

Plan for the Interpretation of Contemporary Breckenridge History



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Executive Summary

This section will summarize the plan in 2-3 paragraphs. It will be the final section to be completed.

Introduction

This document is the work product of Exhibit Design Associates (EDA), a Colorado corporation, working on behalf of the Breckenridge Heritage Alliance (BHA). It articulates statements of significance and interpretive themes to guide the development of interpretive opportunities focused on modern Breckenridge history (from the end of World War II to the present). The plan also offers recommendations for the development of specific exhibits and programming (the “media prescription”), actions to support implementation (the “tactical prescription”) and cost estimates for media development.

Purpose & Need

The purpose of this plan is to articulate a specific vision for the interpretation of the modern history of Breckenridge. The management, staff and volunteers of BHA, as well as town officials and others, have acknowledged a gap in their efforts to help both residents and visitors understand the evolution of the community. There are multiple opportunities for interested parties to learn about the mining era, and the importance of railroads to early development. But there are relatively few opportunities to learn about the dramatic changes that occurred in the modern period, as Breckenridge grew from sleepy mountain village to world-class resort.

Goals of the Plan

The goals of this plan are to:

- Provide a written history of the period, including a bibliography, as well as an inventory of existing and potential resources (artifacts, documents, photos, etc.) that will support the efforts of future designers of exhibits and programming.
- Articulate the significance of the contemporary historical period, and develop interpretive themes to guide the development of media and programming.
- Envision interpretive media and provide cost estimates for implementation.
- Develop strategies and tactics that will support the achievement of the objectives listed below.

Objectives

The objectives of the interpretive media and programming described in this plan are to:

- Increase appreciation and understanding of the modern history of Breckenridge.
- Develop a sense of place that fosters a greater awareness of local cultural heritage.
- Explore the issues and opinions regarding striking a balance between economic development and preservation of open space and wildlife habitat.
- Stimulate curiosity and a desire to discover more about the community of Breckenridge, its people and its history.
- Celebrate the colorful characters who have made the community unique.
- Create a strong personal connection between visitors and the special qualities of the town and ski area.

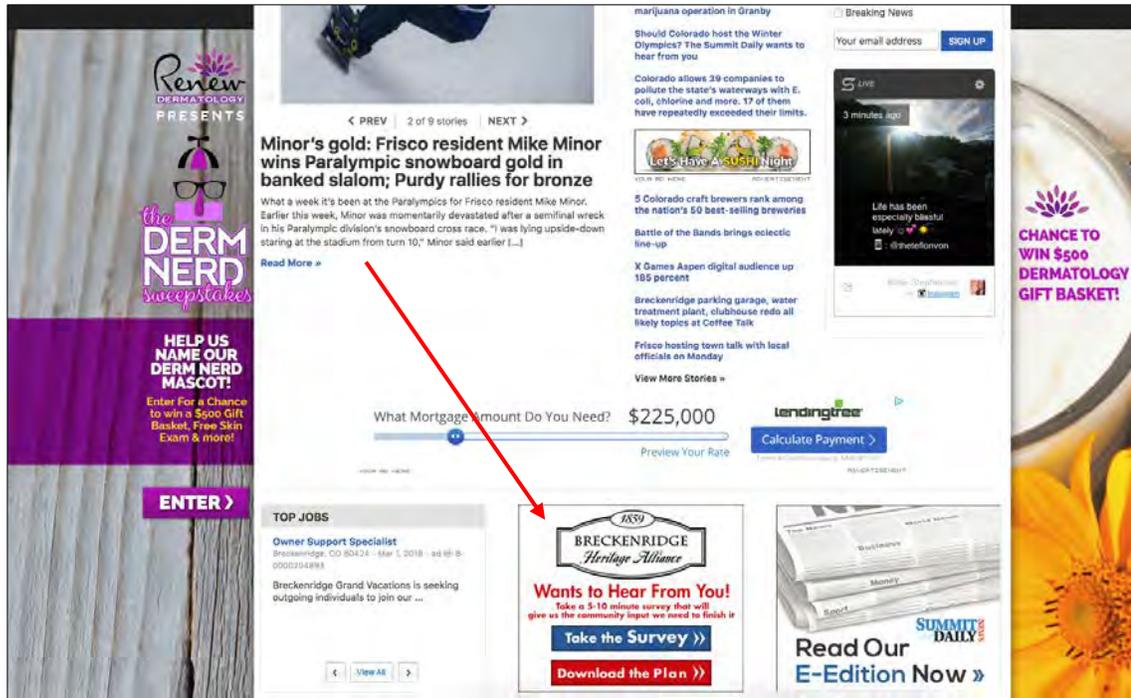
Methodology

The planning process began with a workshop held on December 1, 2017. The half-day event was attended by about two dozen persons. The discussions were far-ranging, focused primarily on the lives and times of those who either moved to Breckenridge during the early period of ski area development or grew up in the town post World War II.

Following the workshop, the planning team completed research in the BHA archives, the Denver Public Library Western History Collection and the Government/Reference section, as well as online. A history of the community was written – it can be found in the Project Background chapter that immediately follows this section. A bibliography can be found in Appendix A.

The project team wrote statements of significance and interpretive themes based on the output of the workshop. That work was submitted, reviewed and edited. A survey intended to gather public input on the relative importance of the

statements of significance was developed. The survey can be found in Appendix B. A link to the survey was posted on the BHA website, along with a link to the draft plan. Links were also posted in an ad that ran in the digital version of the Summit Daily News from March 10 to March 28, 2018. As of the date of this draft, nearly 40 responses had been received, so it appears that the survey will yield some useful information. A screenshot of the digital edition of the paper appears below.



The project team met with volunteers and paid staff of BHA in an informal setting on February 20, 2018. The group included many of the docents who regularly lead tours. The discussion included tours, interpretive signage, oral histories, artifact storage and various ideas for the enhancement/improvement of existing exhibits and programming. The ideas expressed in that meeting were integrated into the media and tactical prescriptions.

Project Background

This section offers a history of Breckenridge from the 1950s to the present. The history was developed from a variety of sources, including personal accounts, newspaper articles, online resources and academic studies. The narrative for the years 1950-1979 is largely complete. The 1980s and 90s are presented in outline form – research is ongoing, and a completed narrative, as well as a timeline, will be presented in the next draft of this document. Readers are asked to review the bibliography in Appendix A, and suggest any additional sources that might improve/enhance the historical narrative.

1950s

When retired Summit County newspaper editor John Leuthold told the Denver Post in 1958 that “Breckenridge is just a ghost town now,” he wasn’t entirely wrong. The gold mines of Leuthold’s era were mostly dormant, the dredges were shut down, and the railroads hadn’t been running for years. The 1950 Census counted just 296 souls living in Breckenridge, its lowest population ever.

But if the town’s pioneer past was largely dead by 1950, its future was beginning to take shape. Across Colorado, the air was thick with talk of a new industry: tourism. “What we must do,” the Rocky Mountain News editorialized as early as 1946, “is to develop the resources that are *unique* – our climate, our scenery, our place as the nation’s playground.” This movement gathered steam throughout the 1950s, fueled by developments all over the state:

- In 1951 Governor Daniel Thornton hosted the first Governor’s Hospitality and Travel Conference, an annual gathering of tourism boosters and officials from federal, state and civic organizations.
- Club 20, a Western Slope business organization, formed in 1954 and began a vigorous campaign to improve highways in rural Colorado, especially in the mountains.
- From 1953 through the rest of the decade, President Dwight Eisenhower took annual fishing and golf vacations in Colorado (his wife Mamie’s home state), drawing gobs of free publicity and favorable attention to the state’s outdoor amenities.
- The US Forest Service initiated “Operation Outdoors,” a long-range development project to add campgrounds, picnic facilities, hiking trails and other recreational infrastructure in popular national forests (including, significantly, Colorado’s White River and Arapaho National Forests).
- Aspen emerged as a year-round resort destination for the jet-set, establishing a model for other declining mining communities (such as Breckenridge) to emulate.
- Aspen, Arapahoe Basin, Winter Park and smaller Front Range ski areas catering mainly to locals established the foundation for a modernized ski industry with overhead lifts, well-defined runs, groomed snow and professional instruction.

All these threads were buttressed by a statewide campaign to change Coloradans’ perception of themselves. Launched in 1956 by the Colorado Advertising and Publicity Committee, the campaign encouraged local communities to shed their attachment to mining, ranching and logging and embrace a new identity as tourism hosts. “Most of us folks living in Colorado don’t fully realize what we have to offer vacationers,” proclaimed one brochure, “nor do very many of us appreciate the tremendous importance, in dollars, of our tourist business.” The committee offered Coloradans the following six-point formula for tourism promotion:

1. Scenery
2. Climate
3. The Old West

4. Sports
5. Events and Festivities
6. Highways.

The list might as well have been written specifically for Breckenridge, which already excelled in four of the six categories (all but the last two). The town's exceptional scenery and sunny climate were givens, and its Old West bona fides literally dotted the landscape in the form of picturesque mine ruins, abandoned cabins, defunct wagon roads and dredge boats, along with a smattering of working mines and ranch operations that served as living throwbacks to the 19th century. Sportsmen could enjoy fishing, hunting and camping throughout Summit County, and skiing was already gaining adherents at embryonic ski hills near Breckenridge (at Hoosier Pass, Ballpark Hill and near the top of Peak 10 via an old mining road), as well as more-developed operations at Climax and Arapahoe Basin.

The town did have one well-known event on its calendar circa 1956 – the annual No-Man's Land Festival, marking Breckenridge's inadvertent omission from survey lines demarking U.S. territory. But the community's most consequential deficit was in Item #6: highways. As of 1950, the fastest way to town from the Front Range paralleled the old railroad routes – through South Park (via U.S. 285 from Denver, U.S. 24 from Colorado Springs or Pueblo) to Fairplay, then over Hoosier Pass on State Highway 9, which was unpaved in those days. It took about four hours from Denver, longer from the state's other main population centers. The other major route, U.S. 6 over Loveland Pass, was more direct than U.S. 285, but the terrain was more rugged, resulting in travel that could be painfully slow in bad weather. Most motorists chose the comparatively easy drive over Kenosha and Hoosier passes.

The highway issue wouldn't be solved for nearly two decades, when I-70 and the Eisenhower Tunnel reduced Denver-Breckenridge driving time to less than two hours. But the placement of the interstate and the tunnel were hotly contested issues throughout the 1950s. Those amenities didn't just fall into Breckenridge's lap – the town had to fight like crazy for them.

"Big Ed" Johnson, who commenced his third term as Colorado governor in 1955, was a powerful ex-U.S. Senator and an Eisenhower fishing buddy. He wanted to route the future interstate over Berthoud Pass and along the U.S. 40 corridor, an idea that made a lot of sense. Already one of the nation's most popular coast-to-coast highways, U.S. 40 was familiar to motorists, and it had a powerful lobbying advocate (the Highway 40 Association) in Colorado. The road connected Denver directly to Salt Lake City, and it passed through (or near) many of Colorado's best-established vacation destinations: Rocky Mountain National Park, White River National Forest, and the ski resorts at Berthoud Pass, Winter Park and Steamboat Springs. It also happened to traverse northwestern Colorado, where Big Ed Johnson grew up and still had close political ties.

The competing route, along the U.S. 6 corridor through Summit County, crossed more difficult terrain and offered a less promising itinerary of destinations – most glaringly, it veered far south of Salt Lake City. But it had three big things going for it:

1. Aspen's powers-that-be (including the well-connected 10th Mountain Division veterans) greatly preferred it over the U.S. 40 option.
2. The Denver Water Board backed it, since it would link the Front Range to the fishing/boating/camping opportunities the Board was about to start building at Dillon Reservoir.
3. It was supported by a loose coalition of old Colorado families, most of whom owned land and natural resources in the Central Rockies.

Part-time Breckenridge residents Robert and Lois Theobald were key figures in the latter federation. Both were lawyers who specialized in mining and water rights, and they had forged business alliances throughout the state. Moreover, Robert (a former state senator) had plenty of connections in the state capitol. The Theobalds helped crystallize opposition to the U.S. 40 lobby and neutralize its power, both in the pages of the *Summit County Journal* (which they owned) and behind the scenes through their legislative and business connections.

Stephen McNichols succeeded Big Ed Johnson as governor in 1957, and he hired a New York highway engineer named Lionel Pavlo to study both corridors and settle the question. Pavlo was keen on the idea of a tunnel to carry the interstate under the Continental Divide, eliminating the need to overtop the Rockies. Engineers had been dabbling with the idea of a tunnel since 1941, when state highway chief Charley Vail drove a test bore near Loveland Pass. Vail's successor, Mark Watrous, went so far as to solicit construction bids for that project in 1947, but the price tag was prohibitively high and the legislature wouldn't commit the funding.

