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## Salt Lake County hosting 'west bench' open houses

*Comments welcome on Kennecott Land development plans*

By [Doug Smeath](#)

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MAGNA — Big things are brewing in the far western reaches of the Salt Lake Valley. As many as a half-million new residents are expected to move in the coming decades to a vast, currently undeveloped area.

That has residents of a community that is today on the county's outskirts — but is poised to be at the heart of the hubbub — wondering what's coming their way.

Magna residents turned out in unexpectedly high numbers Tuesday evening at a public open house aimed at gathering their input and answering their questions.

The meeting, hosted by the Salt Lake County government and planners, was held to address plans by Kennecott Land to develop 41,000 of the 74,000 acres it owns along the foothills of the Oquirrh Mountains. A second open house will be held today, 6-8 p.m., in the Kearns High School cafeteria, 5255 S. 4800 West.

Throughout the Salt Lake Valley's history, Magna has been about as far west as you could go. But Kennecott Land foresees large highways, two urban centers, several neighborhoods, shopping centers, universities and even a ski resort spanning from I-80 to the south end of the valley — and most of it is west of Magna.

"I'm worried and excited at the same time," new Magna resident Alex Hoppus said after discussing Kennecott's ideas with county planners. "Magna is right in the middle of this, and we're kind of isolated now."

He wonders whether all the lights, traffic, hustle and bustle of the coming development will bring chaos and headaches to his small town, or whether the plans call for improved roads, new light-rail lines, increased access to the Oquirrh and new businesses that will raise Magna's profile and improve its image.

Lifelong Magna resident and Chamber of Commerce president Laura Jo McDermaid is excited.

"We're seeing the economic (impact) already coming," she said, referring to the county's recent work — after decades of residents' begging — to redesign the unincorporated township's historic Main Street and revitalize its businesses.

"I think we're going to be kind of the doorway to this development, and we want to be ready."

Kennecott's plans for the land are still in the formative stage. A draft master plan has been completed, based on input from four planning summits hosted over the summer by the county's Council of Governments. Those summits brought transportation and infrastructure planners, environmentalists, city and county officials, business leaders and others together to air their concerns and share their hopes for the development.

The County Council is currently studying the plan and will be asked in the coming months to approve county planners' general plan for the area. That plan focuses on a host of key concepts, ranging from environmental sustainability to diverse housing choices to a strong base of jobs and retail options.

The council is also considering creating a new zoning category, the planned community (P-C) zone, which would be applicable to any piece of land of at least 1,000 acres with one single owner, or a group of owners voluntarily consolidating their zoning requests. It would be a mixed-use zone allowing developers to master plan a community with parks, residential areas, business areas and open space all falling under one zone, with council approval being required at several stages in the planning.

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