

Royal Gorge: Public Input Report

August 25, 2006



Objective: Collaborative Land Use Planning

Royal Gorge LLC, a partnership led by Todd B. Foster and Kirk C. Syme, purchased Royal Gorge cross-country ski resort and several thousand acres of land at Donner Summit in North Lake Tahoe. The partnership hopes to develop portions of the land.

Shortly after purchasing the land, Royal Gorge LLC retained the services of a land planning firm to evaluate the property and gain a better understanding of environmentally sensitive areas. They also retained the services of a public affairs consultant and began an effort to reach out to the Donner Summit and greater Truckee-North Lake Tahoe communities, including meeting with numerous groups and individuals.

Reaching out to the community and soliciting public input before a land use plan has been developed is the beginning of what Royal Gorge owners hope will be a collaborative land use planning process with the local Donner Summit and regional Truckee-Tahoe communities.

In the past several months, dozens of people have recounted their thoughts and concerns about future Royal Gorge development. This report describes what people had to say.

Phase One: Pre-Development Plan



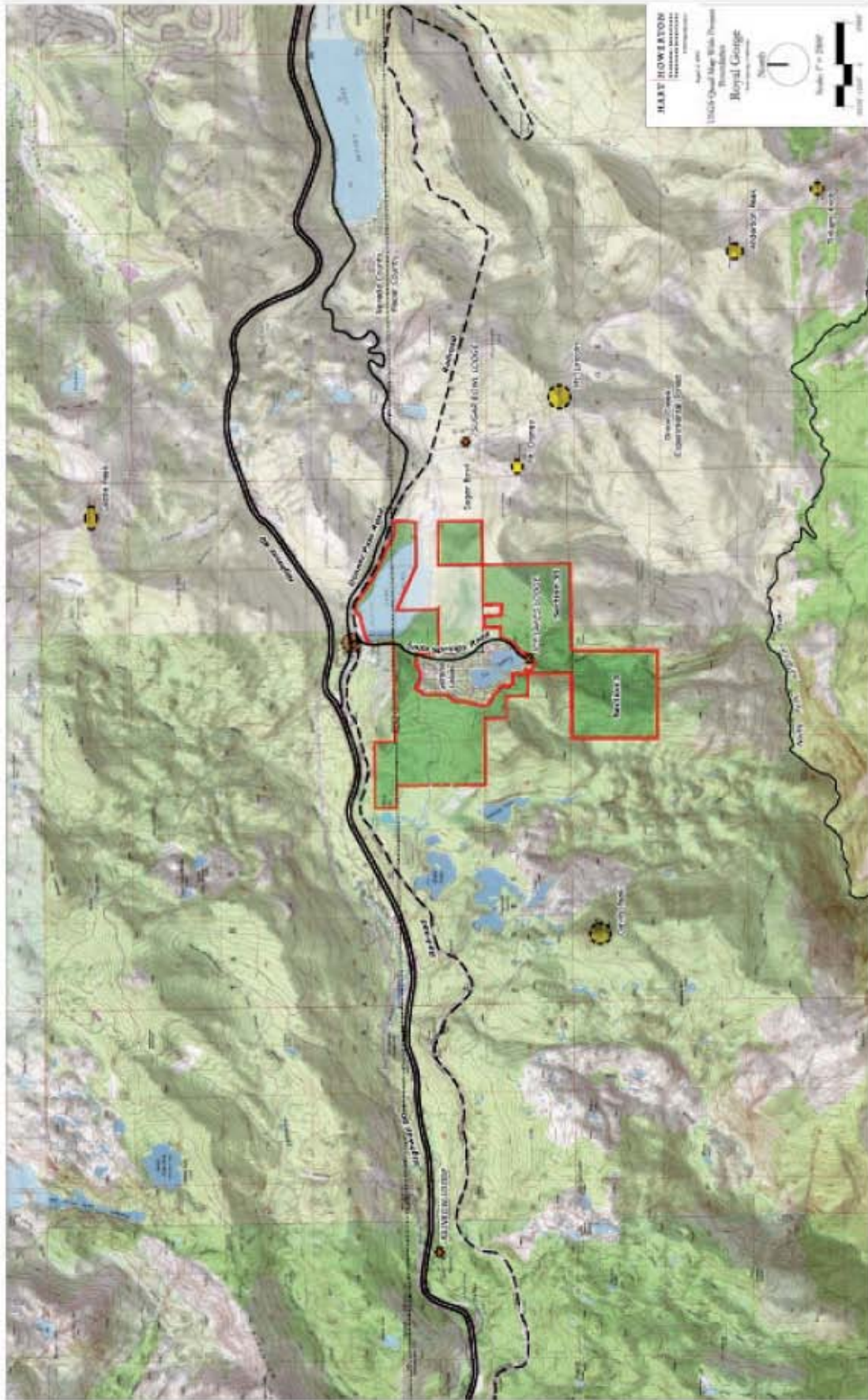
Phase One of public input: Whereas valuable input was obtained, it is important to note that the comments elicited are strictly preliminary because no development plan has been completed or presented to the community. At this stage, individuals and groups described general concerns about future development at Royal Gorge.

Future input, working relationships: Once Royal Gorge LLC is better able to define its future plans, additional input will be sought from the community. And even more important, Royal Gorge LLC intends to establish ongoing partnerships and collaborative working relationships with community groups to help refine ideas concerning future development.

Development versus operations: The purpose of the community outreach was to elicit people's thoughts concerning potential future real estate development. But Royal Gorge is a functioning cross-country ski resort, and therefore many public comments had to do with ski resort operations.

Neighboring property owners and Donner Summit residents are interested in activities taking place on Royal Gorge land – whether the activities concern resort operations or real estate development. Many local residents regard resort operations as a kind of *barometer* to help them gauge how considerate of the community the new owners are likely to be when it comes to future real estate development.

