

Historic and Cultural Resources Element

“I know of no way of judging the future but by the past.” - Patrick Henry

Vision: Promote our cultural heritage through the protection of important cultural and historic resources.

Introduction

Summit County’s history has included several different “waves” of settlement and activity. The first wave, of which little is recorded, is the use of the County by Native Americans. Because of the County’s high elevations, the land was primarily visited by Native Americans during the summertime for hunting. Signs of these visitations can be found in areas such as Vail Pass, where archaeologists have uncovered an historic Ute hunting camp.

The second wave occurred with the arrival of settlers from the east and the gold rush. In 1859 gold was found in the Blue River just north of present-day Breckenridge and the gold rush was on. The Town of Breckenridge was founded, and it became the first permanent town on Colorado’s western slope. Soon, other areas of the County were prospected and dozens of town settlements sprung up to feed the gold rush frenzy. The towns of Frisco and Dillon were established during this mining boom era. But for every town that endured, numerous others eventually disappeared as the mining claims were played out. Once-thriving mining towns such as Parkville, Chihuahua, Wheeler, and Robinson eventually became only memories. However, there are still numerous remnants of the area’s history scattered throughout the County. These remnants include mining shafts, old mine buildings, and tailings associated with the area’s mining legacy. Old settler’s cabins can also be found in numerous locations.

While mining was the dominant employment activity in most of the County during the late 1800s and early 1900s, another source of income came from ranching. Ranching occurred throughout the valley areas of the County, but was most prevalent in the Lower Blue River valley. Because of the high elevation, ranching in the County has been mostly limited to raising cattle and growing hay. Some of the ranches in the County have been handed down through the family for generations, and continue to be actively ranched.

By the 1960s, mining was mainly a memory of the past (with the exception of the Climax Molybdenum Mine at Fremont Pass). Population had dwindled from the mining boom years. In its place, “white” gold began to be harvested at Arapahoe Basin and Breckenridge ski areas. As skiing increased in popularity, the Keystone and Copper Mountain ski areas were created in the early 1970s and the County was experiencing its third wave of settlement and growth. Today’s economy is based primarily on the County’s recreational amenities.

The rich history of the County can serve as a benchmark for our community to reflect on as it contemplates its future. Historic buildings that are found serve as reminders of the area’s past and an industry that, with the major exception of the Climax Mine, has disappeared. These historic structures and sites also provide an attraction for locals and visitors that adds to the appeal of the area and contributes to the local economy. Given the significance of the historic and cultural resources, it is the intent of this Plan to promote the protection of these resources and encourage efforts to educate visitors and residents about the area’s history.

Regulatory Framework

Protection of historic resources is primarily accomplished on a voluntary basis by landowners. Colorado statutes allow the Board of County Commissioners

“to provide for the preservation of the cultural, historic, and architectural history within the county by ordinance or resolution; to delegate the power to designate historic landmarks and historic districts to an historic preservation advisory board; to accept dedicated or deeded easements or other historic property and to expend moneys for the maintenance of such deeded historic land, facilities, and structures; and to receive contributions, gifts, or other support from public and private entities to defray the maintenance costs of such historic land, facilities, and structures” (Colorado Revised Statutes 30-11-107 (1)(bb)).

Based on this statutory authority, the County established the Summit County Historic Preservation Advisory Board and regulations for the designation of historical landmarks and structures. Although this designation is intended to protect a site or structure’s character, there are limitations to its use: 1) the designation of a historic structure may only occur with the consent of the landowner; and 2) the County cannot require the preservation of a designated historic structure. Several structures have been designated by the County for their historic significance (e.g., the Rice Barns, Slate Creek Hall, and Old County Courthouse).

In summary, existing statutes limit the ability of counties to prevent historic structures from being destroyed, but statutes do allow counties to work cooperatively with landowners to achieve historic preservation. There are tax benefits available for protecting historic structures that may entice a landowner to preserve the structure. In addition, a historic theme can be mandated in architectural design standards. For example, a building that is altered or rehabilitated could be required to be rebuilt with a similar historic architectural style. The Town of Breckenridge employs this approach in its historic district.

Summit County Historic Sites

Table 1. Summit County Designated Structures of Historic Significance

Name	Basin
Rice barns	Snake River
Slate Creek Hall	Lower Blue
Old County Courthouse	Upper Blue

Source: Summit County Historic Preservation Advisory Board.

