statements addressed both community and visitor priorities, only 9% of destinations—such as New Smyrna Beach and San Juan Islands—explicitly linked all three sectors in a meaningful way. Notably, one-third of the plans did not address this alignment at all.

For a detailed breakdown of how specific goals align with each theme, see Appendix 2.

4.2 Plan Goals

The goals outlined in destination plans offer insight into what destinations aim to prioritize. Overall, goals outlined in destination plans reveal a clear pivot toward community-centered priorities, with strong attention to resident quality of life, workforce well-being, and housing. Destinations are also signaling intent to promote inclusive economic participation and protect cultural and environmental assets, though very few plans reflect deep commitments to climate adaptation, energy transition, or GHG reduction.

These findings suggest that while sustainability is broadly acknowledged, destinations are prioritizing social and economic stability over environmental transformation or long-term resilience—at least in how they are currently defining their future direction through planning goals. A summary of the main findings follows.

Strong Focus on Community and Workforce Well-being

The most consistently prioritized areas are social equity and community livability:

- **94% of plans include goals related to resident quality of life.**
- **94% emphasize community involvement and empowerment.**
- **77% reference affordable housing.**

This focus reflects a strong intent to position tourism as a contributor to local well-being rather than just economic performance. Plans from destinations such as Park City, Outer Banks, and Whitefish express a clear desire to ensure tourism contributes to livability for residents and addresses workforce-related challenges exacerbated by housing shortages and cost-of-living pressures.

Cultural Identity and Place-based Values Are Widely Embraced

Destinations also signal strong interest in protecting what makes them unique:

- **83% included goals for cultural resource management.**
- **80% referenced maintaining a sense of place.**
- **80% also addressed traffic congestion, often framed as a livability and visitor experience issue.**

This focus reflects a strong intent to position tourism as a contributor to local well-being rather than just economic performance. Plans from destinations such as Park City, Outer Banks, and Whitefish express a clear desire to ensure tourism contributes to livability for residents and addresses workforce-related challenges exacerbated by housing shortages and cost-of-living pressures.



*Intent to Align Tourism with Inclusive Economic Growth*

*Economic inclusion is another frequently mentioned priority in the 35 tourism plans:*

- **83% of plans included goals around inclusive prosperity and economic development.**
- **69% address workforce-related challenges, with 57% doing so in a significant or comprehensive manner.**
- **66% referenced support for local entrepreneurship.**
- **57% referenced digital transition (e.g., tech for business or monitoring).**

*Examples like Sonoma County show destinations signaling a desire to make tourism more supportive of local businesses and broader community development. However, only 9% of destinations mentioned economic leakage, indicating that most plans do not yet reflect a clear focus on retaining tourism revenue within the local economy.*

*Environmental Sustainability Is Widely Acknowledged, but Depth Varies*

*Environmental themes are commonly referenced in plan goals, particularly:*

- **89% included goals on the sustainable use of natural resources, with 54% addressing it significantly.**
- **66% addressed ecosystem resilience, though only 26% did so in a substantial way.**
- **54% aimed to tackle water conservation and waste reduction.**

*Destinations like the San Juan Islands, Vail, and Sedona stand out for including stronger environmental goals in their plans. However, the relatively low percentage of detailed or comprehensive goals across all plans suggests that environmental sustainability—though frequently mentioned—is not yet a central focus in most planning frameworks.*

*Tourism and Resilience Management Foundations Emerging, but Depth is Limited*

*Several plans have goals related to tourism system transformation: ,*

- **89% included goals on sustainable mobility and transportation, with 60% addressing it significantly.**
- **86% set goals to educate visitors about sustainability, with 51% do so in a meaningful way.**
- **86% also aim to promote alternative visitor experiences; for example, Ketchikan proposes strategies to disperse visitation and ease pressure on popular attractions.**
- **74% reflect growing awareness of how messaging can influence visitor behavior and better align it with destination values.**

*However, foundational transition areas are less emphasized:*

- **40% of plans include goals that mention climate adaptation.**
- **46% referenced energy transition, while 40% addressed GHG reduction.**
- **34% addressed disaster risk planning, with only 11% doing so comprehensively.**



Jackson Hole,  
Wyoming



Park City,  
Utah

Destinations like Jackson Hole/Teton County are emerging as leaders by integrating data monitoring and community input into ongoing tourism decision-making. Park City also stands out for its resilience-focused goals, which include strategies for both community resilience and climate action planning.

These results suggest that while there is growing awareness of tourism’s need to evolve, many destinations are still in the early stages of defining what structural resilience and climate preparedness look like.

For a full breakdown of how plan goals align with each sustainability theme, see Appendix 3.





## 4.3 Plan Actions

This section of the report assesses the extent to which plan actions and tactics are addressing a set of core sustainability-oriented themes, organized under four key pillars: economic, social and cultural, environmental, and tourism and resilience management. While the presence of an action theme in the plans does not guarantee implementation, its inclusion in the plan signals that destinations recognize it as a priority area for sustainability-oriented tourism planning and management.

The actions and tactics outlined in destination plans reflect a clear and growing emphasis on housing, workforce development, and community well-being. These priorities demonstrate that destinations are responding to real social pressures and beginning to center tourism as a tool for strengthening local communities.

At the same time, areas such as economic equity, sustainable business practices, and digital innovation are emerging but underdeveloped. Key gaps remain around ownership models, labor standards, and structural equity—areas that, if addressed more directly, could significantly enhance the social and economic resilience of tourism-dependent places. As destinations move from planning to implementation, deepening focus on these underrepresented areas will be critical to delivering on the promise of truly inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

Let's take a closer look at the main findings.

### **Workforce Housing, Overcrowding Management, and Visitor Education Lead Destination Action Priorities**

*Among the 35 tourism plans analyzed, three themes stood out with 77% inclusion rates—making them the most widely prioritized action areas:*

- **Housing accessibility and affordability was the top social concern, with over one-third of plans detailing comprehensive actions. Destinations such as Vail, Park City, and Aspen offered clear and collaborative strategies that tightly link tourism planning with broader community efforts.**
- **Congestion and overcrowding reflect widespread concern about resident livability and visitor experience. Destinations such as Big Sur, Ketchikan, and the San Juan Islands included solutions like shuttle systems, geographic dispersal strategies, and visitor capacity limits.**
- **Visitor education on social impacts gained strong traction, with over one-third of plans detailing significant or comprehensive programs to promote respectful and responsible tourism behavior.**

### **Building Community Strength: Workforce, Identity, and Resilience as Core Action Areas—But Equity Gaps Remain**

*Beyond the top-tier priorities, many destination plans emphasize actions that support community resilience and local tourism capacity. Workforce development were also leading themes, each appearing in 71% of plans. Workforce development was often framed around retention, training, and labor pipeline improvements, reflecting an effort to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the tourism labor force. San Luis Obispo, Vail, and Taos stood out for detailing targeted efforts—from building local career pathways and expanding training opportunities to tackling workforce stability through housing and employer partnerships.*

*Preservation of place identity and investment in community resilience were also frequently addressed. Preservation of place identity and inclusive access to attractions were tackled in more than 70% of plans, reinforcing the desire to maintain community character and ensure access for all. Community resilience initiatives appear in 66% of plans, with 49% offering significant details. Olympia includes resilience hubs and ties tourism to public health and emergency readiness. Jackson Hole/Teton County embeds risk mitigation and local capacity planning into tourism management. Taos also emphasizes community resilience through cultural preservation.*

*However, this strong community focus did not always extend to targeted equity measures. Fewer than 25% of plans included actions to support women or minority entrepreneurs, and only 14% referenced gender-balanced workforce strategies. This suggests that while destinations are investing in community-wide benefits, there is room to advance more inclusive and equitable tourism development.*



## Local Employment and Entrepreneurship on the Rise, Yet Structural Equity Largely Overlooked

Many destinations are taking steps to broaden who benefits locally from tourism, especially through employment and small business support. However, more systemic strategies to ensure the equitable distribution of tourism benefits remain limited. Three themes stood out with 77% inclusion rates—making them the most widely prioritized action areas:

- **Employment in tourism was addressed in 71% of plans, often through strategies to create more stable, year-round jobs and improve tourism career pathways. Breckenridge and Lake Placid linked tourism employment to housing and training initiatives, while Kaua'i supported skill-building through hospitality and conservation programs tailored to local workforce needs.**
- **Resident entrepreneurship appeared in 63% of plans, with stronger emphasis in places like Olympia, Taos, and Park City. These destinations introduced incubators, mentoring schemes, and micro-grant programs to help residents start or grow tourism-related businesses. However, only 11% of plans outlined comprehensive actions in this area, and few mentioned strategies to boost resident ownership of tourism enterprises.**

Meanwhile, broader structural mechanisms—such as tourism tax reinvestment or initiatives to ensure fair distribution of tourism benefits—were addressed in fewer than half of the plans. Only a small number, including Sedona and San Diego, articulated clear mechanisms to redistribute tourism revenue or invest directly in infrastructure and small business support.

## From Vision to Action: Environmental Goals Lack Depth in Most Tourism Plans

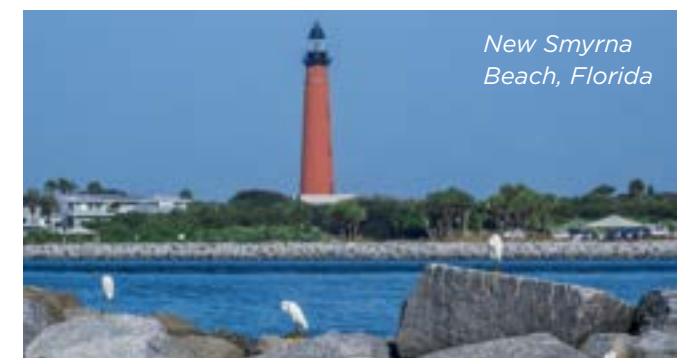
Of the 17 environmental sustainability themes assessed, only five were addressed in more than half of the plans, and just a few were supported with significant implementation detail. This gap between the expression of strong environmental aspirations in plan visions and goals and the presence of well-defined actions signals that, while environmental awareness is growing, robust action remains limited. Still, several key themes are gaining momentum:

- **Sustainable mobility was one of the most widely proposed environmental action areas, included in 80% of plans. Destinations like Vail, Park City, and San Luis Obispo proposed detailed initiatives aimed at reducing car dependency—such as enhancing transit, supporting walkability, and implementing parking demand management—to lower emissions and protect community livability.**
- **Visitor education on environmental impacts was also addressed in 80% of plans, but only 17% outlined significant programming. Notably, Taos, Los Angeles, and Sonoma County proposed efforts to educate visitors on responsible recreation and conservation practices.**

## Climate Resilience and Resource Conservation Are Not Yet Core Action Areas

Actions related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as water and waste management, are among the least developed in the plans analyzed.

