

# DONNER SUMMIT CANYON

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KTG@SAVETHESUMMIT.COM

## Members Only on Donner Summit

In "Introducing the Vision- Royal Gorge- A Wilderness Edge Community", which Kirk Syme's Woodstock Development published for a brief time on the internet, Royal Gorge LLC paints a picture of their planned resort that is permeated with exclusivity. Kirk Syme and Mark and Todd Foster, in their public presentations last March earnestly promised locals that their "conservation community" would not be a gated development. What they didn't tell the public is that there is more than one way to "gate" a community. At the same time as they were reassuring listeners of continued access to Royal Gorge lands, they were providing investors with an entirely different vision, that of a preferential and privileged enclave. Their planned "members only" development will be as effective as a guarded gate in limiting public access to recreational resources.

At the fabled Royal Gorge, yet still a world-class cross country ski resort, hundreds of private houses and timeshares are planned. Cross country skiers will be thwarted by private property encroaching onto the former trails, and private lakes drowning meadows and hillsides. Pity the poor skier, looking for a place to warm up, when he arrives at what appears to be a public lodge, only to find out, as described in Royal Gorge LLC's "Introducing the Vision", that, "in the winter the Lake House will serve as the private cross-country ski lodge for club members." The non-member skier had better have the foresight to pack a thermos of hot cocoa, and perhaps a nourishing cheese sandwich.

Down hill skiers braving the vertically challenged (a pitiful maximum 500 foot vertical) Ski Camp slopes may turn their gaze to the restaurant perched at the top of Razorback Ridge. The smell of charbroiled burgers might entice, but, alas, the poor skier will be turned away at the door. According to Royal Gorge LLC's "Introducing the Vision", the "mountain-top restaurant is planned, open to Club members at lunch, and to the public at dinner." Perhaps, when they let the lucky public in for dinner (but of course only if wearing appropriate apres-ski garb), they'll charge them to park in the private parking lots

## Blackout On Donner Summit

Blackouts are not an unknown occurrence on Donner Summit. Normally, though, the outages are of brief duration, and annoying blinking clocks on appliances are the only indication power was ever out. It takes a substantial storm, or full cabin occupancy on a busy weekend, such as the Fourth of July, to kick the power off for more than an hour or so.

Lately though, Donner Summit has been subject to a prolonged black out, and curiously enough, this lengthy blackout has also extended to the Placer County Planning Department. This blackout, of information instead of power, is disturbing in that it seems to have been planned in advance, but no one thought to alert the customers to the anticipated outage.

In late November Royal Gorge LLC submitted multiple documents to Placer County related to its proposed development. At about the same time, Royal Gorge LLC also told the public on their "What's New" section of their Futures web page, "Royal Gorge continues to



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accompanying the restaurant Royal Gorge LLC will have marred the hillside, and viewshed to build.

In 43 pages of assiduously courting the wealthy (the book even had hand-built covers), not once was the community of Serene Lakes, about to be engulfed by what is essentially a private club for the well-heeled, mentioned. The only glimpse of the actual lakes is provided by, "Ice Lakes Lodge- located at the southern end of the Serene Lakes includes a private beach... the intent is to incorporate Ice Lakes Lodge into the community amenity package." What was once a restaurant and bar open to the Serene Lakes Community (non-designer flannel shirts, and all), whose money even helped build it, will be yet one more private "members only" clubhouse.

Welcome to Royal Gorge LLC's repellent vision for the future of Donner Summit, where there will be two classes of wilderness access- access for those who have the money to purchase their housing, and stay at their luxury hotels, and thus buy membership in their private clubs, and access for all the rest of us. As a good portion of the cross country resort is on land leased from the Forest Service, and other rented lands with Placer County roads running through them, Royal Gorge LLC's planned exclusionary domain will prevent the

prepare its development application to Placer County and anticipates a submittal after the first of the year."

The multiple documents, including a new specific plan for the proposed "Lake Camp", and a very thick "Water Supply Alternative" that carries the notation that it was to be simultaneously transmitted to the Serene Lakes County Water District (SLCWD), and the public, are of great interest to the public, as they detail Royal Gorge LLC's latest plans for development at the Summit. Not only are these documents of public interest, once submitted to the county they are public records, and must be made available for the public to view and copy. There is no tenable argument that these documents are covered by any exemption in the California Public Records Act.

So, why won't Placer County "turn on the lights", and allow the public state mandated access to these records? What is their rationale for studying them in secret, and going along with Royal Gorge, who made the dubious assurance that they'd submit an application *after the first of the year* on their web page?

Good question. When lead planner Crystal

public from hiking on and enjoying lands that are rightfully public property.