By 1959, when Pavlo commenced his study, Robert Theobald had been appointed state director of revenue. From that position, he could offer credible assurances that Colorado would come up with the funds to build a tunnel should a feasible proposal emerge. With a tunnel at Loveland Pass, U.S. 6 would offer a less arduous, more direct passage over the Continental Divide than the U.S. 40 corridor over Berthoud Pass. In addition, Pavlo almost certainly knew by then that an interstate along U.S. 6 would activate big plans (already backed by big money) for ski areas at Vail, Breckenridge and elsewhere in Summit County. And, of course, the route would help the Water Board realize its dreams of a summer resort at Lake Dillon.

Against this backdrop, in 1958, Breckenridge mayor Frank Brown wrote a gentle, humorous rebuttal to John Leuthold's dismissal of Breckenridge as a ghost town. "If that is true," he wrote, "there are a lot of spooks floating around up here.... Every habitable house in town has phantoms haunting it, and there isn't a day that some apparition or other doesn't come to town, steering a 1958 model, looking for a place to settle down." Breckenridge had recently added TV service, the mayor noted, and passed bond issues to expand its water supply and build a new school. Local boosters were busy preparing a big bash to celebrate the community's 100th anniversary in 1959. The event would coincide with the centennial of the Pike's Peak gold rush (which the State of Colorado was promoting nationwide with a marketing campaign branded "The Rush to the Rockies"). A recent University of Colorado survey had pegged Summit County as the state's 7th-fastest-growing county, estimating 500 more full-time residents (a 45 percent increase) than in 1950. The 1960 Census would later confirm this analysis, while showing a 33 percent population increase within Breckenridge's city limits –97 new residents, bringing the total to 393.

"Things are booming," the *Summit County Journal* noted in early 1960. "We are hearing rumors fast and furious. Watch and see what will happen in Breckenridge."

1959-1962

At about the same time Lionel Pavlo began to investigate interstate highway corridors, managers for Colorado's various national forests were wrapping up a long-range master plan for ski-area buildout in Western Colorado. Meant to protect public lands from a free-for-all by investors rushing to cash in on the recreation boom, their plan called for the gradual, orderly addition of 21 new ski areas on USFS acreage, with target dates for future construction stretching into the 1980s. Completed in 1959 – about a year before Pavlo finished his interstate highway report –the master plan identified half a dozen ski-area sites in the U.S. 6 corridor (including Breckenridge, Vail, Keystone, Copper Mountain and Beaver Creek) and none along U.S. 40.

While the USFS was developing its plan, Wichita lumber merchant Ralph Rounds and his two sons started scooping up "worthless" mining parcels on Peaks 8, 9 and 10 outside Breckenridge. One of the sons, Bill Rounds, was acquainted with a geologist named Bill Stark, who had spent a lot of time hiking and prospecting in the Ten Mile Range. Stark convinced Rounds that Breckenridge would make an ideal hub for summertime recreation – especially with Dillon Reservoir due to open in the mid-1960s. Rounds had recently taken up skiing and had become friendly with resort developers in Aspen. They convinced him of skiing's growth potential. So the vision of a natural summertime playground expanded into something grander: a four-season resort with skiing at its heart.

Another key connection may have encouraged the Rounds family to start buying land in and near Breckenridge. The family had been doing business with the U.S. Forest Service since the early 1900s, and had logging operations in several Western states. Perhaps whispers about the Forest Service's intentions for ski-area development in Colorado reached the Rounds family and spurred their investments in Summit County? Or maybe Bill Rounds got a well-informed tip from one of his ski industry connections in Aspen? Could be both. Could be neither. Whatever the case, we can assume the family made its land purchases advisedly.

Pavlo issued his interstate corridor study in mid-April 1960. It recommended a highway that crossed the Rockies along the U.S. 6 corridor, passing under the Continental Divide through a tunnel at Straight Creek. The Colorado Highway Commission approved the plan on the day it was released, locking in the state funds that ensured the tunnel would be built. With this last piece in place, the gears of development began cranking in 1960:

- In the summer, the Rounds family submitted a preliminary proposal to the Forest Service for a Peak 8 ski area.
- They also started building a lumberyard on Highway 9 north of town (Antrim Lumber Co.) to meet the expected demand for home and lodging construction.
- The Theobalds acquired 1,100 acres just south of town in September and platted four subdivisions, known collectively as Blue River Estates.
- Summit County hired a consulting firm to begin work on a master plan to guide countywide development.
- The state highway department announced its intent to pave Highway 9 from Hoosier Pass to Kremmling.
- In October the Rounds family – now doing business as Summit County Development Corporation (SCDC) – started construction on five duplexes and a bowling alley (the latter a pet project of Breckenridge mayor Frank Brown).
- In mid-December the Town of Breckenridge unveiled plans for a new post office in downtown Breckenridge.
- In the first few months of the following year (1961), plans for a new laundromat, ski lodge and two new subdivisions were announced.

This flurry of activity came in anticipation of the two main events: the construction of Dillon Dam and Reservoir (which commenced in April 1961) and the opening of Peak 8.

From March 1 through 3, forest rangers Paul Hauk, Dale Gallagher and Dick Stillman conducted an initial survey of Peak 8 to assess avalanche risks, wind patterns, soil stability, drainage conditions and other pertinent factors. While they were criss-crossing the mountain, the March issue of *Skiing News Magazine* (forerunner of *Skiing*) hit the newsstands with an article headlined: "FAMILY SKI AREA PLANNED FOR PEAK 8." This was the first detailed public description of the new resort, and it characterized Peak 8 as being "expressly designed for the needs of family skiers," with "gentle slopes" suitable for novices. The article added that "plans for the resort include eventual installation of a gondola tramway to an alpine bowl on Peak 7, an exclusive ski residence development, and several ski lodges and motels."

Paul Hauk and his USFS team filed a favorable report on their three-day site survey, clearing the way for the SCDC to file its formal permit application on March 27. This was cutting it awfully close, as the USFS master plan called for Peak 8 to open in time for the 1961-62 season. But the Vail Corporation – whose permit had already been approved in January 1961 – cried foul, arguing that it shouldn't be leapfrogged by the Peak 8 opening. Breckenridge mayor Frank Brown called the matter to the attention of Colorado congressman Wayne Aspinall, chairman of the mighty House Interior Committee, which held purse-string power over the Forest Service and its parent agency, the Department of Agriculture. Aspinall, it so happened, had served in the state senate alongside Robert Theobald in the late 1940s, and his list of political patrons overlapped considerably with Robert and Lois's client portfolio. This might have increased (and surely didn't diminish) the Congressman's devotion to resolving the issue. Whatever the case, Aspinall evidently twisted some arms. Chief Forester Robert McArdle and Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman got dragged into the dispute, and the Forest Service gave SCDC's application an expedited review. The Peak 8 permit was approved in late June.

The formal paperwork wouldn't be completed for another month, but the SCDC – having no time to lose – started cutting trees for the first ski lift immediately. By mid-October there were 20 towers in place, the Berghof was rising up from its foundation, and the roads from town to the base area were graded and passable. A month later the lift cables had been strung, the first six runs had been cut and the resort had taken shipment of two snowcats. By December 1 the chairlift was operational, and crews were hustling to install a second lift (a T-bar) before opening day.

On December 9, Denver's KOA-TV (now KCNC) aired a 30-minute special touting the ski resort's imminent debut. And a week later, on December 17, 1967 – about 165 days after construction began, and a mere eight months after Paul Hauk and company surveyed the unimproved slopes of Peak 8 – the new ski mountain welcomed about 2,200 skiers for its Grand Opening weekend. After years of speculation and anticipation, Breckenridge ski area was a reality.

The sprint to opening day left everyone breathless, yet the pace didn't waver after the lifts started running. The stampede of progress continued all over Breckenridge and throughout the Blue River Valley – ski lodges, more subdivisions, a movie theatre, an airstrip, a barbershop, a new grocery store, bars, restaurants, gas stations and more.

The sheer scope of change was exhilarating for some, unsettling for others. Mrs. Walter Byron expressed these mixed feelings in a 1961 guest editorial for the *Summit County Journal*:

“Some are interested in this development from the viewpoint of exploiting the possibilities of any type of growth for personal gain. Others, although they also hope for profit personally, are working toward a future for the county which will benefit all residents.

Others cannot help wishing nostalgically that everything could go back to the Summit-County-minds-its-own-business way of living that prevailed only a few years ago. They wish they had never heard of the Denver Water Board and its Dillon Reservoir – and they would just as soon all the tourists stay home.

Sympathetic as we all must be, we still realize that no matter how we look at the past, it will not come back again.”

1960s

Peak 8 logged 17,000 skier-days in its debut season, a paltry total by today's standards but an unqualified success for Breckenridge (and all of Summit County) under the circumstances. That figure climbed to 100,000 by the middle of the decade and approached 200,000 by 1970. Taken as a whole, the decade brought roughly 1 million skiers to town.

The rapid growth in annual skier visits was spurred by many factors, first and foremost the growth of facilities on the mountain. In its second year of operation, Peak 8 doubled its capacity to four lifts (two double-chairs, two T-bars) and 13 runs. Additional terrain and lift service was added each season, along with new places to eat, shop and rent equipment. The eventful year of 1966 brought a change in management (to Denver businessman Harry Baum) and a gas leak that blew a brand-new building off its foundations. Neither one interrupted the ski resort's growth trajectory. With Peak 8 rapidly approaching capacity, in August 1967 the Forest Service conducted an initial survey of Peak 9 with an eye toward future expansion. The permit was granted in 1969.

This growth came about despite the opening of Vail Resort in 1962. Rather than drawing traffic away from Breckenridge, the rival ski area seemed to increase it by helping to enlarge the overall market for winter recreation, which was still relatively new in America. Various factors drove its ascent, including jet airplanes that could whisk tourists from the East Coast (where most of the population still lived) to western ski areas, better and more fashionable winter apparel, better skis, faster lifts and professional instruction. America's hosting of the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, California –

the first Olympics ever broadcast on television – almost certainly helped to drive participation in these sports. As did the silver-medal downhill performance by American skiing legend Billy Kidd at the next Winter Olympiad.

But skier visits only tell part of the story of Breckenridge's growth. Many thousands of non-skiing tourists also came to town, including large numbers of Front Range visitors who were lured by the shiny new lodges and entertainment venues that were making headlines in Front Range newspapers. Marquee properties included Quandary Lodge (opened in 1961), Breckenridge Inn (1961) and Ski-Ball, a \$3 million "dream resort" north of town near Tiger Road (1963). Nor did the ski-visit statistics account for the increased summer-recreation traffic generated by Dillon Lake, which backed up behind the dam between 1963 and 1965. A good chunk of traffic to the lake passed through Breckenridge both coming and going. The southern route into town (over Hoosier Pass) remained the preferred route for many travelers, as opposed to the slow and sometimes treacherous drive over Loveland Pass on U.S. 6.

Nor did skier numbers capture the full effect of part-time Breckenridge residents – people who bought second homes or condominiums as weekend/seasonal retreats from their primary residences in Denver, Colorado Springs and elsewhere. A big chunk of the homebuyers in Breckenridge's new subdivisions fell into this category – several thousand people by 1969, according to one estimate. Many of these part-timers were regular skiers, so they did show up in the Peak 8 visitor stats – but they also spent uncounted days in the area hiking, fishing, hunting, boating and otherwise enjoying mountain recreational opportunities.

"There's a boom on in Breckenridge," the *Denver Post* noted in a 1964 travel-section article. "Young people with their eyes on the future are moving there. They are setting up businesses, becoming a part of mountain home developments.... When you talk to them, the excitement of what they see spills over you."

Such articles became more common as the Straight Creek Tunnel edged closer to completion. The end of the decade brought headlines such as "New Boom Transforms Old Mining Town" (*Rocky Mountain News*, March 18, 1968) and "New Building Boom Hits Resort at Breckenridge" (*Denver Post*, March 24, 1969). These reports sometimes conflated brand-new projects with older subdivisions that had been rolling out since the early 1960s and were only now reaching their final phases. The Rounds family – who rebranded their development company as Breckenridge Lands, Inc. (from SCDC) in 1963 – remained the area's largest landholder, with the Theobalds running a close second.

Looking back on that era, it's tempting to view the growth as easy, even inevitable. But it assuredly did not feel that way to the people who made it happen.

For them, life in the burgeoning ski town was anything but easy. With the interstate highway and tunnel still in the planning and building stages, Breckenridge remained a tiny, isolated town plagued by unpaved (and often unplowed) roads, neglected buildings and spotty infrastructure. Massive piles of rubble left from the gold-dredge era lined the Blue River through downtown and far up and down the valley. Unlike the tourists who parachuted in for a few nights of sumptuous accommodations, or the wealthy second-home owners in their fancy new A-frames, most year-round residents occupied 19th-century dwellings with bad insulation, peeling paint and few creature comforts. It was the opposite of glamorous.