Table 2. Federal and State Listed Historic Properties in Summit County

Name	Designation	Basin	Significance
Boreas Railroad Site	National Register ¹ Colorado State Register ²	Upper Blue	Located at an elevation of 11,498 feet at Boreas Pass, the site served as a railroad station during construction of the railroad over the pass and during its operation from 1882 to 1937. The restored Section House is the most prominent surviving structure.
Breckenridge Historic District	National Register Colorado State Register	Upper Blue	The district contains approximately 180 structures with excellent examples of late 19 th and early 20 th century commercial, residential,

Name	Designation	Basin	Significance
			and religious architecture associated with Colorado mountain mining communities.
Porcupine Peak Site	National Register Colorado State Register	Snake River	Located on a river terrace, this prehistoric site is significant for its numerous occupational components, extensive time range, and evidence suggesting a variety of cultural activities.
Frisco Schoolhouse	National Register Colorado State Register	Ten Mile	Built circa 1890, this wood frame rural schoolhouse includes an elaborate bell tower and a stained glass window.
Wildhack's Grocery Store/Post Office	National Register Colorado State Register	Ten Mile	The building, which served as a local gathering place, housed the U.S. Post Office from 1914 to 1966, and for many years was the only general store in Frisco.
Slate Creek Bridge	National Register Colorado State Register	Lower Blue	Constructed in 1924, this replacement bridge over the Blue River consists of a rigid-connected, eight-panel steel Parker pony truss with buttresses. It is the only Colorado example of this Pratt subtype bridge.

¹ National Register of Historic Places.

² Colorado State Register of Historic Properties.

Source: Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Goals, Policies/Actions

Goal A. Identify, protect, and enhance the important historical and cultural resources of the County, recognizing that the historic structures, archeological sites, and cultural resources are links to the County's past and should continue to define the future.

Policy/Action 1. Develop a comprehensive inventory of the County's historical and cultural resources (structures and sites of local, state, and national historical significance). In conjunction with property owners, the Summit Historical Society, and Colorado Historical Society, this inventory should be assessed to determine which historical and cultural resources are important to preserve.

Policy/Action 2. Work cooperatively with property owners to avoid development impacts to historic and cultural resources. Where impacts cannot be entirely avoided, these should be mitigated whenever possible by use of one or more of the following:

- 2.1 Incorporate historic structures into new development, including the planning and design of trails, parks and open areas.
- 2.2 Design new development to fit with historical architectural themes.
- 2.3 Preserve historic structures and sites in their existing location when possible and practical. Where it is not practical to retain historic structures in their original location, relocation should occur to another site within the development or within the Basin.

Policy/Action 3. Develop incentives to encourage the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

Policy/Action 4. Wherever possible and appropriate, promote educational and interpretive efforts to provide property owners, residents, and visitors information about the County’s rich local heritage.

Sustainability Measures

There are literally hundreds of old structures scattered across the landscape of the County. It is not practical or desirable to preserve all of these structures. However, protection of some key structures that are good representatives of our cultural heritage is important. Therefore, the monitoring of new historic property acquisitions and new federal, state, or local designations provides one indication of how our historic and cultural heritage is being preserved. The following two tables are intended to track these items over time.

Table 3. Summit County Historic Property Acquisitions¹ (2003-2008)		
Historic Property Name	Property Owner/Manager	Significance

¹ New historic properties that come under ownership or management of the Summit Historical Society, Frisco Historical Society, or other entities/agencies with the purpose of maintaining the site and any structures for their historic values.

Table 4. Federal, State, or Local Designations of Historic Properties and Structures in Summit County (2003-2008)		
Historic Resource Name	Type of Designation¹	Significance

¹ Federal register, state register, county historic designation.

Implementation Strategies

Many of the policies and actions identified in this element propose some future work, such as an amendment to the Land Use and Development Code, in order to see their successful implementation. The table below identifies specific strategies recommended to fully implement the Historic and Cultural Resources Element. Priorities are identified to give an indication of the current relative importance of a particular implementation strategy. These priorities are provided as guidelines only.

Goal, Policy/Action	Project/Description	Timeframe	Priority
A.1	Develop a comprehensive inventory of the County's historical and cultural resources. Identify the potential risk of loss to each resource. Provide recommendations of which structures and sites should be designated for their historic significance at the local, state, or national levels. In conjunction with property owners, the Summit Historical Society, and Colorado Historical Society, this inventory should be assessed to determine which historical and cultural resources are important to preserve.	Ongoing	Medium
A.2.2	As part of the proposed Development Code amendments to adopt new countywide design standards (see the Design and Visual Resources section), a section should include discussion of designing new development to fit with historic architectural themes.	6 months	Medium
A.3	Gather together experts in historic preservation, along with appropriate governmental entities (e.g., Summit County Building and Planning Departments) to identify different types of incentives that could be enacted to encourage the preservation of historic and cultural resources. Once a list of incentives has been identified, assign appropriate parties to implement the incentives.	6 months – 1 year	Medium

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