- **Only 37% of plans included climate adaptation strategies, and 43% mentioned efforts to reduce global emissions.**
- **Water conservation appeared in 37% of plans, but with only 20% offering significant detail.**
- **Solid waste management was addressed in 60% of plans, yet less than 35% included strong, actionable tactics.**



A few destinations such as Vail, Sedona, and Big Sur stood out for integrating clear commitments—ranging from water flow management and infrastructure upgrades to emissions reduction goals. Still, most plans referenced these themes only briefly or not at all, signaling a need for deeper integration of climate resilience and resource conservation into tourism strategy.

These findings suggest that although environmental priorities are widely recognized, action-oriented follow-through remains uneven. A handful of destinations are beginning to translate ambition into concrete strategies, but the majority still need to move from commitment to implementation.

For more in-depth insights into how plan goals map to specific sustainability dimensions, refer to Appendix 4.



## 4.4 Governance & Implementation

The governance and implementation section of the report examines how destination organizations are coordinating efforts, mobilizing stakeholders, and structuring their roles to put plans into action. It highlights the practical approaches, partnerships, and challenges shaping how tourism plans move from vision, goals and priority initiatives to implementation.

### 4.4.1 Prominent Governance Approaches

Across the board, destinations are taking meaningful steps to ensure their stewardship plans are implemented—not shelved. Here are some of the notable approaches being used for implementation.

#### Differentiating Internal and External Roles

A key theme across many destinations is the need to clearly distinguish between actions that fall within the direct remit of the destination organization and those that require collaboration with external entities. Destination leaders consistently emphasized in the focus groups that implementation progresses more swiftly when actions align with the DMO's core functions, such as marketing adjustments, visitor communications, or convening partners.

For example, Glacier Country quickly shifted its marketing

strategy to better reflect community preferences because that work was fully within its operational control. Similarly, San Luis Obispo and Breckenridge emphasized their role in leading the implementation of goals that matched their capabilities, while supporting or encouraging other stakeholders to take the lead in areas like housing or equity.

Conversely, destinations like Oceanside and San Diego acknowledged that many critical plan actions—such as workforce development, transportation planning, or affordable housing—lie outside their authority. In

these cases, DMOs are positioning themselves as facilitators, conveners, or advocates, bringing together public agencies, nonprofits, and community leaders to move these efforts forward collaboratively.

**“Our role is to influence and advocate. We don’t have the power to be the actual doers. We don’t hold any of those keys, but we can help support, guide, and connect.”**

— ManLai Tam, Operations Manager, Visit Oceanside



Outer Banks, North Carolina



Oceanside, California

This differentiated approach to implementation reflects a practical understanding that not all actions can or should be owned by the destination organization, and that sustained impact requires both role clarity and shared commitment across sectors.

#### Establishing Multi-Stakeholder Committees and Networks

Destinations are embracing shared governance through the creation of stewardship councils, implementation committees, and action teams that bring together tourism leaders, government agencies, nonprofits, and community members. Many of these mechanisms build upon the steering committees established during the planning process. They sustain the rich dialogue and trust-building that began during that phase, enabling stakeholders to do more together over time and carrying forward the inclusive spirit of the planning effort.

- **The Outer Banks Visitor Bureau convened a 21-member special committee. The committee plays a key role in “strengthening partnerships” and “bridging divides between residents, visitors, and industry.” The committee structure is evolving and there is recognition of the need for more hands-on implementation.**
- **Vail structured its implementation through quarterly meetings of a Destination Stewardship Committee involving public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders.**
- **Jackson Hole/Teton County has two members of their destination stewardship council that are representatives of the community at large.**
- **Taos formed action teams within its Destination Stewardship Network. These teams are designed to tackle specific quick-win initiatives aligned with each organization’s capacity. The model recognizes that most participants have full-time responsibilities—so the structure aims to offer targeted, manageable ways for partners to contribute meaningfully.**
- **Santa Monica, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo emphasized structured coordination between the destination organization and various municipal departments to align tourism strategies with broader community goals.**
- **Door County established a formal Implementation Committee composed of diverse community and organizational representatives. This group plays a dual role—overseeing plan execution and sustaining the momentum of community involvement fostered during the planning process. Participants emphasized that the committee structure helps institutionalize stakeholder engagement and enables trusted relationships to flourish.**

These collaborative mechanisms serve as both implementation drivers and platforms for continuous engagement with all key stakeholder groups including the broader community.

“

***Our 21-member special committee has been instrumental in strengthening partnerships and working to bridge divides between residents, visitors and the tourism industry.***

— Jeff Schwartzberg, Community Engagement Manager, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau

“

***How do we foster collaboration that lightens the load for local leaders who are already stretched thin—while also unlocking space for communities to innovate and lead their own initiatives? Those are the key questions.”***

— Jessie Hook, Destination Network Manager, Town of Taos



“

*We didn't just want community input, we wanted community ownership. That same level of involvement is key to turning this plan into real, lasting impact.*

— Julie Gilbert, President & CEO, Destination Door County

### Hiring Dedicated Staff to Champion Implementation

A leading approach involves the creation of new roles focused exclusively on stewardship implementation.

- Destinations such as Outer Banks, Door County, Taos, Lake Placid, and Hocking Hills hired Community Engagement Managers, Economic Development Directors, or Stewardship Coordinators. These positions serve as anchors for implementation—ensuring accountability, continuity, and internal and external coordination.
- In Taos, the Community Engagement Facilitator who led the planning process transitioned into a key implementation leader, helping to sustain momentum while a new hire was brought in to manage the Destination Stewardship Network.
- Jackson Hole/Teton County similarly hired a coordinator to support its Destination Stewardship Council, ensuring continued progress through a period of governance transition.
- In Outer Banks, the Community Engagement Manager plays a central role on a Tourism Board-linked task force, helping to keep implementation efforts aligned with strategic goals.

### Embedding Implementation Within Existing or New Governance Structures

Implementation is being embedded into broader institutional structures to ensure continuity and reduce fragmentation:

- Ketchikan integrated its tourism plan into the borough's comprehensive planning process.
- Durango is reconciling its local plan with overlapping regional and state strategies to streamline efforts.
- Glacier Country moved away from framing the plan as a standalone program, embedding it instead as a guiding framework for the entire organization.



Ketchikan, Alaska



Durango, Colorado



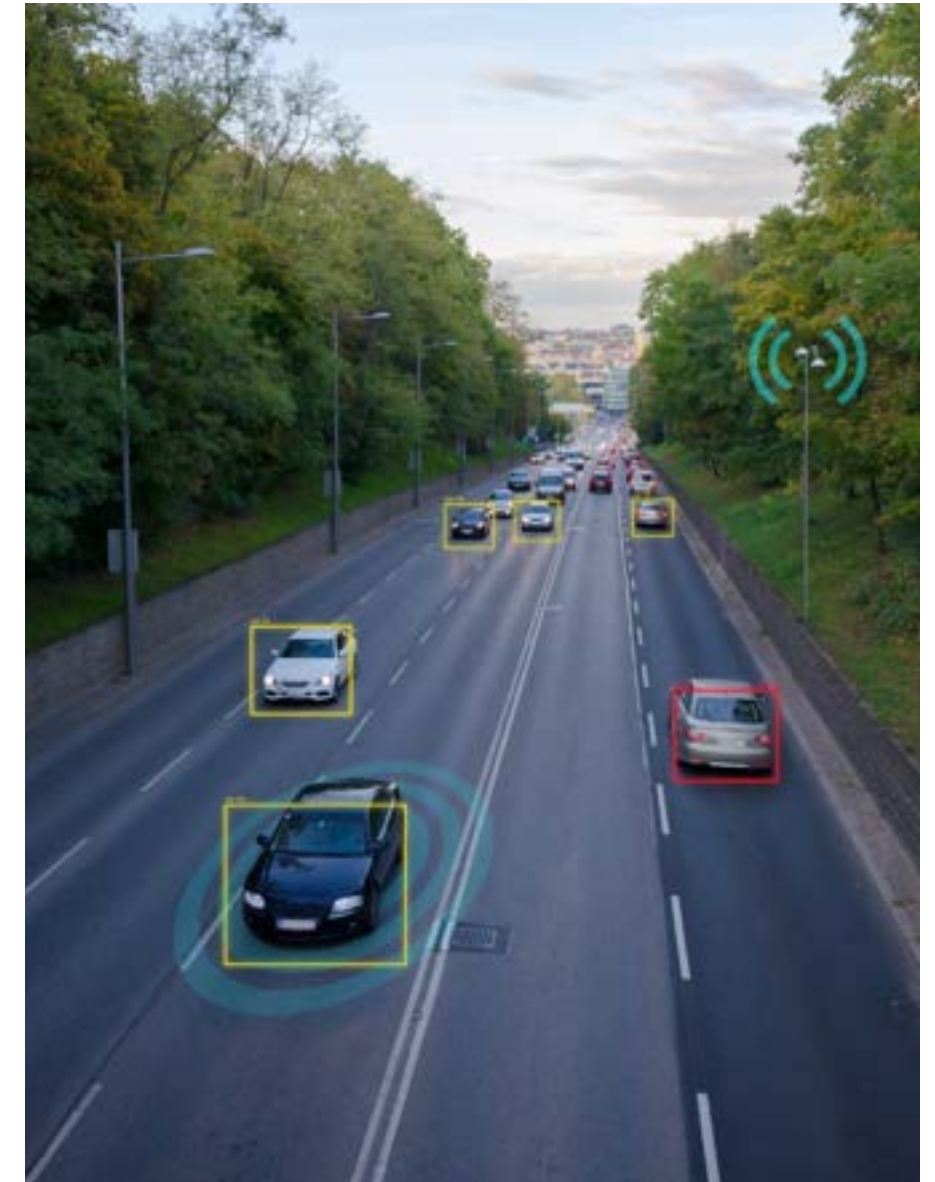
Glacier Country, Montana

These examples highlight a shift from one-off planning efforts toward more integrated, system-level approaches.

