



Mayor Ben McAdams
2018 State of the County speech
Building on Success
February 13, 2018
(As Prepared)

Good morning. Thank you, Council Chair Newton; members of the county council; Deputy Mayors Erin Litvack, Darrin Casper, Karen Hale and Rick Graham; department heads, county employees and fellow elected officials who are here today.

We're saddened by the loss of long time public servant and county Recorder Gary Ott. However, we welcome his successor Adam Gardiner, who joins the experienced team of Treasurer Wayne Cushing, Auditor Scott Tingley, Clerk Sherrie Swenson, Assessor Kevin Jacobs, and Surveyor Reid Demman.

The state of our county stands on a strong foundation of facing up to challenges and taking responsibility for results. As the regional government of Utah's most populous county, we've shown again and again how local leaders solve problems-- at a time of too much partisan conflict and not enough common purpose.

I am honored to be here today, repeating words you've heard from me before: the state of our county is strong. In December, we adopted a structurally-balanced, fiscally responsible budget. We retain our Triple A bond ratings. We remain one of the top 41 counties in the nation for financial strength, thanks to careful management and sound policy. It's just one of the ways we are able to stretch our tax dollars even further.

We have pursued a clear mission: Wherever existing county government functions don't reflect the world we now live in, we will change.

We have changed how we operate internally and externally. We're now aligning department budgets with desired outcomes and we're measuring what our customers receive-- in exchange for their hard-earned tax dollars. Our employees are so committed that some of them – like former Real Estate Director Lee Colvin – come back out of retirement when duty calls. Lee, thank you.

Clark Planetarium “eclipsed” its past successes during last year’s Solar Eclipse. Seth Jarvis and his \$2 a pair eclipse glasses delivered the magic of this world-wide phenomenon to our residents. Last year alone we served over 171,000 students at the planetarium; the team has also taken the show on the road with the Astro Van to serve 65,000 more. What a unique and important response to the call to action for more science, technology, engineering and math education for Utah’s future workforce.

Jim Cooper and our county library professionals are also partnering with Junior Achievement and STEM-focused programs. In 2017, they enrolled 60,000 children, teens and adults in the library's Summer Reading Challenge. West Valley, Kearns, Daybreak in South Jordan, South Salt Lake and Herriman are all in line for new libraries in the coming years. In a state where access to quality education is routinely the number one issue for families and businesses alike, Salt Lake County programs and facilities are an invaluable asset.

What a year it has been for Martin Jensen and the Parks and Rec team. They have completed the north-south Jordan River Trail and the east-west Parleys Trail from Wasatch Boulevard to 300 West. Now, we're pursuing additional funding to complete the PRATT trail from 300 West to the Jordan River, giving residents a long-desired east to west Class One trail. Park openings include Wardle Fields and Lodestone Regional Park. Since the 2016 park bond rollout Parks & Rec has completed 35 of 100 projects. This summer they'll finish the new Parks Operations Center and this spring, will break ground on a new Draper Recreation Center, which will serve residents of that fast-growing city.

The foresight that made all of this possible happened long before I became mayor, but thank goodness county leaders took the time to incorporate parks, trails and open space in our rapidly-expanding urban region. The result? -- Outstanding recreational opportunities and an excellent quality of life for residents and their families.

Utah has always punched above its weight class when it comes to the arts—dance, symphony, theatre. Sarah Pearce and her Center for the Arts team has had a great year, completing the Abravanel Hall Lobby remodel, and hosting nearly 500,000 patrons at our fine arts venues. This year we'll celebrate the ground breaking for the Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center in Taylorsville, move ahead with planning the Capitol Theatre Renovation as well as launch a program to help low-income families attend shows at the Eccles Theatre. Thanks to the county's exceptional management, and the community's love of theatre, we saw \$48 million in ticket and subscription sales at the Eccles Theatre – our newest cultural addition.

No list of recreation, arts and education successes would be complete without highlighting our Zoo, Arts & Parks program—ZAP-- with nearly 7 million visits across 13,592 events and 196 organizations funded. As it says on their logo – “ZAP is You”. Kirsten, you and your team help support a vibrant community and enviable quality of life.

Public works, flood control and engineering may not be glamorous, but ask residents of coastal California what happens when those systems fail. Scott Baird's team handled critical public safety projects—as usual—on time and on budget, including completing the Cyprus High School Crosswalk, reconstruction of 2300 East, a beautification project in Kearns along 5600 West with an ADA ramp, landscaping and masonry fencing, and repairing 80 percent of potholes within 72 hours of being notified.

To save money and improve air quality, the county fleet's fuel efficiency improved 7 percent last year. And Rick Graham's entire Operations department has provided critical transitional support to the Municipal Services District, metro townships and Millcreek City – no easy task as an entirely new municipal government model takes effect. Let's have a round of applause for the entire public works and municipal services team. Thank you.