"If you didn't like pioneering – meaning, if you couldn't get by without running water for a few months – you wouldn't make it," says Kate Brewer, who arrived in the early 1960s.

Pioneering was exactly the word for it. The folks who committed to Breckenridge on a permanent basis tended to be independent souls with an enterprising spirit not so different from the miners and ranchers of the town's frontier heyday. They weren't seeking fortunes, so much as freedom from desk jobs and a chance to live on their own terms. "None of us thought this was going to be a boom town," remembers Turk Montepare:

“There wasn’t much to do, not much money to be made. But it was relatively inexpensive, beer was cheap, there was moonlight skiing on Baldy Road. We had a good time. It was a very accepting community, full of smart, interesting people who wanted to be here.”

“You really had to want to be here,” adds Bob Girvin, “because it wasn’t easy to get to Breckenridge in those days. You still had to go over Loveland Pass.”

The mixture of recent arrivals with mining-era holdovers made for an unusual culture that might be best described as a sort of gumbo stew, a hodge-podge of ingredients that you might not think would go well together – and often didn’t. Longtime residents jeered at skiers as “slope dopes” or “turkeys.”

The cast of characters included:

- Retired miners (or their widows) who’d lived in Breckenridge since before World War II and never left
- The remnants of the local business community from “old Breckenridge”
- Odd-jobbers who picked up shifts wherever they could find them – on construction sites, logging crews, road crews, or the occasional mining operation that stirred to life
- Diehard prospectors who were still out there panning for gold every summer
- “Crazy Norwegians” who helped build and operate the Peak 8 resort, most prominently Sigurd Rockne, Trygve Berge and Olaf Pederson
- Skiers, hikers and outdoorsmen (and women) who wanted to live in the mountains year-round
- Part-time residents who bought second homes for weekend skiing/hiking
- Cabin-dwellers and squatters who lived in abandoned mining structures in French Gulch, Monte Christo Gulch, the Swan River Valley and elsewhere
- Beatniks, proto-hippies, free spirits
- Summit County employees (Breckenridge was the county seat)
- A smattering of teachers, lawyers, engineers, realtors and other professionals.

These subcultures overlapped and intermingled freely, with most individuals falling into multiple categories. Residents typically had to wear various hats just to make ends meet. Ray McGinnis, who arrived in 1962, scraped by as an apres-ski musician, construction worker and land surveyor. Sigurd Rockne, co-director of the Peak 8 ski school, spent his winters carving turns, his summers building houses and the whole year tending bar at The Mine (a restaurant he and his wife owned). Trygve Berge, the other ski school director, ran a dry goods store and ski shop when he wasn’t on the snow.

“The uniqueness of Breckenridge,” says Erin McGinnis (Ray’s daughter), “was that it was made up of this beautiful tapestry of people from all over. They all came from different backgrounds, and they all had to depend on each other because there weren’t a lot of resources. That’s what made it such a special community.”

The disparate threads synthesized into a coherent identity that was best summed up in the town’s self-conception as “The Kingdom of Breckenridge.” This irreverent label aptly reflected the community’s playfulness. It also gave a wink and a nod to the iconoclastic “No Man’s Land” theme of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when locals insisted (tongue firmly in cheek) that a long-ago surveying error had excluded Breckenridge from U.S. territory, thus making the town a nation unto itself.

Nothing exemplified the “Kingdom” sensibility like Ullr Dag, the winter carnival that debuted in 1963. Named for a Norwegian deity (a stepson of Thor) who excelled at skiing, hunting and skating – a god of recreation, in essence – this January revel featured gaudy costumes, torchlight skiing, horse-drawn sleighs parading down Main Street, evening bonfires, snow sculpture competitions, and plenty of drinking and dancing. Faux dignitaries presided over the festivities, which went on for three or four days. Ray McGinnis describes an infamous highlight from the ‘63 Ullr Dag:

Dave Bruns, the “Minister of Finance,” had Ullr coins struck which were about the size of a 50-cent piece. They read “Good for Fifty Cents.” When the Federal Government got wind that we were printing our own money, they notified Dave that he was counterfeiting.... This was aired on the major TV networks all over the country. To keep from going to jail, Dave recalled the coins and had them re-struck with “Not” in front of the “Good for Fifty Cents.”

“The people who were here in the ‘60s and ‘70s knew how to have fun,” says Gretchen Abernathy. “We had Ullr Dag, we had No Man’s Land Festival. There were parties in the back bowls that you could only get to if you knew how to ski to them.”

“What kept me here were the parties,” agrees Jan Radosevich, who waited tables at Andrea’s Pleasure Palace, one of the three bars (along with Fatty’s and Shamus O’Toole’s) comprising the infamous “Devil’s Triangle” that offered food, drink and lively companionship.

The U.S. ski tourism market came into its own over the course of the 1960s, and Colorado established itself as the center of nation’s winter-sports universe. And within Colorado, Breckenridge carved out a distinct niche all to itself. While Aspen promised glamour, Vail marketed itself as a luxury destination, Arapahoe Basin steeped itself in old-school tradition, and Winter Park emphasized its convenience for the Denver market, Breckenridge promised a different type of experience – somewhat gritty, bohemian, skeptical of convention and completely accepting of nonconformity.

This identity would prove to be an enduring and essential part of the town going forward. Long after Interstate 70, Denver International Airport and the Internet brought it within easy reach of ho-hum America, the Kingdom of Breckenridge fiercely defended its sovereignty and maintained the feel of a world apart.

1970s

The new decade started off with big news: Aspen Skiing Corporation announced on January 16, 1970, that it was purchasing the Breckenridge ski area for \$1.5 million in cash.

Aspen’s interest was driven mainly by the imminent opening of the Straight Creek Tunnel, which, after nearly a decade of construction, was finally nearing completion. The first of its two bores was projected to open by no later than 1973. In addition, Aspen may have wanted a piece of the action for the 1976 Winter Olympics, which were expected to be awarded to Denver (they were, a few months after Aspen’s purchase) and staged partly in Summit County. It’s even possible that the two new ski resorts being readied nearby – Keystone (opened November 1970) and Copper Mountain (1972) – strengthened Breckenridge’s appeal. Rather than competing for visitors, the two new venues promised to have a synergistic effect, drawing more skiers through the tunnel and onto Summit County slopes than Breckenridge could attract on its own.

A major new real estate player, Eagle County Development Corporation, jumped into the fray alongside the still-active Theobalds and Breckenridge Lands. These companies and other minor players kept churning out new subdivisions and homes, driving Breckenridge’s assessed valuation from \$1.5 million in 1970 to more than \$9 million in 1974, a year in which the town issued more than \$10 million worth of new building permits. By the middle of the decade the full-time population surpassed 1,000, a level not seen since the 19th century. The new residents included Breckenridge’s first bona fide global celebrity, French racer Jean Claude Killy, the era’s most highly decorated skier and 1968 Olympic champion in the downhill, slalom and giant slalom.

New construction in town was mirrored by improvements on the ski slopes. Peak 9 opened in December 1971 with two lifts and 200 new acres, the first phase of a \$4.5 million expansion that would almost double the resort’s acreage by the end of the decade. High-speed lifts replaced T-bars, and the ski school gained a new director (Hans Garger) and dozens

of new instructors. The Eagle's Roost restaurant opened at the top of Peak 9. Skier-days topped a quarter-million in the 1971-72 season, roared past 500,000 in 1975-76 and approached 700,000 by decade's end. John Rahm, vice president and GM of Aspen Skiing Corp., said the company was looking to expand onto Peak 10, and possibly Peak 7 after that.

The blossoming of both town and ski area drew favorable reviews in the Denver newspapers. "Funny little ugly duckling Breckenridge is fast developing into a dramatic swan," wrote the *Rocky Mountain News* in 1972. "The year-round recreation area is a model of what a mountain community can be, offering something for everyone – even conference facilities." Echoing that praise in 1974, the *Denver Post* wrote: "Scorned for years by Vail- and Aspen-bound skiers looking for bigger thrills and the aura of prestige emanating from those communities, the old settlement scattered on Blue River dredge dumps has begun attracting condominium and commercial projects comparable in quality and scope to developments in Colorado's major resort centers."

Breckenridge lift tickets remained less expensive than Vail or Aspen, its condos were more affordable and its slopes were more accessible to casual skiers. But the culture of the community was undeniably changing. "The very soul of Breckenridge [is being] transformed," the *Rocky Mountain News* said. While this might have been an overstatement it wasn't entirely untrue. Expansion attracted a breed of investor very different from the Rounds and Baum families – more corporate, more profit-driven, less sensitive to local sensibilities. "Breckenridge Struggles With Problems of Overgrowth," headlined the *Denver Post* in 1976, citing a spate of recent housing projects that were plagued by foreclosures and/or defective construction.

Somewhat ironically, the Kingdom of Breckenridge pioneers now found themselves in a position akin to that of longtime Breckenridge locals circa 1960 – threatened by change from outsiders. But whereas the settlers of the 1960s had invested blood, sweat and tears in the town, some of the newer arrivals seemed like carpetbagging profiteers who were anxious to cash in and get out.

The inevitable blowback made headlines in 1972, with Colorado's unexpected and startling rejection of the Winter Olympics. Serious misgivings surfaced less than a year after the IOC accepted Denver's bid, as Coloradans became aware of the financial burdens and environmental impacts involved. Even ski communities – which had been counted on to welcome the Olympics enthusiastically – had mixed feelings at best, outright hostility at worst. Breckenridge tended toward the latter. Sentiment in town ran so heavily against the Olympics that part-time Breckenridge resident Alan Merson, running almost entirely on an anti-Olympic platform, challenged longtime incumbent congressman Wayne Aspinall (a strong Olympic booster) in the 1972 Democratic primaries. Improbably, he won the nomination. Two months later, in the general election, voters effectively killed the Games via a statewide referendum.

Colorado's rejection of the Olympics reflected the nation's growing environmental consciousness – it happened in the same year that Congress passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and ratified the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. It also reflected the degree to which the state was reaching a tipping point between competing economic imperatives – building up tourist capacity, versus sustaining the *unbuilt* capacities (fresh air, wild scenery, pristine water) that attracted tourists in the first place.

The same impulses that drove Colorado to renounce the Olympics in 1972 played out locally in Breckenridge through the rest of the decade. In addition to conserving environmental values, residents also wanted to preserve the cultural identity that made Breckenridge distinct from other destinations. Back when Aspen Skiing Corp. bought the ski area in 1970, the *Denver Post* had overheard some worried locals grousing that the town might as well change its name to "East Aspen." It was meant as a joke at the time, but by the mid-1970s people were taking the matter seriously.

As a first step, the town started getting serious about pursuing National Historic District (NHD) status. Several old Colorado mining towns had achieved NHD status since the enabling legislation passed in 1966, but none had a ski resort attached to it except Telluride (whose resort didn't open until 1972). It would take a number of years to complete the research, fill out the paperwork, and build the political consensus necessary to apply. While those steps plodded along,

the town government adopted a set of architectural guidelines intended to ensure “a lasting architectural heritage of integrity and authenticity.” The guidelines applied not only to historic buildings but also future construction. As the *Rocky Mountain News* reported, “An aroused citizenry has realized that much of the history of Breckenridge is reflected in its architecture. Citizens felt that preserving a few surviving buildings would not suffice, and that it was also important to guide the design of new buildings with an idea to preserving the historic character of the community.”

In addition, the town imposed stricter building codes and approved a 2 percent sales tax to fund improvements (street lighting, curbs, sidewalks and building facades) up and down Main Street. And the ski resort and chamber of commerce both started consciously marketing the mining-town past as one of the main reasons to choose Breckenridge over other destinations. The slogan “Breckenridge: Great Times Since 1859” first appeared in brochures and ads in about 1976 and stayed in place through the end of the decade. At about the same time, the ski mountain started naming new runs after local mines and other landmarks from the past (Tom’s Baby, Wellington, Country Boy, Gold King, etc.).

Alongside the historic preservation campaign, Breckenridge locals threw themselves into environmental protection in the 1970s. This movement’s roots in Colorado stretched back a century. Among its earliest adherents was 19th-century Breckenridge settler Edwin Carter, the “Log Cabin Naturalist” whose taxidermy specimens became the founding collection of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Of more recent vintage, some Breckenridge residents had campaigned on behalf of Summit County open space during the late 1960s, when the engineers building Interstate 70 proposed drilling a *second* tunnel ---- this one under the Gore Range, bypassing Vail Pass. The defeat of that initiative preceded the establishment (in 1978) of Eagle’s Nest Wilderness Area, the only federally-designated wilderness in Summit County.