### Using Data and Monitoring to Guide Actions

Data-driven decision-making and community responsiveness are central to many implementation models. They support both tracking progress toward plan goals and communicating tangible results to key stakeholders—particularly political leaders, the media, and community and business groups.

- Big Sur invested in real-time traffic monitoring to improve tourism impact analysis.
- Santa Monica sends newsletters and shares meeting minutes across committees to promote cross-pollination and transparency.
- Door County began quarterly reporting to track progress and maintain public trust.
- Breckenridge, Colorado uses its long running resident sentiment research each year (which offers reporting to a neighborhood level) to assess progress against its plan and identify emerging 'hot button' issues.



“

*We started in 2017. We did a resident sentiment survey to get in front of the threat of overtourism. We've continued to do those surveys bi-annually and they really have given us the data to show not just how our community is feeling about tourism, but how they're feeling about other issues. That's really helped inform the Destination Management Plan and what we need to be doing to continue to align our work with community values.*

— Lucy Kay, CEO & President, Breckenridge Tourism Office



### 4.4.2 Transforming Local Tourism Policy and Practice

Analysis across destinations in the study reveals that the introduction of destination stewardship plans has spurred meaningful changes in tourism policy and planning. While the scope and depth of change vary by place, several cross-cutting trends stand out:

#### From Counting Visitors to Cultivating Stewardship

Many destinations are moving beyond traditional tourism models focused on visitor volume, instead centering their strategies on resident well-being, resource stewardship, and sustainable engagement.

- **The Outer Banks shifted from volume-driven messaging to promoting respectful visitation and community alignment, even removing the word “visitor” from some communications to reduce perceived division.**
- **Kaua’i reoriented its communication strategy to encourage pono (respectful and responsible) behavior among visitors, aligning its messaging with local values and natural resource protection.**
- **Santa Monica reframed tourism as a tool for enhancing quality of life and sustainability, embedding tourism planning into broader community well-being and public safety initiatives.**
- **Sedona explicitly defined tourism success as “resident-first,” prioritizing livability and natural preservation over growth metrics.**
- **In Glacier Country, stewardship values now underpin regional and state-level planning—even if not explicitly labeled as such—signaling broader institutional alignment with sustainable tourism principles.**

*“We’re focused on educating visitors on how to experience Maui with respect and cultural sensitivity. Our emphasis has shifted toward attracting mindful, quality travelers who align with our values, rather than simply increasing visitor numbers. It’s a community first approach, where the perspectives and priorities of our local residents are at the forefront of our decision-making.”*

—Sherry Duong, Executive Director, Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau



Kaua’i, Hawaii



Santa Monica, California



Sedona, Arizona

This shift also manifests in new metrics in destinations like Sonoma County that are adopting a stewardship lens across its brand and metrics—introducing new performance indicators tied to revenue quality, community well-being, and sustainability rather than raw visitor numbers.

#### Integration with Broader Policy Agendas

Stewardship plans are increasingly serving as umbrella frameworks, allowing tourism to intersect with and support broader community policy goals.

- **In San Diego, a hotel tax measure not only funded convention center expansion but also tackled homelessness and infrastructure needs.**
- **Park City uses its tourism plan to frame diverse environmental and housing policies, enabling cohesive messaging across city and county efforts.**
- **While San Juan County decided not to move forward with implementation of its draft plan, the planning process itself has helped surface and inform local policy conversations around vacation rentals, camping regulations, and infrastructure needs. In contrast, Santa Monica has actively used its experience management plan to guide new initiatives related to community safety and event policy.**

This integration reflects a growing recognition that tourism doesn’t operate in a silo. Rather, it is deeply embedded in the economic, social, and environmental systems of the destination.

*“In Park City, many sustainability initiatives were in progress before the development of the Sustainable Tourism Plan, so the Plan didn’t drive those progressive policies directly – but now, it serves as a unifying framework. It gives us a way to connect and communicate the various projects happening in the community under one cohesive vision.”*

— Jennifer Wesselhoff, President & CEO, Park City Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau



Whitefish, Montana

#### Housing and Workforce Policy Become Top Priorities

Across nearly every destination, housing and workforce challenges have emerged as primary concerns—often accelerated by tourism growth.

- **Breckenridge, Whitefish, and Vail have made major financial and policy commitments to workforce housing through multi-pronged approaches including STR regulation, tax measures, and housing development funds.**
- **Truckee and Taos also enacted short-term rental caps, though some are now reassessing early decisions to ensure long-term viability.**

Destinations are increasingly using tourism revenue and influence to shape local housing outcomes, recognizing that sustainable tourism requires a stable resident base.



Truckee, California



Transportation and Infrastructure, From Crisis Response to Systems Thinking

Several destinations have launched new policies and systems to address congestion, transportation inefficiencies, and infrastructure demands.

- **Sedona’s integrated tourism-transportation plan enabled a successful city-led shuttle program that reduced traffic at key trailheads.**
- **Kaua’i’s advanced reservation and shuttle system at Hā’ena State Park has been pivotal in managing tourism pressure and protecting natural and cultural assets.**
- **In San Diego, regional planners now incorporate visitor flow and workforce needs into transportation modeling—something previously not done.**

This signals an evolving approach to infrastructure: one that treats visitor mobility as a shared, multi-agency responsibility.



Hocking Hills, Ohio

Fiscal Policy and Local Investment Tools Are Expanding

Funding for projects and programs related to the implementation of the plan, and for the staff to manage the process is critical. Despite ongoing challenges in securing sufficient funding and resources across a number of destinations in the Destination Forward study, a number of destinations have successfully passed new tax measures or created dedicated investment funds linked to tourism revenue:

- **San Luis Obispo added a new 1% sales tax, backed by public support grounded in years of resident-focused communication.**
- **Vail passed a sales tax in 2022 and the November ballot may include an STR tax to support the development of workforce housing.**
- **Hocking Hills established a Destination Investment Fund to reinvest tourism dollars directly into community-benefiting projects.**

These mechanisms reflect a shift toward reciprocity—ensuring tourism gives back in new, tangible ways to the communities that host it.

More broadly, funding for sustainable tourism investments across the U.S. remains limited. The 2025 edition of Funding Futures estimates that perhaps only 5% of total ‘tourism generated tax revenue’ is reinvested into tourism generally with “less than 1% being reinvested into sustainable tourism challenges such as housing for tourism and hospitality workers.”<sup>18</sup>

4.4.3 Implementation Challenges

Despite progress, many destinations noted structural and resource-related challenges. Destination organizations emphasized that:

- **Staffing limitations slow progress.**
- **Governance transitions or unclear authority can delay or derail implementation.**
- **Some stakeholders are reluctant to take ownership of action areas, even when they support the plan in principle.**

These barriers underscore the need for dedicated funding, stable governance, and clear mandates for action.



San Luis Obispo, California



# Gallery of Good Practices



Rapid City,  
South Dakota





Sonoma  
County,  
California

The following good practice case studies highlight how destinations across the U.S. are putting destination stewardship principles into practice. These examples stand out not just for the results they've achieved, but for how they've achieved them—by thinking creatively, working collaboratively, and grounding their efforts in local values. Each destination has drawn on its unique strengths, developed meaningful partnerships, and responded to complex challenges with adaptability and long-term vision. Together, these case studies demonstrate practical approaches to advancing destination stewardship goals.

## 5.1 Housing Affordability Solutions

### Unlocking Housing for Seasonal Workers Through Resident Incentives | Park City, Utah

**The Initiative:** As part of its broader sustainability objective to address housing, transportation, energy, water, and waste, Park City has pursued a regional approach to housing that includes innovative solutions for workforce needs. One such initiative is the WE RIP program, launched in 2023 to encourage local residents to rent out spare rooms or accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to seasonal tourism workers—addressing a persistent gap in affordable short-term housing.

**Implementation:** WE RIP offers financial incentives to residents who participate, capping rent at \$1,000 per room or \$1,500 per month for a one-bedroom or studio unit. Managed by local nonprofit partners, the program aims to create 40–50 additional seasonal beds each winter by tapping into existing housing stock rather than requiring new construction. It reflects a nimble, community-based approach to workforce housing that leverages local resources.

**Accomplishments So Far:** In the 2024–2025 winter season, the WE RIP program provided 36 beds for seasonal workers—just shy of its 40-bed target. Organizers view this as a strong foundation and aim to expand participation in future years. The program has proven to be an effective stopgap measure, easing immediate pressure on the housing market while broader regional solutions continue to be developed.

“

*The development of our Sustainable Tourism Plan was a reaction to community sentiment – an effort to better balance a thriving tourism industry and business community while protecting the environment and our residents' quality of life. It was a big shift for the organization, moving from a destination marketing organization, DMO, to a destination marketing and management organization, DMMO.*

— Jennifer Wesselhoff, President & CEO, Park City Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau



## Tackling Housing Affordability Through Local Collaboration | Whitefish, Montana

**The Initiative:** Housing is a dedicated focus area in the Whitefish Montana Sustainable Tourism Management Plan, with goals to expand the supply of affordable workforce housing and to collaborate with partners to address local housing needs through varied approaches.

**Implementation:** Explore Whitefish launched the Community Support Fund (CSF), a voluntary 1% fee added to lodging, restaurant, and transportation receipts by participating member businesses. Unlike mandatory Business Improvement District taxes used in other Montana communities, the CSF is opt-in, allowing businesses to support destination programs on their own terms. Since June 2022, Explore Whitefish has partnered with the nonprofit Housing Whitefish to allocate 50% of CSF contributions from restaurant partners toward affordable housing initiatives.<sup>19</sup> This collaboration has generated over \$389,000 to date, supporting rental assistance, operational funding, and housing scholarships for local workers.<sup>20</sup>

**Accomplishments So Far:** The initiative has provided rental assistance to over 60 households, supporting 116 individuals, many employed in the retail, restaurant, and lodging sectors.<sup>21</sup>



Scan the QR Code  
to Learn More



Sonoma County,  
California

## 5.2 Enhancing the Resident and Visitor Experience

### Community-Led Visitor Management to Protect Resources and Promote Safety | Big Sur, California

**The Initiative:** Big Sur's Destination Stewardship Plan envisioned a "Community Corps" initiative to manage visitor impacts through on-the-ground education, data collection, and monitoring. Rooted in Big Sur's culture of volunteerism, the goal was to reduce congestion, wildfire risk, and environmental degradation in high-traffic areas by deploying local ambassadors and advocates.

