



Mayor Ben McAdams
State of the County 2017 address

Opportunity Ahead

February 7, 2017

(As Prepared)

Good morning. Thank you, Council Chairman DeBry, members of the County Council, Deputy Mayor Erin Litvack, other department heads and county employees, and fellow elected officials who are here today.

The state of our county, and my remarks today, focus on the opportunities ahead for the more than 1.1 million residents we serve. As the regional government of the most populous county in Utah, our metro region is in the business of “applied hope.” We do not operate with extreme partisanship or pessimism; we simply work together to make progress.

I am honored to be here today, at the start my second term, with the knowledge that the state of our county is strong. In December, we adopted a structurally-balanced, fiscally-responsible budget. We retain our Triple-A bond rating on general obligation bonds. We also received much-desired upgrades –from AA+ to Triple A-- on two additional bond categories. We remain one of the top 41 counties nationally for financial strength, thanks to sound fiscal policy and careful management. It’s just one of the ways we are able to stretch our tax dollars even further.

Since day one in this job, I’ve set a clear mission: Wherever existing county government functions don’t reflect the world we now live in, we will change.

We have also been partners in community-driven change.

Legislation we proposed ultimately gave 160,000 residents an historic vote last November. The people chose to add a new city and five new metro townships to our metro region. These unique communities will now confidently plan their futures, knowing that their boundaries are secure and they’ll have access to our excellent county services.

Those services would include Talia Butler and her team at Salt Lake County Animal Services, which in 2016 ranked as the largest no-kill municipal shelter in the state. With support from Best Friends Animal Society—led by our own councilman Arlyn Bradshaw—Animal Services’ live release rate exceeded 95 percent. It is the fourth year in a row Animal Services has operated at a more than 90 percent live release rate

for the entire year. Pets and their owners have a good friend in county Animal Services. Thank you.

Last year, we opened a new health building in West Jordan and in the coming months, we will break ground on a new downtown Salt Lake Health Building and a Public Works and Parks & Rec Operations center. With South Jordan partners, we will begin work on an \$18 million regional park in the southwest part of the county –Welby Park. We'll soon break ground with state partners on a building next to the Olympic Oval in Kearns, which will offer meeting and office space, including offices for the new Kearns Metro Council and its Community Councils. Our Health Department, Parks and Recreation Division and our facilities teams have been incredibly busy. Thank you.

We received county-wide citizen input on a proposed active transportation network, focusing on safe, efficient choices for residents to commute by bike or simply take more short trips to run errands. That means less traffic congestion, cleaner air and more transportation options for families throughout the valley.

We partnered on an environmental cleanup for Centro Civico's property –the future site for new senior housing and a cultural center. We stood up for taxpayers and said “no deal” to a bad deal for a developer who asked for too much in exchange for building a convention hotel.

We celebrated the opening of a beautiful Broadway-style theater, which hosted 45 public events serving over 71-thousand patrons last fall, including 5-thousand who came to the Grand Opening public open house. In 2018, we will implement the Arts for All Program, which gives opportunities to school children and others to attend shows and events. Our team at the Center for the Arts has worked so hard this year. Thank you.

Thanks to voters who approved the November Parks & Rec bond, Draper will see activity on a new recreation center; other parks throughout the county will see upgrades and improvements that bring outdoor fun and exercise to thousands of families and visitors.

Representation in the courts for Salt Lake County issues will be more accessible when District Attorney Sim Gill's legal team moves into new West Jordan offices this fall. Next year, they'll work just steps away from the Matheson Courthouse in downtown Salt Lake. Prosecutorial and other legal services are vital to our public safety role and fundamental to building a safe, just and healthy community. To Sim Gill and his team, thank you.

All Sheriff Winder's UPD patrol officers now carry a life-saving antidote to opioid overdose while on duty. Two weeks ago, in Taylorsville, they saved a 42-year-old man who was unconscious from a suspected heroin overdose. Thank you for adopting this

life-saving policy. And, Sheriff, to you and your men and women who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe, thank you. I want to pause to remember several who left us in the last year. West Valley's Cody Brotherson, UPD's Doug Barneyj. I also want to also acknowledge UPD's loss of Brian Holdaway and Detective Brooks Green. To these men and their families. Thank you. We pray for you and mourn with you.

