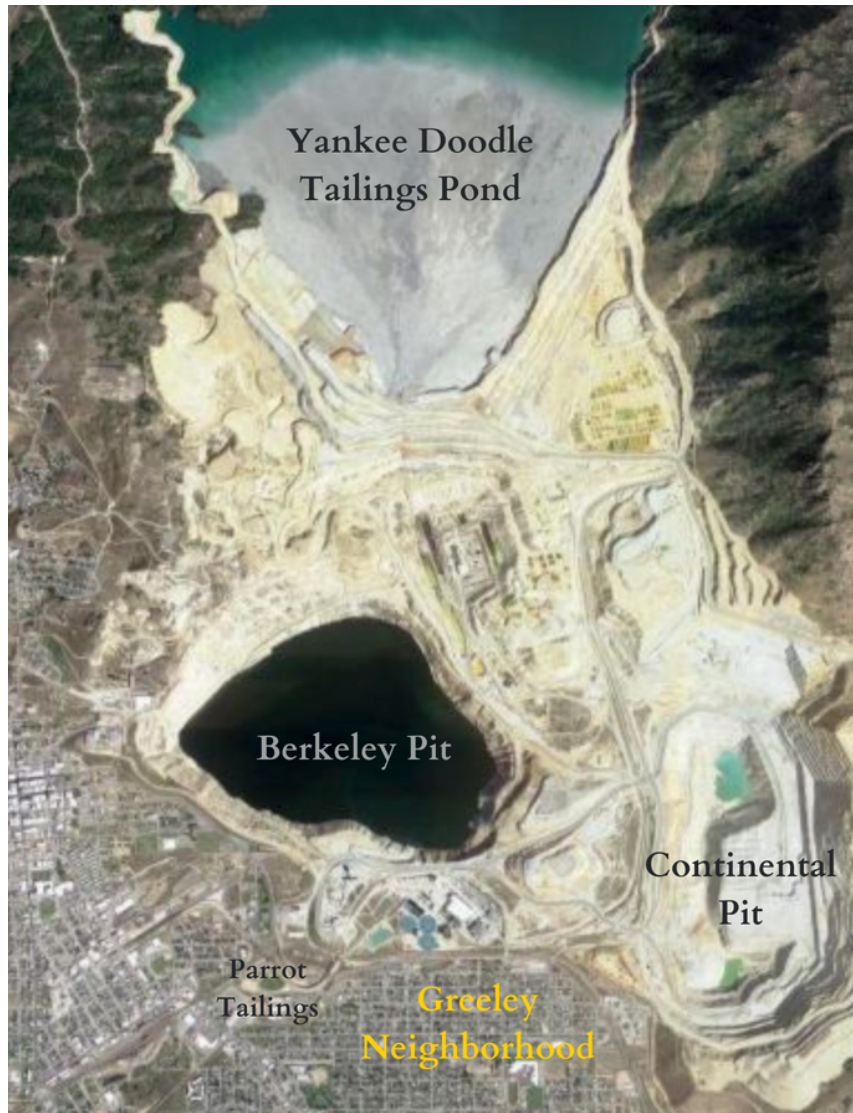




Butte-Silver Bow's Greeley Neighborhood: Seeking A Clean And Healthful Environment

Welcome to Our Neighborhood

Over the past decade, Butte has undergone enormous positive changes in improving its economic vitality and human health. Greeley, one of Butte's oldest neighborhoods, has also witnessed tremendous changes over the years. Greeley deserves the same prosperity and attention that benefits the rest of Butte.