**Implementation:** While a formal Community Corps was never officially launched, the model has been effectively applied in key situations. In 2020, local leaders recruited and trained paid community members to document illegal roadside camping, data that directly contributed to the implementation of higher camping fines in 2022. In 2022, the model was adapted again for Bixby Bridge, where community members gathered data that supported the formation of a multi-agency Emergency Task Force. This effort led to a 2024 coastal permit to restrict roadside parking in sensitive residential areas.

**Accomplishments So Far:** These community-driven efforts have resulted in stronger enforcement policies, reduced illegal camping, and new safety measures at major tourism chokepoints. While challenges persist, Big Sur's flexible, locally informed approach offers a scalable model for adaptive visitor management.

“

*We want to protect the environment. We want to ensure that our local culture and community are preserved. At the same time, tourism is a major part of our local economy. So finding that balance has been a challenge.*

— Rachel Goldberger, Program Manager, Community Association of Big Sur (CABS)



Big Sur,  
California



### Inspiring Responsible Tourism Through Community-Based Messaging | Breckenridge, Colorado

**The Initiative:** Breckenridge’s sustainable tourism plan emphasizes the development of “cutting-edge messaging/programs around responsible tourism and responsible citizenry,” extending beyond environmental topics. The B Like Breckenridge campaign embodies this goal by encouraging visitors and locals alike to act as stewards of the mountain community, promoting behaviors that respect both the environment and local culture.

**Implementation:** The campaign includes a wide range of visitor tips on how to “be like Breckenridge,” covering everything from environmental practices to community values. These messages are shared through a local marketing campaign and reinforced through partnerships with local businesses. Participating businesses are supported in their efforts to embed the campaign’s sustainability principles into their daily operations and customer interactions.

**Accomplishments So Far:** Awareness of the B Like Breckenridge message is tracked through intercept surveys, and the town is building out a broader set of metrics to measure sustainability and stewardship progress. These include campaign-specific indicators as well as broader goals like plastic diversion, recycling rates, and DEI outcomes, laying the groundwork for long-term accountability and community engagement.



### Investing in Quality of Life and Visitor Experience | Hocking Hills, Ohio

**The Initiative:** Launched in January 2021, the Destination Investment Fund (DIF) is a grant program designed to enhance quality of life for Hocking Hills residents while also expanding visitor experiences beyond the popular state park. Managed by the Hocking Hills Tourism Association, the fund supports projects led by local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that align with the dual goals of resident benefit and tourism enhancement.

**Implementation:** The DIF operates two grant cycles annually, with application deadlines in February and August. Applications are reviewed by a dedicated Grant Review Committee, and funding is determined each year by the Tourism Association Board of Trustees based on available lodging tax revenue. The transparent, locally driven process ensures alignment with community priorities and long-term tourism goals.

**Accomplishments So Far:** Since its launch, the DIF has funded a wide variety of projects, including the renovation of a historic theater, creation of the Butterfly and Canal Trails, development of the Hocking Hills Children’s Museum, new pickleball courts, arts programming, and improved public amenities such as recycling receptacles and downtown flower maintenance. These investments collectively strengthen both the resident experience and the destination’s appeal to visitors.



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to Learn More

### Advancing Equity Through the Tourism Accelerator | San Diego, California

**The Initiative:** In 2021, the San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA) launched the Tourism Accelerator, one of the first programs of its kind in the U.S., to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the local tourism industry. The initiative aims to support businesses owned by women, veterans, people of color, individuals with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community by providing resources to help them thrive in the tourism sector.

**Implementation:** Each year, SDTA selects ten San Diego-based businesses to join the Tourism Accelerator, providing each of them with over \$15,000 in services and support. This includes complimentary SDTA membership, business coaching in areas such as finance, marketing, and operations, a \$500 voucher for professional development at UC San Diego Extension, digital and print advertising support, and visibility across local promotional channels. The program is made possible through partnerships with sponsors like SDG&E and The Shipyard and is guided by a selection panel made up of business leaders and program alumni. Participants are chosen based on their viability, community involvement, and alignment with the program’s goals of inclusive economic growth.

**Accomplishments So Far:** Since its inception, the Tourism Accelerator has supported over 30 businesses. According to SDTA, 65% of graduates report revenue growth, 45% have created new jobs, and 100% feel more confident in managing their businesses. The program has also fostered a strong alumni network that continues to support, collaborate with, and mentor new participants.



San Diego,  
California



### Co-Designing a Cultural Events Fund to Celebrate Community | Taos, New Mexico

**The Initiative:** Part of its commitment to equity and place-based stewardship, the Taos Destination Stewardship Network (DSN) initiated the development of a Cultural Events Fund aimed at supporting events that reflect and uplift the rich cultural diversity of Taos. The initiative was guided by the principles of the community's Destination Stewardship Plan, emphasizing shared leadership, inclusivity, and community-driven design.

**Implementation:** Launched in December 2024, the fund was co-designed by a cross-sector Action Team convened by the DSN. The team created a framework that not only provides financial support but also offers capacity-building resources to underrepresented cultural groups and event organizers. Taos MainStreet, a nonprofit with strong local ties and organizational capacity, was selected to manage and implement the program. Responsibilities include marketing the fund, managing outreach and inquiries, disbursing funds, and connecting event sponsors with local resources and each other.

**Accomplishments So Far:** While applications for the fund have not yet opened, Taos MainStreet is actively working toward an equitable and efficient launch. The initiative stands out as a model for collaborative design, rooted in community knowledge and driven by shared values, with the potential to deepen cultural expression and community cohesion in Taos.



**Scan the QR Code to Learn More**



*Taos, New Mexico*



*Durango, Colorado*

## 5.3 Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability Innovation

### Measuring Impact Through Food Waste Reduction | Durango, Colorado

**The Initiative:** As part of Durango's broader sustainability goals and in alignment with the city's Climate Action Plan, Visit Durango launched a food waste reduction pilot program aimed at positioning the destination as a leader in sustainable tourism. This effort also supports a recommendation in the city's tourism plan to conduct a Resilience and Sustainability Analysis that advances the goal of carbon neutrality in the tourism sector.

**Implementation:** Launched in March 2025, the pilot program is a collaborative initiative led by Visit Durango's Sustainability & Policy Manager in partnership with a local resource efficiency group, a composting company, the local Restaurant Association, and Swiss-based food tech company Kitro. The program works with four local restaurants, each participating for three months. Smart tracking technology measures pre- and post-intervention food waste to evaluate progress and calculate broader tourism sector impacts.

**Accomplishments So Far:** In the first month of implementation, the first participating restaurant achieved a 16% reduction in food waste. The goal is a 20–30% reduction per restaurant by the end of the pilot. These results will help establish a baseline to estimate food waste generated by the wider tourism economy in Durango. Early collaboration across multiple stakeholders has set the foundation for future expansions and further alignment with the city's carbon neutrality objectives.



**Scan the QR Code to Learn More**



## Decarbonizing Snowmelt Through District Geothermal Innovation | Vail, Colorado

**The Initiative:** Vail's Stewardship Roadmap prioritizes decarbonizing its snowmelt system—the town's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and a key guest amenity. The system spans over 14 acres and costs more than \$1 million annually to operate. In partnership with Holy Cross Energy and others, Vail is developing a districtwide geothermal network using waste heat from local facilities and geothermal wells. Supported by a \$250,000 Colorado Energy Office grant, the project is 30–40% designed and includes planning for longterm governance and implementation.

**Implementation:** Vail's Stewardship Roadmap prioritizes the decarbonization of its natural gas-powered snowmelt system, the town's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Covering more than 14 acres and serving as a key guest amenity, the system represents both an environmental challenge and a quality-of-experience asset. To address this, the town is pursuing a district-wide geothermal solution in collaboration with Holy Cross Energy and other partners, aligning with its broader climate goals.

**Accomplishments So Far:** One geothermal test bore hole has been successfully completed, showing strong potential. Civil engineering, energy modeling, and governance planning are underway to define ownership and financing models, bringing Vail closer to a transformative clean energy solution for its largest infrastructure based emission source.



Scan the QR Code  
to Learn More



*We're continuing our work very intentionally around building community, creating a great Vail experience for everyone, protecting our environment, creating housing, and then also marketing responsibly and doing our very best to educate our guests on what our values are.*

— Mia Vlaar, Director of Tourism & Economic Development, Town of Vail

## 5.4 Governance, Implementation & Cross-Sector Collaboration

### Interim Council Guides Destination Stewardship | Jackson Hole/Teton County, Wyoming

**The Initiative:** As part of its Sustainable Destination Management Plan (SDMP), the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board (JHTTB) called for the creation of a Destination Stewardship Council (DSC) to oversee short-term plan implementation. Established in February 2023, the DSC serves as an interim advisory body tasked with guiding plan priorities until a permanent Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO) is formed.

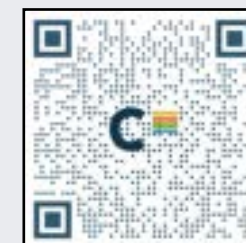
**Implementation:** The DSC has 12 members representing federal land agencies, local government, nonprofits, tourism stakeholders, and two at-large community members to ensure inclusive representation. It is chaired and managed by a Destination Management Coordinator (DMC), a contract role funded through the statewide lodging tax. The DMC facilitates meetings, prepares minutes, and leads communication and coordination efforts across working groups. Meetings are public and minutes are posted online, supporting transparency.

**Accomplishments So Far:** Since its formation, the DSC has played a central role in shaping JHTTB's strategic decisions, including exploring the development of the DMMO and addressing challenges such as visitor management and federal staffing shortfalls. The council has also broken down silos among community groups, improved cross-sector communication, and fostered a shared commitment to sustainable destination stewardship across Jackson Hole. To promote transparency and accountability, the SDMP Progress Tracker offers a publicly accessible, color-coded dashboard that clearly shows the status of each action item, helping stakeholders monitor implementation in real time.



*One thing that has helped us so far is having the right people in the room who are committed to enhancing our destination. We can get so much done—working to build trust and develop these relationships.*

— Lindsey Ehinger, Destination Management Coordinator, Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board



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### Strengthening Local Impact with a Full-Time Economic Development Lead | Lake Placid, New York

**The Initiative:** The Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan called for the creation of an economic development organization or department to attract and steward investment in the region. Recognizing that sustainable economic growth requires collaborative leadership, the plan recommended a centralized coordinator of public policy that would also guide housing and workforce initiatives, and help enhance quality of life for residents over time.