Royal Gorge LLC Land Holdings



Methods of Gaining Public Input



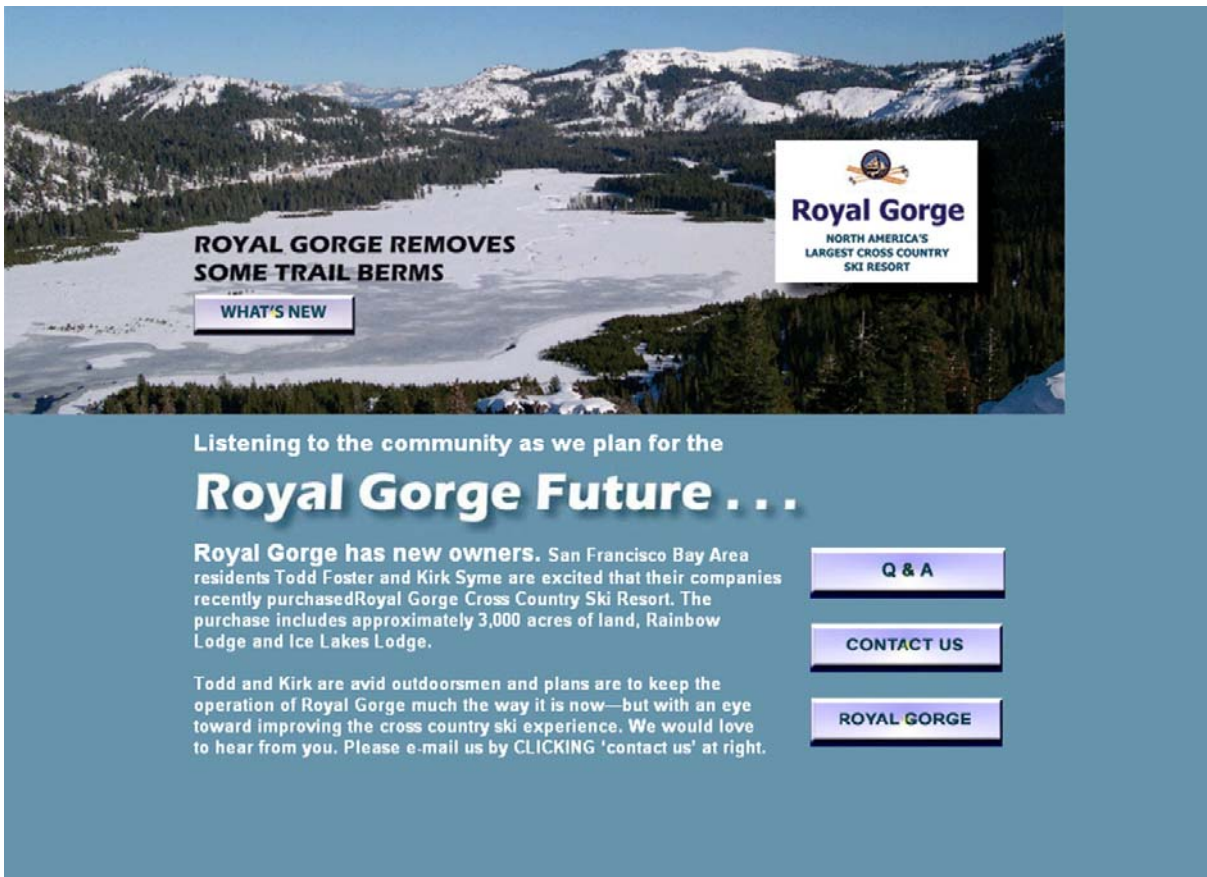
Identifying stakeholders: A working list was created of people believed to have an interest in potential future real estate development at Royal Gorge. (See Appendix.) As more information was obtained, the stakeholder list grew. Groups and individuals were contacted by phone, letter and email. In most cases, a meeting or several meetings, a lengthy phone conversation and/or an exchange of emails occurred. A few representatives of groups were contacted but did not respond. And despite best efforts, it is likely there are groups and individuals who were overlooked and not placed on the stakeholder list. This is the beginning of a lengthy community outreach process, and efforts to expand public participation will continue.

Donner Summit groups take precedence: Roughly half of the list consisted of Donner Summit groups and individuals. It was determined that the earliest contacts should be with groups and individuals at Donner Summit, because of their proximity to Royal Gorge.

Regional organizations: Included in the stakeholder list are numerous regional, general interest, government and non-governmental organizations and agencies whose interest may be generated once the owners have a concept development plan for the property. It was determined that contact with these groups and individuals should occur later, once a general plan is available for initial review.

Regional environmental organizations: As with Donner Summit stakeholders, it was determined that regional environmental organizations should be contacted *before* a conceptual development plan is available for review. These groups consist primarily of those that took an active role in the recent Martis Valley Community Plan update, and/or those with interests in geographic features that are part of the Royal Gorge property.

Website: A new website, www.royalgorgefuture.com, was established and publicized. This website is linked to the existing Royal Gorge website, www.royalgorge.com. The new website was set up for the express purpose of gaining community input. The website includes a comment form. Those who comment receive a reply, thanking them for their input, and/or responding to questions or requests for more information. In addition, people submitting comments may ask to be placed on a mailing list to receive regular informational updates in the future.



ROYAL GORGE REMOVES SOME TRAIL BERMS

WHAT'S NEW

Royal Gorge
NORTH AMERICA'S
LARGEST CROSS COUNTRY
SKI RESORT

Listening to the community as we plan for the
Royal Gorge Future . . .

Royal Gorge has new owners. San Francisco Bay Area residents Todd Foster and Kirk Syme are excited that their companies recently purchased Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Resort. The purchase includes approximately 3,000 acres of land, Rainbow Lodge and Ice Lakes Lodge.

Todd and Kirk are avid outdoorsmen and plans are to keep the operation of Royal Gorge much the way it is now—but with an eye toward improving the cross country ski experience. We would love to hear from you. Please e-mail us by CLICKING 'contact us' at right.

