

Vermont Ski Museum
Strategic Plan: 2008-2010
“A Transformation from Success to Vibrancy”

Summary: This document has been developed by the Vermont Ski Museum’s staff and Board of Directors to guide the Vermont Ski Museum in a bold new direction over the next three years. Because the Museum has been successful in accomplishing its initial objectives of becoming the definitive source for information about Vermont skiing history, as well as becoming the owner and protector of a uniquely valuable collection of objects that support this history, the developers of this document believe it is now appropriate to transition the Museum in a new direction. This essence of this new direction can best be captured by the title of this plan: *“A Transformation from Success to Vibrancy.”*

The Museum’s mission remains: “To Collect, Preserve, and Celebrate Vermont’s Skiing History.” But what this new direction means is that the Vermont Ski Museum, while continuing to build and protect its large collection, will put far more emphasis on finding new and exciting ways to convey the fun, excitement, and interesting history of the sport to the vast audience of ski-sport enthusiasts in Stowe, in the State of Vermont, and worldwide. An over-arching goal is to enhance its product offering in order to create an exciting “must-see” venue for visitors and tourists from afar, and Vermont residents alike.

Goals: After its first six years of operation in Stowe, the Museum wishes to leverage upon the initial success as a well-respected, professionally run museum. Through discussions with community members, business partners, ski fanatics of all types, and existing and potential supporters, the Board has identified four areas that warrant substantial enhancement:

- ***Enliven the building’s exterior*** to complement the dynamic activity occurring inside the Museum, as well as the bustling activities of Stowe Village and Stowe Mountain Resort;
- ***Upgrade the exhibit design and presentation*** offerings to make them more compelling through the better use of new multi-media and interactive technology; employ the firm of *Shadows and Light* to help reorganize the interior space into a large, long term timeline of Vermont’s skiing history including two large scale, in-depth rotating exhibits;
- ***Develop the web site*** into a more comprehensive research tool to provide access to the Museum’s extensive database of historical materials for students, researchers, and museum members, and to enable e-commerce of memberships and Museum shop items; and
- ***Grow the endowment*** fund so as to protect the Museum’s collections and to assure the maintenance of its mission into perpetuity.

Background: In 1988, Vermont writer and publisher Roy Newton began collecting retired ski gear, equipment, machinery, signs, library materials and other skiing memorabilia in the Brandon, Vermont, area. He organized his findings, and chartered the Vermont Ski Museum, located initially near the Brandon Inn. Although the location did not promote visitation, Newton amassed a large collection of historical skiing-related materials that would have otherwise been destroyed. This collection became the nucleus of the Vermont Ski Museum’s collection in Stowe.

In 2000, a group of Stowe businessmen, looking to document a critical piece of Vermont’s history and to offer another activity for Stowe locals and visitors to enjoy, purchased the Museum collection and the associated rights. They launched a \$1.4 million campaign to save the condemned 1818 Old Town Hall as the home of the new Vermont Ski Museum. Managed by volunteers throughout the State, the campaign reunited Vermont ski racers, 10th Mountain Division members, area developers, self-professed ski bums, and industry pioneers. This has been the backbone of the Museum’s first six years of life.

The initial goals of the Museum were to fulfill a broad mission to *“Collect, Preserve, and Celebrate Vermont’s Skiing History.”* More specifically, the Board wanted to tell the many stories of Vermont’s skiing history through exhibits and programs. In acknowledgement of Vermont’s four seasons of tourism, a demanding

exhibit schedule of exhibits changing at least one exhibit per season was implemented. This was augmented by a series of seasonal fundraising events each year. Using this model, the Museum has successfully served as an educational and historical resource for researchers of all ages, a community gathering space, a catalyst for reunions and memory sharing, and a focal point for the local community and the Vermont skiing community.

The First Six Years' Results: During its first six years in Stowe the Museum has proven that:

- There is an *important need to preserve the stories and materials of Vermont's skiing history*, and that the Vermont Ski Museum is the only organization dedicated to this task. The Museum has partnered with diverse statewide organizations such as: the Vermont Ski Areas Association, the Vermont Folklife Center, the Vermont ski and snowboard academies, the Catamount Trail Association, the University of Vermont Extension Program 4-H, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, plus individual ski areas, to collect stories, to conduct research, and to offer programs.
- *The building of the collection is crucial* – without the Museum doing so, this history would be lost within the next few decades! Many others agree. The Museum has received 3 National Endowment for the Humanities grants, one from the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, and one from the American Association of Museums, to build and maintain the collection and collection storage.
- *Our community values the programs offered by the Museum.* The Museum offers diverse programs for the Stowe community and for the greater skiing community. This is a difficult balancing act with a small staff and a small budget, but the programs and events have resulted in financial gain, a strong membership base, national publicity, and many happy memories.

A New Vision for the Vermont Ski Museum:

While the Museum has successfully achieved its initial goals and is considered a quality cultural institution, the Board has determined that its programs and exhibits should now be taken to the next level. This will further solidify the Museum's place in the Vermont and Skiing communities, make the story of Vermont skiing more accessible to visitors and residents, and ensure its long term financial viability.

To this end, the Board has adopted the following **Vision Statement:**

The Museum should:

- *Be a top quality, professional, innovative, and interactive small museum serving as a fun and memorable educational experience and visitor attraction through diverse programs and visually stimulating, informative exhibits that reflect the dynamic nature of skiing;*
- *Cover all disciplines of ski-sport, including alpine, nordic, and snowboarding;*
- *Be a nationally and internationally renown educational resource for historical information on Vermont skiing and its social and economic impacts; and*
- *Be a community, statewide and regional cultural attraction participating in worthwhile partnerships with like-minded organizations and businesses.*
- *Be financially strong through broad membership and sponsorship support, careful operating cost containment, and the growth and conservative management of the museum's endowment fund: "The Vermont Ski Legacy Society."*

The Board of Directors realizes this is an ambitious plan, but the past support and the untapped potential throughout Vermont (and even nationally) builds confidence that this is a worthy and necessary project that can be accomplished. The Museum should reflect the **dynamism of the sport of skiing**. The Museum should reach its potential as an **educational resource**. The Museum should add to the **sparkle of the town** through its external appearance and its offerings. The Museum should **attract lifelong skiers and their families**. The Museum should continue to responsibly **add to its collections and to safely display them**. The Museum should **be financially strong and establish a large, well-managed endowment** to support its ongoing needs. These goals are attainable; the Museum is already well on the path to achieving them!