**Implementation:** To implement key pillars of the plan—particularly event management, housing diversification, and economic development—ROOST (the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism) convened a community workgroup in 2022. In 2024, ROOST hired an Economic Development Director to lead these efforts. The position is housed within ROOST and provides regular updates to the workgroup. This role was created specifically to operationalize the economic and housing strategies laid out in the plan and to attract new investment to the region.

**Accomplishments So Far:** The Economic Development Director has already secured over \$10.5 million in grant funding for regional initiatives and launched several projects aimed at increasing local housing supply and diversifying the regional economy. These actions mark significant progress toward implementing the community’s long-term vision and demonstrate the importance of dedicated leadership in moving from planning to action.



Lake Placid, New York



Los Angeles, California

### Centering Community in Destination Stewardship | Los Angeles, California

**The Initiative:** In January 2021, Los Angeles Tourism formally redefined its mission to become a community-centric organization, guided by the principle that “what’s good for residents is good for visitors.” The revised mission—to improve the quality of life for all Angelenos through the economic and community benefits of tourism—reflects a commitment to delivering tourism in ways that are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable.

**Implementation:** To ensure its efforts are shaped by diverse community voices, LA Tourism launched a Community Advisory Board composed of up to 30 volunteer leaders representing the city’s broad cultural, ethnic, and demographic diversity. Meeting several times each year, the Board provides feedback and insights on tourism’s impact and opportunities to uplift residents. Input from the Board has directly informed key initiatives aimed at increasing economic access and representation in the tourism sector.

**Accomplishments So Far:** Major initiatives shaped by the Community Advisory Board include EmpowerLA, which supports over 140 small, diverse-owned businesses by waiving membership dues for 24 months and offering tourism readiness training. Another result is a Paid Apprenticeship Program focused on students from local junior and community colleges, providing hands-on experience in the tourism industry and expanding access to long-term career pathways. These programs mark significant progress toward ensuring the benefits of tourism are felt broadly across Los Angeles’ communities.

“

*The key takeaway for us was really becoming more of a community-centric organization based on the premise that what’s good for residents will always be good for visitors, but that the converse doesn’t always hold true.*

— Adam Burke, CEO, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



## A Collaborative Model for Plan Implementation | Outer Banks, North Carolina

**The Initiative:** The Outer Banks Long-Range Tourism Management Plan (LRTMP) acknowledges that the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau does not have direct control over many tourism-related assets. To ensure successful implementation, the plan emphasizes a collaborative, community-driven approach. A key component of this strategy is the formation of a special committee tasked with evaluating the plan's strategic goals, recommending actions to the Dare County Tourism Board, and supporting the implementation of approved initiatives.

**Implementation:** In 2023, the Dare County Tourism Board created a 22-member LRTMP Special Committee, made up of representatives from local government, nonprofits, education, healthcare, business, and environmental groups. Chaired by a Tourism Board member, the committee meets bi-monthly to assess strategic goals, host expert speakers, and make actionable recommendations. The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau ensures consistent communication with stakeholders through roadshow presentations, email updates, and its community engagement channels.

**Accomplishments So Far:** In 2024, the Special Committee helped launch The Outer Banks Promise, a visitor pledge campaign promoting responsible tourism, which earned the 2024 NC Travel Industry Association Gold Award for Community Stakeholder Communication. Other achievements include expanded voluntourism efforts and successful collaboration with state and local partners to inform implementation priorities.



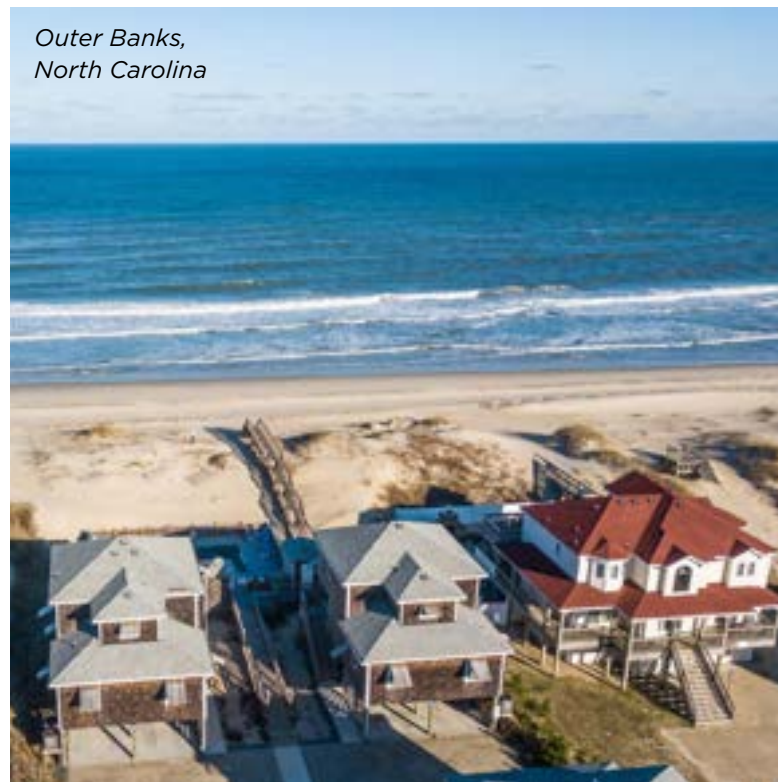
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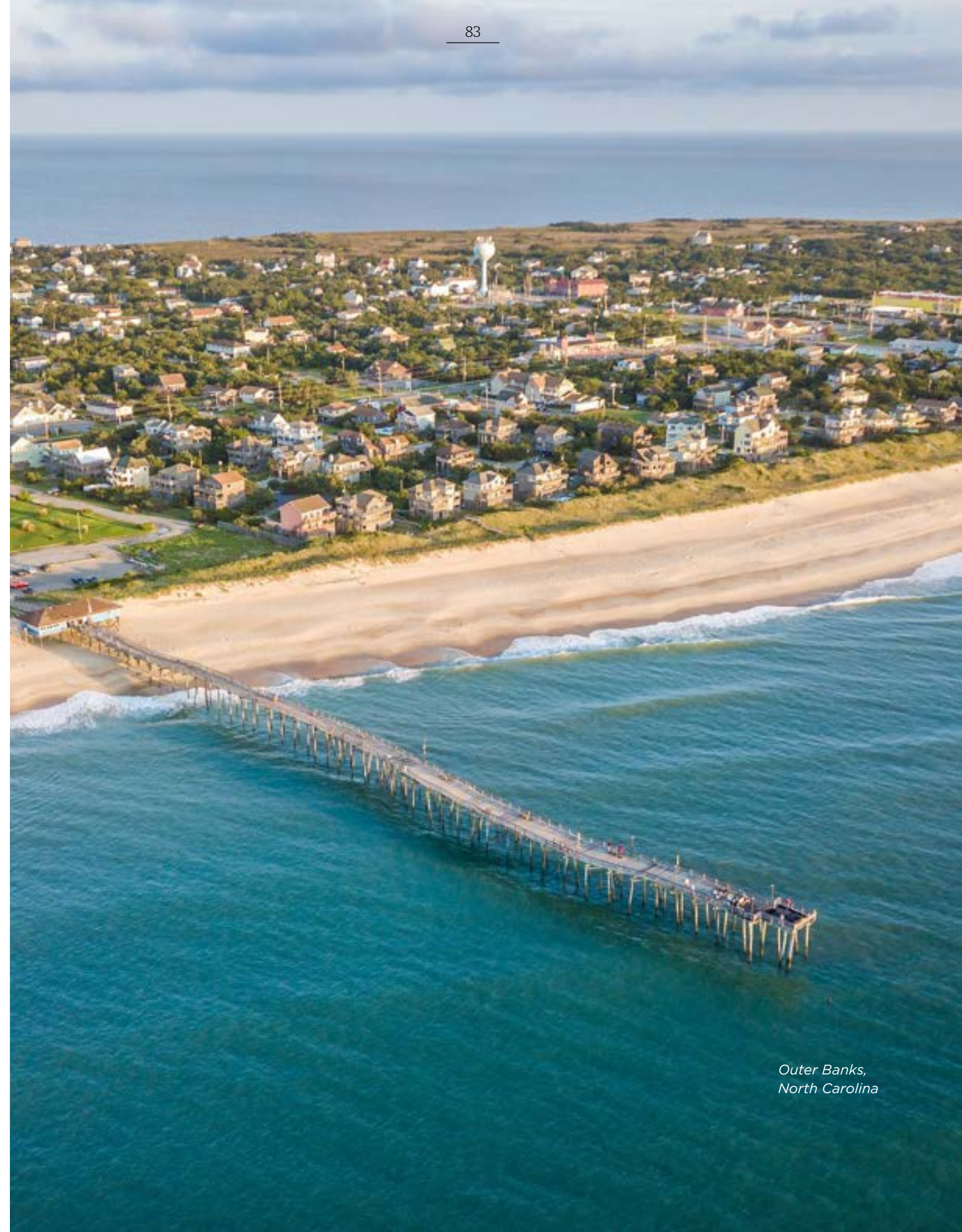
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*We're being included in community conversations that we may not have been included in the past.*

— Jeff Schwartzberg, Community Engagement Manager at Outer Banks Visitors Bureau



Outer Banks,  
North Carolina



Outer Banks,  
North Carolina



## Industry Takeaways: Destination Stewardship in Practice

*San Luis Obispo,  
California*



# 1 Strategic Intent Often Outpaces Tactical Follow-Through

Vision and goal statements across plans consistently emphasized community well-being, sustainability, and equity—but only some destinations developed detailed tactics to back them up. Just 20–35% of plans translated many of their stated priorities into comprehensive, measurable actions. This reveals a gap: destinations know where they want to go, but many still need clearer operational roadmaps. A key reason for this may be that the traditional remit of DMOs has been marketing. They have not typically led on social and community issues—yet many plans now prioritize complex, interconnected challenges like housing, workforce development, and transportation. Tackling these requires deeper cross-sector collaboration and new capacities to effectively move from vision to action. Strengthening the bridge between aspiration and implementation will be critical for delivering meaningful change.

## STRONG STRATEGIC THEMES

- **Community-centered tourism**
- **Resilience and sustainability goals**

## COMMON GAPS

- **Tactical specificity**
- **Implementation metrics**
- **Monitoring and evaluation structures**

# 2 Destination Organizations Are Evolving Through Stewardship Planning

DMOs are using these new plans to evolve into mission-driven conveners, advocates, and policy shapers. This pivot is fueled by a growing sense of agency and the need to remain relevant. Many are now coordinating multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms, aligning destination plan priorities with broader community agendas, and beginning to track impact through data.