Q & A

CONTACT US

ROYAL GORGE

Database, regular updates: A database has been created of groups and individuals from whom input has been obtained, as well as people who have asked to be kept informed. In the future, updates will be disseminated on a regular basis using this database.

Who Provided Input

Donner Summit neighbors:



Serene Lakes Property Owners Association

(SLPOA)—Serene Lakes is a subdivision of about 800 existing homes and cabins located directly adjacent to Royal Gorge property. The subdivision contains several additional privately owned home sites without homes. This subdivision could potentially be the most immediately affected by real estate development on Royal Gorge property. Input was sought through both the SLPOA organization, and by talking directly with individual Serene Lakes homeowners. The current SLPOA board president is Martin Bern.

Sugar Bowl homeowners—Sugar Bowl ski area includes 97 private residences.

Donner Summit Area Association (DSAA)—This organization of Donner Summit area residents and businesses first began in late 2004. The group's purpose is to assure, through long-range planning, that the Summit remains a special place to live, work and visit. The group hopes to develop a long-range conceptual economic development and land use plan for the Summit, with the goal of enhancing the attractiveness of the area and ensuring that growth benefits the general public. Its current president is Daniel Wexler.

Donner Summit residents, businesses—In addition to meeting with organized groups, input was sought from individuals who live and work at Donner Summit, including both full-time and part-time residents.

Major landowners, adjacent and nearby—There are several major landowners near or adjacent to the Royal Gorge land holdings. (See map, Page 3.) They include individual as well as institutional owners, such as the San Juan Unified School District and the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

Palisades—Palisades is a small collection of summer homes and cabins on approximately 1,000 acres surrounding Palisade Lake west of the Royal Gorge property.

Cedars—The Cedars is a private, secluded residential enclave of cabins on about 9,000 acres south and east of Royal Gorge property. A small number of individuals and families, most from the San Francisco Bay Area, own summer homes within the enclave.

Donner Summit ski areas:

Conversations were held with representatives of several ski areas near Royal Gorge, including Boreal, Donner Ski Ranch, Soda Springs and Sugar Bowl.

Regional environmental organizations:

Initial contact has been established with **Mountain Area Preservation Foundation**, the **Sierra Club**, **Sierra Watch**, the **South Yuba River Citizens League**, and the **Sierra Business Council**. Plans are to undertake a collaborative process to reach agreement between regional environmental organizations and Royal Gorge LLC concerning existing conditions at the Royal Gorge property.

Service districts, agencies:

Initial discussions were held with the Donner Summit Public Utility District and the Sierra Lakes County Water District.

Cultural, historical:

Through Pacific Municipal consultant John Nadolski, the **Washoe Tribe** has been informed of the prospect of future real estate development at Royal Gorge, but no input has been sought from the tribe yet. Representatives of the **Lincoln Highway Association**, California Chapter, were emailed but did not respond.

Recurring themes, concerns, and recommendations



Below is a summary of the many comments Royal Gorge has received during the last several months. Commentary has been organized into recurring themes.

Public access to trails, open space

The greatest number and intensity of comments concerned public access to trails, open space and wilderness. Residents of Serene Lakes, in particular, expressed a belief that Royal Gorge Ski Resort restricts access to roads and trails that are public. This appears to occur when skiers cross Royal Gorge trails in order to access public land. Many people also complained about the plethora of “No Trespassing” signs on Royal Gorge land. In response, Royal Gorge has begun to reduce the number of signs and is exploring sign text revisions to create a more welcoming atmosphere, especially for neighboring property owners.

In addition, many people recreate on the U.S. Forest Service parcel of land that runs east of Soda Springs Road. Several people mentioned rumors they had heard of a potential land exchange that would make this parcel private, in exchange for a private parcel elsewhere becoming Forest Service land. Opposition to such an exchange was expressed. Royal Gorge owners have provided background information to respond to this concern, as follows: Royal Gorge owners preliminarily explored many ideas shortly after purchasing the land, and the feasibility of a land exchange was one of them. But it was deemed not feasible, and was not pursued. The impetus for exploring an exchange was to gain more contiguous public open space, and Royal Gorge owners remain interested in pursuing that goal.

Here are some examples of commentary concerning public access:

“Address the issue of public access to public land and undeveloped private land. The Summit residents have enjoyed summer access to both the public lands within and surrounding Royal Gorge, as well as the undeveloped Royal Gorge land. Continuing this access would immensely increase the Summit support of new homes on Royal Gorge property...Our special hope is that we'll be able to continue to hike on the Royal Gorge property in the summer. If there's a concern, maybe Serene Lakes residents could receive an ID card and sign a commitment to pick up any trash, including pet droppings... Your land is our treasure too and we want to be good neighbors.”

“In the winter, we need places to cross Royal Gorge trails so we can get to public land.”

“Your property is a private property barrier that prevents us from getting to Forest Service land. You should be talking about opening it up so we have access to Forest Service land.”

“Do you have to have a @#&% No Parking and No Trespassing sign on every tree in the forest?”

“I find the overabundance of trespassing signs obnoxious and unnecessary.”

“Can you please inform your employees that Pahatsi is a public road and create some signage similar to what has been done on the Cedars road across from Ice Lakes Lodge?”

“Please bring down your walls...stop posting everything as trespassing on land that you do not own. Get rid of dangerous cables and gates.”

“It's important for Royal Gorge to understand that access to free backcountry skiing DOES NOT represent a threat to their business. I ski both the Foresthill road (free) and Royal Gorge (paid) and consider the two completely different. The tracks, services and extensive trail system will always make RG

attractive, regardless of the availability of free backcountry skiing.”