Our Milestone Program, serving adolescents who are homeless or struggling to find a strong foundation as they embark on adulthood, under the leadership of director Mina Koplín expanded it to serve five more young men who would otherwise be homeless. Thank you.

We launched –in partnership with the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce – our New Americans initiative, to implement an action plan that will bring together neighbors, communities, employers and civic leaders to support these new citizens in their efforts to build a bright future.

Former U.S. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney said, “We are a nation of immigrants. We are the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the ones who wanted a better life, the driven ones, the ones who woke up at night hearing that voice telling them that life in that place called America could be better.”

Immigrants have flocked to this Salt Lake valley starting with the British and Swedes in 1847, followed by the Greeks and Italians, and so many others since then seeking refuge in these mountain tops.

Today, I'm honored to have as my guests four teens who are here through the refugee foster care program. Rohim Abdul is from Burma; Nai is also from Burma; Maryan Ali is from Somalia, and Benard Walambo and Jolie Karungi are from the Congo. They are unaccompanied children from around the world who have found safety and a future in Utah. We are very glad that you are here. You are welcome in Salt Lake County. We are proud to claim you as citizens of our great state and we vow to keep you safe and open doors of opportunity to you as you help us to strengthen our community and with us build a greater Salt Lake. Thank you, Councilman Bradshaw for leading Salt Lake County forward with a formal resolution of support for our current day refugees.

In the past four years, Salt Lake County has raised collaboration to new levels. I think of Bruce Field – a run-down and neglected former ball field in Kearns. Thanks to the Office of Township Services, Parks and Recreation, the Kearns Pony League and Sheriff Winder and the Honorary Colonels—and \$800,000-- it has new life and new purpose. Safe neighborhoods and healthy communities begin with one clean-up at a time.

Speaking of clean-up, childhood asthma and potential poisoning from lead paint exposure still threaten the health of too many children in the county. What if someone came up with a way to spare children and families trips to the emergency room and developmental problems? Our team in Regional Development is doing just that, by partnering with the University of Utah Health plans and the national Green & Healthy Homes Initiative. Home visits, home assessments, and environmental clean-up are protecting children's health and their parents' pocketbooks.

Last week, I stood with Ashley Pacheco and her young children in the front yard of their home. She had gotten the bad news that lead-based paint was flaking and peeling off the walls, putting her kids at risk. But she found help from our Lead-Safe Housing program, who fixed the problem and gave her peace of mind that her son and daughter's health would not be harmed by lead poisoning.

It's been a busy four years. But I feel as though we're just hitting our stride. In bipartisan fashion, we balanced our budget and stepped up to an urgent public safety responsibility—agreeing to fund criminal justice reforms. Our programs will be outcome-driven and get tough scrutiny so that we'll know what worked and what needs improvement.

We've shown how to resolve long-running turf battles on several fronts, including 911 emergency response.

In August, I stood with Sheriff Winder, the directors of the two major 911 dispatch centers in the valley, mayors and state legislators and public safety officials to unveil a long-sought technology solution. When citizens dial 911, they expect immediate help. Our dedicated emergency first responders deserve technology that clearly shows where help is needed and who is closest to the scene. Now, they're getting it and we'll all be better off, no matter where in this valley we live. At about 20 percent complete, the transition is making steady progress and should be on track for completion next year.

As public servants, and stewards of precious tax dollars, our job is to deliver efficient, effective and desired services that support residents in their individual pursuit of a safe, healthy and prosperous future.

This year, I am launching what I call our **Opportunity Agenda**.

On my list – the opportunity for good-paying jobs, the opportunity for safe, affordable housing, the opportunity to access quality healthcare and education, and the opportunity for recreation and fun.

Economic development/Jobs

Improving the labor market and encouraging work are central to economic opportunity. The private economy is the arena where most Utahns work hard to realize their dreams. Our local economy is robust for many, but the fact of living in a global economy offers both opportunity and—frankly—some disruption and pain.