Gridlock and partisanship in Washington has taken a toll on building and maintaining infrastructure. But planes, trains, trucks and pipelines have never been more vital to the global economy. Our regional government partners with the state and with cities to support the modern infrastructure needed for a 21st Century economy and by the private sector job creators. Collaboration with groups such as the Wasatch Front Regional Council and Envision Utah bring numerous ideas into the discussion and all stakeholders to the table.

I recently joined existing businesses in Camp Kearns to celebrate a county road-paving project that will turn muddy dirt paths into access for new businesses and more jobs. Kearns residents will have new job opportunities close to home, cutting down on commute times, traffic and expense.

We are helping build out a regional bike network for safe, convenient cycling that helps improve air quality. Our regional approach gives individual cities the support and resources they need to truly connect an entire active transportation system.

We are partnering with the Salt Lake County Housing Authority to bolster an affordable housing fund; we hosted 5,300 technology entrepreneurs from the Silicon Slopes and beyond at the Salt Palace Convention Center; and we're reaching out to local chambers and cities to learn their needs in the areas of research and loan development. Small business is truly the engine that drives our economy, generates tax revenue and produces jobs.

Public/private agreements, like the one with Mountain America Credit Union that we recently signed to re name South Towne Expo Center, serve both business and government and provide taxpayer benefits as well.

This year, we'll develop a long range plan for the Mountain View Corridor, where major residential and business development is coming. And we will design and construct a multi-modal transportation network that supports exciting plans for the Northwest Quadrant.

We've accomplished a lot that we can all be proud of, but several key initiatives will demand even more from us this year.

We are on track to break ground this spring on three new homeless resource centers that will anchor the radically-different approach we're supporting to address homelessness. The opportunity for safe, affordable housing should be available to every

Utahn. But we know from three years of Collective Impact work that we're dealing with a stubborn and complex social challenge.

I'm repeating my pledge today that until the legislature passes a bill to address the impact on cities that host resource centers, we won't break ground in South Salt Lake. I have faith in our legislative partners and I'm confident they will succeed and we will be moving forward this spring as planned.

Over the past three years, we harnessed the good will and hard work of many people trying to address homelessness; we brought forward an action plan, tied to measurable goals. We raised millions in public and private dollars to support a new homeless services system, allowing us to do away with the one-size-fits-all model and address the individual causes of homelessness. We've already taken steps to coordinate county services. Last July we assigned an Aging and Adult Services employee—Kelly Roemer—to serve as a liaison with older adults who are homeless or may become homeless. She often encourages clients to meet her at a local senior center to complete paperwork and eat lunch. Since July she has worked with over 25 homeless older adults to help them secure and maintain housing. Some of her tasks include: helping to get important documents such as IDs, obtaining employment, and connecting them to drug treatment options.

We are also starting work on a multi-year plan to end child homelessness and eliminate its trauma for our youngest, most vulnerable residents. We will focus on the four pillars of childhood stability: education, healthcare, safety and community development, going as far upstream as we can in order to break intergenerational cycles of poverty, prevent crisis and increase opportunity.

I've met so many people on this journey, but one that stands out is a 7-year-old girl named Sammy and her single dad – Gary. He fell into homelessness after a health crisis that cost him his small construction company. He reached out to me after reading about our Collective Impact work and brought his daughter to my office. It was hard to watch Sammy laughing and drawing pictures while her dad described alarming conditions in the homeless shelter. When you have a system where capacity is overwhelmed with too many people and too few exits, you have to look upstream at the source of the flow. It was a happy day last summer when we could say that all the families with children had moved out of the downtown shelter. Caring for vulnerable children—and strengthening families—has always been the Utah way.

Our Department of Regional Transportation, Housing & Economic Development – led by Carlton Christenson – brought forward 1, 371 units of affordable housing across the Salt Lake valley. We've helped preserve housing, through rehabbing single & multi-family housing units and by remediating safety hazards, such as lead paint, in older homes.

Our work on homelessness – and our understanding of how it often intersects with the criminal justice system—led to our most expansive collaboration to date: Operation Rio Grande.

Criminals and victims of the opioid epidemic had turned part of the downtown area into a crisis zone; open-air drug markets, unsafe streets, predators hiding among the homeless population and businesses living in fear.

State, county, city and nonprofit leaders came together to propose strong and immediate action.

We knew that we could not arrest our way out of the problem. That is why our team of Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice professionals Tim Whalen and Kele Griffone—along with District Attorney Gill-- insisted on adding evidence-based treatment options as an alternative to jail. It was the opportunity to put the “reinvestment” into the Justice Reinvestment Initiative.

