2024 State of the City Address Presented by Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall January 30, 2024

Hello! Thank you for being here. I am so grateful you are here and that you care deeply about our city, as I do. I'm honored to serve once again as your mayor and couldn't be more optimistic about the path we are on as Salt Lakers.

Thank you to the Salt Lake City Council, State leaders including Wayne Niederhauser, Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson, Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill, other elected officials, members of our incredible Salt Lake City-Utah 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Organizing Committee, Gail Miller, Scott Anderson, Amy Redford, our amazing city team and other esteemed guests for being here tonight. Thank you for your thoughtful partnership in service to our communities, our environment, and our future. And thank you to our hosts here at the beautiful Eccles Theater and our friends at the Tin Angel Cafe.

I am thrilled to be here with you, at one of the City's most celebrated entertainment destinations in the heart of Downtown. Not only because I'm excited for the State of the City tonight or for the lineup of shows and performances that will happen here this year, but for what this space and this street outside means for the future of our entire City.

There is a strong likelihood that 10 years from tonight, we will be in the throes of welcoming the world through the doors of the Salt Lake City International Airport for the 2034 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In many ways, hosting the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games was the catalyst for the trajectory we find ourselves on today.

Our growth continues, our economy is strong, and in this city, we care for and love one another more today than ever. Nothing is going to change that.

Salt Lake City will be the epicenter of the Olympics once again and Main Street will be a vital component to our success before, during, and for decades after the Games.

If Downtown is the pulse, then our City is the heart of Utah and the Mountain West. This is our legacy. This is our future.

A future that is built not solely for the success of any one global event, but for those of us who live here every day.

This morning, scientists at Myriad Genetics in Salt Lake City's Jordan Meadows neighborhood worked on testing that will help people learn more about their health markers, including cancer, so that they can seek care and avoid a missed or late diagnosis.

In Sugar House, two young women opened the doors to A La Mode, a clothing boutique that welcomes women of all sizes with a motto of 'be yourself, love yourself, treat yourself.'

In the Granary District, Matt Sterbenz and his crew at WNDR Alpine are building incredible, lightweight skis and snowboards from bioalgae.

Here on Main Street just a few blocks south of this theater, Mary Daniels opened Lillies of the Field Thrift Shop, where she gives away many of her items for free to unsheltered individuals and people who are having a tough time.

And two blocks east of here, my friend Omar Jamhour opened his second business in the neighborhood: The Block Barbershop. Think about the customer who got a fresh haircut today and a renewed confidence for an upcoming job interview. Say that customer gets the job, which leads to a career and starting a family. And 10 years from today, that customer brings his son to that same barber shop for a fresh cut of his own before the Olympics begin in his hometown.

From Northpointe to 9th and 9th to Marmalade to Glendale to Liberty Wells to Capitol Hill, Salt Lake City is full of life, thriving and innovating. Our people show us that we can achieve anything we set our hearts and minds to because Salt Lakers are creative and hard-working, adamant to chart a path forward to success.

We approach our greatest challenges—and our boundless opportunities—with partnership and ambition at the center of everything we do.

The decisions made today by our large and small businesses, and our city government, will have vast ripple effects on our future.

Our momentum is only growing, in reach and intensity.

We are setting the stage for not just tomorrow, but for the next 10 years, 20 years, and even 50 years.

The State of this City is strong.

It is unwavering.

It is undaunted.

When I think about what makes cities great, the best cities, and the cities I enjoy discovering...I think of cities that are built for all generations. They are built for families. They are built for young professionals, creators, and students. They are built to play and connect outside after dinner...for our aging neighbors, and for all abilities. They are timeless and innovative, all at once.

Salt Lake City is a world-class city, pursuing every opportunity that forges equity, sustainability, and avenues of success for families, individuals, and all our neighbors.

An earlier generation of Salt Lake City business owners, planners, and residents dreamed of ideas that would, and I quote, "recapture for Downtown its rightful position as 'heart' of the metropolitan area, "designed to meet the needs of people". They called it the Second Century Plan.

That was 62 years ago. It is high time we make major strides in achieving some of those goals. In the midst of the pandemic, we began breathing life into this people-focused ... family-focused ... vision of canopied streets, activities, tree planting, and expanded infrastructure that will forever orient our Downtown toward pedestrians—from growing families to empty nesters eager to be in the heart of it all.

