

State of the City 2019 – Salt Lake City, Utah

Thank you, Nate, Mya, and Dylan—you have certainly made East High proud!

Thank you to the Salt Lake City Fire Department cadets for your service tonight.

Thank you to the members of the City Council who are here this evening.

And thank you to all of you for joining us here this evening.

Tonight, I want to extend a special thanks to Salt Lake City staff, and public servants across this State.

We are in the 27th day of a Federal Government shutdown, which has frustrated and hurt people around this country.

A dysfunction which erodes people's faith in government.

So, I am glad we have the opportunity to come together tonight to talk about the progress we have made at the local level.

Progress in affordable housing, transit, infrastructure, safety, and protecting our environment.

Progress made because of the cultural shifts we have created over the last three years.

And progress driven by the type of public servants your just saw.

I want to start tonight by telling you a story.

25 years ago, I turned on the news and couldn't believe what I was seeing.

A group of students from East High School—just blocks from where I lived—were being threatened and bullied by their peers, teachers, school officials, and even parents—all because they wanted to come together as the state's first Gay-Straight Alliance club.

As the story unfolded, I found myself feeling uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable, because as an openly gay woman, I knew I wasn't doing enough to help make life better for them.

Uncomfortable, because although I had always considered a life of public service—having been raised in a household steeped in the Kennedy aura of duty to country—I had done little to live up to my namesake of Jackie Kennedy.

The courage of the East High students altered the course of my life—and the course of this State. They set me on a path to embrace change and to accept the uncomfortableness which often comes with it.

While those students set out to create a safe space for themselves and their friends, what they accomplished was nothing less than a cultural shift in the State of Utah.

A cultural shift that led us to where we are today.

A time when the Mayor of the Capital City of Utah can stand before you and thank her wife for her support—thank you Betty, I love you!

A place where young people are freer to be themselves and can more easily find the support they need.

Throughout my career in public service, I have never forgotten the impact and bravery of those students, nor my commitment to use my voice to build a stronger and more equitable community for all people.

Most importantly, I have never forgotten that cultural shifts require time, persistence, and the passion of many—the kind of passion I see every day from this community and the team at Salt Lake City.

So, it is an honor for me to be here tonight, at East High School, to present my 2019 State of the City Address.

For three years my team and I have been working with this community to create the kind of cultural shifts that would allow us to Build a City for Everyone.

At a time when our country seems more divided than ever, we have focused on how to bring people together, in a lasting way.

We understand the strength of community is found in its people.

Students, seniors, entrepreneurs, young families, and artists.

Doctors, teachers, construction workers, fire fighters, and the barista at your local coffee shop.

We live amongst one another, because we inherently value what each of us brings to this community.

And the affordable housing shortage we are facing in this region threatens the very fabric of this notion.

For three years, my Administration has taken on this crisis.

Just a little over one year ago, Salt Lake City passed our first affordable housing plan in more than two decades.

In this effort we have had incredible support from the community, the City Council, and the RDA—sending a signal that Salt Lake City is united and prepared to tackle this crisis from every angle.

Since 2016 we have added nearly 2,500 affordable units into Salt Lake City's housing pipeline, including 400 units of transitional housing to help move people out of homelessness.

Often, when we discuss housing, it can feel like a complicated math equation.

80%, 60%, and 20% AMI.

9% tax credits versus 4%.

While our housing experts can make even the most complicated deal balance, they have never lost sight of the human face of this issue.

Tonight, we are joined by several people who have been directly impacted by the work we are doing.

Daniel Day spent four years living at the Road Home shelter.

Dealing with health issues and with few people in his life who could help, Daniel struggled to get on his feet and move forward.

Six months ago, Daniel moved into a one-bedroom apartment, funded through the City's House 20 Program.

House 20 is designed to help stabilize individuals experiencing homelessness, those who are the highest users of costly emergency services like Police, Fire, and ambulances.

Today, Daniel is focused on his health.