To strike a balance between environmentally-harmful development (such as the Gore tunnel and the Olympics) and acceptable, even desirable growth that would enhance Breckenridge’s tourist and recreation industries, the town published its first long-range planning document in 1977. It was meant to guide future decisions about where growth would occur, and what type of development was desirable (and environmentally compatible) in any given location. The document established 30 districts that covered not only the city limits, but also the northern and southern gateways to town, and the forested skirts of the Ten Mile and Mosquito ranges. In 7 of the 30 districts --- which together accounted for about 1/3 of the acreage covered by the plan --- the “Desired Character and Function” section read as follows:

“Preferred character is to remain in a natural state to minimize exposure to natural hazard potential, provide water shed, conserve soils and vegetation, to recognize other natural constraints, to maintain open space and recreation opportunities, to provide scenic background for the town, to preserve and enhance the mountain character of the community, and to serve as a buffer between more intensively developed areas.”

“We were in a spiral of growth, and what we did was put a lid on it,” Mayor Chuck Struve told the *Denver Post*. *“We’re trying to define what we have.”*

The historic guidelines and long-range plan went a long way toward restoring the sense that the Kingdom of Breckenridge still controlled its own destiny. There was even some exploration of whether the town might buy the ski area and operate it as a community-owned asset. *“We had some discussions about it with the board of Aspen Skiing Corp.,”* remembers Bob Girvin. *“We would have needed a bond issue or whatever to raise the cash, but we could easily have run the mountain. We just didn’t move quickly enough.”*

That ship sailed in 1978, when Aspen Skiing Corp. was purchased by 20th Century Fox. The transaction didn’t change anything from an operational standpoint – Aspen Skiing Corp. remained a distinct subsidiary, its Breckenridge manager (Art Bowles) remained in place, and the Hollywood studio seemed content to stay out of the way. But it served as yet another reminder that Breckenridge would have to exercise constant vigilance to fend off encroachment from the outside world.

1980s

Breckenridge kicked off the new decade with a year-long celebration of its 100th anniversary. Although the town had been continuously inhabited for about 120 years, it didn't incorporate until 1880, making 1980 the "official" centennial year – and a perfectly legitimate vehicle for a year-long party to attract tourists.

The festivities kicked off in January with an extra-special Ullr Fest. It peaked in August with Centennial Week (which piggybacked onto the annual No Man's Land festival). The calendar was packed with events large and small that expressed Breckenridge's distinctive spirit of independence, irreverence and playfulness. The highlights included:

- A homegrown bio-drama of Breckenridge ski pioneer Father John Dyer, written and produced by local stage impresario Allyn Mosher
- Two "Founders Days" celebrations that honored naturalist Edwin Carter and Father Dyer
- Establishment of a self-guided historic walking tour, with plaques installed on downtown buildings
- Two midsummer parades
- Gold-panning and hard-rock mining demonstrations
- Historic essay and poster contests in the local school district
- Jeep tour over Mosquito Pass, tracing one of Father Dyer's historic ski routes
- A marathon, a fine-arts festival and a fiddlers' contest.

Fittingly enough, the centennial year also brought a successful end to Breckenridge's pursuit of National Historic District status. The town submitted its application in January 1980, with a supersized bid enumerating several hundred structures, about half of which dated to the Victorian era. The U.S. Department of the Interior approved the application in April 1980, creating one of the largest historic districts in Colorado.

In the midst of this long, loving recognition of its first century, Breckenridge took an important step to plan for its second. In a special election on April 1, 1980, voters approved a Home Rule charter. From a symbolic standpoint, this administrative step reaffirmed the town's self-conception as a Kingdom unto itself. As a practical matter, it empowered local officials to write ordinances that fit local needs and to impose tighter (and more binding) restrictions governing land use, environmental impacts, historic preservation and so forth.

Such authority was increasingly necessary to preserve Breckenridge's character as it grew in size and popularity. Summit County added 6100 residents during the 1970s, more than tripling its population. It would add another 4300 during the 1980s – and that only counted permanent residents. The county's second-homeowner population totaled an estimated 25,000 people as of 1980, and there were several thousand more seasonal employees. Breckenridge and its upstream neighbor, Blue River (incorporated in 1970), grew at similar rates. Their combined population nearly doubled from 550 year-round residents in 1970 to 1050 residents in 1980, then spiked to roughly 1700 by 1990.

The uncomfortable effects of this growth intensified during the early 1980s. In a bracing presentation to the town council, town manager Richard Levengood enumerated a lengthy backlog of unfunded projects and priorities that included open space acquisition, master planning for the Blue River, a growth-corridor study and streetscape improvements on Ridge Street. The sanitation district exceeded its 1.3 million-gallon treatment capacity and was forced to dump raw sewage at Delaware Flats. This triggered a sharp rebuke from the EPA, and howls of protest from the residents of nearby Ten Mile Vista subdivision. Traffic also backed up and overflowed, obliging the city to install its first traffic light (at Main and Lincoln) in 1980. The second light came just a few years later. A Summit County planning department survey found that mass transit ranked near the top of residents' wish lists, with 81% of respondents in favor

of a municipal bus system. And the bumper-to-bumper traffic on I-70 grew so bad that state and county highway planners floated a radical plan (never implemented) to use all four lanes of the interstate for eastbound traffic on winter Sunday afternoons, with westbound traffic relegated to U.S. 6 over Loveland Pass.

Armed with their new town charter and home rule authority, local leaders set about creating a framework for addressing these issues. In 1983 they partnered with the Harris Street Consulting Group (which had worked on the town's historic district nomination and 1977 long-range plan) to complete the Town of Breckenridge Master Plan. Broader and more binding than the 1977 planning document, the Master Plan provided detailed guidance on everything from housing and transportation to environmental quality, recreation, open space, education, historic preservation and arts/culture. While not offering specific policy solutions, it articulated the principles and priorities that established a solid foundation for future policymaking and spending decisions.

Master Plan development was closely followed by a series of concrete steps. During the 1980s, Breckenridge:

- Built its first affordable housing development at Grandview Terrace.
- Improved in-town service on the Summit Stage, a county-operated bus system launched in 1977.
- Co-founded the Summit Water Quality Committee (along with Dillon, Frisco, Silverthorne, Montezuma and Blue River) to tighten sanitation and pollution controls.
- Partnered with state officials to start converting the Blue River corridor from an eyesore into a scenic and recreational asset. The river channel north of town was re-engineered, and the massive piles of dredge-tailings were replaced with regraded streambanks and plantings of native vegetation.

Although growth posed serious challenges, they were the by-products of tremendous achievements. The vision of Breckenridge as a world-class, year-round tourist destination and outdoor playground truly came to fruition during the 1980s.

The ski resort led the way with a long list of innovations and improvements. The most consequential of these – the decision in 1984-85 to open the slopes to snowboarders – had far-reaching impacts on the future of the snowsports industry. Most other U.S. resorts prohibited snowboarding on their slopes, eschewing it as a “punk” variant of skiing that was incompatible with their traditional, largely-upscale base of skiing customers. The nascent sport of snowboarding was also viewed as a liability risk. But Breckenridge may have recognized something of itself in the new sport's rebellious attitude and youthful verve. It not only allowed snowboarders to ride, it actively courted them with dedicated terrain features and high-profile competitions such as the World Snowboard Championships. Its half-pipe, one of the first in the nation, debuted in the mid-1980s (built by hand in the early years) and helped make Breckenridge a national snowboarding mecca.

Some ski historians dispute the oft-cited claim that Breckenridge was “the first major U.S. resort to allow snowboarding,” but there's little argument that its embrace of the sport was a significant milestone across the snowsports industry. Once Breckenridge demonstrated that snowboarding and skiing could coexist profitably, it was inevitable that peer resorts in Colorado (as well as Utah, California and elsewhere) would follow suit. By 1990 snowboarders were carving turns at Vail, Sun Valley, Snowbird, Stratton and just about every other brand-name mountain throughout the U.S. (Aspen, the most stubborn holdout, wouldn't succumb until after 2000.)

Skiers, suddenly cast in the unfamiliar role of “traditionalists,” reacted to snowboarding's rise with varying degrees of enthusiasm, tolerance or outright hostility.

But snowsports enthusiasts universally welcomed a number of on-mountain improvements:

- Snowmaking equipment appeared in time for the 1981-82 season, ensuring earlier openings.
- Also in 1981-82, Breckenridge unveiled the world's first high-speed quad chairlift (soon to become the industry standard).
- In 1983-84, Breckenridge served as the first U.S. host of a World Cup freestyle skiing event, getting national TV exposure and drawing a host of celebs for a pro-am ski race.
- In 1985 Aspen Skiing Company, flush with new cash from oil-industry investors, unveiled plans for a 10-year, \$50 million expansion at Breckenridge.
- Peak 10 opened in 1985-86, initially adding 165 acres and bringing Breckenridge's total skiable area to 1,441 acres.

The new terrain, faster lifts and infusion of snowboarders combined to push lift-ticket figures to new highs, solidifying Breckenridge's place among the top 10 ski areas in North America. The resort compiled its first season of 1 million-plus visitor days in 1987-88, an increase of more than 50 percent in just five years.

Summer tourism increased at a similar pace, thanks to new attractions and amenities aimed at the warm-weather crowd. The Breckenridge Music Festival took root during the Centennial summer of 1980, with a series of concerts in the historic Father Dyer Church. The performances were so well received that they spawned an annual event (known colloquially as "Bach, Beethoven and Breckenridge") hosted by a permanent non-profit organization, the Breckenridge Music Institute. Concerts took place at the Berghof Restaurant on Peak 8 until 1988, when they moved downtown to the "Event Tent" (a precursor to the Riverwalk Center).

The Breckenridge Film Festival debuted in September 1981, with support from the Denver International Film Festival. The inaugural program included 23 films over four days, with in-person appearances by a handful of documentarians, producers and Hollywood directors. A midsummer jazz festival debuted in 1984, and the Jack Nicklaus-designed Breckenridge Golf Club opened in two installments – nine holes in 1985, another nine in 1987. By decade's end it started appearing on "best of" lists of the nation's top municipal courses. The first segments of the Blue River bicycle trail opened at mid-decade, part of a county-wide network that eventually linked Breckenridge to Frisco, Dillon, Copper Mountain and Vail. The relatively-new sport of mountain biking rapidly gained popularity in the 1980s. Breckenridge's combination of terrain, scenery and rideable routes (ski runs, hiking trails and old mining roads) attracted a new group of recreationists while giving existing winter visitors a reason to return for the long days of summer.

By 1988, some of the community's hotels and resorts were reporting 90 percent occupancy at the height of summer. "Breckenridge is particularly pretty in the summer," enthused a *Rocky Mountain News* travel writer. "You can take a hike, go on a historic tour, fish, play tennis or ride a horse. You can laze by the pool in a modern condominium or relax under a tree outside a charming lodge. Breckenridge has some interesting restaurants, including ample outdoor dining spaces that so many summer guests are seeking." His *Denver Post* counterpart added, "The sidewalks of Main Street can be jammed on a fine summer's day, and restaurants and bars are often packed, but one does not get the feeling of constantly fighting crowds.... There is something about the little town that minimizes the feeling of being in a tourist town."

All this growth took place in a decidedly unfavorable fiscal context. Colorado's economy crashed in 1982 with the collapse of the decade-old oil shale boom. Petrodollars that had flowed in rapidly during the 1970s flowed out just as rapidly, driving unemployment up and real estate values into the ditch. The pinch left Colorado more dependent than ever on tourism, one of the few industries that continued to grow during the 1980s. In fact, the state's prosperous

tourist communities – particularly those that, like Breckenridge, had diversified beyond a narrow appeal to skiers – were cited as models for policy makers to follow as they worked to bring Colorado back from the oil crash.

With everything going so well, it came as something of a shock when Aspen Skiing Company put Breckenridge Ski Area and some other holdings up for sale in November 1987, just a couple of weeks before the resort opened for the 1987-88 season. Although ASC wouldn't disclose the reasons behind the offering, a study from the University of Colorado business school provided a clue: the average Colorado resort lost almost \$250,000 in 1986-87. The CU report chalked up most of the red ink to transient factors, including a short-term spike in insurance costs and one-time capital expenditures to install pricey high-capacity lifts. The report forecast a profitable future for the industry, so it's a reasonable scenario that ASC faced a short-term cash crunch that forced it to liquidate assets despite an optimistic mid-term outlook.