Today, I’m proud to report that we’ve made remarkable progress, thanks in large part to the extension of Medicaid we supported at the Utah legislature. The population it serves is primarily the individuals we see in our jail and through criminal justice services. \$100 million is now available for treatment for these individuals. As Utah Supreme Court Chief Justice Matthew Durrant reminded us, in his recent State of the Judiciary speech, “There is simply no better investment that can be made to improve public safety than an investment in treatment.”

Noella Sudbury and her partners—Tim Whalen, Kele Griffone and the Legal Defenders Association-- created and launched a new drug specialty court, to offer sentencing options other than jail. Since August 14th, we’ve added 200 treatment beds and we are keeping them filled. Following Operation Rio Grande arrests, we conduct monthly assessments in the jail; 84 individuals have entered treatment, as a result.

Karen Crompton, Gary Edwards and his Health Department team issued an all-hands-on-deck call, providing daily and then weekly cleanups in the Rio Grande street area. Their work made a dramatic and visible difference in how the area appeared to the public and for those residents seeking services. That, along with scheduled clean ups throughout the county, ensured that encampments were removed in a humane manner that treats homeless individuals with respect.

Dozens of those arrested in Operation Rio Grande found out that police were not just hauling them off to jail, but instead, offering an alternative. My guest today is one of those who have grabbed hold of this second chance and is working hard to return to a stable, self-reliant life. Destiny has met all the legal system requirements, since her arrest August 21st. She recently moved into a Sober Living home – which offers transitional housing to substance use clients as they begin looking for employment. It’s not every day that someone thanks you for arresting and jailing them, but Destiny did

just that. Destiny, we're proud of your effort and your decision to confront this illness and take responsibility for turning your life around.

We will continue to keep jail beds open for those who need to be behind bars.

This year, Sheriff Rivera and her team face the important task of re-opening Oxbow Jail, so that we have space for those criminals who should be behind bars. The dedicated men and women who serve in law enforcement are incredible partners in keeping Salt Lake County residents safe and at the same time efficiently using tax dollars. I look forward to the July opening of Oxbow and being able to thank the Sheriff and her staff for completing this critical assignment. And I am eager to complete the plan that brings the CATS program back to the Oxbow Jail this July, from its temporary placement in Davis County.

With District Attorney Sim Gill's leadership, we are also moving forward on legal action against the opioid manufacturers who are responsible-- in part-- for the massive harm to our state by the alleged deceptive and fraudulent marketing practices of their pain pills. The opioid drug problem has reached crisis levels in Utah and in the U.S., where—in 2015-- over 33,000 Americans died of a drug overdose involving opioids. Over and over, those we arrest in Operation Rio Grande tell the story of how prescription painkillers led to heroin addiction. That is unacceptable and unconscionable and we will join other Utah counties and communities across the country to stand up and hold the drug makers accountable.

Public safety is job one for us as county elected officials and we are meeting that responsibility with strength and compassion.

As a thriving metropolitan area, we've seized the opportunity presented by our community's unique strengths and assets. We're following up on the data gathered for our Regional Export Plan and are moving forward with a new era of economic development.

Whether it's planning and financial support for constructing modern infrastructure or promoting our quality of life and affordable housing for talent recruitment by businesses, we're advancing global competitiveness and connectedness.

A little-noticed section in the tax reform legislation passed by Congress last year holds promise for our metro as we look for ways to spread economic opportunity across all communities.

The law creates "Opportunity Zones", which will use tax incentives to draw long-term investment to places that struggle with high poverty and sluggish business growth. If the Opportunity Zones succeed, they could help revitalize neighborhoods currently starved for investment. Private investors like banks then create "Opportunity Funds" to seed either new businesses in those areas, expansions of existing ones or real estate development. More than \$2 trillion in unrealized capital gains are sitting on individual

and corporate balance sheets across America—a serious pool of untapped investment dollars.

Salt Lake County will work closely with our partners at the state as “Opportunity Zones” are designated in our region. Investors are already voicing enthusiasm for the concept and its market-based incentives.

Salt Lake County is a regional government overlaying city boundaries and jurisdictions. Our transportation network is linked, our public safety response is connected and our economic success depends on collaboration. We’re all in this together. The lines on the map don’t divide us if we’re creating economic opportunity across the board. Our goal is to see prosperity increase at all levels, not just in certain zip codes.

Regional economies thrive when we’re open to new cultures and risk-takers. Utah has its own refugee past. We know what it means to grab hold of opportunity. We welcome the newcomers who seek to participate fully in the American dream.

If you want to be a problem solver, you must be laser-focused on the need and the tools you have to address it. There is no time for ideological arguments or patience with kicking the can down the road.

We look across the landscape and see a network. We build bridges, not walls.

We are both stewards of the past and foundation builders for the future. We must foster continual improvement and be careful to not throw roadblocks in the path of the private, nonprofit and educational institutions that are equal partners in our work.

Nothing is more rewarding than watching the place that you love grow and thrive and be the community that your children and grandchildren will want to continue to call home.

Thank you.