As part of House 20, he is receiving ongoing case management, and a health care plan to help him recover. All this so he can get back to work and do what he dreams of: giving back to his community.

Daniel, I can assure you, this City is rooting for you!

We are also joined tonight by Jared and Morgan McClure, a couple with a young child.

Jared works at City Creek Center and Morgan is a nanny.

Like many first-time home buyers, the McClure's struggled to find an affordable home in Salt Lake City where they work.

Luckily, they came across the City's Welcome Home Program, which offers low interest loans to stable buyers with limited income.

With the City's help, Jared and Morgan purchased their first home in May of last year.

They've already fallen in love with the Poplar Grove neighborhood and are creating a life there.

Over the last three years, Salt Lake City has become the model for how to address the affordable housing crisis.

We have invested in your ideas and the people of this City.

We listened to the community and developed a plan that works—one that is getting affordable units into new developments all around the City.

With support from the community, we are funding new programs to help people like Daniel and the McClures.

This includes creating the City's first ever ongoing revenue source for affordable housing.

All of this means that today we are measuring our annual progress in thousands of affordable units instead of hundreds. This is the type of pipeline we need to meet the backlog of demand that has existed for years.

In the coming year, we will examine our zoning requirements, to find ways in which we can incentivize affordability and accessibility, while maintaining the current feel of our neighborhoods.

But, we can't do it alone.

The cultural shift in affordable housing we have created here, must expand statewide.

Communities along the Wasatch Front must step-up and say YES to affordable housing. The demand in Salt Lake County alone is 40,000 units.

We must say YES to helping people like Daniel and welcome couples like the McClures to our neighborhoods.

As Mayor, I am proud of how Salt Lake City residents and businesses are welcoming partners.

Nowhere is this seen more than in the neighborhoods which will soon be home to the new homeless resource centers being built.

When the sites of the new centers were announced, Sapa Group, led by Haong Nguyen, who is here tonight, was in the process of beginning a \$10 million-dollar investment just across the street from the future women's resource center.

This development will create a food alley between 2nd East and State Street, combining 17 ground floor restaurants, with artists' lofts, and additional commercial space—all using repurposed cargo containers.

After the announcement, Ms. Nguyen and her team reached out to the City's Economic Development Department to better understand the impacts the new center would have.

Our team worked with SAPA Group, putting them in touch with the operators and builders of the new resource center to ensure they had the information they needed to continue this incredible development.

Today, the food alley is closer than ever to becoming a reality.

Rather than seeing the new women's resource center as an obstacle, Ms. Nguyen now sees an opportunity. An opportunity to create a job training program for the women who will rebuild their lives at the center.

Thank you, Ms. Nguyen, you are making a difference.

When I created the City's Department of Economic Development three years ago, it was this type of interaction between the City and businesses I hoped would happen.

Through a commitment to problem solving and partnership, this Department has created a cultural shift in how business is done and won in Salt Lake City.

Along with working to expand businesses like UPS and clearing hurdles for small businesses like Sapa, this team has been a force in promoting all aspects of Salt Lake City.

Last year, partnering with multi-cultural chambers of commerce, this team helped launch "Living Color Utah," an interactive toolkit designed to promote the City's diverse businesses.

And through their focus on the arts, they helped bring 11 murals to the City's historic Granary District, adding to the culture and uniqueness of the historic area

The Granary District is one of several neighborhoods undergoing a renaissance in our City.

These revitalizations are occurring through a combination of the entrepreneurial spirit, economic development efforts, and of course, the incredible improvement in public safety across our City.

There is nothing more a mayor wants to be able to say than this: you are safer in this City today than you were three years ago.

The numbers are dramatic.

A three-year, 25% decrease in crime citywide.

This drop in crime is seen in every district of the city.

This means, when compared to 2015, there were 6,000 fewer crimes.

That is 6,000 fewer victims, and 6,000 fewer incidents putting pressure on the criminal justice system.