Our 2015 work with the Global Cities Initiative produced an Export Market Plan with specific steps that local business, civic and government leaders will take to promote county economic development. Where individual income is not keeping up with the cost of living, we need more high-paying jobs. Research shows that firms that export goods and services pay higher wages, and have lower unemployment levels.

We just announced a major grant from JPMorgan Chase for \$200,000. The funding will go towards assisting our small and medium-sized businesses in reaching their export potential. But there's more.

Next steps include working with Global Cities Initiative and our state partners on strategies to attract and leverage foreign direct investment. We'll work to strengthen our international connections and competitiveness. Our businesses will gain a new source of capital and our globally prepared and multi-lingual workforce make the county a prime destination for global investment.

I recently joined AOL-founder Steve Case at a breakfast near the current prison. We chose that location not so much for the cuisine, but more for an on-the-ground look at those 740 prime acres and their economic potential. Salt Lake County will be pressing for a strategy that maximizes its long-term potential. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity and we must get it right the first time.

What Salt Lake County won't do is support sweetheart deals that are unfair to taxpayers. Economic development is a priority, but not at any cost, and not when it harms our school districts and delivers meager job growth. As we learned recently, some large businesses aren't above pitting metro areas against each other—in secret—in order to receive massive tax subsidies.

Cities in Salt Lake County have been working hard to diversify their tax base through numerous economic development efforts. We applaud their success and we seek to be strong partners.

South Jordan has been very successful in creating a strong employment base with advanced manufacturers like Merit Medical. Riverton and Herriman cities are working to create new city centers with planned mass transit and mixed use development. Like them, I want to expand economic development with a purpose. We have incredible assets, such as an international airport, a Union Pacific Intermodal

terminal, the Mountain View Corridor and a robust fiber optic cable network crisscrossing the valley. We will build on our vision for a Mountain View Economic Development Commission to pursue significant economic development from north to south along the west bench. We will work with elected officials at the local and state level to put resources towards that goal. We will maximize the job opportunities for our residents and grow our tax base to help fund our public schools.

We will continue to grow our destination and hospitality sector. We know that the average convention delegate spends nearly \$1,000 while attending a convention here. That's tax money that hard-working Utahns do not have to contribute. In order to attract more large conventions, we'll push forward with a convention headquarters hotel. I'm encouraged by recent progress we've made on negotiating a final term sheet with our selected developer. We see a time in the near future when we'll have more specifics about this important economic boost for the city, the county and the state.

Housing and Homelessness

The opportunity for safe, affordable housing should be available to every Salt Lake resident. But we know from two years of Collective Impact work, homelessness is a stubborn and complex social challenge.

After bringing many stakeholders to the table, we learned success requires building something new, together. We began to see how in order to get at the root causes of homelessness--we needed to move away from a one-size-fits-all shelter system.

It seems obvious now, but it bears repeating: Emergency shelter is not the solution to homelessness, although it is a way to help people survive a crisis.

Our action plan, which received unanimous support from both the county's and the city's working groups, identifies 14 outcomes, including meeting the basic needs of those in crisis and diverting people from emergency shelter whenever possible. We asked for and received legislative funds, by making our case that homelessness is a statewide issue and that we committed to delivering measurable results. We are also embarking 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.

Our citizens are overwhelmingly caring and compassionate and they want to help. But at the same time, the public has been pushed to the breaking point by the crisis in the downtown area near Rio Grande. They demanded that we act.

Our response? Another collaborative and innovative plan: Operation Diversion. Our goal was to target crime, not homelessness. With excellent work by local law enforcement, Sheriff Winder, and \$1.2 million in county behavioral health funds, we ran three phases of enforcement. We identified criminals, arrested criminals and, when possible, diverted drug and alcohol abuses from jail and into treatment facilities. About half of those arrested said they were currently homeless.

Those treatment dollars were one-time funds. When the money (including this Council's additional \$650,000) is spent, we will lose this alternative path for those arrested due to their addictions. I've begun to make the case with state legislators for more treatment dollars from the state's \$30 million Medicaid Extension fund to aid this population of uninsured. Without treatment, the promise of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative—which we all support—cannot be fulfilled.