Implementation structures—such as Destination Stewardship Councils and dedicated engagement staff—are helping shift tourism management toward cross-sectoral stewardship models that share responsibility for delivery. However, these ad hoc mechanisms have limitations, especially because participating organizations and local leaders often have full-time roles. To sustain progress, destinations must move beyond temporary fixes and explore long-term governance solutions such as local governments and DMOs formally sharing stewardship responsibilities. There’s no one-size-fits-all model—each destination will need to design a system that works in its unique context.

## WELL-COVERED STRATEGIES

- **Facilitating stakeholder networks**
- **Cross-agency coordination**
- **Embedding tourism in policy systems**

## STILL EMERGING

- **Consistent role clarity across regions**
- **Collaborative, long-term governance**
- **Hiring for implementation roles**
- **Tracking and public reporting of progress on plan implementation**

# 3 Community Well-being is Central to Stewardship Planning Tourism Planning

Tourism is being redefined—not just as a growth engine, but as a tool for strengthening local communities. Most plans now prioritize issues like housing affordability, workforce development, employment, and community resilience. There is also strong emphasis on preserving place identity and achieving a better balance between the needs of residents and visitors in the context of overuse of resources resulting from overtourism. These priorities signal a broad commitment to putting local people first.

DMOs have been intentional in the language they use to reflect their evolving roles—often choosing “destination stewardship” over “destination management” to align more closely with shared values and community aspirations. Many have deliberately avoided the word “management” due to its associations with control and authority, preferring terms that emphasize collaboration and shared responsibility.

And while some destinations have added at-large community representatives to destination stewardship councils, sustained community engagement during implementation is still the exception, not the rule. Continuing to put equity and community voices at the center will be critical for long-term relevance and accountability.

## WELL-COVERED THEMES

- **Housing affordability**
- **Workforce development**
- **Place identity & cultural preservation**
- **Community resilience**

## COMMON GAPS

- **Ongoing community engagement during implementation**
- **Visitor-resident balance**

# 4 Social and Economic Equity: Still More Talk Than Action

Many plans talk about inclusion—but only a few back it up with real strategies. Actions to support women- and minority-owned businesses are rare, and goals around gender balance or fair revenue sharing are often missing altogether. While there’s growing interest in boosting local entrepreneurship and broadening economic participation, most destinations are still at the starting line when it comes to true equity. To build a visitor economy that truly works for everyone, destinations will need to go beyond good intentions and actively invest in expanding local ownership and entrepreneurship opportunities.

## EMERGING THEMES

- **Supporting local entrepreneurship**
- **Broadening economic participation**

## COMMON GAPS

- **Concrete equity strategies**
- **Gender-balanced workforce goals**
- **Reinvestment of tourism revenue**
- **Support for underrepresented entrepreneurs**



## 5 Environmental Goals Are Common, Clear Actions Are Not

Most plans express strong environmental values but few back them up with detailed strategies. While sustainability features prominently in goals and vision statements, actions on climate adaptation, emissions reduction, and resource conservation remain underdeveloped. Despite a few standout examples, many destinations are still in the early stages of translating ambition into concrete environmental action.

### WELL-COVERED THEMES

- Sustainable mobility
- Environmental visitor education (80%, but only 17% in depth)

### COMMON GAPS

- Climate change adaptation & mitigation
- Emissions reduction
- Water conservation
- Waste management
- Ecosystem protection

## 6 Funding, Authority, and Capacity Are Core Constraints

A strong vision without resources leads to stagnation. In the focus group discussions, destinations cite limited funding, lack of dedicated staff, and unclear mandates as major roadblocks to implementation. While a few destinations are pioneering local tax measures and reinvestment tools, these remain the exception—not the rule. Without adequate investment and clear governance alignment, even the most forward-thinking plans struggle to move from strategy to action.

DMOs emphasized the need to build capacity—both within staff teams and at the Board level—to effectively lead stewardship efforts. As their remit expands from marketing to broader destination management, it's also critical to define a shared set of holistic metrics and to track and report on implementation progress. Few currently do so consistently. Transparency will be essential to maintaining trust and accountability throughout this evolution.

### EMERGING SOLUTIONS

- Dedicated staff for implementation
- Destination Investment Funds (e.g., Hocking Hills)
- Local tax measures (e.g., Vail, San Luis Obispo)

### STILL EMERGING

- Long-term, sustainable funding mechanisms
- Clearer mandates and shared governance frameworks
- Holistic success metrics and regular public progress reporting

Sedona,  
Arizona



# Conclusion





The 35 U.S. destination stewardship and management plans analyzed in this study reflect a sector in the midst of transformation. While tourism has long been seen as a tool for economic growth, these new types of plans signal a broader and more ambitious vision: one where tourism strengthens communities, protects ecosystems, and contributes to long-term resilience. Most of these new stewardship plans are still in their early stages—ranging from five to six years old—making this a pivotal moment to learn from emerging models, make timely course corrections, and accelerate collective progress.

Across the U.S., destination organizations are redefining their roles—from marketing entities to mission-driven stewards. They are coordinating cross-sector coalitions, embedding tourism priorities in local policy agendas, and experimenting with new structures of governance and accountability. These plans are not just about better management—they are about better futures. There is incremental progress, alongside early signs of transformative change: bold shifts in how destinations define success, share responsibility, and embed tourism within broader systems of community well-being and sustainability.



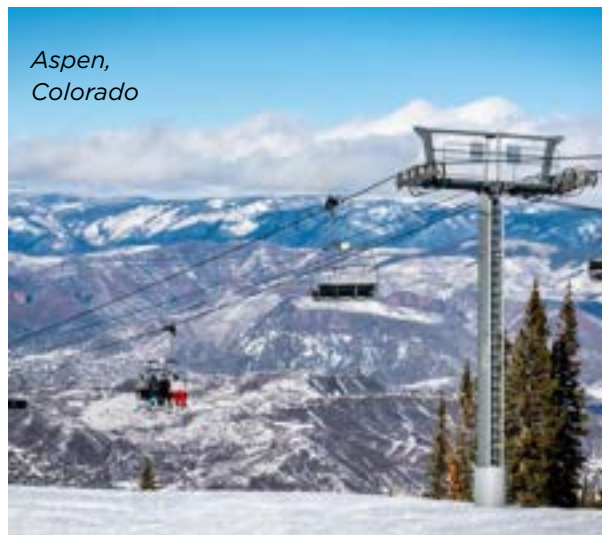
New Smyrna  
Beach, Florida



Moab,  
Utah



Sonoma County,  
California



Aspen,  
Colorado

Yet as this report reveals, gaps remain between aspiration and execution. Many destinations have articulated bold visions but lack the operational clarity, funding, and authority needed to fully deliver on them. Implementation lags behind intent. Social and economic equity is rarely addressed. Environmental goals are often unsupported by detailed actions, and long-term investment tools are lacking.

But there are many bright spots—and growing momentum. This small but growing group of destinations is pioneering new governance models, investing in community-driven solutions, and creating meaningful platforms for resident voice and inclusion. This presents a powerful opportunity for peer-to-peer learning between early adopters and those just beginning the journey. The most promising plans are those that treat stewardship not as a box to check, but as a long-term mindset to embrace.

#### Key Implications Moving Forward:

- **Destination organizations must build internal capacity**—through staffing, governance, and data—to match the complexity of the challenges they now seek to address.
- **Shared responsibility is essential.** No single entity can deliver on housing, workforce resilience, or climate adaptation alone. Sustainable tourism governance demands partnerships grounded in trust, transparency, and long-term commitment.
- **Vision must be matched by execution.** Defining holistic success metrics, committing to public reporting, and aligning funding to plan priorities will be critical to bridging the gap between ambition and action.
- **Community voices must remain central.** Inclusive engagement cannot end with the planning process. Stewardship requires continuous dialogue and co-creation with residents—especially those historically excluded from tourism's benefits.
- **Plans need to evolve with the times.** Tourism destinations are operating in a world of rapid change—shaped by climate risk, shifting traveler expectations, and deepening social inequities. Planning should be adaptive, future-facing, and resilient by design.
- **Resilience planning needs to be strengthened.** Climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and infrastructure resilience are not addressed in the majority of plans. Embedding resilience into both short- and long-term tourism strategies is essential to future-proof destinations.

*The Destination Forward study underscores one clear truth: stewardship is no longer optional. It is a necessary framework for navigating the complexities of today's visitor economies—and for building a tourism future that truly serves people, place and planet.*



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## Additional Resources

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Big Sur,  
California



Here is a list of supporting resources that provide useful additional insights and recommendations:



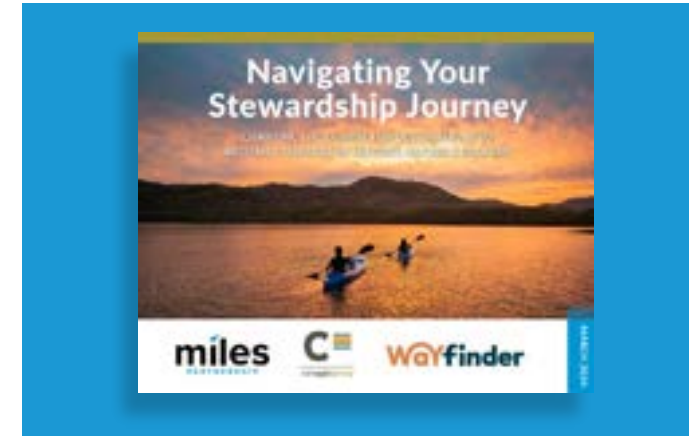
### **GSTC Destination Standards**

A globally recognized framework for assessing and improving destination sustainability across environmental, social, cultural, and management criteria. GSTC, 2025.



### **Ten Principles for Sustainable Tourism**

A strategic framework to guide destinations and businesses in building more resilient, inclusive, and climate-friendly tourism systems. World Economic Forum, 2022.



### **Navigating Your Stewardship Journey**

Charting The Course For Destinations To Become Stewards Of History, Nature & Culture. Miles Partnership, Coraggio Group, Destination Wayfinder, 2024.