If the "For Sale" sign took people by surprise, the identity of the actual purchaser was downright gob-smacking. Victoria Co. Ltd., a Japanese sporting goods retailer with no history of resort management, acquired Breckenridge Ski Area for about \$60 million. The transaction, which represented the first Japanese foray into the American ski market, came amid a flurry of splashy Japanese real estate investments in New York, San Francisco and other major U.S. cities. The trend was closely watched and much discussed, with some national leaders openly warning that widespread foreign ownership of domestic assets endangered the country.

Within the Kingdom, the concerns were more about ski operations than macro-economic trends. Because Victoria had never run a ski resort before, people had no idea what to expect. Victoria had a stellar reputation for customer service in the retail sector, which was encouraging. And many Breckenridge residents were happy to be unhitched from Aspen Skiing Company. Despite a long run of success and growth under ASC's leadership, the local mistrust of Aspen had never completely dissipated. People suspected ASC of pouring its Breckenridge profits into Aspen improvements and relegating Breckenridge to second-class status in marketing campaigns. Victoria might have a learning curve, but one thing was certain: it wouldn't ask Breckenridge to take a back seat to anyone, inside or outside of Colorado.

1990s

Snowboarding came into its own during the 1990s, and Breckenridge continued to lead the way. Todd Richards, one of the sport's first superstar competitors, came to town as a budding rider in the early 1990s. He found a vibrant snowboarding scene already in place:

"Even before I moved there it had the reputation as the place to be for snowboarding. It had the pipe, the Grand Prix, all those competitions. If you wanted to ride pipe, you lived in and around Breck. It was where snowboarders went. You had Ken Block, Andy Hetzel, all these guys who have gone on to make big moves within the industry in different ways, but back then they were snow bums in Breckenridge. They were just these dudes, hanging out..."

Those hanging-out snowboarder dudes had much in common with the Kingdom of Breckenridge's 60s-era pioneers. They lived on-the-cheap, ignored conformity and cared less about making money than about belonging to a community of kindred spirits. But while the ski trailblazers had colonized a neglected, "fixer-upper" mining town, the boarders had to carve their niche at a world-class four-season resort, a different (and in some ways, more daunting) challenge. Gone were the days when you could live rent-free in an unheated cabin to get first tracks. But then, '90s-era pioneers could cobble together a semblance of an income more easily than their elders. The particular circumstances might have changed, but Breckenridge still had room for colorful, nonconformist characters and lifestyles out of the mainstream. The boarders fit right in.

They weren't the only new kids in town. Colorado began a massive growth spurt in the 1990s. Its population increased by 1.1 million (33%) during the decade, and another 750,000 (16%) in the 2000s. Breckenridge grew even more rapidly, with its year-round population nearly doubling during the 1990s (from 1285 to 2408) and again the following decade (to 4540). Those figures don't include seasonal residents and second-homeowners, both of which grew commensurately. Counting part- and

full-time residents, and with every hotel and lodge at capacity, Breckenridge's peak daily population occupation surpassed 40,000 by the end of the decade – a hundredfold expansion in about 40 years.

The boarder culture belonged to one of the largest currents in this immigration: Generation X, whose oldest members were reaching adulthood, entered the workforce and made their mark. The Gen-Xers swelled the market for all things “indie,” including grunge music, Tarantino movies, artisanal foods and craft-brewed beer. To an extent they were precursors of the present day's “disruptors” – small, nimble agents who could adapt on a dime and overturn paradigms just as quickly. As they flocked to Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins and Summit County throughout the 1990s, the whole state began to feel a little more like Breckenridge.

At the same time, the Baby Boomers were reaching their prime earning years, many of them with a decade of explosive stock market growth at their backs and disposable income coming out of their ears. They, too, found Colorado to be a congenial destination – a bit later than their more adventuresome contemporaries who'd arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, but for all the same reasons. The Rockies' weather, scenery, laidback vibe and stellar recreation suited their tastes, and the region's real estate values (which were just beginning to climb out of the hole they'd fallen into during the 1980s) suited their wallets. Armies of well-heeled Boomers from both coasts, and inland metropolises like Houston and Chicago, sold out of hyper-inflated real estate markets and moved to Colorado, where they could pay cash for a home – or maybe two, one in Denver and one in a mountain town like, say, Breckenridge.

A couple of other trends propelled the sharp rise in Breckenridge's population. First, long-distance telecommuting caught on in a big way during the 1990s, fueled by new technologies such as fax machines, mobile phones, laptop computers and teleconferencing platforms. A professional could be just as productive working from Breckenridge as from Boston or Berlin, putting in a full day's work at the (virtual) office while reserving enough time for a couple runs before the lifts closed.

Second, U.S. air passenger miles grew by 50% during the 1990s. Americans had more money to spend in this prosperous decade, and airfares dropped thanks to better airports, more efficient routes, automated navigation, a diversified fleet and various other factors such as the ascendance of discount airlines. Colorado's traffic grew especially swiftly after the 1995 opening of Denver International Airport, whose expansive facilities eliminated most of the delays and bottlenecks that had plagued the old Stapleton Airport. Between cheaper fares and better on-time performance, you could now reliably get to Breckenridge from Chicago (or Dallas, Phoenix, Kansas City and elsewhere) in only slightly more time than it used to take pre-tunnel, pre-interstate skiers to drive up from Denver.

Taken together, this tidal wave of demographic and technological change produced a radical shift in the Kingdom of Breckenridge. It was no longer a place to drop out. In the 1990s, it became a place to plug in.

The breakneck pace of growth in the 1990s might have swamped the town, if not for the groundwork laid in the previous two decades. The mid-1970s architectural guidelines, 1977 long-range plan, 1980 Home Rule charter, 1983 master plan and other blueprints ensured that new growth and development occurred within clear ground rules. That's not to say it didn't cause problems. Traffic jams and the lack of affordable housing, in particular, required serious attention. But there were enough protections in place to ward off chaos and prevent growth from destroying the assets that made Breckenridge special in the first place – its scenic splendor, historic character, recreational opportunities and pristine environment.

Throughout the 1990s, the community continued adding new safeguards against future growth. A countywide election in 1993 approved funds for the creation of the Summit County Open Space Advisory Council – a body with the authority to acquire and preserve undeveloped land. Breckenridge voters followed suit in 1996, passing a local tax to establish the town's own open space program. In short order, Breckenridge issued a recreational trails plan (1996) and open space master plan (1998), which together would guide the town's acquisition of nearly 5,000 acres of open space over the next two decades. A local nonprofit, the Continental Divide Land Trust (CDLT), leveraged easements, bequests and donations to set aside thousands of additional acres of environmentally-sensitive land.

The 1990s also brought the rehabilitation of the Blue River into the heart of downtown. Building on the downstream beautification efforts of the 1980s, the town completed the Riverwalk in 1993, a quarter-mile walking path just off Main Street

that sat atop old dredge tailings. Festooned with public art, interpretive panels, benches, information kiosks and other visitor amenities, the path was crowned by the Riverwalk Center, a 750-seat open-air amphitheater that matched sparkling views with first-rate acoustics.

The National Repertory Orchestra (NRO) took up residence in the Center, adding a high-profile concert series to Breckenridge's summer calendar. A seasonal showcase for rising stars in classical music, the NRO gave Breckenridge some national cultural cache and another powerful draw for summer tourists. The town also kicked off a public sculpture program in the 1990s with a pair of life-size bronze burros on Main Street, evoking the mining/prospecting era. Subsequent installations appeared at Carter Park and on the Riverwalk.

Another significant cultural institution emerged from the private sector in the 1990s: the Breckenridge Brewery & Pub. One of the first microbreweries in Colorado, it was established by an old-school Breckenridge ski bum/hippie named Richard Squire. Patronized in large part by the "boarder-dude" culture, it was a perfect marriage of Baby Boom wisdom and Gen-X vitality. Squire opened his doors in February 1990, with ski season more than half over and the busiest winter weekends (including Ullr Fest) already passed. His projections forecast that revenues would crater once the lifts closed, so he warned his investors not to expect any profits until the following year at the earliest. But the taps kept flowing briskly all spring and into the summer. Brewery operations climbed into the black so rapidly that Squire opened a brewing and bottling plant in Denver in 1991, increasing brewing capacity by a factor of eight and adding statewide distribution. The year after that he opened a second pub location in Denver's booming Lower Downtown, kitty-corner to the future home of Coors Field.

The brewery's value to the town's "brand" hasn't ever been systematically quantified (that's a task for some future graduate student to tackle). But the brewpub's presence in Denver's LoDo, and the beer's popularity throughout Colorado and beyond, meant that millions of people in Breckenridge's core tourist market – especially those up-and-coming Gen Xers – were tossing back frosties with the resort's name emblazoned on the label. You can't buy that type of publicity.

At the same time Breckenridge's population and culture were broadening and diversifying, the ski mountain got drawn into an industrywide process of consolidation. First, in 1993, Ralston Purina bought Breckenridge Ski Area from Victoria Ltd., ending the Japanese firm's six-year administration. Ralston already owned Keystone and A-Basin, so the transaction represented a de facto merger between Breckenridge and two rival Summit County resorts. With memories of the mixed-bag marriage to Aspen still fresh in their minds, Breckenridge locals were mildly (in some cases, acutely) reluctant to hitch their fortunes to another couple of in-state resorts. They also had the uneasy sense that the carousel of revolving ownership wasn't quite done spinning.

Those anxieties were confirmed in short order. In 1996, Vail Resorts announced the purchase of all three of Ralston's ski properties for \$300+ million, absorbing Breckenridge into a skiing megacorporation large enough to merit disapproving glances from the Federal Trade Commission's antitrust department. This was truly a difficult pill to swallow for some members of Breckenridge's old guard. Ever since Vail and Peak 8 clashed over Forest Service permits back in 1961, the two resorts had been jockeying with each other for skiers, dollars and recognition. Judging strictly by the numbers, Vail won a clear victory well before the 1990s – it had more visitors, more terrain, a bigger budget and stronger name recognition. But Breckenridge could (and routinely did) still lay claim to having the superior culture – authentic instead of ersatz, risk-taking instead of cautiously corporate, whimsical instead of predictable, beer-swilling instead of wine-sipping. To some of the Kingdom's truest believers, ending up as a province in Vail's empire felt like a defeat of the values that defined their identity.

But if some were disappointed, at least as many others were energized by the prospect of what the two old rivals might accomplish as partners. If nothing else, people trusted Vail to bring stability to the ski resort after a decade-plus of unsettled ownership. The company's leaders knew the market had unassailable commitments to skiing and to Colorado. And a large segment of the town didn't really care one way or the other. About a third of Breckenridge's population circa 1997 had arrived since 1990 (roughly two-thirds since 1980) and therefore had no memory of old family feuds. To them, Breckenridge and Vail already seemed like natural industry peers. Breckenridge had been gaining stature throughout the

decade, hosting its first FIS World Cup events in November 1991, expanding onto Peak 7 in 1993, and adding a bevy of chutes and bowls at mid-decade. Its snowboard competitions routinely got national TV coverage, and its resident star rider – Todd Richards – racked up win after win in the X Games and other high-profile events, becoming one of the sport’s first international legends.

For better and/or worse, Vail closed the sale in January 1997. Now here’s the kicker: in 1998 Breckenridge opened the Freeway Terrain Park, winning international kudos and reaffirming its status as a snowboarders’ paradise. That same season – for the first time ever – Breckenridge racked up more skier-days than any other resort in the nation. It repeated the feat in 1999-2000, entering the new decade and new century at the pinnacle of U.S. snowsports.

21ST CENTURY

Breckenridge sailed into the 2000s with confidence and a mature sense of purpose. It no longer had to strive for success – the trick now was to sustain it for future generations. The town’s strong stewardship ethic, which stretched back at least as far as the anti-Olympics campaign, became even more pronounced. The 2008 Breckenridge Comprehensive Plan, a long-overdue update to the 1983 Town Master Plan, summarized what was at stake:

“There is concern that Breckenridge has reached an important crossroads where, without careful balance, the growth and changes that may be necessary to sustain a viable tourism-based economy could threaten the health, integrity, and character of the local community.... The overarching goal of this master plan is to ensure that Breckenridge remains a “real” community with distinctive character that is a great place to live, as well as a great place to visit.”

This goal echoed the Values Statements of an earlier document, the 2002 Town of Breckenridge Vision Plan, which read in part:

“Breckenridge is a cohesive and diverse community where . . .

Residents and visitors experience an historic mountain town with characteristic charm that offers a safe, friendly and peaceful atmosphere where individuals can live, work, play and raise a family.

The actions of the community ensure that wildlife and its habitat are protected, that views from Town to the surrounding mountains are maintained, that both air and water quality are clean and improved, and that accessible open space, trails, and backcountry are preserved.”

