Salt Lake City – UT - 2017

Thank you for being here tonight.

I want to begin by thanking the staff of the Marmalade Library for so graciously hosting us this evening.

It was only a year ago that we came together to open this beautiful space in the City.

Through the work of everyone here, this space has truly come to life.

And to the members of my staff, department and division directors, thank you for your hard work this year.

One of the accomplishments I am most proud of, has been assembling this team to help lead our City. Each of you has demonstrated grace under fire, and an incredible commitment to service.

Thank you.

A few weeks ago, my staff and I were honored to receive a visit and performance from the House of Hope choir, some of whom are here tonight.

This unique choir is made up of women currently receiving help at the House of Hope—a residential addiction treatment facility in the heart of Salt Lake City.

Between performances, the women bravely shared their stories with us.

In listening to these women speak it was clear; they WANTED to share their stories with us.

They wanted us to know that each of them had been homeless.

They wanted us to know their drug of choice, and how afraid they were of falling prey to it once again.

They wanted us to know they were survivors, not only of their addiction, but also of the traumas they have experienced.

They wanted us to hear that they are mothers fighting to gain back custody of their children.

They wanted us to know, they are grandmothers who loved their families and wanted to find a way home.

And they wanted us to know; how grateful they are to be getting a second chance.

Whether in treatment for 10 days or 10-months, each of these women also let us know of their commitment to pay-it-forward.

To use this opportunity to get their lives back, to help others be successful as well.

These women serve as a reminder that we all have a responsibility to one another and this City.

A responsibility to:

Foster hope.

Ensure equity.

And create opportunity.

To build a city for everyone.

As we continue to address some of the City’s most pressing issues, it is critical we hold to these core values.

Over the last year Salt Lake City has taken enormous strides in the effort to fundamentally alter the way services are provided to those most in need.

When the City Council and I selected four new homeless resource centers in Salt Lake City, we took one of the most difficult and concrete steps in this multi-year process.

This step acknowledges our belief in Salt Lake County’s Collective Impact Model of service.

It acknowledges the commitments we have made to the State Legislature.

And, it acknowledges the promises leaders have made to the people of Salt Lake City for decades:

Change is on the way.

Salt Lake City has been a place of hope for those experiencing homelessness for 30 years. This is a noble attribute of this great city, and we must work to preserve it for generations to come.

However, the current system of service—even with the tremendous efforts of dedicated individuals—is crushing that hope under a need too great for any one city to manage.

In addressing the legislature on opening day, Speaker Greg Hughes also acknowledged this when he said:

“One city cannot take on this issue.

One county cannot take on this issue.

The state by itself would not be able to take on this issue.”

I would add, one neighborhood cannot take on this issue.

We all must take on this issue.

For Salt Lake City, this means seizing a moment of unprecedented, bi-partisan cooperation between leaders at every level of government.

We have come together in the spirit of collaboration to address a humanitarian crisis right in our own back yard.

And now is the time to move forward.

We will turn our attention to ensuring the centers we build are spaces of hope. That they are well designed to affirm the dignity of those who will find refuge and renewal inside them.

We will work with our County partners to ensure that their new service model does what we have been promised—that it will quickly and effectively move people from homelessness to housing.

We will provide resources to neighborhoods to mitigate concerns they have raised, and help them become welcoming partners.

As a City we will do a better job, along with our County partners, and the Collective Impact Committee, to educate the public on the new model we are adopting.

When the sites were announced the principal of Salt Lake Arts Academy—which sits next to the location on 700 South sent an email to the parents of her students, and copied our office.

It read in part:

“As an urban school, the homeless have always been with us,

It is part of our mission to teach our children to understand issues facing their city, and help them be empathetic and creative in how to solve problems.”

This is not just a mission for local school children, it is a mission for all of us who want change, who want to move forward, and who want to help.

I know we are a city of equity. That our residents believe in the power of coming together to help one another.

As we move forward with this multi-year process, we will continue working to resolve some of the toughest issues surrounding the current system of service.

With Operation Diversion last fall, law enforcement, service providers, and public officials demonstrated what could be done through cooperation, commitment, and accountability.

We separated the criminal element from the victims they prey upon and paired accountability with access to behavioral health services for those in need.

Operation Diversion is a success.

Not because 100% of people involved turned their lives around—though many did, including some brought to House of Hope.

It was a success, because for the first time in a long while, we injected accountability in an area described as “lawless.”

And we created opportunity for those ready to receive help.

During Operation Diversion, I learned treatment specialists and police officers have something in common.

When you thank them for their hard work, they say:

“I’m just doing my job.”