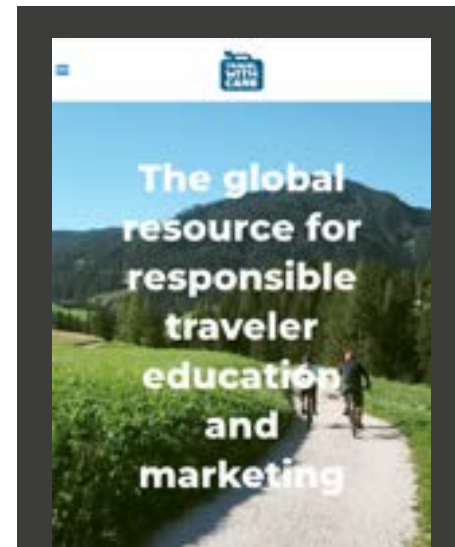
### **Time for DMOcracy**

Global best practices & case studies in community engagement. Group Nao & Miles Partnership, 2022-2023.



### **Destination Management Handbook : A Guide to the Planning and Implementation of Destination Management**

A practical guide outlining the rationale, frameworks, and tools needed to manage tourism for long-term community, environmental, and economic benefit. World Bank Group, 2023.



### **Travel with Care**

Responsible Traveler education, case studies, best practices, research & community of practice.



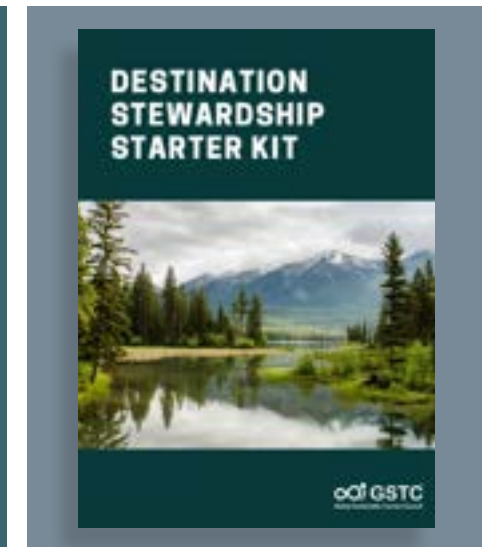
### **Guiding Principles for Sustainable Investment in Tourism**

A set of global principles promoting responsible, inclusive, and climate-smart investment in tourism. United Nations & UNWTO, 2023.



### **Funding Futures**

Research & insights on new and enhanced funding options for Destination Organizations, Miles Partnership, Civitas Advisors, Tourism Economics & Future Partners, 2025.



### **Destination Stewardship Starter Kit**

Starter kit for destination stewardship by Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).



## Focus Group Participants





# Destination Organizations

**Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA)**  
Debbie Braun  
President & CEO

**Breckenridge Tourism Office**  
Lucy Kay  
CEO & President

**City of San Luis Obispo**  
Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth  
Tourism & Community Promotions Manager

**City of Sedona**  
Andrew Grossmann  
Tourism Manager

**Community Association of Big Sur (CABS)**  
Rachel Goldberger  
CABS Program Manager  
Ryne Leuzinger  
CABS Board Chair

**Destination Door County**  
Julie Gilbert  
President & CEO

**Durango Area Tourism Office**  
Barb Bowman  
Interim Executive Director  
Weylin Ryan  
Sustainability Manager

**Hocking Hills Tourism Association**  
Karen Raymore  
Executive Director

**Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Board (JHTTB)**  
Lindsey Ehinger  
Destination Management Coordinator

**Kaua'i Visitors Bureau**  
Sue Kanoho  
Executive Director

**Ketchikan Gateway Borough**  
Frank Maloney  
Planning Director

**Lake Placid Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism**  
Dan Kelleher  
President & CEO

**Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board**  
Adam Burke  
President & CEO

**Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau**  
Sherry Duong  
Executive Director  
*\*Also representing Lana'i and Moloka'i*

**Outer Banks Visitors Bureau**  
Jeff Schwartzenberg  
Community Engagement Manager

**Park City Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**  
Jennifer Wesselhoff  
President & CEO

**San Diego Tourism Authority**  
Kerri Verbeke Kapich  
Chief Operating Officer

**San Juan County**  
Angela Broderick  
Climate and Sustainability Coordinator

**San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau**  
Amy Nesler  
Communications & Stewardship Manager

**Santa Monica Travel & Tourism**  
Misti Kerns  
President & CEO

**Sonoma County Tourism**  
Claudia Vecchio  
President & CEO

# Consultants

**Town of Taos**  
Jessie Hook  
Destination Stewardship Network Manager  
Contessa Trujillo  
Former Community Engagement Specialist for the Taos Destination Stewardship Plan

**Town of Vail**  
Mia Vlaar  
Tourism & Economic Development Director

**Visit Oceanside**  
ManLai Tam  
Operations Manager

**Visit Truckee-Tahoe**  
Colleen Dalton  
CEO

**Visit Tucson**  
Vanessa Bechtol  
Vice President of Destination Stewardship

**Western Montana's Glacier Country**  
Racene Friede  
President CEO

**Whitefish Convention and Visitor Bureau**  
Zak Anderson  
Executive Director



**Better Destinations**  
Cathy Ritter  
Founder & CEO

**Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)**  
Wesley Espinosa  
Executive Director

**Clarity of Place**  
David Holder  
Co-Founder & Principal

**Confluence Sustainability**  
Julie Klein  
Principal

**Coraggio Group**  
Sara Meaney  
Managing Partner

**Destination Think!**  
Ben Vadasz  
Co-Founder & Partner

**MMGY NextFactor Inc.**  
Jé-Vonna Sampson  
Director of Destination Planning

**Nichols Tourism Group**  
Mitch Nichols  
President

**Resonance**  
Chris Fair  
President

**THR Group**  
Lorraine Roach  
Principal Consultant





# Appendices





Appendix 1: Destination Plans Included in the Study

Below is a list of all destinations included in the study, along with a link to their plans, administrative boundaries, typology, and population.

TABLE 11-1 DESTINATIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

#	Destination & Visitor Website	Name of Plan & Completion Date	Administrative Boundaries	Typology	Population (2022)
1	<a href="#">Aspen</a> (Colorado)	<a href="#">The Aspen Challenge: Aspen Destination Management Plan</a> (ADMP) 2022-2027 (2022)	City of Aspen (Colorado)	Mountainous	6,952
2	<a href="#">Big Sur</a> (California)	<a href="#">Big Sur Destination Stewardship Plan</a> (2020)	Monterey County (California)	Coastal	1300 - 1700
3	<a href="#">Breckenridge</a> (Colorado)	<a href="#">Breckenridge Destination Management Plan</a> (2019)	Town of Breckenridge (Colorado)	Mountainous	5,017
4	<a href="#">Door County</a> (Wisconsin)	<a href="#">2034 Destination Stewardship Plan</a> (2024)	Door County (Wisconsin)	Coastal	30,038
5	<a href="#">Durango</a> (Colorado)	<a href="#">City of Durango: Destination 2034: The City of Durango's Destination Management Master Plan</a> (2024)	City of Durango (Colorado)	Mountainous	19,148
6	<a href="#">Glacier Country</a> (Montana)	<a href="#">Destination Stewardship Plan: A New Vision for Tourism to Benefit Western Montanans</a> (2022)	Flathead, Glacier, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli and Sanders Counties (Montana)	Mountainous	373,440
7	<a href="#">Moab</a> (Utah)	<a href="#">Trail to Tomorrow: A 5-year strategic plan for Sustainable Tourism, Economic Diversification, and Asset-Based Community Economic Development in Grand County, Utah</a> (2024)	Grand County (Utah)	Mountainous	9,680
8	<a href="#">Hocking Hills</a> (Ohio)	<a href="#">Destination Stewardship Plan: Striving for Balance</a> (2024)	Hocking County (Ohio)	Rural	28,104
9	<a href="#">Jackson Hole</a> (Wyoming)	<a href="#">Teton County Sustainable Destination Management Plan 2022-2027</a> (2022)	Teton County (Wyoming)	Mountainous	23,346
10	<a href="#">Kaua'i</a> (Hawai'i)	<a href="#">Kaua'i Destination Management Action Plan 2021-2023</a> (2020)	Kaua'i County (Hawai'i)	Island, Coastal	73,511
11	<a href="#">Ketchikan</a> (Alaska)	<a href="#">Ketchikan Tourism Strategy 2023</a> (2023)	Ketchikan Gateway Borough (Alaska)	Island, Coastal	13,910
12	<a href="#">Lake Placid</a> (New York)	<a href="#">Lake Placid &amp; North Elba Destination Management Plan 2030</a> (2022)	Town of North Elba (New York)	Rural	7,604
13	<a href="#">Lake Tahoe</a> (California/Nevada)	<a href="#">Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan: Taking Care of Tahoe</a> (2023)	Placer County (California), El Dorado County (California), Douglas County (Nevada), Washoe County (Nevada), Carson City (Nevada)	Mountainous	1,192,720
14	<a href="#">Lāna'i</a> (Hawai'i)	<a href="#">Maui Nui Destination Management Action Plan 2021-2023 (includes Lāna'i)</a> (2021)	The Island of Lāna'i / Maui County, (Hawai'i)	Island, Coastal	3,193
15	<a href="#">Little Rock</a> (Arkansas)	<a href="#">Little Rock Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau Tourism Master Plan</a> (2023)	City of Little Rock (Arkansas)	Urban	202,218