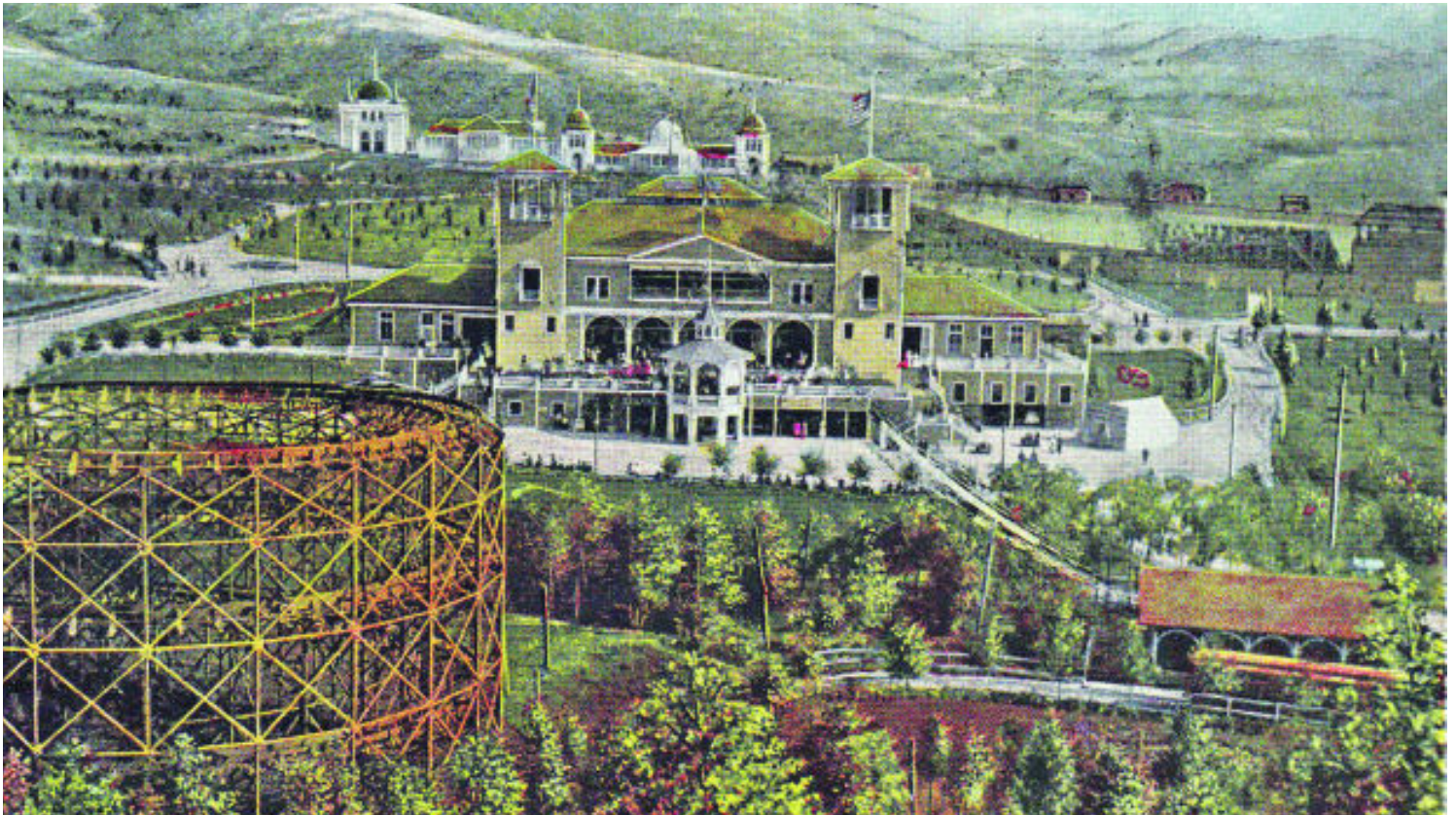


The Greeley Neighborhood is just downslope and south of the Berkeley Pit and the Yankee Doodle Tailings Pond. To the west, the neighborhood is flanked by the historic Parrot Tailings. Directly east is the Continental Pit, an active open-pit hardrock mine and heavily industrialized zone where ore is blasted, crushed, and concentrated to produce copper and molybdenum.

For decades, the Greeley Neighborhood has lived with the impacts of being a neighbor to massive and active hardrock mining operations. Even today, residents of Greeley frequently document large volumes of dust associated with the mining operation originating just upwind of their homes and businesses. This dust, which contains trace amounts of airborne metals, is generated from the crushing, blasting, and transportation activities of the nearby mine, and deposits across their neighborhood, homes, and businesses. More effective dust abatement and mitigation would certainly contribute to a better quality of life for Greeley residents, contributing to even more economic and health benefits for the community at large.

