

## Estes Sustainability Report Examined: Institutional Factors Part 1

Together We Build, May 4, 2022

by Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

On Earth Day this year we wrote “Here in Estes Park the report by the Sustainability Task Force (ESTF) was recently completed, and is now in the hands of our Trustees.” Given the detailed nature of the report, with its 51 recommendations and sub recommendations, it was suggested by an interested Estes Park resident that we might take a more in-depth look at the report, over a period of weeks. Today we start by working backward from the final pages of the report, “Institutional Factors for Sustainability”. As we wrote two weeks ago, “The best way to help the trustees decide which recommendations to act on quickly is to comment, participate and act.”

<https://www.eptail.com/2022/04/21/together-we-build-earth-day-2022-ending-reliance-on-fossil-fuels/> To submit comments to the trustees: <https://estespark.colorado.gov/estf> .

The opening of this section explains “A core feature of sustainability policies is their systematic concern with community, economy, and environment. All three of these aspects of a Town's goals, policies, and programs must be addressed in balance for sustainability.” The report details the programs of other mountain communities, saying “These towns and counties have detailed sustainability plans, climate action policies, permanent community sustainability advisory boards, staff managers for their sustainability plans, and the towns have (or are pursuing) Sustainable Destination certifications.”

The report recommends establishing sustainability as a core feature of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan process in Estes Park is currently underway.

(<https://estespark.colorado.gov/comprehensiveplan> ) You can get involved now through May 22 by taking the community choices survey (you must register and plan for at least one hour of time to complete) ( <https://engageestes.org/get-involved> [https://engageestes.org/get-involved/survey\\_tools/community-choices](https://engageestes.org/get-involved/survey_tools/community-choices) )

The report recommends full integration of sustainability into the Town's annual strategic planning. The Town of Estes Park Strategic Plans can be found at these links:

<https://estespark.colorado.gov/strategicplan> and

<https://dms.estes.org/weblink/ElectronicFile.aspx?docid=175382&dbid=0> Currently, environmental sustainability has very little presence in these documents. The ESTF report suggests specific ways in which the Town should integrate sustainability into the Strategic Plan, by requiring “performance measures, ongoing project performance assessments, and project realignments: “You can't manage what you don't measure.””

ESTF suggests repositioning Estes Park as a Sustainable Destination. Throughout the entire report are suggestions, such as establishing a composting center, creating zero-waste guidelines for the many events held on town property, requiring lodging facilities including short-term rentals to provide recycling cans or bins as a condition of their operating permits, and making recycling easy and less expensive than landfilling for tourists, residents and local businesses alike. Visit Estes Park (VEP) has created a Sustainability and Policy Manager position, announced in a VEP article about the Confluence of States Annual Conference in September 2021.

(<https://www.visitestespark.com/articles/post/confluence-of-states-will-hold-a-signing-ceremony-for-new-member-states-in-estes-park/> ) The ESTF report recommends support of the sustainability initiatives of VEP. The sustainable destination criteria for certification is available from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. (<https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/become-certified-destination/>)

The criteria is divided into 4 sections: Sustainable Management; Socio-economic sustainability; Cultural sustainability; and Environmental sustainability. (<https://www.gstcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GSTC-Destination-Criteria-v2.0.pdf> ) Among the low-impact transportation requirements is “Improvement and promotion of cycling and walking opportunities”, which our community could use much more of in the form of trails and sidewalks. The resource management

criteria for certification as a Sustainable Destination includes energy conservation, waste management, Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) and climate change mitigation, all of which have been identified as focus areas in the ESTF report.

The ESTF report suggests the creation of “a sustainability portal on the Town website to educate residents and visitors about resources and Town policies and programs for sustainability.” This would be extremely helpful, as we know that the Town does have initiatives like the electrification of its fleet, but finding that information on the Town website is elusive. We think that sustainability should be front and center in the information that the Town provides residents, businesses and visitors. The Town of Estes Park should lead prominently and boldly to set the tone for sustainability in our community.

Beck, Thomas W., Together We Build, “Estes Sustainability Report Examined Institutional Factors Part 1”, *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, Friday, May 4, 2022, <https://www.eptrail.com/2022/05/04/together-we-build-estes-sustainability-report-examined-institutional-factors-part-1/>