It's my administration's aim that in the next four years we'll lay a foundation for the next 50 where the hopes poured into the Second Century Plan, tested right here over 38 weekends in the last four years, and realized in great cities across the globe, will come to fruition here on Main Street.

Salt Lakers have come together—we have imagined and explored exciting possibilities for the future of Downtown. A future that draws in people, elevates our businesses and generates more excitement and pride in Salt Lake City. The way we've connected here in the past four years, through Open Streets, revealed extraordinary social and economic benefits.

Open Streets brought in more than 1.2 million visitors from 2020-2023, who spent an estimated \$53 million dollars over 116 days of activation. Businesses that participated in Open Streets from 2020-2022 reported a 19% increase in revenue during the activation periods, as confirmed by city tax data. And even this past fall, as sales tax revenues softened, Open Streets cushioned the revenues of participating businesses.

The pop-ups, explorations, and trial runs have worked, and now we are ready to achieve even more together, championing the aims of the Second Century Plan—that "Downtown will be fully oriented to the pedestrian; it will be inviting, easy to reach and circulate within. Salt Lake City will have added lure for visitors, and the Downtown of Utah's capital city will be the pride of every Utahn."

At this historic junction in Salt Lake City's history, we have an opportunity to shepherd some of the greatest investments in our future and quality of life that we've seen in decades.

That's why tonight, I announce the next steps toward something long-visioned in our City. A Main Street pedestrian promenade that will be the epicenter of activity downtown, right outside these doors.

Of the more than 2,500 people surveyed this past fall about potential designs, 85% chose options that would reduce car traffic on Main Street from South Temple to 4th South.

That's a clear mandate, and we are listening.

Next month, my administration will submit comprehensive study results to the City Council, along with a conceptual design of what's possible and how much it will cost. We're getting a sneak peek tonight.

I look forward to a robust discussion and a forthcoming budget proposal that can get this done.

We are building a catalytic future for Downtown that not only embraces our growth but seizes the opportunity to cement our identity as the center for sports, entertainment, and culture in our state. The future we are building—together—is deliberate. It's intentional and positions our City for even greater success.

While other urban centers are losing population, Salt Lake City continues to defy trends, outpacing state growth. Our residential population Downtown is expected to double from 2020 to this time next year. We continue to make gains in our housing supply and build opportunities to ensure families and individuals can live, work, and play Downtown. We are building more than multi-family projects and single units, we are building community.

As Salt Lakers, we take pride in our homegrown heritage, but ... let's acknowledge that one of the best flagships of our community moved here from out of state.

The Utah Jazz is celebrating 50 years of NBA basketball this year. Forty-five of those years have been in Downtown Salt Lake City.

Tonight, we reaffirm our commitment to keeping the Utah Jazz in downtown Salt Lake City.

Let me be clear. What is best for the State of Utah is that the team plays and stays in Downtown Salt Lake City. Salt Lake City serves as the center of commerce, transportation, finance, law, sports, entertainment, faith, and culture in the Mountain West. If the city suffers, the region suffers.

The future of major league sports entertainment is about offering fans a full experience, before, during, and after the game. That broadened guest experience creates a hive of activity surrounding the arena—an entertainment district. This is not only possible in our downtown, but it is requisite for us to evolve our public spaces to meet our future potential.

A space like this makes possible an Olympic medals plaza that isn't torn down to a parking lot again after the closing ceremonies, it levels up the convention opportunities our friends at Visit Salt Lake can recruit, and creates Utah's epicenter for sport, art, and entertainment, 365 days—and nights—a year.

The potential to welcome both Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League to our City is incredibly exciting and a great fit. It amplifies our City's values-and-vision of expanding sports and entertainment experiences that further connect our residents and visitors, across all generations and identities.

We will work with our beloved Utah Jazz organization, downtown stakeholders, county and state leaders, and anyone who has aspirations of bringing professional sports to make this future a reality.

As more people and businesses call Salt Lake City home, and as more visitors fill our streets for work, shopping and dining, conferences, professional sports, and world-class outdoor adventures, it's critical we expand green space and places in the city that center people—all generations in our community.

