

## Colorado's Ski Resorts Retool As Year-Round Destinations

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As another Colorado ski season comes to a close, the state's resorts are pouring millions into new projects aimed at attracting guests during the warm-weather months.



*Courtesy of Copper Mountain*  
Copper Mountain Resort, Colorado

These efforts are partially driven by evolving economic realities in resort towns and a warming climate that makes the Rocky Mountains' characteristic fluffy powder more difficult to predict.

The drive toward year-round tourism is being driven in large part by looming concerns over [climate change](#). The [National Ski Areas Association](#) has identified [climate change](#) as the No. 1 threat to the snow sports industry.

Companies that own resorts in areas like Summit County, Copper Mountain and Winter Park have never been shy about spending money to improve or add to their attractions. But the efforts to appeal to summer clientele seem to be reaching a new pace and scale.

Copper Mountain Resort recently completed what it describes as “the single largest resort investment in more than a decade,” [a five-year, \\$100M improvement program](#) that includes the renovation of a bike park, a new hiking trail and upgrades to the Copper Creek Golf Course.

Other facility investments designed for the resort's nonskiing clientele include an athletic club with a full gym and a lap pool, as well as pickleball and tennis courts, according to Graeme Bilenduke, director of planning and property services at Copper Mountain Resort.

The Aerie, a midmountain lodge, opened there in November. Situated at the top of a ski lift, it is a 25K SF, two-story building with a full-service restaurant, bar and lounge, as well as a private dining area for events.

“The Aerie goes beyond skiers, allowing nonskiers to immerse themselves in the mountain ambiance,” Bilenduke said, adding the facility is also a new wedding venue.

Copper isn’t alone in courting the wedding crowd. Aspen Snowmass advertises itself as a **prime location for weddings**, with a variety of elevated outdoor and indoor venues that can accommodate hundreds of guests.

Even those resorts geared toward hardcore skiers are putting time and money into upgrading their summer activities and attractions. B.L. Holdinghaus, the director of engineering, maintenance and project management at Monarch Mountain, said the resort spent around \$50K to upgrade and refurbish its **1960s-era mountain tramway** after buying the venue in 2022. The tram had about 10,000 visitors last year, he told *Bisnow*.

While summertime visitations to Monarch are up, “It’s a balancing act to keep it as affordable as possible,” Holdinghaus said.

Winter Park’s ownership is upgrading several important summer venues, including its Trestle Bike Park, said Jen Miller, public relations and communication manager at Winter Park Resort. Winter Park is one of several resorts that has opened its borders to mountain bikers in the summers and is busy adding boardwalks, jumps and other features to its 40 miles of trails. Winter Park is also renovating its **Alpine Slide**, which it advertises as the longest such ride in Colorado.

“We’re actually staying open later and opening earlier for skiing because of advances in snowmaking,” Miller said. “But for snowmaking to be successful, it has to be cold enough, the humidity has to be correct — it’s a whole science.”



*Courtesy of Winter Park Resort*  
Conifer Commons housing at Winter Park

Colorado mountain resorts have also been targeted by out-of-state investment and development firms for their high-end appeal to luxury tourists regardless of the temperature. Two Florida-based firms, **Fort Partners** and **Merrimac Ventures**, are building a **Four Seasons hotel** and condo property in Telluride. It is Telluride’s **first property under the Four Seasons brand** and the first hotel or condo development in Mountain Village in 15 years.

The project, situated at the foot of the resort’s mountain and next to the ski gondola service, will have 52 guest rooms and 68 residences, with the average guest rate expected to be more than \$1K per night. The property’s one-bedroom condos are listed at more than \$2M, and its units go up to six bedrooms.

“The development is making great progress since launching sales last month, and we expect to break ground by the end of the year, with completion slated for August 2027,” Merrimac Ventures CEO Dev Motwani told *Bisnow* via email.

Merrimac and Fort Partners are programming the Four Seasons property to appeal to residents across seasons, including by creating walking paths and plazas for events.

Motwani said Telluride is already a prime year-round destination for tourists.

“The relatively cooler summer temperatures draw seasonal visitors and buyers from hotter climates to town, where they enjoy the popular music and film festivals, indoor and outdoor sports, world-class restaurants and more,” he said.

Drawing tourists year-round requires being staffed up year-round, and many resorts, particularly in ritzy enclaves like Aspen, Telluride and Vail, have been building workforce housing to ensure their staffs have somewhere affordable to live.

Affordable housing is a growing problem across the country, but the issue is particularly acute in Colorado’s high country, where a majority of homes are either vacation rentals or second homes that sit vacant for much of the year, and where regional home prices have more than doubled since 2019.

These properties are out of reach for the lift operators, hotel clerks and servers that keep the towns’ amenities working.

In December, Winter Park opened Conifer Commons, a \$60M project funded primarily by Alterra, Winter Park’s parent company. The facility provides more than 330 beds to resort workers in a four-story building, with a mix of studio apartments and single units with shared bathrooms and communal kitchens. Construction took 18 months from groundbreaking to completion due to the use of modular components that were manufactured by Nashua Builders at its facilities in Idaho and then assembled and completed on-site.

Conifer Commons is on the Winter Park property, so employees can walk to work.

“They can walk across the street and live here without a car. It’s on the free bus route. It has laundry, everything you need,” Miller said.

Resort employees can set up six- and nine-month leases. Those shorter-term contracts are needed in these towns, where workers tend to come and go with the seasons.

With the melting snow, Winter Park’s summer workforce is moving in, Miller said.

“In winter, we have the ski workers, then we switch over to summer operations and have new employees that come in and work only for the summer. The cycle starts again in the fall,” she said. “Some work both seasons. But the majority of our front-line workers, lift operators, just come in for a season, then go do something else.”

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