During this spring’s snow melt, a letter arrived expressing appreciation for roping off certain areas of the ski resort, as follows:

“I am writing to reinforce the importance of using cables and chains to rope off certain areas within the Royal Gorge Ski area...The weekend of June 10th, my buddies and I were going backpacking into Devils Peak Lake...We came across a downed tree...We started looking at how to drive around it...We noticed a big open meadow...with a cable that was lying on the ground. It was apparent that the cable was supposed to be up...As we began to drive through the meadow...we discovered that it was very wet and soft ground. We ended up getting stuck in the snow and mud...By the time we ended up getting the truck back to the roadway, it had made quite a mess...This incident taught me that the cables, chains and ropes...are in place for a certain reason. I would like to apologize to you all, and to let you know that I have definitely learned my lesson...”

Van Norden Meadow

A pressing issue on many people’s minds is a development proposal near the Van Norden Meadow. As part of its land purchase, Royal Gorge LLC inherited this development proposal. The development proposal calls for 18 home sites, a lodge, employee housing and an ice rink, all located in the upland area, not the meadow itself. The proposal is under review by Nevada County. (There is a small amount of Royal Gorge LLC property in Nevada County, but the vast majority of the land holding is in Placer County.)

Input received indicates that people consider the Meadow a special place culturally and environmentally, and want to see development either limited or avoided altogether at this location. Here are some of the comments received concerning Van Norden Meadow:



“No development in Lake Van Norden. It is a beautiful meadow and should stay that way.”

“I am concerned about the construction of single family homes along the north edge of the Van Norden Meadow. The forest is very narrow between the old Lincoln Highway and the meadow. Homes built there would be in a rich ecotone, which we need to preserve for wildlife habitat.”

“I’m not opposed to all development at Van Norden. I would support something that is well-planned, with traffic mitigated and homes set back in the trees.”

“We don’t like that this is piecemeal development... We want to see comprehensive planning... And the fact that the land is split between two counties is not good. It is one eco-system after all.”

“People’s ashes are spread there. I have been to weddings and funerals there. The Meadow is considered sacred. It’s the heart of the community.”

“The Meadow is geologically, culturally and biologically important. It was an important place for the Miwok and Washoe Tribes because of wildlife. Geologically, it is the divide between the western and eastern Sierra. It is the wrong place for development.”

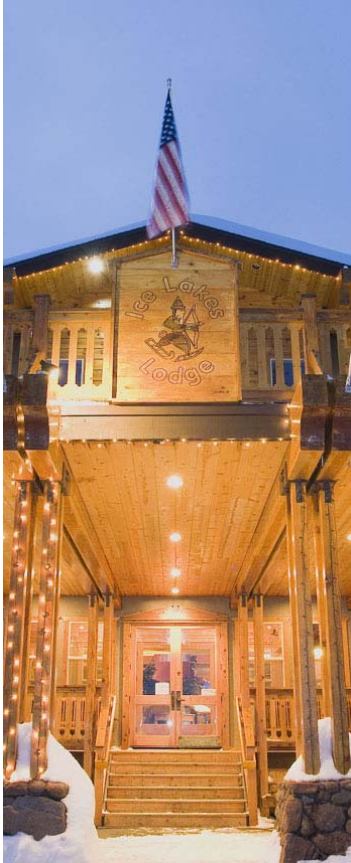
“The second priority of the Truckee Donner Land Trust is preservation of the Van Norden Meadow.”

“Our main concern is the Van Norden Meadow. It is offensive to the community to have it proposed for development.”

“I have a little different perspective than some at the meeting... I love Summit Station and skiing from there. But if you look at it from the client’s perspective, the majority of whom are beginners, they would be much better served by a lodge and ski school at Lake Van Norden. It could also make for great synergy between Sugar Bowl and Royal Gorge. What if a family could go to the Village Lodge and part of the family go downhill skiing and the rest get their trail pass and start

from there heading to Lake Van Norden? They could meet for lunch at the Village Lodge and the whole family could be doing what they want.”

“I have walked the property and the lots extend very close to the meadow. I would like to see lots 1 to 10 be shortened from 350’ or 400’ to perhaps 200’. The day lodge is beautiful, but once again, a little too close to the meadow as is the ice rink. Can these be moved back a bit as well. As for the property around Serene Lakes, I would like to see larger lots than the existing ones. I’ll be one of the first to buy one.”



Access road, traffic congestion

Concerns about access and traffic congestion are paramount, especially for Serene Lakes property owners. This is because there is only one access road – Soda Springs Road – serving the Serene Lakes subdivision. This road crosses well-utilized Union Pacific railroad tracks with an at-grade crossing. The Serene Lakes Property Owners Association has worked closely with Union Pacific Railroad to improve the situation at the crossing as much as possible, given the physical limitations of an at-grade crossing. Of greatest concern is safety, especially in the event of an emergency such as a forest fire.

In addition, people expressed concern about day skier traffic creating delays at the Soda Springs Road/Donner Pass Road intersection. Some comments acknowledged recent improvements in day skier traffic management as a result of steps taken by Sugar Bowl. People expressed concern that if a lift connection were created between Royal Gorge and Sugar Bowl, day skiers wanting to park and access the new lift could worsen traffic congestion.

And finally, people expressed a desire for improved transit service for Donner Summit, especially bus transportation from Serene Lakes to Sugar Bowl and to Truckee.

Some examples of comments:

“Transportation is the big issue. There is just one way in and out. We need an improvement in access.”

“The EIR for the Van Norden project spells it out. The intersection is rated F on ski weekends.”

“I’m concerned about the sheer numbers of people and traffic and the scale of future development.”

“Our number one issue is traffic. There is only one way into Serene Lakes, and there’s a railroad crossing that we finally got the railroad to redo, but we get stopped by trains.”

“Create separate access into and out of the new development. As the new owners have heard at every public meeting, traffic is a nightmare on certain occasions. Further, Pahatsi, Soda Springs, Hillside and Serene are often busy because those roads are used to access the entire Serene development. The community consistently complains about fast-moving traffic on these roads. If the new development has its own infrastructure, and does not use the Serene infrastructure, the development will be more palatable.”