These documents, and others such as the 2007 Open Space Plan, 2010 Sustainability Action Plan and 2011 Upper Blue Master Plan, evinced a determination not to squander what earlier generations had built. On the contrary, the more their town’s pioneer origins (both mining and skiing) receded into the rear-view mirror, the harder local residents pushed to keep the community’s future rooted firmly in its past.

Nonprofit organizations played a critical role in this effort. The Blue River Watershed Group (founded in 2004), Breckenridge Heritage Alliance (2006), Breckenridge Creative Arts District (2014) and other groups picked up slack and filled in gaps in government service that appeared during the new century. Even as Breckenridge and Summit County continued to add population, their government budgets were pinched by two major financial crises: deep federal tax cuts, and the cumulative constraints of the statewide TABOR amendment (which had taken effect in 1993).

The shortfalls left public officials scrambling to cope with growth. Although the pace of expansion slowed a tad, Breckenridge still witnessed a 67% population increase between 2000 and 2015 (Summit County grew by 30% in the

same period). The scarcity of affordable housing forced wage-earning employees to commute from as far away as Fairplay and Leadville, which in turn exacerbated the county's mounting traffic congestion and parking woes. Health care, child care and education also flirted with (and occasionally veered into) crisis territory.

The nonprofits' work helped mitigate these problems. And their active engagement and broad community support offered encouragement that the Kingdom's spirit of creativity, independence and resourcefulness remained alive and well. They also revealed a healthy recognition that Breckenridge's prosperity and privileges could never be taken for granted.

The ski area's marriage with Vail wasn't perfect, but what relationship is? It has endured now for 20+ years, making it the longest uninterrupted ownership run in the resort's history. Fears that the partnership would erase Breckenridge's unique identity have not been realized, although many residents would argue that some degree of erosion has occurred. Vail's purchase of several retail properties on Main Street was a particularly unwelcome incursion, and its conversion to a publicly traded company also raised hackles. Few phrases seemed less compatible with the Kingdom's personality than "shareholder interest."

But Vail's ownership has brought undeniable benefits, notes former mayor John Warner:

"At the time of the sale I was cautiously optimistic. We'd been through a series of owners with no continuity. I thought we might see better management, more improvements, a higher level of service. And we have. Things have really expanded. I think we have a better resort today than we did in the 1990s."

Breckenridge has now been a skiing-and-recreation community for almost 60 years. Neither the placer-mining heyday nor the dredge-mining era lasted as long. That's partly due to the difference between nonrenewable (mineral) and renewable resources, but it also says something important about the great care Breckenridge has taken to keep commercial tourism sustainable over the long haul. Ever since the 1960s the community has carefully planned for the future and vigilantly avoided shortsighted profiteering, acutely aware of how rapidly today's boom can become tomorrow's bust – especially in the West. If there's one lesson people should take away from the past 60 years of local history, that might be it.

Summary of Existing Interpretive Opportunities

This section offers an inventory of existing interpretive opportunities and programming developed and maintained by BHA. This is a skeletal framework at this point. The planning team intends to consult with BHA staff and interested Board members during the review of this draft in order to develop a more in-depth look at BHA resources (that might, for instance, include basic financial information such as O&M budgets, revenues, staffing requirements, etc.). The goal of this effort is to create a guide that will allow current and future Board members, BHA staff and other interested parties a one-stop overview of BHA's interpretive assets and programming relative to interpreting the modern period. Most of the information presented here is also available on the BHA website, <https://www.breckheritage.com/>. Readers are encouraged to suggest notes and comments, as well as additional categories of information, to add to the table – it is intended as a framework for discussion.

Museums/Sites/Structures			
	<i>Seasonal Status, Hours, Fees</i>	<i>Notes, Comments</i>	<i>Potential for Interpretation of Modern Breckenridge History</i>
<i>Barney Ford House</i>	Open year-round; usually Tue-Sun 1100-1500, hours vary seasonally; \$5 donation suggested	The Barney Ford House has a specific focus on a great storyline, with no obvious reasons to wander. The temporary exhibit space can be used for displays that focus on the modern period (as is the case with the gallery of modern photographs that was on display when this plan was written). The Main Street frontage offers a high-visibility location for possible signage, but careful consideration is needed due to the potential to detract from the overall ambience of the site.	LOW
<i>Breckenridge Sawmill Museum</i>	Open year-round; 24-hour self-guided access; free	The site has a specific focus, with no obvious storylines post World War II. Discussion needed.	LOW
<i>Breckenridge Welcome Center & Museum</i>	Open year-round; seven days 0900-1800; free	Modifications/updates currently being considered should focus more on the post-WWII period. The existing theatre might be modified to allow user selection of short videos to complement the existing short feature film. The extensive inventory of 1970s/1980s videos that is currently being acquired could find a home here. The theatre is adequate, with nice artifact displays, but could be made more comfortable and more welcoming with minor upgrades.	HIGH
<i>Edwin Carter Museum</i>	Open year-round; usually Tue-Sun 1100-1500, hours vary seasonally; \$5 donation suggested	The original log cabin went through several iterations, being used as a residence well into the modern period, so it offers an opportunity to interpret the chronic/eternal housing shortage in Breckenridge and how residents have adapted. Exterior interpretation would probably be most appropriate so as not to detract from the interior ambience (while enhancing both guided- and self-guided walking tours).	LOW-MED
<i>High Line Railroad Park</i>	Park open year-round; Luethe Cabin open only in summer Fri-Sun 1100-1500	The evolution of land-use in the community (rodeo grounds to park/playground), and the development of the ice rink are possible storylines. The park is an ideal location for families with small children, offering play opportunities and a model railroad. Possible additional interpretation should consider a focus on this demographic.	MED
<i>Mather Archives Room</i>	Open year-round; Wed-Sat by appt 0900-1200, public access 1300-1700	Need discussion as to whether public access causes problems and whether protocols to safeguard artifacts need to be developed and implemented. While allowing public access to archives is an important aspect of the BHA mission, at first glance this site appears to be more appropriate for researchers than casual visitors.	N/A(?)
<i>Red, White & Blue Fire Museum</i>	Open year-round; Mon-Fri 0900-1100 & 1330-1600 on request (based on staff availability); \$5 donation suggested	The fire department has been an integral part of the community for well over a century. Its evolution from 1950s-present could be a good storyline. Kids love fire engines and everything about them, suggesting that this site, like High Line Railroad Park, be promoted to families with small children as much as possible. Analysis of existing experience needed.	MED-HIGH
<i>Summit Ski Museum</i>	Open year-round; usually Tue-Sun 1100-1500, hours vary seasonally; \$5 donation suggested	The existing exhibits represent a nicely-done, tasteful in-house effort by BHA staff: the story is well-organized and supported by interesting artifact displays. Despite the Main Street address, the museum is in a very low-visibility location that almost certainly limits visitation. The steep staircase limits universal access.	HIGH
Tours			
<i>Saloon Tour</i>	Year-round; schedule varies by season; \$15/adult (21+ only)	Watering holes have always come and gone – there may be as much interest in the modern Devil's Triangle as in mining era saloons. A number of visitors may have bellied up to the bar in person at now-defunct Shamus O'Toole's or Angels' Rest.	HIGH
<i>Tombstone Tales Tour</i>	Summer only; schedule varies; \$15/adult, \$10/child		LOW
<i>French Gulch Gold Mine & Dredge Boat Hike/Snowshoe Tour</i>	Year-round; schedule varies by season; \$20/adult, \$10/child + \$5 snowshoe rental		LOW
<i>Gold Panning @ Lomax Gulch</i>	Summer only; unscheduled; site is free (\$10 charge for gold-panning)		LOW

Tours, cont.

Seasonal Status, Hours, Fees	Notes, Comments	Potential for Interpretation of Modern Breckenridge History	
<i>Iowa Hill Hike/Snowshoe</i>	Year-round; schedule varies by season; \$15/adult, \$10/child + \$5 snowshoe rental		LOW
<i>Preston Ghost Town & Gold Mine Hike</i>	Summer only; schedule varies; \$30/adult, \$20/child	Begins Summer 2018.	LOW
<i>Walk Through History</i>	Year-round; schedule varies by season; \$10/adult, \$5/child	While the focus of this tour lies in the mining/railroading era, there is a robust modern storyline that presents the opportunity to teach visitors about the noteworthy efforts by the Town of Breckenridge and BHA to preserve the town's historic past and maintain the architectural integrity of Main Street.	MED
<i>Washington Gold & Silver Mine Tour</i>	Summer only; schedule varies; \$15/adult, \$15/child	Begins Summer 2018.	LOW
<i>Ski Through History</i>	Winter only; schedule varies; \$20/adult, \$15/child	This tour has been poorly attended, perhaps due to competition from USDA Forest Service tours (which are free), or lack of advertising. Needs discussion.	HIGH
<i>Victorian Tea Party Tour</i>	Year-round; schedule varies; \$25/adult, \$15/child	Located at Briggie House.	LOW
<i>Paranormal Investigation</i>	Year-round; schedule varies; \$15 adult (15+ only)	Begins Summer 2018. Located at Briggie House.	LOW

Audience Segmentation

Audience segmentation, for the purposes of this plan, is not an academic or scientific exercise. It is a commonsense undertaking intended to identify major market segments, with the goal of identifying the media and locations best-suited to reach a certain segment. The approach is nothing more complicated than figuring out if you want to reach golfers, you deploy media at the golf course. Or stores where golfers buy equipment, or websites focused on the sport.

A typical approach to this kind of informal audience segmentation is to divide the target market into four segments: local and non-local “general” segments, and local and non-local “specialized” segments. A specialized recreationist is one who requires special equipment for an activity, for instance a skier or kayaker. A “general” or “non-specialized” recreationist is one who does not require special equipment, for instance an attendee at a film festival or a non-skiing gondola rider.

The planning team welcomes reader input on the table below. We would be happy to hear any ideas about dividing the target audience in a different manner, or creative/innovative ways in which a segment might be reached.

General Local	Specialized Local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery shoppers • Non-skiing gondola riders • Alpine slide users • Community center users <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History buffs • Railroad buffs • Museum visitors • Attendees at Breckenridge Film Festival and other events, activities and exhibits sponsored/supported by Breckenridge Creative Arts (live music, art displays, classes, tours, festivals, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skiers • Snowboarders • Kayakers, rafters, other river-based watersport enthusiasts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bikers • Hikers • Backpackers • Rock climbers • Birdwatchers • Non-motorized lake-based boaters, i.e. windsurfers, paddleboarders • Motorized lake-based boaters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglers • Photographers
General Non-local	Specialized Non-local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel guests • Main Street shoppers • Non-skiing gondola riders • Alpine slide users • BHA tour attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History buffs • Railroad buffs • Museum visitors • Welcome Center users • Attendees at Breckenridge Film Festival and other events, activities and exhibits sponsored/supported by Breckenridge Creative Arts (live music, art displays, classes, tours, festivals, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skiers • Snowboarders • Kayakers, rafters, other river-based watersport enthusiasts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bikers • Hikers • Backpackers • Rock climbers • Birdwatchers • Non-motorized lake-based boaters, i.e. windsurfers, paddleboarders • Motorized lake-based boaters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglers • Photographers

After review, discussion and analysis, this section will be used to build strategies that intended to reach the greatest number of people in the most cost-efficient manner possible.

Statements of Significance

Statements of significance are one-sentence statements of fact. They differ from interpretive themes in that interpretive themes are intended to suggest storylines and accompanying human emotions such as fear, love or anger.

Statements of significance articulate what is unique, special or important about a specific resource (i.e. the Barney Ford House), a locality or region (i.e. Breckenridge and Summit County) or a period in time and the characters who played important roles (i.e. the modern history of Breckenridge).

The Modern Pioneers

In the late 1950s, the population of Breckenridge was only a few hundred people, but the opening of the ski area in December 1961 marked the end of several decades of population decline as a new wave of pioneers arrived – from hippies and ski bums to real estate developers – joining the remaining miners and their families to form a new local culture and economy based on mountain sports.

Open Space

Breckenridge voters approved a 0.5% sales tax increase in 1996 to fund an open space acquisition and management program that began in 1997 – as of January 2018, 58 miles of trails had been built on more than 4700 acres of protected land, and the League of American Bicyclists had designated the town as a Gold Level Bicycle-Friendly Community.

Evolution and Innovation in Mountain Sports

In 1983, Breckenridge became the first Colorado ski area to permit snowboarding, and the community's recreationists and athletes have been early adopters and promoters of new mountain sports such as uphill skiing (aka "skinny" or "alpine touring"), mountain biking and lift-served telemark skiing.

Melting Pot

The early years of ski area development in Breckenridge led to a melting pot of sorts, as a new wave of "counter-culture pioneers" and "blue-collar skiers" arrived, seeking a quality of life distinct from other ski towns and becoming a unique community that created memorable special events like Ullr Fest that epitomized a work-hard/play-harder ethic.