It is morally repugnant to take something that is rare and valuable, the granite fastness that is the Sierra Nevada, the backbone of our state, and attempt to turn it into a club for the haves. It is inexcusable to seek to lull concerned locals, who wish to protect a treasured environment, with a story of a development designed to enhance wilderness access, while at the same time selling it to investors as the montane cousin to a yacht club whose memberships are handed down in the family. Royal Gorge LLC, please don't cheapen the heritage of Donner Summit by denying real public access to all who cherish its transcendent beauty with your "members only" private clubs, hotels, and timeshares.

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The author would like to point readers to something Abraham Lincoln told us,

*"Moral principle is a looser bond than pecuniary interest."* -Abraham Lincoln

The preservation of our Sierra heritage should be a strong moral principle, and pecuniary interests should be subservient to protecting the heritage of John Muir's "Range of Light"

Jacobsen was asked why the county was keeping the documents secret, she said the county needed to check for completeness and authenticity. Gosh, wouldn't you think that the SLCWD board, who had been told at their October board meeting by Mike Livak that they would receive the water study at the *same* time as the county, would be the most appropriate to check "completeness and authenticity"?

Head planner Michael Johnson said the County was justified in keeping quiet while studying these documents to make sure Royal Gorge's application was "complete".

Mike Livak, when questioned why the water study did not go to the water board, as he had promised, expressed concerns that "previously released drafts had been misinterpreted by the public."

Anybody about to blow a fuse about what's going on here? To an unbiased observer, this could just perhaps maybe look like a concerted effort to keep the public in the dark about all kinds of things that are very much their business. Anybody know where we can find an auxiliary generator, so we can shine some light on the blackout at Donner Summit?

Read more at: [www.SaveSereneLakes.org](http://www.SaveSereneLakes.org)

# A Donner Summit Night Before Christmas

*Twas the night before Christmas,  
and all over the mountain  
Could be heard ruckus and noise,  
locals cryin' and shoutin'  
For the bulldozers were lined up,  
all chugging away,  
Ready to gouge out new ski slopes  
the very next day.*

*Snow had not fallen  
as yet in the year,  
Global warming's arrived,  
as so many had feared.  
"Year-round construction,  
a developer's dream  
Who cares there's not water  
enough for a stream?  
This tree covered hillside,  
we'll soon lay to waste  
So before any snow falls,  
let us make haste!"*

*Yet the midnight blue sky,  
with stars all so bright,  
Slowly became darker,  
clouds obscuring the light,  
The air, once so warm,  
took on quite a chill,  
And tender white snowflakes  
began icing the hill.*

*The snow piled on the dozers,  
covering their treads  
You could only get around  
on skis and on sleds.  
Still down the snow fell,  
yet more and more,  
So high that it covered  
the bulldozers' doors.  
The snow fell so long,  
through the following day,  
It became crystal clear  
winter was here to stay.*

*The lamentation stopped,  
and here was the reason  
The developers had to go away,  
at least for the season.*

*And up above tree line,  
if one listened well,  
The sound of a sled,  
with a merry tinkling bell,  
A plaid flanneled Santa was heard,  
calling with cheer:  
Happy Christmas to all,  
and have  
A DEVELOPER-FREE year*

See the YouTube Video version at:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=INRe\\_HhBKDE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INRe_HhBKDE)

# Pave Every Mountain

*A developer's pocket guide to quelling opposition, and reaching new heights in profits*