“I am concerned about the traffic issue from the standpoint of fire protection. To develop, there will be requirements to have two means of egress and ingress. But where would another access road go? Maybe by Sugar Bowl, by Loch Leven Lake, the western end of the property by the Boy Scout camp? But that would cross the railroad tracks too. I don’t see how to avoid the railroad tracks.”

“My wife is concerned about traffic. With development, she’s concerned there will be too much traffic, and that’s scary for our kids because now, they just jump on their bikes and go everywhere.”

“Sugar Bowl lives and dies by I-80 because we are so dependent upon day skiers. If the roads are bad, the skiers don’t come. We need more of a bed base on the Summit...People at Sugar Bowl will want to know if the development will make traffic worse. For Sugar Bowl owners,

it's not so much congestion at the time of arrival, because they often get here Thursday night or Friday morning, but the traffic congestion when they leave on Sunday."

"We need another access point coming off I-80 or old Highway 40."

"Provide a traffic solution before you start."

Scale and character of development

Many people have expressed their desire to avoid development that is out of scale or out of character with the isolated, rugged and serene nature of Donner Summit. This sentiment has been expressed in a number of different ways, as follows:

"The culture here is different than Truckee/Tahoe Donner, and the people who live at the Summit are different. They don't want fitness facilities and exclusive clubhouses. They want to be away from things. The climate is different here too, 1,000 feet higher, more snow, a harsher environment."

"We would like for you to avoid high density housing and making it too commercialized. We don't want it to feel like a subdivision in the Bay Area with golf and condos."

"We fear the loss of what makes this place special. It's off the beaten path."

"I am afraid that we will lose the feel of this place. Keep this in your mind. Please do things tactfully. Keep the feel of the place."

"We love both Royal Gorge and Sugar Bowl. We don't want to have homes all around the ski trails. You will lose what makes Royal Gorge precious. You want to get away from homes, have a few hamlets, then you're away from that."

"It is tranquil up here. That is the asset."

“When we moved up here in the late 70s, Disney had a proposal for a big ski area. I went on a site visit with the Chamber. I remember this guy from Disney pointing to a stream and saying ‘we don’t like that stream; it’s just not natural enough.’ I would like to see you avoid toying with nature. What we appreciate about the area is access to open space and trails. We like to ski, hike and the outdoors.”



“People come up here to get away. I have a special spot, I don’t see many houses. I like to walk out the door and hike. I like it in the wilds, especially in the winter. It’s peaceful and quiet. I’d rather not see development happen up here, but if it’s going to happen, then let’s make it the best it can be.”

“A lot of our friends think that we are crazy on the Summit because we can’t drive down the street and get a video... We wanted to get away from all of that... One of the surprises that we got here on the Summit is that there is a real sense of community.”

“I have strong concerns about...preserving the rugged, friendly, and unpretentious quality of the community.”

“My hope is that whatever future development may occur will integrate well with the existing environment and ultimately may provide the financial base for more services...like restaurants, grocery store, etc.”

“Condos are a real worry. I hear this from a lot of people. Please, no condos!! The biggest subdivision around here is Tahoe Donner. People don’t like that kind of density!”

“Density will probably be our number one issue. I think a reasonable amount of density would be several hundred units. The three areas where development is most likely are the Summit Valley, east of Serene Lakes and west of Serene Lakes.”

Water and sewer capacity, water quality

Many people pointed out in their comments that the area has existing problems with water and sewer capacity, and for new home development to occur, adequate sewer and water capacity will need to be addressed.

In addition, people are extremely concerned that the area's lakes and streams be protected from polluted runoff.

Here are some examples of comments:

"We have a big problem with sewer capacity. The area's sewers are old and in need of repair and upgrading...Sewage treatment is more complex and expensive at higher elevations. We also have the issue of peak usage being on a few weekends, but the plant has to be sized to meet these peaks."

"Obviously, nothing is going to happen without a solution to the wastewater treatment plant expansion problem. How are you addressing this issue?"

"The biggest problem on the Summit is adequate financing for services like sewer, water and fire protection. It's a small area, the service districts are all cobbled together...And the Sierra Lakes County Water District and the Donner Summit Public Utility District fight all the time. Huge fights. There are years of mistrust. You can try to work on expanding and improving existing facilities, or create something totally new, a third entity...The other problem is bridging the gap between the two counties."

"People are concerned that the water will be taken out of the lake for the new homes, and what that will do to the lake."

"I am concerned about runoff from development. We will want to see strict CC&Rs to prevent pesticide and herbicide use. These lakes are our drinking water source."

More recreational opportunities at the Summit

Comments from several people focused on development at Royal Gorge possibly providing increased and more diverse recreational opportunities on the Summit. Here are some examples:



“I like the idea of golf. I am retiring soon and intend to spend the whole summer at my place at the Summit.”

“I want facilities in our area. I would like to see it become more of a year-round recreational environment. I would love to see golf. I would like to see a gym facility with a pool, maybe a place like Trout Creek Recreation Center at Tahoe Donner, a place that homeowners can use. And we need DSL and cable connection improvements on the Summit.”

“I realize that Serene Lakes residents don’t like ‘the Tahoe Donner style’, but there is a market for people who want access to things like golf.”

“I would like to see you open up more ski terrain, with access to Sugar Bowl from Serene Lakes. I’d like to see it be more like Europe, where resorts offer easy access to both cross country and downhill skiing.”

“Turning the Summit into a year-round resort would be great. Plan the recreation first, then the homes.”

“If you’re adding summer amenities, you’ll find a lot of support.”

“I would like recreational facilities like golf and tennis that are open to the public and water sports equipment rental and summer activities, all welcome additions.”

“Will the property owners at Serene Lakes have access to future development, i.e. new ski lifts, ice rinks, lodges, golf course, etc.? A ski lift from Ice Lakes Lodge to Crow’s Nest would be awesome. A golf course would be great if you could play more than 90 days a year on it.”

“A new chairlift to Sugar Bowl from Serene Lakes, with a small parking lot with locals encouraged to use it. Allow very limited car traffic to this lift.”