Real Estate Prospectors

Ski area development in Breckenridge led to a profound shift in the sociocultural composition of the Breckenridge community, as the economy shifted from mining/railroading to recreation/tourism, and real estate replaced gold as the most-valuable commodity.

Blue River Restoration

Restoration of the Blue River through Breckenridge, a stretch of the stream that was essentially sterilized by dredge-mining operations, began in the early 1990s and is nearly complete thanks in large part to significant financial support from the Town of Breckenridge.

National Historic District

Partly in response to the appearance of 1970s-era architecture on/near Main Street, the National Historic District that encompasses most of Breckenridge's downtown area was designated in 1980, owing much of its unique character to decisions by early developers and property owners to restore historic buildings rather than demolish them.

Support for the Creative Arts

Fostered in large part by a strong spirit of volunteerism, the citizens of Breckenridge have supported theatre, visual arts, music and film through efforts ranging from the creation of several cultural non-profits to the development of the Riverwalk Center and the recent Breckenridge Creative District designation, as well as a variety of special events that celebrate creativity and artistic expression.

New Sheriff in Town

In 1996, the purchase of the Breckenridge ski area by Vail Resorts created one of the largest ski complexes in North America (with additional operations at Arapaho Basin, Keystone, Beaver Creek, Arrowhead and Vail), enhancing marketing opportunities and leading to major on-mountain improvements in snowmaking and lifts.

Ski Area Firsts

In addition to being the first ski area in Colorado to permit snowboarding, Breckenridge was the first ski area in the nation to install a quadruple, high-speed, detachable chairlift; the first to offer an alpine slide experience for summer visitors and the first to install a six-passenger, double-loading, high-speed chairlift.

Ullr Fest

Since the first Ullr Fest in 1963, the event has gained a reputation as one of the best parties at any ski town, anywhere, featuring everything from snow sculpture and skating to parades, a film festival, ice plunge, bonfire and associated ski and snowboard competitions.

Interpretive Themes

The job of the interpreter is to facilitate visitors' intellectual and emotional connection to a place by telling stories. An interpretive theme is a one-sentence encapsulation of a story. Interpretive themes link a place's tangible attributes (articulated as statements of significance) to the intangible ideas, meaning, beliefs and values that connect people with place.

It is not the job of the interpreter to tell an audience what to think about a resource, or how to feel about a place. It is the job of the interpreter to tell stories that facilitate personal exploration of place meaning, to help people form unique, individual connections with a resource on whatever level the individual chooses, be it emotional, intellectual or spiritual.

Attaching meanings to a place is a fundamental human trait. So is storytelling. We assign special significance to the places, events, people and things that touch our lives and shape our culture. We pay special attention to the stories that connect us to place, that make us laugh or cry – that make us *feel*.

Stories facilitate exploration of resource meaning and the significance of place. Human beings are natural-born storytellers, and societies depend on the power of story to share the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values that collectively constitute culture. Storytelling is a fundamental, basic activity of human societies, and it is the heart and soul of interpretation.

The set of overarching stories that communicate the essential qualities of a resource are called *primary interpretive themes*. Each is written as a single-sentence abstract that tries to capture the essence of a place and its stories. *Storylines* are the detailed subthemes that provide detail and specific substance. Storylines are typically developed at the beginning of the exhibit design phase. Primary interpretive themes are presented below.

A Tightly-Knit Community of Colorful Threads

The first pioneers to arrive in the mining camp that was Breckenridge in the late 1850s were in search of gold, while the modern pioneers of the post-WWII era were seeking something less tangible: an alternative lifestyle with skiing at its heart, whose adherents were resourceful, independent free-thinkers who could nonetheless count on their community when times got hard.

Two-Edged Sword

The development of skiing re-energized Breckenridge, but the modern immigrants who craved the remote mountain lifestyle also contributed to the population boom that accompanied ski industry growth, a boom that generated significant anti-growth sentiment epitomized by Colorado's rejection of the 1976 Winter Olympics.

Still a Mining Town

Though only a few tangible remnants of the industrial mining town that was Breckenridge remain, the soul of the community is still grass-roots and blue-collar, in contrast to the wealth and glamour of Aspen, and the rootless quality of ski towns like Vail and Keystone that have been resorts since Day One.

Pioneer (and Party) Spirit

Breckenridge locals have been eager adopters of new trends in mountain sports, and the willingness to pioneer new trends and break new ground has also been evidenced by the early emergence of craft breweries and distilleries that bolster the town's reputation as a great place to have a good time.

All That Jazz

The dedication of Breckenridge locals to the development of a vibrant cultural scene is shown by the support its citizens have shown for theatre, film, the visual arts and music; even well before the ski area stimulated resort development and

population growth, there was community theatre, a thriving music scene and a diverse, talented collection of local visual artists.

Not an Easy Choice

Those who moved to Breckenridge as the ski area was developing had to sacrifice to make it – earning the right to live its freewheeling lifestyle by enduring hard, long winters and often living paycheck-to-paycheck in order to get first tracks.

Paying for Progress

The on-mountain improvements that occurred after the purchase of the ski area by Vail Resorts were almost universally welcomed, but some Breckenridge locals regret what they perceive as the loss of the community’s unique identity to “corporatization.”

Looking Back, Paying It Forward

Breckenridge has a well-deserved reputation for its historic charm, which the community has gone to great lengths to preserve and interpret, while also working to restore and protect mountain ecosystems by purchasing open space with voter-approved tax dollars.

Public Input

In early March of 2018, the project team deployed a survey to gather public input on the relative importance of the statements of significance crafted in the first draft of this plan. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

The surveys will be closed at the end of March. Results will be included in the final version of this plan.

Summary of Potential Interpretive Media

This section of the plan presents an inventory of proposed interpretive media and programming. The final version of the plan will include a prioritized implementation schedule and cost estimates. This section is the heart and soul of the planning effort – the concepts that will guide interpretive efforts in the near- to mid-term will be articulated and analyzed here. At this point in the process, the planning team has discussed and evaluated a number of possibilities, and these are presented in brief narrative form below. More discussion/evaluation with BHA staff and Board members is needed, as well as more site work, before the final concepts and priorities (as well as cost estimates) are put down on paper.

The ideas that are under consideration are presented below. Reader input on these concepts is highly-valued, and the planning team will sincerely appreciate reader input on these ideas, as well as suggestions for other media and opportunities that might have been overlooked.

Timeline

There is space available for new exhibits in the Grand Colorado on Peak 8 building. The space is a long corridor, making it an ideal location for a timeline-style exhibit. The downside of this opportunity is the low-visibility attribute of the space. Few skiers will stumble across the exhibit – the primary viewers will probably be owners and guests staying in the building (the hallway provides access from the lobby to the lifts at the base of Peak 8). As well, a timeline would duplicate the exhibits in the existing Summit Ski Museum on Main Street – a space that also suffers from a low-visibility problem.

Despite the issues generating traffic and eyeballs, there are no viable alternatives (of which the planning team is aware) to deploy a timeline exhibit in such a well-suited space. This might be a low-priority for implementation, but the near-ideal morphology of the space itself, independent of the visibility/traffic challenges, suggests that the opportunity should stay on the table. Improved signage/wayfinding will be essential if this concept is implemented.



Gondola Ticket Office

This location presents an opportunity to reach many more skiers than the corridor in the Grand Vacations building, but any exhibits would be more mood-setting than in-depth experiences. For obvious reasons, exhibits that require a viewing period of even a few minutes would create traffic/crowding issues. That said, there are some wide-open, high wall spaces that would be great locations for period photographs, with some very limited text (perhaps promoting other interpretive opportunities). The soffit above the ticket counter, as well the high walls at either end of the office, and the high wall over the exit door, are wide open for some visual interest.



The Transit Center building near the gondola gets lots of traffic and is a good candidate for exhibits as well.

Exterior Interpretive Panels in Town

Most Breckenridge visitors spend some time wandering around on Main Street, the Riverwalk and the neighborhoods just east of the commercial district. There are numerous opportunities for exterior interpretation that will reach these pedestrians, perhaps not only acquainting them with the town's modern history, but also encouraging them to visit BHA museums. Respect for the architectural context of the area is needed to avoid detracting from the historical ambience that the Town has worked so hard to preserve, and which is such a valuable component of the overall Breckenridge experience. Potential sites for an exterior interpretive panel or two include:

- Carter Park
- Milne/Briggle houses (right)
- Carter Museum
- Barney Ford House
- Blue River Plaza
- Riverwalk Center
- Main Street Station Plaza (private)
- Prospector Park
- Gondola Plaza
- Blue River Walkway
- Others TBD.



There is no obvious reason to replace existing interpretive panels, but there are some design challenges to overcome because the existing panels were designed/installed at different periods and are of different character.

Reviewers of this plan, and attendees at the staff/volunteer meeting held in late February, have noted that the downtown area already suffers from “Sign Clutter Syndrome.” The potential for new signage to detract from the desired ambience (already noted above) bears repeating. That said, sites like the Blue River Plaza and Walkway present an opportunity to reach a significant proportion of visitors. As with virtually every potential site in the downtown historic district, the potential to reach a big audience must be balanced against the negative effects of another sign in an already crowded visual space.

Other reviewers have noted that several of the persons interviewed in the ongoing oral history project have mentioned the “hippie squatters” (aka “gulch rats”) who took up communal residence on Forest Service land in abandoned cabins during the 1970s. Those cabins were torn down by the Forest Service. But the story of the modern “pioneers” who lived rough on public land obviously resonates strongly with locals, who remember and appreciate the willingness to sacrifice creature comforts and live on-the-cheap in order to enjoy the mountain lifestyle.

Local interest in this storyline suggests that interpretive panels on trails passing through areas where long-term camps were located should be high on the priority list of exterior media development. Signage in these areas does not have to compete with commercial clutter and, since the existing trail signs focus on mining, would expand and enhance trail users interpretive experience.



Another concept suggested by reviewers regarding exterior interpretive panels is to associate a panel (or multiple panels) with a large artifact of some sort. One design is already “in the can,” using the iconic “Kingdom of Breckenridge” sign formerly located on Highway 9 north of town (left).

On-Mountain Interpretive Panels/Exhibits

Even a cursory analysis of the target audiences offered in the audience segmentation section suggests that among the most robust opportunities to efficiently reach out to a significant proportion of visitors could be based on the gondola. This lift is ridden by most skiers and many non-skiers as well. Within the cars, riders are a captive audience – many of them would likely welcome an interesting distraction.



Ideas that the planning team hopes to examine include placement of a series of interpretive panels in gondola cars (left), as well as at on-mountain food service facilities and perhaps elsewhere (bathroom signage is seen by almost everybody). Placing signage on areas with skier traffic is problematic due to safety concerns, but signage regarding run-naming histories might be integrated into existing sign complexes.

Development of this concept requires coordination with Vail Resorts. Multiple e-mails and phone calls to a Vail Resorts representative did not elicit a response, so specific recommendations cannot be included in this plan.



Interpretation of the modern period might be interspersed with skier safety messages, an approach that could make the concept more palatable to Vail Resorts. The on-mountain restaurants are privately-owned by concessionaires, so placement of any interpretive media would need to be coordinated with the owner/operators of those businesses.

Breckenridge Hall of Fame

Whether to call this concept a “Hall of Fame” or another name such as “Community Characters” is a question that the planning team has left open. The idea that is envisioned is not so much a “fame” idea based on a resume of outstanding lifetime accomplishments, but rather a gallery of the “ordinary” citizens who have made up the backbone of the community in addition to the movers and shakers. There is already a ski-focused Hall of Fame at the Ski and Snowboard Museum in Vail (currently undergoing a major renovation scheduled to open in February 2018), and there is no obvious reason to duplicate those efforts. Rather, a community instead of statewide focus is envisioned.

Obvious challenges include how to develop and manage a selection process, which is fraught with the potential for conflict, jealousy and hurt feelings. If this idea goes forward, it would be necessary to establish firm selection criteria and to manage the process fairly and consistently, which would be time-consuming.



There are two Halls of Fame in the immediate area of Breckenridge, the aforementioned one in Vail, and the Mining Hall of Fame in Leadville. Both of these are located in existing museums, which might be taken to suggest that a standalone HOF would not generate enough visitation to support it. Space to house a community-focused HOF exhibit in Breckenridge, either in an existing museum or as a standalone, presents a big challenge. That said, there is no obvious reason why the concept could not proceed as a virtual hall of fame hosted on the BHA website, or one of the new exhibits in the Welcome Center. Recognition does not have to come in the form of a bronze plaque. The “hall” could be housed on a single touchscreen computer.