The Green Loop is a proposal as bold as Salt Lakers.

While my administration won't see the opening of the Green Loop, we will lay the foundation and spur the momentum for this transformational project.

As you can imagine, converting 132 foot wide right-of-ways into multi-block, pedestrian-centered space is far from a walk in the park...but the extraordinary benefits to our community, our economy, and our quality of life are worth it.

I am talking about a once-in-a-generation opportunity to encircle our downtown core with incredible open spaces. But this isn't just about a place for us to play. This is about economic growth. There are few things more economically attractive in a downtown core than transit access and park proximity.

It is rare for cities to get the opportunity to do something so transformative. And yet, when they do, it becomes an iconic part of every great American city—The High Line in New York City, Millennium Park in Chicago, the Beltline in Atlanta. The Green Loop will be distinctly 'Salt Lake', but it will also cement our place in the world as a truly great city.

This linear park network will reconstruct 5 miles of downtown streets into places for every generation to come together to play, walk, shop, picnic, and relax. What's more, when we unlock the connections the Green Loop will make, its reach opens up a second link into our Westside. It's more than the downtown opportunity—it's a Westside opportunity as well.

I'm determined to see the Green Loop move forward and become one of our most celebrated features in Salt Lake City. My administration will utilize every tool and partnership to ensure this community benefit improves our livability, economy, and environment for decades. And it is my vision that it will be ready to welcome the world 10 years from tonight for the Olympic Games.

And in no uncertain terms – this will not take away from our already established priorities, nor divert our focus from the challenges we face today. In fact, ambitions like this are absolutely tied to the mandate that we better address the needs of our unhoused residents—from housing and mental health care to public safety and human dignity.

Not only MUST we do this and continue to successfully rally the state, other cities and counties to the work, but our ABILITY to meet these growing needs will be SUPPORTED BY the economic growth our downtown investments create.

Put plainly, solving our greatest challenges is inextricably linked to our ability to realize our greatest potential. Both need committed partners from the state and business community. Both require a strong and growing economy to fund change and progress. Both are the right thing to do for the people of Salt Lake City.

While a thriving downtown matters to everyone—it is my priority to strengthen activation and create opportunities across the entire City, in every neighborhood.

Last year, we broke ground on the city's first regional park in 65 years, and it's happening on our Westside. FINALLY. It's happening where many young families are building their lives, raising their children, and walking their dogs. When Phase one of Glendale Park is completed in the coming year, it will bring us closer to a complete transformation of an old waterpark site into a beautiful, accessible community space that will better serve our families and neighbors.

In Phase one of Glendale Park, residents will enjoy an all-ages, all-abilities playground with adaptive play structures; a basketball court, a large pavilion plaza, and a promenade for community events. Phase two will build on the community's vision and include a pool!

While we redevelop this space, we're also moving full steam ahead in 2024 to create a new shared vision in another neighborhood.

Last year, we kicked off Ballpark NEXT and saw some truly inspiring submissions reimagining the possibilities of the Smith's Ballpark site. We celebrated nine exceptional contest finalists, coupled with the tremendous partnership of the Larry H. and Gail Miller Family Foundation to spearhead the \$100 million Legacy Fund to help improve outcomes in the neighborhood.

Since then, we gathered community input—bringing in more than 350 comments from the community among more than 200 unique stakeholders. Through this input, we've developed guiding principles, which will serve as the backbone of our land use strategies. And we have an active Request for Proposals in the field, seeking the right design team to bring these guiding principles to life.

We are thrilled at the prospect of bringing Major League Baseball to Salt Lake City. And, if on the path toward getting a permanent team, we get to keep our beloved Bees at Smith's ballpark for

a few more years, we are ready to catch that curveball and make a stellar play out of it. This will not hold up the vision and what's to come of Ballpark NEXT.

Recognizing current market conditions, we would take advantage of this time to build on our shared vision that aligns with and activates the people and local businesses that make up the Ballpark Neighborhood's distinct identity.

There's so much positive momentum and generational opportunities arising from our intentional action and strength in partnership. We have reached a seven-year low in crime through the hard work and strategies of our police department, but we are not without challenges.

As a local government, it's an important part of our job that the success we're experiencing must serve all Salt Lakers equally.