Salt Lake County raised \$11.5 million in private contributions for two Pay for Success initiatives to serve approximately 550 individuals in need. The Road Home and First Step House have begun programming efforts for persistently homeless individuals as well as repeat offenders. They'll be helped to regain stable lives, treat addictions, find and keep housing and jobs, and become self-reliant, all at a reduced cost to taxpayers.

I'm grateful to the County Council for supporting all these efforts. You have taken action that is both humane and fiscally responsible. I thank Sheriff Winder and D.A. Gill, and Behavioral Health Director Tim Whalen for our partnership and the men and women in law enforcement and criminal justice for keeping the public safe and offering second chances to people ready to try again.

Healthcare and Education

The opportunity for public education is enshrined in the Utah constitution. It is also the best investment we can make in our kids, as parents, civic leaders and employers. Public education has been the ladder to success for countless generations of Utah families. But recently, education has also become a dividing line that affects such outcomes as Utahns' mobility, and the likelihood that they will own a home.

Research shows that the earning gap between college graduates and high school graduates has never been wider. We know that one of the best predictors of

both high school graduation and applying to college is whether children attend a high-quality preschool.

We are preparing to roll out the Salt Lake County Early Learning Initiative, with the goal that all children in Salt Lake County entering kindergarten will be socially and academically ready for kindergarten. We will adopt the quality standards outlined in two state bills, and look for opportunities to increase access to high-quality preschool over the next five years.

We will prioritize low-income 3- and 4-year-olds, use public, private and Head Start classrooms, and require a pre- and post-assessment of each student.

Year one will focus on increasing the quality of existing programs, as well as creating the infrastructure to implement the initiative more broadly in future years.

We will seek grant funding to support teacher training and curriculum and reduce barriers for those low-income families whose children will benefit the most.

Councilman Snelgrove and Councilman Granato have seen children's' excited faces as they take part in preschool activities. They have joined me in preschool classrooms – public and private—where children and parents are seizing the opportunity to learn, and shape their own successful futures.

Karen Crompton and her Human Services team have partnered with pediatricians, educators, and parents to support evidence-based programs such as “Talking is Teaching” and “Reach Out and Read.”

And of course Salt Lake County offers the most comprehensive public library system in the state, where books, computers, literacy programs and other programs are free and open to all.

Healthcare

The opportunity to access health care is fundamental to building a healthy community. The public sector has long been in the health care arena in a major way. Our Health Department, for example, is on the front lines of disease prevention, whether it's vaccines for kids or food inspection. County health clinics offer low cost health care options for mothers, babies, kids and students. It is both the right thing to do and the fiscally responsible approach. Better to stop an outbreak of whooping cough before it starts, than treat sick people in the emergency room and face widespread illness in schools and the workplace.

Our behavioral health division serves Medicaid clients and providers, as well as people with no insurance at all. For children, the poor, those with disabilities and other

vulnerable populations, this coverage is a medical lifeline and part of our community's moral imperative to help those in need.

Criminal justice and healthcare feature a complex interaction. Two years ago, the Utah legislature passed criminal justice reforms on the belief we spend a lot of tax dollars locking people up that are better suited for drug treatment. Their premise was that we could reduce the state prison population by reforming criminal penalties for drug possession that had been felonies and instead impose misdemeanor penalties. I agreed with the premise but said at the time reforms required passage of Governor Herbert's "Healthy Utah" Medicaid plan, offering behavioral health and drug treatment to these individuals, in order to succeed.

That didn't happen. In my State of the County last year I warned that neither our jail capacity nor our treatment budget was sufficient for that to continue. The net result is that thousands of people left state prison without treatment, county jails have new offenders and there's no money for diversionary treatment. What we have seen so far is not justice reinvestment. It is justice de-investment. Those people are on our streets and our communities are less safe. Everyone recognizes the problems. I am meeting with the Governor's staff, state legislators and others to find the funding for treatment plans. These conversations have been incredibly productive. State leaders recognize the needs they created. However, if this dialogue fails, I see little recourse but to ask the legislature to roll back the reforms, to halt the chaos on our streets.

