

The Alternative Uses Survey: In your words

After receiving over 160 responses to our San Juan Ridge Mine Lands Potential Uses and Development Questionnaire the board of SJRTA felt like we had a good enough sample of the Ridge population to share our results. In addition to these results there was an optional section of the questionnaire where people could write in their comments or suggestions regarding alternative uses of the land. Below is a breakdown of how community members responded to the survey:

Land use	Yes	Ok	No
Solar Farm	71%	24%	5%
Organic agriculture	63%	24%	13%
Commercial cannabis	24%	24%	52%
Clustered housing	43%	31%	26%
Clustered studio space	44%	35%	22%
Light Industry	39%	38%	23%
Horse/bicycle trails	79%	17%	4%

Each question had a minimum of 160 respondents.

The results of the questionnaire confirmed much of the input that we have received from workshops where we asked community members to contribute ideas for alternative uses. As predicted the most popular use for the land was recreational- riding and bicycle trails with 96% of people either marking yes or ok in support. At the heels of recreation was solar farm with 95% of people marking either yes or ok. Many of the other results were also amenable to the community with people marking either yes or ok for organic agriculture at 87%, clustered studio space at 79%, and light industry at 77%. The least popular item was commercial cannabis where 48% of respondents marked either yes or ok and 52% marking no.

The additional comments and suggestions were extremely important additions to the questionnaire. The comments shed light on why people chose the way they did which helped make clear where the questionnaire might not have addressed their specific concerns. For example many people felt like the options for describing recreation were limited because the question stated only horse riding and bicycle trails. The following three comments address the issue of recreation and how hiking trails and open space could have been more explicit in the questionnaire.

- What about Hiking Trails? I would like to be able to keep hiking on the dirt roads along Shady Creek, out to Lonesome Lake, etc.
- Open space. This is what helps to define our community. Restore, recreate, and leave it alone.

Perhaps recreation would have received even more support in the questionnaire had we specifically included hiking trails and open space. Some folks included other specific recreation uses such as OHV trails, music amphitheater, and disc golf course.

Another comment focused specifically on the process for how the land should be used. An end use that maintains the integrity of the land sounds great but how are we going to get there with the legacy

contamination issues that are almost certainly present on an historic hydraulic mine site. One comment read:

- How about restoring the damage from the various mines and restoring to park land/open space.

Indeed it seems a certainty that there exists mercury from old sluice boxes and other mine features used to amalgamate and concentrate gold from placer gravels. Other respondents in this vein wrote:

- I feel that all these uses could be appropriate for the community. Why isn't addressing historic mining contaminants an underlying principle?
- I think it is important to understand the potential impact to human health on the site before recommending agricultural products or daily use.
- (There should be) research plots for mine lands forest restoration.

Without a doubt if this property is to end up as an official public benefit to the community the contamination at the site would have to be assessed, and if significant contamination exists it would have to be cleaned up. Also, the use for the property would determine the degree to which the site would have to be remediated. For example housing or public buildings would require a much more intensive remediation than say a public trail. Luckily we have ongoing projects in Nevada County that are leading the way in these efforts. Examples include the Tribute Trail in Nevada City showing how remediation can work for recreational trails and the new Yuba River Charter School site in Grass Valley showing how remediation can work for public buildings.

In addition to concerns about contamination, community members expressed how important the details of any development venture would be. Below are some comments to this effect:

- All of the ideas listed sound good; I would most likely support them if I knew more details about location and impact.
- I would certainly like to hear more from my neighbors and from land use professionals as to the impacts building would have on the property. Any negative evaluations would certainly influence my opinion.

Perhaps the most detailed comment describing how important process should be in a development project in the diggings was this community member:

- I am supportive of more light industry, but I put no because it depends totally on who does the development...it would have to be a model, high-bar project, something really game-changingly sustainable, like 3 D printing with sand or hemp fiber plastic, and be very quiet and non-polluting...and not just done by some "developer" to extract profit and send it away from the county.

This seems to be a common thread among the Ridge community. We want economic development and more opportunities whether those be housing or small business but we don't want to lose the rural quality of our place as a consequence.

Another common theme in the feedback we have received, not just from this questionnaire, is that education and interpretation should complement any public use of the land. One person wrote:

- Recreation and educational opportunities would be ideal use for this land. I feel that is especially important to have an interpretive center of some sort for historical perspective on mining in the area.

The North Columbia Diggings has a rich history that is not as well known as its sister hydraulic mine, Malakoff Diggings. We may yet have an opportunity to share a history that describes the relationship that Native Americans and settlers have had with the land and the incredible destruction as a result of hydraulic mining and the slow but sure recovery of the land over the last 150 years.

Our board will continue to communicate with the current CEO of the San Juan Ridge Mine Corporation and convey the results of this questionnaire to help guide the corporation's efforts in finding a compatible land use. In parallel to these efforts we will continue to explore how our community might purchase the land in the event that the corporation decides to put it on the market.

The SJRTA is continuing its efforts to collaboratively find a solution to the San Juan Ridge Mine issue. Although the issue is quiet now we would like to see an end to nearly 50 years of addressing catastrophic mining ventures on this land. Our efforts continue!