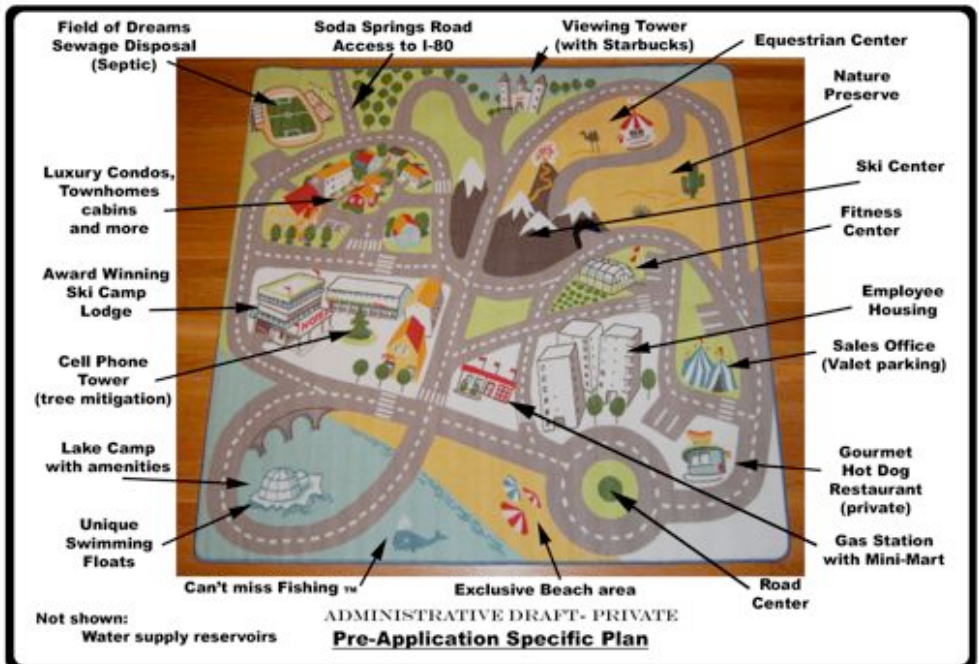
- 1) Buy the properties under various fictitious names- that will make it harder for nosy community groups to keep track of what you own, and what you're doing to it. It's not their business anyway.
- 2) Think "green", or at least think how to talk "green", even if in your heart of hearts you know that bulldozing hillsides, clear-cutting trees, dredging and damming lakes, and dewatering class one trout streams is, well, maybe not exactly any color remotely near green. Maybe it's not even a color at all, but more of a word picture- like "scorched earth." Oh- and all the wood and cement and resources you'll use building 4 story condos- they don't exactly grow on trees, do they? Well, the wood does- maybe you can "recycle" all those trees you've clear-cut into building lumber. That'll enhance your "green" credentials. Right.
- 3) Be warm, fuzzy, cosy, and dishonest as all get out to the public. Convince them that you are the "People's Developer", the one granting unlimited access to places, like Forest Service lands, that they've had access to all along. Meanwhile, let your investors know you *really* intend to cover the area with tony, *private* lodges, that no way will you let the shabby locals into- unless they work there, of course.
- 4) Try to convince the locals that you're the "good" developer, and warn them that if they're fractious and prevent you from covering the mountain with 1000 condos, the "bad" developer who comes after you will cover the mountain with 1000 condos.
- 5) Spend whatever astronomical amount you can get banks to loan you, and then, when

you've blown it all on consultants and lawyers, demand your "reasonable investment expectations". Hope the public doesn't notice you (and the banks) have engaged in gambling, and they're expected to cover your losses.

- 6) Make friends with the politicians, the supervisors, county employees, and their mothers. Buy whatever their children are selling, be it cookies, wreaths, or wrapping paper, and, you might consider donating to the elected officials' campaign funds. Donate lots. And then do it again. As for influencing the unelected officials, well, consider hiring a lobbyist- they'll have a hint or two for you.
- 7) Mountains have lots of steep places that even you can't build on. Call this "open space" and encourage public groups to raise money to buy it from you. (Hint: if it's really, really steep, and maybe prone to avalanches, and the groups won't cough up the money, then give it to the county as "mitigation" for all the other bad things you're planning for the mountain.)
- 8) Convince the locals you're going to build "the happiest place on earth", with camp vernacular, Sierra appropriate, never taller than the shortest trees architecture. Of course, those 3 and 4 story condos are pretty high, so maybe you should invest in some very tall, flame retardant artificial trees- the kinds phone companies pay you to install. Even if your development looms above the natural trees, at least everyone will have good cell phone reception- and you'll receive some cell phone generated income.

Oh, about that "happiest place on earth"- if the locals are pretty happy with the way it is now, and rather grumpy about your proposed condo empire, you might want to think of a way to, if not maximize your profits, at least get off the mountain in one piece (financially speaking, of course). Start talking to friendly land trusts now.

## BREAKING NEWS: Lost Royal Gorge "Specific Plan" Found!



### Startling Discovery:

When all hope was gone, a lucky break led to the discovery of Royal Gorge LLC's latest "Specific Plan" in the children's department of IKEA. No explanation has been given for the plan's surprising location, but authorities are elated at the plan's finding. After being appraised of the discovery, one official expressed "amazement at the plan's condition considering where it was found." Calls into Royal Gorge have not been returned. The plan was located after an employee alerted the webmaster at [www.saveoursummit.org](http://www.saveoursummit.org) of strange notations on the object. The employee claimed he was puzzled by the "Administrative Draft- Private" stamp and decided to investigate. Googling "Administrative Draft" led him to [www.savethesummit.org](http://www.savethesummit.org), and from there to SOS: Save Our Summit.

"Save Our Summit" alerted authorities and the rest is history.

Unfortunately, there is no word as to the whereabouts of the "Water Supply Alternatives" study. The public has been asked to keep their eyes open for the missing document. The search has been narrowed to big box hardware stores, with particular attention given to plumbing departments.



See the new SOS: Save Our Summit website at [www.SaveOurSummit.org](http://www.SaveOurSummit.org). SOS is a public awareness campaign promoting the organizations and websites monitoring the Royal Gorge development.

Buttons, bumper stickers, window decals, signs and flyers are available on the website.