Well, my job is to help them do theirs. And when we can, do it in the spirit of cooperation, even better.

In order to make pilot projects like Operation Diversion more permanent, we need resources, specifically treatment beds and more jail space.

The City Council and I have been in discussions about how the City can further fund innovative treatment and diversion programs. This includes the Police Department’s Community Connections Center, which opened last summer, thanks largely to the efforts of Council Member Stan Penfold.

This storefront resource center staffed with police officers, social workers, and other service providers has referred over 200 individuals to a variety of treatment services. Imagine what we could do with more staffing.

The CCC is successful, and at the request of Chief Brown, I am moving forward with funding for three additional social workers at the Center.

This is life-changing work, and our police department should be applauded for taking the lead on this.

Through the Justice Reinvestment Act, we have been clear as a State that addiction is not a crime.

Sheriff Jim Winder, who operates the Salt Lake County jail, understands and supports this position.

Faced with overcrowding, Sheriff Winder has correctly focused efforts at the County Jail on serious offenders.

During Operation Diversion, Sheriff Winder and his team clearly demonstrated their commitment to fundamentally changing the criminal justice dynamic in our County—an effort I am truly grateful for.

For nearly a decade Sheriff Winder has requested additional funding for jail space. As recently as 2015, he requested support for a large scale Community Correction Center. This is a structured, residential environment for offenders, to help them integrate back into the community successfully.

The ability to have resources that allow us to continue Operation Diversion must be part of moving forward as we build new resource centers.

It’s time for all partners involved to heed the call from the Sheriff, to immediately open available jail space while we expand treatment options.

Efforts by the Salt Lake City Police Department are also going a long way to help change the dynamic in the city.

This year, Chief Brown initiated a “beat model” of policing, nearly doubling the number of officers in our local neighborhoods.

This shift has resulted in an 7.3% drop over the past year in homicide, sexual assault, and armed robbery. This is a move in the right direction in our fight against crime.

The SLCPD is committed to fostering positive change, and creating honest dialogue that results in trust.

Last year Chief Brown created the Community Activists Group, or CAG, and has been working directly with them to build transparency in operations, hiring practices, disciplinary matters and more.

Chief Brown is here tonight with Deeda Seed, an organizer of CAG, and I want to thank both of you for your willingness to work together, and listen to one another.

Since February of last year, CAG and the department have collaborated on redesigning the department website to make it easier to find important information like use of force data, hiring practices and more.

Members of CAG are also participating in Sergeant interviews, ensuring a public voice when SLCPD makes leadership decisions.

But even with this strong level of cooperation, there will always be times when the bonds of this relationship may be tested.

At those times, it is our responsibility to do what we can to ensure transparency, open communication, and to set clear expectations to help minimize misunderstanding.

It is for those reasons why, last year I requested, and the City Council approved, funding for independent counsel for the Civilian Review Board when the need arises.

Just yesterday, I released a draft policy regarding body camera footage of critical incidents.

This policy balances the need for transparency with the legitimate need to protect records during investigations and judicial proceedings—to ensure everyone is afforded a fair trial.

My goal with this policy is to make clear the mechanism of when and how Salt Lake City will release this information.

It will also set a level of transparency we expect other agencies to meet when investigating incidents in Salt Lake City.

This draft is now available online for review and public comment on the City’s website.

As our City continues to grow and change, so do the demands on our Public Safety teams.

The willingness of the Salt Lake City Police Department to lead in modern policing techniques is one of the reasons why they are among the finest departments in the country.

This year, while police officers continue to receive de-escalation training, a team of 25 officers will receive world-class implicit bias training. This team will be charged with training fellow officers on the new techniques and practices they learn.

At our 911 Bureau, a commitment to excellence has resulted in an 11% reduction in the time it takes to answer calls. Our dispatchers know every second matters in an emergency, and they are doing all they can to answer the call.

This year our Fire Department came under new leadership with the promotion of Chief Karl Lieb. Chief Lieb understands the value of diversifying his team and participated in designing programs to bring more women and minorities into the profession.

I want to take a moment now to pause and reflect on the sacrifices our Public Safety teams make each day—sometimes paying the ultimate price for our safety.

Less than two weeks ago, our City lost one of it’s own with the death of

Fire Fighter-Paramedic Tyson Mason, who also worked for Life Flight.

Over the course of the last week, especially at his funeral, I heard over and over what a knowledgeable, well respected, and dedicated team member Tyson was.

He was someone his family could count on.

He was someone his crews could count on.

He was someone the City could count on.

The loss of Tyson Mason will be felt across the City and State.