We know that systemic barriers—past and present—have limited access to services and opportunities, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities. Salt Lake City's commitment to building a more equitable future remains steadfast—despite outside attempts to undermine the City's efforts.

We know we are stronger because of our diversity and because we aim to create a more equitable and accessible future. We will always choose to champion opportunities that lift diverse voices in this City. We choose bridges, not barriers. We choose inclusion, not isolation.

I support and defend efforts aimed at diversity, equity, and inclusion, no matter the political whiplash these efforts may be forced to endure. We will not stop this critical work. It's the right thing to do. For our neighbors, for our families, for our future.

I'd like to recognize our DEI team tonight for their work to make Salt Lake City a more welcoming place.

As we grow as a City, we know the number of people who are most vulnerable is also growing.

We desperately need and must have year-round shelter options for everyone, and we need ongoing funding from the State to make it happen. Salt Lake City is doing its part, but we cannot do this work alone. The most recent statewide data tells this story: In the 2022 Point in Time Count, Salt Lake County saw 80 new individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time. That is a fraction of what they saw in the Mountainland Region and Statewide. 90% of the increase in people experiencing homelessness for the first time in 2022 came from outside Salt Lake County.

I remain hopeful the Legislature will adopt Governor Cox's budget proposal that supports comprehensive efforts to alleviate AND prevent homelessness, including proposed funding for mental and behavioral health services and emergency shelters.

If green-lit by the Legislature, this proposal would provide support for two non-congregate shelters, two low-barrier shelters, funding for a statewide winter shelter response, \$30M for deeply affordable housing, and \$8M to address the state's shortage of behavioral health professionals and services.

We know the emergency shelter system must increase capacity to meet immediate needs. There should always be enough shelter and housing options for every Utahn experiencing unsheltered homelessness. As long as there is shelter space available, we can continue to address on-street camping while offering everyone a space indoors with compassion and urgency.

Because of the strong partnership between the State, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, service providers, the philanthropic community, and other cities, more than 600 extra beds are available this winter to provide warm, humane conditions.

The State has the authority, power, and funding to continue this progress and generate transformational change. If we are to maintain and build upon the progress we have seen this winter, the State must move beyond one-time funding stopgaps that only get us through the next 3 years. If we want to move the needle, we have to advance longer-term strategies and adequately fund them with ongoing dollars to succeed.

Salt Lake City has and will continue to do our part in the state's homeless service system to support unsheltered individuals. We have expanded community-based resources, including the Downtown Ambassadors Program. We helped pilot a temporary microshelter community in Salt Lake City in partnership with the state—a first-of-its-kind model that will inform the state's long-term site. We are financially supporting a critical, medically vulnerable persons program, which opened in Sandy last week. This work is so urgent and only possible by working with our partners.

People experiencing serious mental illness and substance use disorders need stable housing and treatment, not to be cycled through our emergency rooms and short-term visits to the jail. This change is largely a County and State function, but its impact will be felt in our City's Justice Court, on our City's streets, and in our City's parks.

The Governor's proposed budget adds support to this effort. We also look to support Salt Lake County in determining new funding options that expand permanent supportive housing and services so people can get the treatment they need. This approach not only is the most humane, but it saves taxpayer money.

Addressing homelessness, at its heart, begins with affordable housing options and resources for unsheltered residents. As my friend, Joseph Grenny says, "Homelessness is a catastrophic loss of community."

Ongoing investment in affordable housing is the foundation of decreasing homelessness and increasing the quality of life for people in Salt Lake City. It will take years to catch up to current housing needs. That's why consistent investment is so critical to prevent future homelessness and allow the emergency shelter system to operate effectively.

As with our challenges related to homelessness, the City is tackling affordability and continuing an outsized investment in ALL types of housing, including affordable, multi-family projects.

Investing in our future, our families, and all generations of Salt Lakers so they can call this wonderful place home continues to be a top priority for me.

Community and our families are central to the identity of Salt Lake City—they are worth fighting for.

In the last four years, we have made historic investments in affordable housing, with more than 4,000 new affordable units built or funded.