“I think one major, rather easy thing that Royal Gorge can do is to get involved more with racing and sponsor/support Auburn/Far West ski racing, especially for kids, early to mid-teens. Hold races more often.”



Golf, no golf

As the above comments indicate, some people want to see more summer recreational activities and specifically mention golf. Other people are opposed to golf:

“I hope you don’t plan to build a golf course. They are everywhere I go. I am concerned about fertilizers and pesticides. But one of the reasons we are able to maintain our identity here is we say no to things like tennis courts and golf. Hiking and skiing are what we are about.”

“Golf would be very difficult because at this elevation, it would be an extremely short playing season. At Serene Lakes, we also get mosquitoes! We are in a swampy area and we have about six weeks of terrible mosquitoes in June.”

“Golf is not a high priority, and besides, there’s enough golf up here now.”

Protect prized natural areas and view sheds; maintain seclusion

People requested that several areas be protected from development:

“The ridge line at Sugar Bowl marks the transition zone between the eastern and western Sierra and two different watersheds. The ridge separates the Yuba and American River watersheds. There are major wildlife corridors at this transition. Areas that need protection and buffering from development include the wildlife corridors at this ridge, as well

as Onion Creek Experimental Forest. The most contiguous lands to preserve are starting at the Van Norden Meadow and continuing along the ridge line that extends to Onion Creek Experimental Forest. Also, Negro Canyon -- especially for Truckee, it's a recreation Mecca and a high priority for preservation."

"As you develop, please keep in mind that Point Mariah needs to be accessible to all."

"Cornice Ridge is what we call it, west of Crow's Nest. That's an important parcel for everyone. Also, Palisades Peak is just as important."

In addition, several areas where people have cabins and homes offer privacy and seclusion that people want to see maintained. They don't want to see development at Royal Gorge bringing in crowds of people and thus impinging upon their area's solitude and privacy.

Also, concerns were expressed about protection of "view sheds" from development – specifically, avoiding development of the ridge that culminates in Lola's Lookout. If homes or other structures were to be placed roughly above the elevation of the Bogus Basin Trail, concerns were expressed that these structures would be prominently visible from Serene Lakes properties.

Pay attention to locals

An often-mentioned problem for Serene Lakes property owners is the fact that they cannot purchase a season's pass and then ski onto the Royal Gorge cross country trails from their homes. Instead, the ski resort makes them go to the lodge and purchase a ticket each day they want to ski. This dramatically reduces the convenience of living adjacent to Royal Gorge trails.

Royal Gorge representatives say they use ticket sales to keep track of the number of people on the trails for safety reasons, and the color of the day's tickets allows resort personnel to

easily confirm from a distance if a skier has purchased a ticket, and therefore is authorized to be skiing on the trails.

Serene Lakes residents want a new season pass system created that will allow them to hop on the trails from their homes without having to purchase a ticket each day.

In addition, many Serene Lakes and Donner Summit residents would like to see Royal Gorge resort pay more attention to locals.

Here are some representative comments:

“Let Serene Lakes homeowners have access to cross country skiing from their properties.”

“At downhill resorts, you can ski to your home. Not at Royal Gorge.”

“Locals want to support the resort. We want the resort to be successful.”

“What I want is for Serene Lakes owners to have cross country ski passes at Royal Gorge, but we wouldn’t have to check in every time we want to use them! We also want to hike and mountain bike. Why not have a year-round trail pass for that? We want ease of access. Why not create something like a yellow arm band, something visual?”

“I would like to see a Royal Gorge season pass or set of discount tickets that would only be valid during the beginning and/or end of the day. As XC and downhill skiers, we would make more use of Royal Gorge if there was a less expensive option for a short ski during the times the resort is underutilized. I use the ‘twilight’ pass some and would love to see something like an ‘early bird’ pass. I like to sometimes do a quick 15K skate session before or after a half-day of downhill.”

“My wife and I own a home in Serene Lakes and we have purchased season passes from RG for the past few years. Allow residents of Serene to enter RG wherever they want

rather than making them check into the main lodge and buy a ticket. We love to be able to drop in to a trail a few steps from our home. Past owners forced us to come to the lodge for a ticket each day. We then have to get into the car and drive there.”



“In summer, open your trails to mountain bikers. Charge us for a season pass and we will pay to ride your trails.”

“Royal Gorge should offer discount prices to local area residents. Tahoe Donner gives discounts to its residents—they make seasons passes reasonable. Royal Gorge pays no attention to locals. Locals don’t get treated as valuable at all. This is a great place to start to build goodwill.”

“I would like to be able to ski the trail parallel to Soda Springs Road from Pahatsi to the road near Ice Lakes Lodge. A good portion of this trail is signed a public USFS trail but there is no way to gain access without crossing private land. The county road (Pahatsi) from the Royal Gorge lodge and beyond should be an option for public access skiing but currently it is almost impossible to get through in winter. Any provisions you can make for public (or Serene Lakes residents) would be appreciated.”

Conversations held with nearby property owners the Girl Scouts and the Palisades indicate that they see more development in the area as potentially providing improved plowing of roads in the winter. Some nearby property owners hope that Royal Gorge will agree to plow roads that access their properties, thereby providing reliable winter access to homes that currently are snowbound and accessible only in the warmer months.

“We like the idea of getting roads plowed closer to our homes, or maybe even getting the roads plowed all the way to our homes in the winter.”

Affordable, employee housing

Many people advocated constructing homes that would be affordable to local, full-time residents, as well as ensuring there is adequate housing for Royal Gorge employees.

“We would like to see a component of what you do that’s affordable – a component that a teacher or firefighter or policeman could buy.”

“You have an opportunity to have a balance, to develop trophy homes and good stuff for worker people. Roads get closed. Truckee people can’t get to work here.”

Cluster versus sprawl

Several individuals and groups spoke in favor of clustering development to preserve more undeveloped areas:

“We’d like to see a balance. Cluster the density, but we don’t want to see a massive condominium project.”