Sources: Population - US Census Bureau, Hawai'i Visitor & Convention Bureau

#	Destination & Visitor Website	Name of Plan & Completion Date	Administrative Boundaries	Typology	Population (2022)
16	<a href="#">Los Angeles</a> (California)	<a href="#">Tourism Master Plan: City of Los Angeles</a> (2020)	City of Los Angeles, (California)	Urban, Coastal	3,880,000
17	<a href="#">Maui</a> (Hawai'i)	<a href="#">Maui Nui Destination Management Action Plan 2021-2023 (includes Maui)</a> (2021)	The Island of Maui / Maui County (Hawai'i)	Island, Coastal	117,644
18	<a href="#">Molokai</a> (Hawai'i)	<a href="#">Maui Nui Destination Management Action Plan 2021 -2023 (includes Moloka'i)</a> (2021)	The Island of Molokai / Maui County (Hawai'i)	Island, Coastal	7,404
19	<a href="#">New Smyrna Beach</a> (Florida)	<a href="#">New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau Destination Master Plan</a> (2023)	Town of New Smyrna Beach (Florida)	Coastal	30,449
20	<a href="#">Oceanside</a> (California)	<a href="#">Oceanside, California Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2024-2034</a> (2024)	City of Oceanside (California)	Urban, Coastal	172,190
21	<a href="#">Olympia</a> (Washington)	<a href="#">Ten Year Destination Master Plan for Thurston County, WA A Community-Driven Sustainable Tourism Plan</a> (2024)	Thurston County (Washington)	Urban	294,272
22	<a href="#">Outer Banks</a> (North Carolina)	<a href="#">The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau: Long-Range Tourism Management Plan 2023 - 2033</a> (2023)	Dare County (North Carolina)	Coastal	37,160
23	<a href="#">Park City</a> (Utah)	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism Plan: Park City &amp; Summit County, Utah</a> (2022)	Summit County (Utah)	Mountainous	42,524
24	<a href="#">Rapid City</a> (South Dakota)	<a href="#">Destination Stewardship Plan: Ensuring Tourism Continues to Contribute to Rapid City's Vitality</a> (2023)	City of Rapid City (South Dakota)	Urban	75,632
25	<a href="#">San Diego County</a> (California)	<a href="#">San Diego Tourism Stewardship Plan</a> (2024) <i>*Draft Plan was analyzed.</i>	San Diego County (California)	Coastal, Urban	3,290,000
26	<a href="#">San Juan Islands</a> (Washington)	<a href="#">San Juan Islands Destination Management Plan (SDMP) (Draft)</a> (2023) <i>*A decision was made to pause plan development based on stakeholder feedback.</i>	San Juan County (Washington)	Island, Coastal	18,001
27	<a href="#">San Luis Obispo</a> (California)	<a href="#">Experience SLO CAL 2050: Destination Management Strategy</a> (2019)	San Luis Obispo County (California)	Coastal	281,712
28	<a href="#">Santa Monica</a> (California)	<a href="#">Santa Monica Experience Management Plan: A Framework for the Future, 2022-2032</a> (2022)	City of Santa Monica (California)	Urban, Coastal	89,951
29	<a href="#">Sedona</a> (Arizona)	<a href="#">Sedona Sustainable Tourism Plan: Connecting Sedona Visitors to Long-Term Destination Sustainability</a> (2019)	City of Sedona (Arizona)	Mountainous	9,739
30	<a href="#">Sonoma County</a> (California)	<a href="#">Sonoma County Tourism: Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan May 2023</a> (2023)	Sonoma County (California)	Coastal	488,436
31	<a href="#">Taos</a> (New Mexico)	<a href="#">Taos Destination Stewardship Plan</a> (2024)	Taos County (New Mexico)	Mountainous	34,475
32	<a href="#">Truckee</a> (California)	<a href="#">Visit Truckee Tahoe: Two-Year Strategic Plan FY 23/24 + FY 24/25</a> (2023)	Town of Truckee (California)	Mountainous	16,784
33	<a href="#">Tucson</a> (Arizona)	<a href="#">Metro Tucson 10-Year Tourism Master Plan</a> (2019)	Pima County (Arizona)	Urban	1,057,597
34	<a href="#">Vail</a> (Colorado)	<a href="#">Vail's Stewardship Roadmap: A Community Positive Ten-Year Visions for a Thriving Visitor Economy</a> (2023)	Town of Vail (Colorado)	Mountainous	4,833
35	<a href="#">Whitefish</a> (Montana)	<a href="#">Whitefish Montana: Sustainable Tourism Management Plan</a> (2020)	Town of Whitefish (Montana)	Rural	8,098



## Appendix 2: Assessment of Plan Vision Statements

This appendix reveals that many of these statements referenced core themes such as community, visitors, sustainability, and collaboration, even if only briefly.

TABLE 11-2: ALIGNMENT OF VISION STATEMENTS WITH SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Themes <sup>22</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Community Inclusion	12%	42%	45%	0%
Visitor Inclusion	21%	33%	36%	9%
Sustainability in General	21%	52%	18%	9%
Collaborative Approach	36%	30%	30%	3%
Alignment Across Sectors	33%	48%	9%	9%
Business Sector Inclusion	39%	36%	21%	3%
Environmental Sustainability	39%	42%	12%	6%
Economic Sustainability	36%	45%	15%	3%
Social and Cultural Sustainability	30%	55%	15%	0%

## Appendix 3: Detailed Assessment of Plan Goals

This appendix presents the detailed assessment of how plan goals align with social and cultural, environmental, economic and tourism management and resilience themes.

### Social and Cultural Themes

TABLE 11-3: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN GOALS WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>23</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Community involvement and empowerment	6%	20%	23%	51%
Resident quality of life improvements	6%	26%	31%	37%
Affordable housing	23%	9%	29%	40%
Cultural resource management	17%	29%	34%	20%
Traffic congestion	20%	29%	26%	26%
Maintaining character/sense of place	20%	40%	20%	20%
Poverty alleviation/mitigation	83%	11%	3%	3%

### Economic Sustainability Themes

TABLE 11-4: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN GOALS WITH ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>24</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Workforce availability and retention	31%	11%	26%	31%
Prosperity for all and economic development	17%	34%	26%	23%
Promoting local entrepreneurship	34%	20%	37%	9%
Digital transition	43%	20%	20%	17%
Addressing economic leakage	91%	9%	0%	0%

### Environmental Sustainability Themes

TABLE 11-5: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN GOALS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>25</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Sustainable use of natural resources	11%	34%	37%	17%
Ecosystem functioning and resilience	34%	40%	11%	14%
Water resources conservation	46%	26%	20%	9%
Waste reduction	46%	26%	23%	6%
Biodiversity conservation	51%	40%	0%	9%
Greenhouse gas reduction	60%	26%	6%	9%

### Tourism Management and Resilience Themes

TABLE 11-6: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN GOALS WITH TOURISM AND RESILIENCE MANAGEMENT THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>26</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Sustainable mobility and transportation	11%	29%	31%	29%
Educating visitors on sustainable travel	14%	34%	29%	23%
Shifting marketing focus from visitor quantity to quality	37%	31%	14%	17%
Reducing overcrowding	43%	31%	14%	11%
Disaster risk planning and management	66%	23%	3%	9%
Land-use zoning	69%	14%	11%	6%
Greenhouse gas reduction	60%	26%	6%	9%
Climate adaptation	60%	14%	14%	11%
Energy transition	54%	29%	14%	3%



## Appendix 4: Detailed Analysis of Plan Actions

This appendix presents the detailed assessment of how plan actions and tactics align with social and cultural, environmental, economic and tourism management and resilience themes.

### Economic Sustainability Themes

TABLE 11-7: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN ACTIONS WITH ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>27</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Employment in tourism	29%	31%	20%	20%
Resident entrepreneurship	37%	31%	20%	11%
Fair distribution of economic benefits from tourism	46%	23%	17%	14%
Government tourism-related investments	54%	17%	11%	17%
Sustainably certified tourism enterprises	49%	26%	17%	9%
Application of digital technologies for sustainability	49%	26%	23%	3%
Resident-owned tourism establishments	54%	31%	11%	3%
Distribution of tourism-related taxes	89%	0%	9%	3%
Decent work conditions	89%	3%	9%	0%

### Social and Cultural Sustainability Themes

TABLE 11-8: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN ACTIONS WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>28</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Housing accessibility and affordability	23%	11%	31%	34%
Addressing congestion and overcrowding (public lands, towns/destinations)	23%	20%	26%	31%
Workforce development and talent promotion	29%	17%	29%	26%
Community resilience initiatives	34%	17%	34%	14%
Place identity preservation (character/sense of place)	29%	29%	20%	23%
Accessible and inclusive access to attractions	43%	6%	37%	14%
Educating visitors on social impacts	23%	40%	29%	9%
Educating visitors on cultural impacts	31%	29%	31%	9%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

### Social and Cultural Sustainability Themes cont.

TABLE 11-8: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN ACTIONS WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Quality education	43%	14%	29%	14%
Community health and well-being initiatives	49%	14%	31%	6%
Educating residents on social impacts	40%	31%	26%	3%
Addressing workforce shortages	57%	17%	6%	20%
Educating residents on cultural impacts	51%	31%	14%	3%
Reduction of inequalities	77%	6%	9%	9%
Support for women and minority entrepreneurship	80%	11%	9%	0%
Promotion of gender equality	83%	14%	0%	3%
Balanced gender workforce initiatives	86%	11%	3%	0%
Women's work-life balance initiatives	97%	3%	0%	0%

### Environmental Sustainability Themes

TABLE 11-9: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN ACTIONS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>29</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Sustainable mobility and transportation	20%	20%	31%	29%
Educating visitors on environmental impacts	20%	40%	23%	17%
Protection of ecosystems	31%	37%	23%	9%
Solid waste management	40%	26%	23%	11%
Sustainability reporting practices	46%	31%	14%	9%
Global carbon emissions reduction	57%	14%	14%	14%
Educating businesses on environmental impacts	49%	31%	17%	3%
Educating residents on environmental impacts	51%	26%	23%	0%
Water resource conservation	63%	17%	17%	3%
Tourism-related land use regulations	71%	14%	9%	6%
Water flow management	74%	17%	6%	3%
Wastewater management	69%	29%	3%	0%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.



Tourism and Resilience Management Themes

TABLE 11-10: ALIGNMENT OF PLAN ACTIONS WITH TOURISM AND RESILIENCE MANAGEMENT THEMES

Scored Theme <sup>30</sup>	Not Mentioned	Implicit Reference	General Mention	Detailed Discussion
Promotion of alternative visitor experiences	14%	20%	29%	37%
Promotion of sustainable tourism practices	17%	37%	17%	29%
Marketing focused on education and sustainability	26%	29%	20%	26%
Indicators to monitor the economic impacts of tourism	29%	34%	11%	26%
Strategies to reduce tourism concentration	37%	26%	14%	23%
Indicators to monitor the social impacts of tourism	37%	23%	26%	14%
Community participation in decision-making/management roles	34%	31%	14%	20%
Indicators to monitor the environmental impacts of tourism	34%	31%	17%	17%
Initiatives to increase length of stay	54%	9%	29%	9%
Community consultation on management alternatives	51%	29%	3%	17%
Disaster risk planning and management	71%	6%	17%	6%
Mitigation of visitor dependency	86%	6%	9%	0%
Climate change mitigation efforts	66%	17%	9%	9%
Climate change adaptation strategies	63%	23%	9%	6%
Promotion of renewable energy	66%	20%	9%	6%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.







*Big Sur, California*