

# Why you should be worried about the draft Northwest Quadrant Master Plan



“The Ground Rules” photograph of the Northwest Quadrant by Charles Uibel

The Northwest Quadrant (NW Quadrant) of Salt Lake City is located between the Bangerter Highway (4000 West) and 8800 West and 2100 South to 3700 North. It covers 29 square miles (19,000 acres). On the portion being considered for new development the only roads are dirt, there is no infrastructure in place, and it is 8 miles from downtown SLC. Current zoning is light manufacturing, open space, and agricultural. The marshes, playas and upland vegetation zone of the NW Quadrant serve as critical buffers to outside disturbances for the wide variety of bird species that rely on Great Salt Lake. The uplands also are important habitat for the long billed curlew, burrowing

owls, an array of raptors and small mammals. The official planning document, “The Northwest Quadrant: Creating a Sustainable Community” is in final draft form, and is being presented to the City Council in the next few months for adoption.

If the Council approves the Plan, the area will soon be rezoned to pave the way for development which includes: 25,000 housing units; office buildings and other structures; a population of 70,000+ (for comparison West Jordan has a population of 68,000); 15 new elementary schools; 8 middle schools; 2 high schools; plus all the other new infrastructure, including roads, sewer lines, electricity and gas lines, a sewage treatment facility, etc., that a new community created on a “greenfield” needs.