“I believe it would be possible to design development that would not be disastrous. I would much prefer to see compact, well-sited and walkable groups of homes surrounded by open space than a low density sprawl all over the Summit.”

Protect the night sky

People would like the new development to take precautions against light pollution and protect the night sky.

“Serene Lakes has no street lights. We want the night sky protected so we can continue to see the stars.”

“Please build with consideration of dark skies. One of my favorite aspects of the Summit is the night sky, which we love to share with our kids, friends and guests. It is easy and cheap to incorporate dark sky principles in building design, it just takes a desire. Check out www.darksky.org.”

Fire protection

Comments were received concerning the need for fire protection to be built into future development.

“I am concerned about fire protection. Some Royal Gorge trails function as fire breaks. Some good thinking went into creating defensible space and firebreaks for the Serene Lakes subdivision. Be careful and take that in to consideration. Incorporate fire protection into your plan early on.”



Summit is ignored

A recurring theme in comments concerned ignoring the Summit as a political entity. Many people claimed that because the area is not densely populated and is split between Placer and Nevada Counties, neither county pays enough attention to the area. Also, it was pointed out that it is difficult to obtain data about the Summit. Data is normally collected for the much broader Truckee-North Lake Tahoe area and is not broken down so that a meaningful economic or social picture can be obtained of the Summit.

A major impetus for the formation of the Donner Summit Area Association was an economic development report prepared by Nevada County that many Summit residents believe demonstrated ignorance on the part of the County about the needs and desires of Summit residents. The DSAA has since met with Nevada County and is working to communicate Summit needs and concerns to county officials.

“There is a dearth of information that’s specific to this area. How much money is generated by visitors, for example, or how much do locals contribute to businesses. We are at the edge of where information is put together.”

“We are split between two counties. You call the police, you don’t know who will come.”

“Truckee people don’t care about the Summit, people who live there or ski there.”

Serene Lakes leadership

Many people expressed opinions concerning the leadership of the Serene Lakes Property Owners Association board of directors. Serene Lakes residents said that the SLPOA board used to function primarily as a club to manage social events in the community, but had lately become “more political” as a result of the proposed Van Norden Meadow development project.

Many people expressed a desire that Royal Gorge LLC communicate directly with all Serene Lakes property owners and not assume that the SLPOA board was representative of the range of opinions within the community.

Another theme that emerged was the desire to work collaboratively with Royal Gorge LLC, versus as opponents in an adversarial manner. Many people said that the SLPOA board overrepresented the “naysayers” and underrepresented people with a more positive outlook on working collaboratively with a developer. Here are some examples of comments:

“The board hasn’t been political until just recently. A lot of people don’t want that. They didn’t canvass the membership on this Van Norden issue. They can’t say they have this number of people because they’re not sure the membership is behind them. I wouldn’t feel comfortable having them talk for me. You should communicate directly with owners.”

“I am looking forward to your positive direction for the community. I am very unhappy with the SLPOA BOD and those responsible for the newsletter – as are many of my friends and neighbors in Serene Lakes. Many of us look forward to your ability to influence positive growth in Serene Lakes. From the little I know about what you plan to do, I like it! Donner Summit needs some sprucing up. It is the closest resort area and has the potential to become something really great without removing any of its natural charm.”

“There are a handful of grumpy ‘I came here first folks’ at Serene Lakes that tend to be the most vocal. However, there

are many less active folks that are not negative to well-planned and well-designed improvement.”



“Many of the active folks keep up a constant chatter over the SLPOA Forum, but others who may view your activities more favorably probably are not even aware of the site. You might consider getting the mailing address of Serene Lakes Property Owners and mailing information about your plans. I think you will reach a more receptive audience this way, maybe even a quarterly newsletter (?) Just a thought. Many would be willing to write a letter of support. The more vocal will show up at the planning commission saying they represent the entire community. This is not true.”

“What bothers me is SLPOA only cares about Serene Lakes issues. But we see ourselves as Donner Summit residents. We care about all Donner Summit residents and businesses and services.”

“I just wanted you to know that not everyone in Serene Lakes is negative, or at the very least hyper-sensitive, toward your recent purchase. Change does strange things to people. We are excited about the possibilities. Thanks for reaching out and please let me know if you need any input from a Serene Lakes cabin owner.”

“I hope a few extreme people in the area do not destroy the goodwill you guys have extended by asking for feedback and meeting with the public. I support the development and hope to reap the benefits that you will bring to the area.”

“Certainly this board does not represent me. But I think it represents the substantial majority of owners. You should definitely work with them, but make sure that you reach out to all owners.”

Continuation of Nordic ski operations

With the change in ownership at Royal Gorge, many people expressed their desire that the new owners continue Nordic ski operations at the resort. Many long-term, loyal Royal Gorge



customers live throughout the local community and want to see the resort continue to provide an extensive amount of Nordic ski terrain.

Resort and lodge operations

As mentioned on Page Two, many opinions have been expressed about the operation of the Nordic ski resort and the Ice Lakes and Rainbow Lodges. However, the purpose of this report is to focus on public input concerning potential future development at Royal Gorge.

Long-time Royal Gorge Resort owner John Slouber has retired and the new resort General Manager is Neil Erasmus. General Manager Erasmus has reviewed and continues to solicit public comments concerning resort and lodge operations and is working to respond and make appropriate operational changes.

Next Steps

This report represents the first step in a long-term, proactive process to reach out to residents and special interest groups who have a stake in future potential real estate development at Royal Gorge.

In the near future, Royal Gorge LLC intends to go back to individuals and groups initially contacted, this time with a general site plan indicating types of development and general areas for its location. This general plan will serve as a tool to obtain additional community input, this time with greater specificity.