I am reminded of the warning one year ago from Utah Chief Justice, Matthew Durrant. He said:

"If treatment is unavailable, not only will the system fail to improve, it will likely worsen. Putting offenders who previously would have gone to jail or prison—into the community—without treatment, will almost certainly increase crime."

The state's own 2016 criminal justice report concludes: "There is clearly a strong need for expansion of current substance use and mental health treatment capabilities for justice-involved offenders, and this remains a central mission of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative."

That is why I, the Sheriff, the Salt Lake City Police Chief, the business community, our residents, and others in the criminal justice system are now forced to deal with the need for both jail beds and treatment beds. We are between a rock and a hard place not of our making, but which nevertheless is our challenge to address.

Speaking of funding, with our Pay for Success portfolio, we're turning to the private sector for resources to design and implement criminal justice and homelessness programs that work. Salt Lake County's dedicated providers –The Road Home and First Step House—have begun programs that will offer private rental market housing to

individuals who fall into the category of “persistently homeless” and residential behavioral health treatment to high-risk, high-need offenders who cycle in and out of the jail. The private funders know that unless the outcomes we seek—a reduction in homelessness and recidivism—are achieved, we won’t pay. Independent evaluation will show whether or not these programs work and whether lives are measurably improved.

The most cost-effective health care is preventative care. Gary Edwards and his entire team continue to provide exceptional service to our residents.

In 2015, the Health Department’s immunization nurses administered more than 67,000 vaccines to clients. The injury prevention program distributed over 600 low-cost car seats to families in need. Targeted case management nurses conducted nearly 45-hundred home visits to economically disadvantaged households with newborns and toddlers.

Through federal support, the Health Department’s Women, Infant and Children program served 21,000 clients each month with nutrition education, supplemental food and access to health care. We’ve come a long way from 1899, when the Salt Lake County Commissioners created the County Health Board. Now, we’re in the headlines and on the front lines for responding to suspected cases of Ebola and the transmission of the Zika virus. And who can forget the dedication of health department team members putting up signs warning residents about the algae blooms contaminating the Jordan River?

Recreation and Fun

One of the best ways for us to stay healthy is to get regular exercise. The opportunity to exercise, play, have fun, and join with friends and family is abundant in Salt Lake County – and expanding.

In June, we gathered in West Millcreek to celebrate Sunnyvale Park – a neglected space that we brought back to life for the refugee and immigrant families living nearby. The park does double duty as an afterschool playground for children from the Sunnyvale Neighborhood Center.

We also celebrated the opening of Wheadon Farm in Draper, with its unique history of a family farming tradition that preceded the residential and commercial growth of this young city.

In September, we cut the ribbon at Lodestone Regional Park bordering Kearns and West Valley City, with basketball courts donated by the Utah Jazz, and a giant mining truck tire symbolizing the area’s mining history.

The November passage of our Parks and Rec bond offers expanded opportunities, such as a new rec center in Draper, a new regional park in South Jordan and a new regional park in Magna. Voter approval also gives us the opportunity to invest in maintenance and improvements in trails, golf courses, the Equestrian Park and inclusive playgrounds built for kids of all abilities.

We're a state that thrives on outdoor recreation and adventure, from mountain-biking, to canoeing to rugby, lacrosse and field hockey. It's all part of the quality of life our residents value and support and that we are successfully delivering year after year.

Conclusion

Our county government is showing that it can step up to –and meet—the challenges of a rapidly-changing world. We grow more flexible and capable with each success. We don't operate with extreme pessimism or partisanship, but focus on making progress together.

In the coming year, I want every agenda item to be one that expands opportunity for residents; for anyone who feels that the economy has let them down and that no one cares about what happens to their lives or their families, I say watch Salt Lake County's opportunity signs.

We will build on the strong foundation that our recovery from the last Great Recession has produced. New private sector jobs will be better-paying jobs; early-childhood education classrooms will be high-quality classrooms; homeless individuals will see hope for recovery and self-reliance; families will have nearby parks, trails, and rec centers that fit their needs and accommodate their budgets.

We will welcome refugees, celebrate diversity, support individual initiative and be accountable for every tax dollar we spend.

Thank you.