In 2023 alone, 605 affordable units were completed in part thanks to nearly \$22 million in RDA funding. 605 units! This isn't just a number. To me, and to hundreds of families and individuals, The Aster, Paperbox Lofts, Colony B, City Lofts, and Richmond Flats ... are very tangible and attainable housing. These are hundreds of homes that didn't exist before.

In the next year, more than \$38 million in City funding will be brought into play to construct new or purchase existing affordable units and support future housing projects. We are leading the state in multi-family project development and taking every opportunity to generate more affordable units across the City.

These historic investments and our work to eliminate barriers through city policy will spur even greater affordable development in our neighborhoods. We're doing this by executing our Housing SLC plan over the next five years and by implementing strategies outlined in Thriving in Place—the City's plan to combat displacement and gentrification.

What does that look like in action? This year, a new program will launch to financially assist Salt Lakers displaced due to demolition, redevelopment, or substantial renovations and help them relocate within the City. Renters can also expect the City to provide a new service this year in the form of a Tenant Resource Navigation Center. And things will keep moving along at The Other Side Village where they have a clear path to deliver tiny homes as quickly as they can.

Investing in necessary infrastructure is a part of our evolution. It's an opportunity to improve our quality of life and safety, but the road to get there—through construction's notorious and annoying orange cones—can be a test of one's patience and endurance. Especially if your name is Bill Knowles. Thank you, Bill, for being our prime navigator through the trickiest construction projects.

If you feel like we've been plagued by more cones than the decade prior, you're right. They're part of the City's 2018 voter-approved bond to improve street conditions that had been put off due to the 2008 recession. A decade's worth of work and reconstruction projects have been packed into five years and must be completed by 2025, when that funding expires.

In 2023, the City completed more than a dozen major roadway and local streets projects, including 300 West, 900 South, 200 South, Phase 1 of Highland Drive and Phase 1 of 1100 East.

We're approaching the last remaining street reconstruction projects from the bond, including 2100 South in Sugar House. I know...I could feel you bracing yourself right there. I want us all to collectively take a deep breath in...and out.

With every project, we learn more. And it's important to me that we bring those lessons with us. Residents, especially those who live and work in the heart of "downtown Sugar House", should expect more outreach, more communication, and more community-driven efforts to support the businesses through this project.

When completed, Sugar House will no longer be a snarl of bumpy roads—but a safe and more beautiful place to be for everyone, especially pedestrians and cyclists, to access some of our City's most beloved institutions.

Yes, we're building. A lot. Roads, bridges, housing, shelters, parks, promenades and more. But I'll tell you what the number one thing is that I want my administration to build: families back into our downtown. Kids, parents, grandparents. A great downtown is home to all ages, at all stages. The reality is that in any growing city in this country, if the city government isn't deeply involved in making sure families can thrive, they will be built out.

Even if our ambition merely maintained the level of access families have today to living well in our downtown, that would be a success. But I know we can do better than that. Everything I have talked about tonight will bring benefits to families, and we'll do more. More child care. More family-sized housing. More places for families to play. More support from the city to find and connect with these resources.

So this year, I am directing our economic development team to create a loan program like we saw last year in Pittsburgh that is designed to sustain and stimulate the growth of new and existing child care businesses. Our city council has recently received our proposal to adjust zoning codes to remove barriers for child care businesses to exist in the city.

I am directing our redevelopment agency and community and neighborhoods department to find ways to bring family-opportunities into full focus on city-owned properties that we will develop along the Green Loop, including the Fleet Block, the old Public Safety Building, Station Center and more.

I am directing our public lands team to find micro-park opportunities downtown where we can install play infrastructure that families living in this neighborhood can easily and safely access. And I will be asking our downtown business community to imagine their own investment coupled with ours along the Green Loop, to build the kind of amenities that kids and parents, grandparents, singles and visitors alike will want to enjoy time and time again.

Building families back into our city is something every one of us should all rally around.

The improvements I've talked about are important because we are raising generations across Salt Lake City.

These generations, the kids training to be future Olympians, teachers, first responders or inventors, young adults building their life science careers, our generation of elders who continue to shape the direction of our city through their service on our boards and commissions—all of our futures are inextricably intertwined with the well-being of our environment.

The actions we take in the next four years will set the course, not for not only the next 10 years, but for the next 50 when it comes to prioritizing our water and air quality.