Chief Brown's strategy of getting officers back into neighborhoods is working.

Pairing social workers with police officers to ensure people are getting the help they need, is working.

The plan to disrupt the criminal element hiding amongst the most vulnerable—first demonstrated by the City and County with Operation Diversion—is working.

Tomorrow, I will attend a Police Academy graduation of 15 new cadets.

Over the last year, the Salt Lake City Police Department has graduated 81 cadets—staffing vacancies and fulfilling our pledge to add 27 new positions to the Department overall.

Tonight, I'd like to introduce you to one of the most unique additions to the Department—Rita the Advocate Dog and her partner, Cari Bobo.

Rita is a comfort dog who started her career with Salt Lake City Police two months ago.

Through furry physical contact, Rita calms victims during interviews, allowing investigators to get the details they need to help prosecute criminals.

Rita is definitely a hero—and I am guessing one of the biggest supporters of the puppy mill ordinance we passed last year.

I know she is already making a difference in many lives, and with her own Instagram page, @ritaslcpd, she'll be one of the most popular members of the team!

Helping victims of crime is one of the most important things Salt Lake City Police Department does, and I am grateful to Chief Brown for making this a priority.

A few months ago, I was deeply moved to help launch a new YWCA program designed to train first responders to identify the signs of strangulation.

Nearly 10% of the women who experience intimate partner violence will also experience strangulation.

The signs of this trauma are often difficult to see, adding to the complex task of helping people get out of abusive situations.

As a survivor myself, I know it is critical for us to create a culture which starts by believing. No one should ever find themselves in an emergency room, too afraid to say what really happened, like I did years ago.

Salt Lake City is fortunate to have a public safety team who always strives to improve what they do.

These efforts include dramatically lowering 911 call response time, through better staffing and training.

And this year, Lisa Burnett, the City's new 911 Director, is leading an effort to put location markers on the Jordan River Trail, so people can get help faster.

Throughout the summer, Salt Lake City Fire fighters were called upon to battle blazes in wildland areas, not only here, but across Utah and in California.

They are some of the best trained personnel in the country to deal with these urban interface wildfires. These fires are growing more intense as summers become hotter and dryer.

This is dangerous work. And I am incredibly proud of their service to this City and other communities, especially their heroic efforts stopping the Ensign Peak fire last year, with no loss of life or property.

I am equally proud in how they are leading as an agency to do their part to minimize the causes of climate change.

Last year, the Salt Lake City Fire Department made history by opening the first two net-zero fire stations in the country.

In addition to these efforts, Chief Lieb is also committed to examining the overall fuel efficiency of the Fire Department fleet. He is providing his support staff with clean vehicles, while investing in new technology to reduce the carbon output of the department's larger equipment.

It shouldn't surprise us that those on the front-lines have an "all-in" mentality when it comes to addressing climate change.

And it is this type of mentality we must all have, if we want to be a part of the solution to clear the air.

When I took office three years ago, I stood on the steps of City Hall and I could not see the Wasatch Mountains—the very mountains which drew me to this city 30 years ago.

Each of us knows there is no single solution to the air quality crisis we are facing as a State.

And we know it is a problem which must be addressed by the state, every city, every business, and yes, every resident who calls Utah home.

I am proud of the work Salt Lake City has done over the last three years to create cultural shifts in how we reduce pollution.

In 2016, Salt Lake City became the 16th city in the United States to formally adopt a 100% clean energy plan.

We are rapidly approaching the first stage of that goal, to have 50% of City government operations powered by clean energy in 2020.

We will achieve this goal through a new clean energy development project which will begin this year.

We will also continue our partnership with Rocky Mountain Power, to create the necessary framework to enable Salt Lake City, Park City, Moab, Summit County, and other communities to reach our NET-100% clean energy goals by 2032.

Reaching these goals is critical, not only to our region's air quality, but to help stave off the effects of climate change which put at risk our water, forests, outdoor tourism, and the brave members of the Salt Lake City Fire Department.