Our hearts go out to his family, his wife Haileigh and their newborn son Lukas.

Please join me for a moment of silence.

Thank you.

Over the last year—driven by the vision of Building a City for Everyone—my administration’s teams at Housing and Neighborhood Development and the RDA have been working together to carefully craft Salt Lake City’s first housing plan since 2000.

This plan, which will be released in full on Thursday, acknowledges that it is a moral imperative to ensure Salt Lake City is a community where all people, regardless of race, age, economic status, or physical ability can find a place to call home.

We are not simply focused on numbers, but in laying groundwork across the City to support and foster affordable housing.

We will address the root causes of affordability, create long-term solutions for increasing needed housing supply, and expand opportunities throughout the city, while resolving systemic failures in the rental market, and preserving our existing units.

To achieve these critical goals we will first reform City practices to promote a responsive, affordable, high-opportunity housing market.

This will require bold, but equitable, changes to existing City policies and procedures.

If we are to truly make an impact, these must include removing local barriers; which limit density, prohibit needed housing types, and create development burdens. All of this contributes to the supply deficit, and worse, economic segregation in the City.

At the heart of our plan will also be opportunities to work with community partners. Together we will design and build new high-quality, innovative, and affordable homes throughout every part of the city.

We are focused on the life-cycle of neighborhoods, committed to collaboration, excited to innovate, and working with the knowledge that any plan must come with long-term and sustainable funding options.

Last week I convened the first meeting of a Blue Ribbon Commission comprised of industry leaders to begin addressing the challenges of funding affordable housing.

I look forward to working with the City Council in the coming weeks as we discuss this plan and how we can implement it over the next 5-years. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder, we can make significant progress on this issue, while making the city a fairer place to live.

The opportunity to impact our need for affordable housing also rests in economic development efforts.

With the cost of housing rising faster than wages over the past few years, it is imperative we focus on creating local, good paying jobs.

Last year we took a giant step forward with the formation of the Department of Economic Development and the hiring of Lara Fritts to oversee our efforts.

While still building a complete department, Lara and her team have revolutionized how business is done, and how it is WON in Salt Lake City.

UPS, Big Agnes, Cotopaxi, Cicero Group, POST Consumer Brands, Stryker, and Rotor Bike Components are just some of the companies that have been attracted to Salt Lake City with the help of her team this past year.

These new and expanded businesses represent approximately two million square feet of space, more than $300 million dollars in capital expenditures, and more than 2,000 jobs.

And the best is yet to come.

By ensuring UPS builds their new regional shipping center right on the corner of Salt Lake City’s Northwest Quadrant, our Economic Development team brought a major asset to the area.

This shipping center will undoubtedly attract other businesses—especially those that rely on easy shipping—bringing more jobs and more opportunity.

And that is what the Northwest Quadrant is:

Opportunity for Salt Lake City.

Earlier this year we launched a 2-year infrastructure and economic implementation plan for nearly 4,000 acres just west of the airport.

Our plans are aggressive, to match the awesome opportunity before us.

Throughout 2017, Salt Lake City will review and complete zoning, and develop a master plan for a future transportation grid.

Most importantly, we will continue to develop an identity for this area to help us build the strongest possible economic base.

This work will be done with input from experts and key stakeholders, including the State, County, general public, and City Council.

This timetable ensures the economic zone will be ready a full two-years before construction is completed on the new prison. And it creates an opportunity to work closely with landowners and other stakeholders on development.

We will also ensure everything we are doing is built on a foundation of sustainability, beginning with the preservation of another 4,000 acres of natural area.

This year, our Economic Development Department will also launch and complete a large-scale survey of businesses in Salt Lake City. This survey will be used to better understand which of them needs additional support to grow and thrive.

And to help business thrive, our Department will also work with partners to create a mobile small business development service center. This service center will bring resources and support to entrepreneurs where they are, saving them valuable time and creating opportunity.

With our State’s strong economy, there is opportunity all around us.

Tonight, representatives from Stryker Corporation, one of the world’s leading medical technology companies, are here with us.

Stryker will be consolidating their manufacturing operations from West Valley and California, to right here in Salt Lake City. The facility they are developing, which will include a state-of-the-art-training center, will attract surgeons from all around the world.

The deal with Stryker was the first of the many accomplishments to be accomplished under the City’s new Department of Economic Development.

When I called for the creation of this department, I asked that they align City resources, re-engage with statewide economic partners, take advantage of our place as the Crossroads of the West, and support businesses that complement the City’s needs and values.

With the University of Utah, Research Park, and a growing life science industry here in Salt Lake City, working to get Stryker made sense.