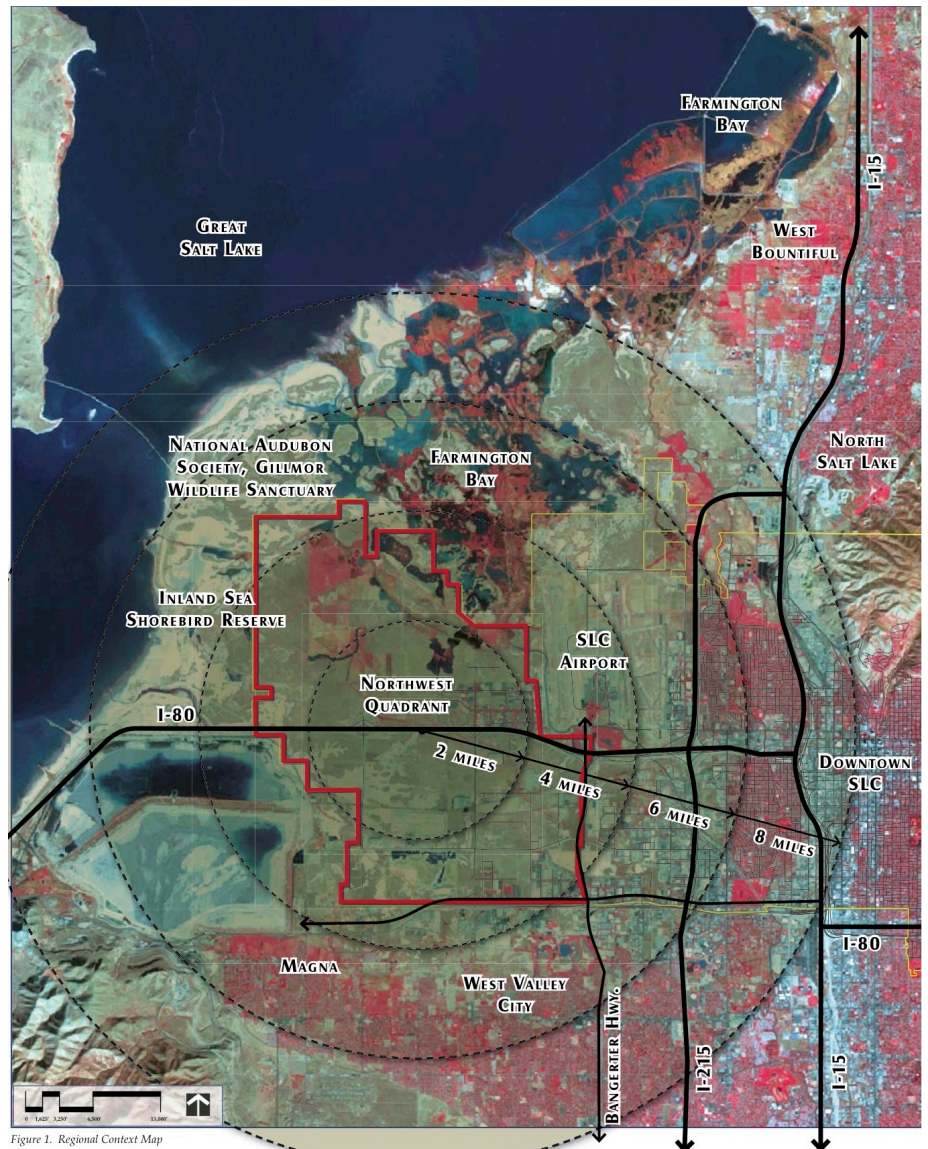


Figure 1. Regional Context Map

## **Environmental hazards exist in NW Quadrant**

While it's a great place for birds, developing the North West Quadrant for humans poses some real problems. In addition to the fact that the area is unconnected to other developed parts of Salt Lake City, a significant portion is a floodplain, the soil will turn to liquid in a severe earthquake and there are old landfills nearby that contain contaminants (including arsenic).

## **Living in the NW Quadrant will not be easy**

Part of what makes the NW Quadrant a great bird habitat, also makes it a difficult place for humans to live. There are many bugs. Also, trees and other types of plants people expect in landscaping won't grow in the alkaline and saline soil. The Great Salt Lake smells, the airport is noisy, and the view to the west is of the Kennecott Smelter. Domestic pet ownership will be restricted because pets pose a threat to the unique birds in the area.

## **Developing the NW Quadrant poses tremendous risks for Salt Lake City taxpayers including:**

- Further degradation of our air quality by tens of thousands of new vehicles traveling on our roads
- There is discussion of extending the new light rail line to the airport to the NW Quadrant - but who will pay the \$100 million+ cost?
- Salt Lake City taxpayers will pay for the 23 new schools that will need to be built, because schools aren't covered by impact fees.
- There is a big question about how much of the cost of entirely new infrastructure such as sewage treatment, public safety facilities, electricity, and roads will be covered by impact fees.
- The unknown cost of providing water to this new community
- The loss of open space and wildlife habitat (particularly for some amazing birds)

## **The Northwest Quadrant Master Plan is based on many unrealistic assumptions such as:**

- People will live and work in close proximity to NW Quadrant. The Plan assumes ample employment opportunities for the 70,000 + residents based on the fact that 30,000 jobs exist in the area now (filled by people who live somewhere else in the Salt Lake Valley).
- The ecological integrity of the area will be maintained even though 70,000 people with their houses, children and cars have moved in.
- The development won't be suburban sprawl even though it is 8 miles from downtown with no transit other than bus (unless light rail is built).
- People will be able to grow food producing gardens and the landscaping will include trees - even though the soil will not sustain gardens or trees.

## **This Threatens What We've Been Working on as a City:**

Salt Lake City has had consistent policies for the last 10 years to encourage infill development, which strengthens our urban fabric and contributes to sustainability goals. We have also made massive investments, public and private, in Downtown and the West side, none of which are guaranteed to succeed. Do policy-makers honestly believe that our transit-corridor plans for North Temple can be realized when all of this development is allowed to skip 8 miles to the west? Will our redevelopment of Downtown really be helped by sprawl in the NW Quadrant? To read the draft master plan go to:

[http://www.slcgov.com/ced/planning/pages/090909\\_NWQ\\_MasterPlan\\_PCRecommendation\\_V2.pdf](http://www.slcgov.com/ced/planning/pages/090909_NWQ_MasterPlan_PCRecommendation_V2.pdf)

**What YOU can do:** Share your concerns and ask that the "agricultural" zoning in the NW Quadrant be replaced with "open space" zoning, instead of zoning that allows for a mini-city to be built. Contact your City Council Member: [council.comments@slcgov.com](mailto:council.comments@slcgov.com) and Mayor Becker: [mayor@slcgov.com](mailto:mayor@slcgov.com). Get your friends to take action too, ask them to join the cause! Together we can save the open space that exists in the Northwest Quadrant and stop Salt Lake City from creating suburban sprawl within the borders of our city.