Each of us has a personal responsibility to take action to protect the local and global environment.

Salt Lake City will continue to create new paths for residents to be a part of the solution, making it easier for all of us to reduce our environmental footprint.

One change came last year with the introduction of a new bulk waste collection program.

After hearing from residents for years about illegal dumping during the City's annual clean-up and concerns over contamination and a lack of recycling, the City's waste management team introduced a new system in 2018.

While there were initial growing pains, the new customized pick-up service has resulted in changes we can all be proud of.

During the first year of operation, the new pick-up program increased the amount of material we were able to recycle from ZERO to 15 tons!

Additionally, we have nearly **TRIPLED** the amount of green waste diverted from our landfill to more environmentally friendly composting.

All this while maintaining the same amount of material removed from our neighborhoods.

In October we received an email from a resident named Wendy who lives just a few blocks from here on Herbert Avenue.

She wrote to simply say:

“Thank you for the service you offer and the ease and promptness in responding to my request for pick-up.”

With the new year-round program, residents like Wendy are able to receive service when they need it—confident they are doing their part to help keep our City and planet clean.

Just as the choices we make to reduce, reuse, and recycle matter to the health of the environment, the decision we make to turn the key matters to the quality of the air we breathe.

We know half of the toxic pollution in the air is from our cars.

As a working mom of two boys, I understand it is not always easy to balance my desire to help clear the air with the demands of an active family.

So as mayor, creating a cultural shift in how Salt Lake City approaches transit, to help more people make clean air decisions, has been central to my time in office.

With support from the City Council and the residents of Salt Lake City, who said YES to investing in transit, long-awaited changes to bus service will begin this August.

Commuters on three key lines along 2nd South, 21st South, and right here at 9th South will see extended hours, more frequent service, and at long last, Sunday service.

For students here at East, whose boundary extends into our Westside neighborhoods, these improvements not only mean they can get to school earlier and stay later for activities, it means an overall easier commute.

By extending the 9th South line through the Glendale and Poplar Grove neighborhoods, we will add a critical connector between our east and west side communities.

And mark your calendars, because on February 9th, Salt Lake City will host a special “rolling open house” to test the extension and get feedback from residents on this bus line.

This is an exciting time for transportation options and Salt Lake City is committed to leading out through innovation and partnerships.

From expanding bus service to working cooperatively with companies like UTA, Lyft, Uber, GreenBike, Bird and Lime, Salt Lake City is committed to exploring every idea to help people move around in a greener way.

In just a few weeks, our Transportation team will travel to Phoenix to present a new concept developed for the American Dream Challenge.

Their idea is to take all the transportation options which currently exist in our City and bundle them together.

Through a single app, users will be able to choose the service that works for them, pay for it, and be on their way.

Our team has already won the first round of the American Dream Challenge, and if successful, will receive \$1 million dollars to fund this innovative program.

But the true value of this million-dollar idea, is found in the savings it can provide middle-class residents in Salt Lake City, who on average spend \$9,300 dollars annually to own a car.

By creating transportation options for individuals to get out of their cars, we can create a little more breathing room for residents—both in terms of air quality, and available income.

Regardless of the outcome of the American Dream Challenge, Salt Lake City will continue to invest in programs which create equitable access to transportation options.

This year, we will begin a review of the City's transit pass program, with the goal of making it more robust and getting it into the hands of more City residents.

We will also create first-mile, last-mile solution to make it easier for people to access the transit system.

During my State of the City Address last year, I introduced a plan to fundamentally shift how we repair and maintain our City's roads

This plan proposed funding options to repair City streets, two-thirds of which are rated poor or worse. And to adequately maintain them so we don't find ourselves in this situation again.

This included an \$87-million-dollar bond to replace our worst roads.

Over the last year my Administration, with Council support, took this plan on the road to show residents what is possible with a new commitment to our aging infrastructure.