Archival Video

BHA is in the process of acquiring a large collection of videos that were taken by the local television station in the 1970s and 1980s. It is hit-or-miss whether the planning team will be able to review any of those before the completion of this process. But there are hundreds of hours of video, so it is nearly certain that there will be enough quality footage to generate significant interest among both locals and visitors.



The Welcome Center seems to be the best candidate to house/present this collection. The existing mini-theatre presents a well-done documentary, but there are a few problems with the theatre that appear, at first glance, to have easy fixes. First, the existing short feature runs on a continuous loop, and visitors who enter the theatre have no idea how long it's going to last, thus not enough information on which to base a decision whether to watch or not. Second, the theatre entrance is a little bit unwelcoming (it's a dark space, of course) – it would be fairly simple to create a warmer, welcoming ambience that encourages entry with a few signs. Third, some padded seating with backs would be nice. Finally, many visitors would welcome a touchscreen menu with brief descriptions (including the run-time) of various videos so that they could view those that have the most interest to them.

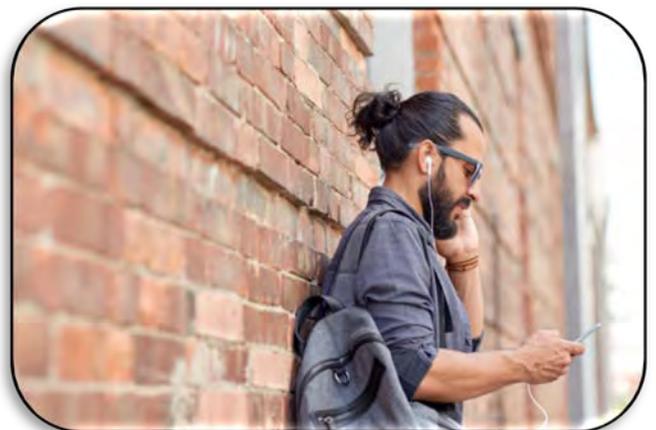


Podcasts

The possibilities for podcasts are virtually unlimited, and they are an excellent medium to present oral histories. That said, most oral histories are taken with an eye toward documentation, not entertainment. They are typically too long for any listener, other than the most dedicated researcher or family member, to sit through.

This is an idea, though, that would go hand-in-glove with the Hall of Fame/Community Characters idea. The nominees could be interviewed with an eye toward generating a 5-7 minute output of finished audio, enough to last for a lift ride or a short commute.

A downside of both the HOF and podcast concepts is that each would require a fairly significant commitment of staff time. It is easy to imagine that a serious, full-scale undertaking could be a full-time job. That said, the last of the miners of Breckenridge aren't getting any younger, and most of those who settled in the community in the 1960s/70s are sporting plenty of grey hair now as well. This endeavor is entirely in tune with the mission of BHA, and it would make a valuable contribution to the historic preservation that the community values so highly.



Self-Guided Tours

Hard Copy

Two types of self-guided tours might be considered. The first, more traditional approach, would be to develop a booklet of some sort. This publication might be as simple (and low-cost) as a tri-fold pamphlet with a map, or as upscale as a full-color, glossy book. Members of the planning team developed a walking tour of downtown Steamboat Springs in 2009 (right). The award-winning book was distributed free of charge, so its commercial potential is hard to evaluate, but the concept (basing an historical walking tour on tangible architecture) might translate well to the modern era in Breckenridge. Interested parties are welcome to contact the planning team’s project manager to get a copy.



Virtual

The technology available to create virtual experiences changes on a continual basis, which is one of the challenges of this (or any) high-tech approach. The preliminary recommendation of this plan is to develop a walking tour of downtown Breckenridge based on landmarks that are associated with the town’s modern history. Those landmarks might still be standing, or might have been razed in the name of progress, but a robust tour is clearly possible even if users are looking at a parking lot where a building used to stand.

A phone-based tour is envisioned. Users would need to download an app, which would provide (written or audible) directions from a central point such as Blue River Plaza. The application “pings” the user’s phone when they are close to a site. Text, images and audio interpreting the site then appear on the user’s phone.

One of the advantages of this approach is that fairly in-depth interpretation – including lots of visual content as well as audio – can be delivered without creating any visual clutter. The content is limited only by the developer’s imagination, the size of a phone screen and, of course, costs. There are monthly hosting fees for the content in addition to development expenses.

Another significant strength of this approach is that it can be used in a “Then & Now” context. The basic idea is to get users to stop at a site that they view in its modern reality while looking at an historic photo of the same site on their phone. Imagine, for instance, a user on Blue River Plaza checking out the (comparatively) pristine waters of the stream while looking at a photo of a working dredge boat or a scene of hydraulic mining on the same site as long ago as a century. The potential for some memorable interpretive experiences is obvious. The primary challenge is funding the time-consuming research and fieldwork necessary to develop the content. Some historic photos cannot be located in a modern context without lots of research and guesswork. Others can be relatively easily located if the mountains around town are visible in the image, while still others just cannot be pinpointed with any amount of effort.

Tactical Prescription

This section presents ideas that will facilitate the accomplishment of the BHA mission (relative to interpretation of modern history) that are not strictly exhibits or programming.

Evening on the Town

This idea emerged in the staff meeting. Museum attendance increases in the summer months, and the group discussed ways to bump up numbers even more. Given the longer days (and weather more conducive to evening strolls), the group was enthusiastic about promoting an “open” evening at the cultural sites in Breckenridge. The idea is to work with groups like BreckCreate to establish one night per week as a night when all the local cultural attractions stay open late. Doing this only one night per week does not overly strain staff resources while creating a special night when visitors can enjoy a museum (or gallery, etc.) after dinner.

Move the Ski Museum

The existing ski museum is a tastefully-done, well-organized interpretive experience. But it is in a low-visibility location despite its Main Street address, and a steep, narrow staircase effectively eliminates the possibility of providing universal access.

The planning team has not detected a great deal of support or enthusiasm for the exhibit concepts put forward in the 2017 planning document that offered a vision to update the Welcome Center exhibits. Accordingly, this plan recommends that the upstairs area in the Welcome Center become a new home not only for the skiing exhibits, but also for other exhibits interpreting the modern history of Breckenridge. There is a good collection of artifacts, and it is likely that some community outreach could turn up many more.

Climate-Controlled Secure Storage

BHA has an outstanding location in the Community Center for its document/photo storage and research area. The organization would benefit from a larger dedicated storage area where artifacts would be secured. Part of any proposed storage facility would be a climate-controlled area for delicate items like fragile papers, old clothing and other artifacts that require extra protection. The arid, high-altitude climate can cause significant deterioration to some artifacts.

The existence of a dedicated storage facility would likely increase the number of donations and loans. Persons willing to contribute their family heirlooms and other artifacts of historic or sentimental value need to be confident that those donations will be respected and protected.

Crowd-Source Modern Breckenridge History Webpage

Among the most important aspects of this plan is its effort to develop a reliable narrative of the community’s modern history. Our reviewers have suggested that a Wikipedia-type web page be developed that features the historical narrative and gives readers the opportunity to contribute comments, stories, corrections and so forth. A page(s) could be hosted on Wikipedia or a dedicated page(s) could be created on the BHA website.

This is a robust idea with good potential to not only encourage local (and probably national) involvement in telling the Breckenridge story, but also to turn up sources that might make a valuable contribution to the scholarly value of the narrative.

The challenge of implementing this idea is that such a webpage requires continual monitoring and maintenance. The page would need to be moderated by a BHA Board member (or other knowledgeable source).

The page would need to be billed as what it is: a crowd-sourced medium to serve as a forum for the exchange, discussion and debate of memories, subjective impressions and so forth. It will need to emphasize documentation rather than argumentation. For such a site to have credibility, it will be crucial for the moderator to maintain a spirit of shared truth-seeking and civil discourse, and to banish trolls who want to settle scores, grind axes or just draw attention to themselves. Its ultimate goal should be to elicit accurate information, sources or ideas that – after proper vetting and research – can support exhibit and program development.

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History Colorado

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Natural Features/Hoosier Pass
Natural Features/Ten Mile Range
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Recreation/Snowboarding
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Appendix B: Survey

Interpretation of Modern Breckenridge History Survey

Thank you for your interest in this survey. It'll take 5-10 minutes to complete.

The Breckenridge Heritage Alliance is developing an interpretive plan that will guide the development of exhibits and programs focused on the modern history (1950s-present) of Breckenridge. The plan is in its first draft stage, and we would like to get your input on the direction it should go from here. You are welcome to encourage your friends and family to participate. A copy of the draft plan can be downloaded from this site, or from the Heritage Alliance website: www.breckheritage.com.

“Statements of significance” are statements of fact that form the foundation of an interpretive plan. Statements of significance describe what is unique, special or important about a place or a period in history. The statements of significance that have been developed about the modern history of Breckenridge appear below. Please check the box that indicates how important you think each statement is. The input you provide will help us to decide how to prioritize future exhibits and programs. Completed surveys will be accepted until Monday, March 26.

The Modern Pioneers

In the late 1950s, the population of Breckenridge was only a few hundred people, but the opening of the ski area in December 1961 marked the end of several decades of population decline as a new wave of pioneers arrived – from hippies and ski bums to real estate developers – joining the remaining miners and their families to form a new local culture and economy based on mountain sports.

Extremely important Very important Somewhat important Not important

Open Space

Breckenridge voters approved a 0.5% sales tax increase in 1996 to fund an open space acquisition and management program that began the following year – as of January 2018, 58 miles of trails had been built on more than 4700 acres of protected land, and the League of American Bicyclists had designated the town as a Gold Level Bicycle-Friendly Community.

Extremely important Very important Somewhat important Not important

Evolution and Innovation in Mountain Sports

In 1983, Breckenridge became the first Colorado ski area to permit snowboarding, and the community’s recreationists and athletes have been early adopters and promoters of new mountain sports such as uphill skiing (aka “skinnying” or “alpine touring”), mountain biking and lift-served telemark skiing.

Extremely important Very important Somewhat important Not important

Melting Pot

The early years of ski area development in Breckenridge led to a melting pot of sorts, as a new wave of “counter-culture pioneers” and “blue-collar skiers” arrived, seeking a quality of life distinct from other ski towns and becoming a unique community that created memorable special events like Ullr Fest that epitomized a work-hard/play-harder ethic.

Extremely important Very important Somewhat important Not important

Real Estate Prospectors

Ski area development in Breckenridge led to a profound shift in the sociocultural composition of the Breckenridge community, as the economy shifted from mining/railroading to recreation/tourism, and real estate replaced gold as the most-valuable commodity.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

Blue River Restoration

Restoration of the Blue River through Breckenridge, a stretch of the stream that was essentially sterilized by dredge-mining operations, began in the early 1990s and is nearly complete thanks in large part to significant financial support from the Town of Breckenridge.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

National Historic District

Partly in response to the appearance of 1970s-era architecture on/near Main Street, the National Historic District that encompasses most of Breckenridge’s downtown area was designated in 1980, owing much of its unique character to decisions by early developers and property owners to restore historic buildings rather than demolish them.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

Support for the Creative Arts

Fostered in large part by a strong spirit of volunteerism, the citizens of Breckenridge have supported theatre, visual arts, music and film through efforts ranging from the creation of several cultural non-profits to the development of the Riverwalk Center and the recent Breckenridge Creative District designation, as well as a variety of special events that celebrate creativity and artistic expression.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

New Sheriff in Town

In 1996, the purchase of the Breckenridge ski area by Vail Resorts created one of the largest ski complexes in North America, enhancing marketing opportunities and leading to major on-mountain improvements in snowmaking and lifts.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

Ski Area Firsts

In addition to being the first ski area in Colorado to permit snowboarding, Breckenridge was the first ski area in the nation to install a quadruple, high-speed, detachable chairlift; the first to offer an alpine slide experience for summer visitors and the first to install a six-passenger, double-loading, high-speed chairlift.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

Ullr Fest

Since the first Ullr Fest in 1963, the event has gained a reputation as one of the best parties at any ski town, anywhere, featuring everything from ice sculpture and skating to parades, a film festival, ice plunge, bonfire and associated ski and snowboard competitions.

() Extremely important () Very important () Somewhat important () Not important

Do you have any suggestions for exhibits or programs that you'd like to see developed?

Do you have any comments or suggestions that will help us make the draft plan better?

Do you have any artifacts, documents or photographs that you might be willing to loan or donate to the Breckenridge Heritage Alliance to help us tell the story of the community? Anything from an old ski-school uniform to photos from the 1960s-1990s could become a vital part of an exhibit. If you would like to be contacted, please provide a name and phone number or e-mail, and someone from the Alliance will reach out. Your personal information will not be shared.

That's it! Thanks for helping out, your input is highly valued.

To contact the Breckenridge Heritage Alliance with questions, comments or concerns:

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