Earlier this month, the State's Great Salt Lake Strike Team released a report and initial strategy to more effectively protect the lake. It said "any strategy for returning the lake to a healthier range will be challenging...and...while we have seen substantial improvements in conditions over the last year, lake levels remain well below healthy levels."

Our namesake deserves and demands meaningful action. As a City, we've elected to annually commit 13 billion gallons of reuse water to the Great Salt Lake and plan to finalize our reuse application this year.

In 2023, Salt Lake City Public Utilities customers saved enough water to fill more than 1,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools compared to the three-year average. But our city's conservation story didn't begin last year. For decades, Salt Lakers have voluntarily risen to the challenge and explored more ways to save water in their homes.

We're armed with more data and insight than ever before, and our brilliant Public Utilities team is moving the needle and providing essential services to our communities, which we all witnessed during last year's spring runoff season.

But, we have the capacity to conserve even more. This year, I challenge Salt Lakers to focus on improving their water conservation in late summer and early fall. The city's WaterMAPS tool we released last year shows us there's still room to improve our conservation efforts.

I've asked and keep asking residents to prioritize water conservation, but it's equally important that our City works to conserve water wherever possible.

Tonight, I am excited to announce that we've completed a top-to-bottom review of water use in city-owned facilities. We will release the full report in the coming days.

We've identified areas where the City can do better. By implementing best practices indoors at our top 20 user sites alone, Salt Lake City will save at least 5 million gallons of water every year.

What's more, the City team has identified and begun implementing some of these cost and water-saving steps, like replacing 29 faucet aerators and 13 flush valve toilets at the City & County Building and maintenance on the Library's cooling tower to improve efficiency. They may not be flashy steps, but every drop adds up to make a difference, just like in your homes and offices.

We're also taking steps outdoors. After launching the SLC Turf Trade program and offering low-water grass seed to residents, the City is finding ways to transition our own landscapes to lower-water uses. Also, in collaboration with our partners at Utah State University, we're expanding a turf-grass study of our golf courses to identify low-water grasses that we can use there.

We all can do better. What we learn as we track savings and make changes will help us influence other cities in the state to do the same.

We're also making strides in reducing air pollution with cleaner vehicles and clean energy. Thanks to Rocky Mountain Power, we've been busy installing more electric vehicle charging infrastructure on the westside—at Day-Riverside Library, our Regional Athletic Complex, Rosewood Park, and Riverside Park to name a few—with more planned for Glendale Park. I'm excited to see more EV-ready parking spots at future multi-family properties thanks to an update our Council approved to the City's off-street parking ordinance.

I hope the Council will further support my administration's vision for air quality programs, which I announced in this past budget.

Since then, staff have been busy creating and mapping these new programs. Clean Air SLC will kick off in 2024. I know Salt Lakers are eagerly awaiting the City's new e-bike program and landscaping equipment exchange program—so ready those helmets and prepare your countdown for early summer. It's coming. Plus, the City will pilot an indoor air quality program to get out high-efficiency HVAC filters and other tools to improve air quality inside residents' homes that need it most.

In the past four years, I have approached every aspect of city business with an unwavering commitment to partnership. And in the next four years, those efforts will level up.

We are stronger when we come together, working collectively to solve our greatest challenges and shape our most exciting possibilities.

We remain determined in our work to build a mighty path for this great City—a path forward that is taking us to new opportunities and strengthening our quality of life with every step we take.

A path that has been carefully composed—piece by piece—community, equity, and connectivity are at the center of everything we do and everything we aspire to achieve.

A path that ensures confidence in our economy and encourages innovation, creativity, and the ability for everyone to succeed.

A path that emboldens the stewardship of the Great Salt Lake and nourishes environmental quality because our existence depends on it.

A path that is catalytic, driving excitement and energy in our communities about our legacy and gold-medal future as a sports, entertainment, and cultural powerhouse.

I am animated by our legacy and these generational opportunities for Salt Lake City—these opportunities are accelerating toward us at great speed.

As we embrace this future, and welcome more neighbors today, tomorrow, and in 10 years when we host the Winter Games, I know we will be proud of the decisions we made.

We will be proud of the partnerships we built. And we will be proud of the initiative we took to ensure Salt Lake City thrives for another century.

Thank you and goodnight.