Royal Gorge

Public Input Report

Appendix

- Stakeholder list
- Website comment form
- Article submitted to Serene Lakes Property Owners Association newsletter

Royal Gorge LLC: Stakeholders Working List*

Surrounding property owners, nearby business owners

The Cedars
Donner Summit Area Association
Palisades
Serene Lakes Property Owners Association (SLPOA)
Sugar Bowl Homeowners

Resorts, ski areas

Boreal
Donner Ski Ranch
Soda Springs
Sugar Bowl

Environmental organizations

Mountain Area Preservation Foundation
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Clair Tapaan Lodge
Sierra Watch
South Yuba River Citizens League
Truckee Donner Land Trust

Local, state, federal government; agencies; quasi-governmental; service providers

Assemblyman Tim Leslie
Association of California Water Agencies
CA Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection
CA Public Utilities Commission
Congressman John Doolittle
Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
Donner Summit Fire Department
(Truckee Fire Protection District)
Donner Summit Public Utility District
Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Assoc.
Nevada County
Placer County
Placer Local Agency Formation Commission
Pacific Gas & Electric
Sierra Lakes County Water District
State Department of Fish and Game
State Fish and Game Commission
State Resources Agency
State Senator Dave Cox

Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART),
Tahoe Trolley
Town of Truckee
Truckee-North Tahoe Transportation
Management Agency
Truckee Tahoe Unified School District
Union Pacific Railroad
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service

Non-government organizations

Boy Scouts
Builders Assoc. of Northern Nevada
(BANN)
Chamber of Commerce North Lake
Tahoe
Contractors Association of Truckee
Tahoe (CATT)
Girl Scouts
Kiwanis Club of North Lake Tahoe
North Lake Tahoe Resort Association (NLTRA)
Sierra Business Council
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Soroptimist International of Truckee
Donner
Tahoe Conservancy
Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce
Truckee Host Lions Club
Truckee Rotary Club
Truckee Sunrise Rotary Club
Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation
Tuesday Breakfast Club
Workforce Housing Association of
Truckee Tahoe (WHATT)

Cultural, historical organizations

Emigrant Trail Museum
Lincoln Highway Association, CA Chapter
North Lake Tahoe Historical Society
Truckee Donner Historical Society
Washoe Tribe

**Groups only; does not contain names of private individuals*

Website Comment Form:

Contact Royal Gorge's New Owners

We want to know your questions about the future of Royal Gorge, and we are open to hear your comments, input and suggestions. Please don't hesitate to send us an e-mail by using the form below. We are excited to have the community involved in our process.

****First Name**

****Last Name**

****Phone Number**

FAX Number

****Address**

****City**

****State**

****Zip**

****E-mail Address**

YOUR COMMENTS

PLEASE RESPOND TO MY QUESTIONS BY: E-mail Fax Phone Mail

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

I own a home/property near Royal Gorge YES: NO:

I own a home/property at Serene Lakes YES: NO:

I own a home/property at Sugar Bowl YES: NO:

I am a full-time resident of the North Lake Tahoe area YES: NO:

Yes! I would like to receive emails with more information about the ROYAL GORGE FUTURE

** NOTE these fields are required so that we can respond to your comments and/or questions. Thank you.

Submit Form

Reset Form

[RETURN TO HOME](#)

Done

A Message from Royal Gorge's New Owners

Let's Work Together on Public Access*

By Todd Foster and Kirk Syme

We are Todd Foster and Kirk Syme and we are the new owners of Royal Gorge. We have purchased the Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Resort, 3,000 acres of land, Rainbow Lodge and Ice Lakes Lodge.

In the past few months, we have been talking to a number of people who live in the Donner Summit area. We were able to meet many Serene Lakes owners at the Serene Lakes Property Owners Association board meeting in January.

We appreciate how forthcoming people have been in taking the time to talk with us and share your concerns. It has been an educational process for us and we would like to keep the dialogue going.

Access to public land

While folks have shared their concerns on numerous and diverse topics, there has been one issue that seems to rank at the top of most everyone's list – public access. When we say public access, we mean the ability to go out your door and conveniently gain access to public land for recreational activities, such as hiking or mountain biking.

Many people have described barriers that are preventing or making it difficult to gain access. We want to address the problem of public access, but to do so, we need your help.

Solving existing problems, preventing new ones

It seems to us that there are two broad categories when it comes to public access: First, the need to address existing access problems. Second, the need to gain a solid understanding of local residents' needs and desires so that any future land uses do not impinge upon public access and perhaps can even enhance it.

Volunteer for ad hoc committee on public access

To work on these two issues – solving existing public access problems, and preventing future ones – we would like to work with Serene Lakes residents by setting up **an ad hoc committee on public access**.

It would be our intention to have a couple of managers from Royal Gorge resort on this committee. The objectives of the committee would be as follows:

- Identify existing barriers that prevent access or make it difficult to access public lands.
- Identify actions that Royal Gorge can undertake to improve public access.
- Identify recreational preferences and patterns of use that should be preserved and respected in the future.

Would Serene Lakes owners who are interested in participating in this ad hoc committee please contact us via the new website we've set up. We will extend this invitation to the Donner Summit Area Association as well. The new website address is:

www.royalgorgefuture.com Go to the comment section and submit a comment letting us know you would like to participate in the committee. Also, if you know other Donner Summit area residents who are avid outdoors people and should be part of this committee, please provide their names and contact information to us.

Sign up for updates:

If you have other issues on your mind and want to share your thoughts with us, please go to www.royalgorgefuture.com and submit your comments. We want to hear from you.

We have been asked, what's next? Right now we are talking with as many people as possible and gaining a solid understanding of people's concerns when it comes to land use issues as well as operation of the resort and the lodges. We are also working with consultants and continuing to study a number of concepts and ideas for the land we own. And finally, we are building a list of people who want to be kept informed about any plans that we develop. If you want to be on that list, please go to the royalgorgefuture.com website and submit your contact information so that you will receive any progress reports.

* *Published in Serene Lakes Property Owners Association Newsletter, Ice Lakes News, Spring 2006, p.11*