By collaborating with GOED and EDCUtah, and working to ensure Stryker’s permitting needs were met—Salt Lake City demonstrated that we are open for business.

Our new Economic Development team has demonstrated their vision, capability, and value to our city. It is critical for us to keep them moving forward.

Throughout the last year, we have been taking steps to ensure the Redevelopment Agency is the strongest possible partner in our efforts to promote economic development and affordable housing.

Together we are charting a new path forward for the RDA, one that respects the unique role of the agency and respects the statutory role of both my office and the City Council.

Over the last few months, staff from the Department of Economic Development, the RDA, and City Council has been meeting to develop an RDA budget reflective of these shared goals. Today my office submitted this budget to the City Council for consideration.

This budget sets aside funding for affordable housing, which the Council requested in the fall, and restores necessary funding to projects currently underway, like Station Center.

Most importantly this budget provides a strategic path forward for this agency.

We only need to walk around this beautiful building to see the value of the RDA. This library is a new anchor for this neighborhood, and the surrounding area will soon be a vibrant mix of housing and development space.

With passage of this proposed budget we can move forward on the Marmalade, North Temple, Station Center, and Granary Projects while giving us a critical tool for affordable housing initiatives.

Last year our City took critical action to address the issues of climate change and protecting our environment.

Through a Joint Resolution the city pledged to have 100% of our city’s energy needs met by renewables by 2032. And we will reduce our total carbon footprint by 80% by 2040.

When I took office one-year ago, one of the biggest negotiations awaiting me was with our energy supplier, Rocky Mountain Power. Under the leadership of Vicki Bennett, Director of the Department of Sustainability, we negotiated an unprecedented 5-year franchise agreement.

This agreement takes into account our city’s energy goals, and allows the City the ability to better chart our progress.

We also became one of the largest subscribers to Rocky Mountain Power’s Subscriber Solar program.

Now, after months of stakeholder engagement meetings we have another opportunity to take a major leap forward.

Two weeks ago my office transmitted to the City Council a new building energy ordinance. The ordinance will require buildings over 25,000 square feet to “benchmark” their energy usage, helping to reveal where they can make reductions.

Commercial buildings are responsible for 60% of Salt Lake City’s carbon footprint, so this ordinance has the potential to make a big impact. It has the potential of eliminating over 98 tons of pollutants from Salt Lake City’s air each year.

Benchmarking allows building owners and managers to identify if their buildings are good candidates for efficiency improvements, helps reduce energy waste, and saves money.

This ordinance helps building owners do the right thing by becoming partners in our fight for clean air.

I urge the Council to review and adopt this ordinance as soon as possible.

Salt Lake City continues to be recognized nationally for the work we are doing to protect our local and global environment.

From helping to clear our air, to steadfastly defending the watershed areas, which provide safe, and reliable drinking water to the Valley, we will continue to lead the state in sustainability efforts.

Finally tonight, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the confusion and fear that has impacted many in our community since President Donald Trump took office.

The actions of the Trump administration, particularly the Executive Orders on immigration and refugees, are not in keeping with the values of this Nation, and certainly not of our City.

Only a few generations ago, refugees fleeing religious persecution came to this valley to start a new life for themselves. They built a new home to live and pray as they saw fit, a new place to build opportunity and hope for the future.

Whether you trace your roots in this City back to handcarts, mining, or a ski trip, we are bound by the history of the place we now proudly call home.

We are, and always will be, a welcoming City.

As Mayor, I have a duty to protect and honor this beautiful legacy, and the people who live here.

While I remain confident Salt Lake City will forge a productive relationship with the new Administration, it will not be at the expense of what makes this City truly great.

The best of who we are is seen in the faces of those who came to us in a time of need, and found their light in our community.

I want to introduce you to a few of these people tonight.

Tina Benj, a Sudanese refugee who came to Utah in 1999. Tina is the first person you meet in my office.  She helps hundreds of City residents every week.

Galina Urry, a refugee from Ukraine, who came to Utah with her family in 1991. Galina helps keep our neighborhoods strong with her work at the City’s Department of Community and Neighborhoods.

And Fatima Dirie, who fled Somalia and found a home in Utah in 1997. Fatima has spent the last year connecting hundreds of local volunteers to refugee families as part of our Refugee Volunteer program.

It is because of women like Tina, Galina, Fatima, the women of the House of Hope Choir, and so many others in our community who work to foster hope, build opportunity for themselves and others, and strive each day to build a more equitable City, that I can confidently say tonight:

The State of our City is strong.

Thank you!