The City's engagement team met with businesses and residents to explain how this funding was an investment in the long-term strength of our community.

In November of last year, all of this work paid off, when 67% of residents voted for the road reconstruction bond.

In every district of the City, a majority of residents said yes to the fiscally responsible approach we are taking to finally fix our roads.

Earlier this month the City's streets crew welcomed newly hired team members.

Along with new equipment, these workers will enable us to double the lane miles we can repair and maintain this year!

As we move forward, we will also take every opportunity to problem solve and minimize the impacts caused by construction.

Not far from here is a great example of this work.

On 13th East, the Public Utilities Department worked throughout the last year on the first phase of a total reconstruction of this critical artery.

Central to their work was neighborhood outreach to help residents during the 2-year project.

Leading this effort was Philip Case, who is here tonight.

Philip has been described as an unstoppable outreach guru. And I believe it!

Throughout the first phase of this project, Philip knocked on twelve hundred doors and responded to fifteen hundred calls, texts, and emails.

Philip has reported back that residents appreciated the outreach, with many inviting him in for treats, and handing him water to fuel his work.

Thank you, Philip and to all the residents for your patience and input as we build a new 13th East.

Currently our teams are also working together to develop a new complete streets ordinance which includes ALL modes of transportation and the opportunity for community engagement.

By also considering what is along our streets, we can create a better design for the people who use them.

This year, we will begin a long-awaited reconstruction of 27th South between Highland Drive and Preston Street.

Because this area includes two schools, our priority will be to make the road safe for kids, utilizing raised crosswalks and other features.

We have heard about a desire to address our nation's aging infrastructure at the Federal level, but no action has been taken.

While others talk, Salt Lake City is putting shovels in the ground, laying pipes for future generations, and rebuilding our roads so they will work for everyone.

And, as you know, we are rebuilding our international airport.

A \$3.6-billion-dollar project, which will create the nation's first 21st century hub airport, without using a single tax-payer dollar.

As Mayor, I have had the opportunity to meet with my colleagues from around the country, and to talk with them about what we are doing in Salt Lake City.

I have spoken with them about the issues of homelessness, affordable housing, and transit, and how politically difficult it can be to find and fund solutions that work.

So, it is incredible how the people in this community have embraced our plans to address these issues, and are willing to give, so we can improve the lives of everyone in this City.

As the Chairwoman of Mayors for a Sustainable Future and co-chair of the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100% Clean Energy I have carried the message of clean air and carbon reduction around the country.

Salt Lake City's unique partnership with our energy provider, is proving to be a path forward, for other cities to join this movement.

Last year when I spoke at the United Nations Civil Society conference, I highlighted how people come together in our community and partner with city and state government to help solve our most pressing issues.

In August, this prestigious global conference will come to Salt Lake City, giving us the opportunity to show thousands of people from around the world how we are creating a sustainable and resilient city.

The issues we face as a community are not unique, but the ability to put into place solutions at the pace we have, is.

Over the last three years we have created shifts which will resonate for years to come.

This work was possible because of the City workers you saw in tonight's video, and the thousands of others like them.

This has been possible because for three years my colleagues on the City Council and I have focused on the idea that government can be an instrument of good.

Yes, at times we have disagreed, and that is healthy, but on most issues, we have spoken with one voice.

Through our policies and budgets, we have established that our legacy will be measured in part by how easy a student here at East can get from their home in Glendale to school.

How we can bring stability to the lives of people like Daniel Day, creating an opportunity for a second chance.

That couples like the McClures can live safely and affordably in neighborhoods across this City.

And how we can create opportunities for people like Haong Nguyen to be part of the solution.

Most importantly, the work we have done over the last three years has been possible because of the people in Salt Lake City.

Residents who engage their government because they love this City and want to see it thrive. It is no wonder we are America's choice for a future Winter Games.

Together, we are building a City for everyone.

And together, we are ensuring that the State of THIS GREAT CITY is strong.