The History of Greeley

Like much of Butte, Greeley residents have a long history of being impacted and displaced by mining activities. The Greeley Neighborhood was a sparsely populated community in 1916. In 1955, expansive open-pit mining created the Berkeley Pit, which required the evacuation and demolition of entire Butte neighborhoods, displacing many of the residents down the hill to the Greeley Neighborhood. In some cases, entire homes were moved, while many of the impacted residents had to rely on temporary trailer homes and manufactured homes.



While near the Berkeley Pit, residents could still walk to the cherished community asset that was Columbia Gardens, a free entry amusement park with many amenities, including a roller coaster, carousel, green space, baseball fields, a lake, flower gardens, dance hall, and more.

As open-pit mining in the area continued to grow, Columbia Gardens was closed, demolished, and replaced with another expanding open-pit mine. Prioritizing industry profits, the Continental Pit spread out to envelope and replace this prized community asset.

Air Quality Impacts to the Greeley Neighborhood



Dust from a blast at Montana Resources' open-pit mine in 2018.
Photo by Meagan Thompson

Montana Resources, the operator of the neighboring open-pit mine, currently extracts more than 50,000 tons of ore daily that are hauled, then crushed and milled on-site to produce copper and molybdenum concentrates. This activity creates a fine particulate dust that is carried by the wind and deposited across the Greeley Neighborhood. The particulates are a nuisance and also contain trace metals that are potentially impacting the health, and most certainly decreasing the quality of life and well-being, of Greeley residents.

The Butte-Silver Bow (B-SB) government has acknowledged the unique circumstances of the Greeley community and its close proximity to active mining. BSB even supported a 2010 Greeley Area Plan that prioritizes that “Greeley residents and Continental Pit mining operations acknowledge their proximity to each other and work to understand and address issues of concern.” Over the past decade, the Greeley Community Corporation (GCC), formerly known as Greeley Neighborhood Community Development Corporation, has brought their air quality concerns to the attention of the B-SB Council of Commissioners, the Health Advisory Committee, and Montana Resources, but has seen little to no action to improve the air quality from the mining activity. While B-SB and Montana Resources have met with the community, Greeley residents still look for meaningful proactive actions from BSB and Montana Resources to reduce airborne mining particulates and protect their community from current industry air pollution.

Health Impacts Assessment

In 2019, B-SB and Montana Resources commissioned an air quality analysis to determine exposure levels for the residents of Greeley. The results were presented to the B-SB Health Study Committee where it was concluded that the air quality was not a problem for the Greeley community. However, there was no analysis of the potential health impacts associated with active mining dust nor the impacts of chronic exposure from multiple contaminants of concern that nearby residents experience from repeated deposition of mining dust across their properties, including their homes and businesses. Clearly, more information is needed to fully assess the dangers to human health.

For over a decade, the Greeley community has been expressing their concerns regarding the health risks associated with living next to active hardrock mining. In order to ensure the community's safety, the Greeley Neighborhood is requesting improvements in Montana Resources dust mitigation practices to reduce exposure to the airborne particulates and a health impacts assessment study to determine the potential health impacts from both short- and long-term exposure to airborne metals.

GCC is deeply invested in realizing the vision of Butte as a safe, healthy community where mining remains valued and compatible with their community goals. A strong partnership with the B-SB local government and other partners can work towards real actions making all of Butte a safe, clean, and healthful place for community members to live, work, and play.



More Information

<https://www.montanaresources.com/about/>

<https://co.silverbow.mt.us/238/Greeley-Neighborhood-Planning>

https://mtstandard.com/news/local/history/photos-a-look-back-at-buttles-iconic-columbia-gardens/collection_28a2eec6-8201-5dd6-a063-f2e1a3ffdebc.html#27

<https://www.montanapbs.org/programs/RememberingTheColumbiaGardens/>

<https://www.mining.com/montana-resources-uses-high-tech-solve-bird-problem/>