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**Contact: Helen Langan**

**801-641-6569**

**Update on Planning Division: City Has Already Implemented More Than Half of  
the Planning Audit's Major Recommendations**

*Next Phase of the Planning Division Reorganization Continues in Salt Lake City*

SALT LAKE CITY - Mayor Becker's Office announced today more details in the ongoing effort to significantly improve the City's Planning Division. Most noteworthy is the news that more than half of the Citygate Audit's major recommendations, released only weeks ago, have already been acted upon.

The independent audit produced by Citygate includes some 23 major strategic recommendations. "The most challenging yet perhaps the most important recommendations are strategic in nature," states the report. The report then identifies 23 major recommendations.

Of that list, Salt Lake City leaders under the direction of Mayor Becker, have already acted on the following 13 items:

- **Develop a team approach between the Mayor, Community Development Director, Planning Director and City Council.**
  - The Planning Transition Leadership Team was developed while the City completes a search for a new Planning Director; the team meets regularly to focus on priorities for the Planning Department.
- **Strengthen mid-management effectiveness in the Planning Division.**
  - New team leaders have been identified within the Planning Division and meet regularly.
- **Set clear expectations for the Planning Director and address dysfunctions beyond his control.**
  - Mayor Becker and the City Council have worked together to put the entire City on notice that they will not circumvent the planning process, either individually or as a group, as had been the practice of past elected officials, as detailed in the planning audit.
- **Review the purposes of boards and commissions.**
  - Mayor Becker has charged a group of City employees and community representatives with the task of conducting a thorough review of the boards and commissions. That review is now nearly complete and will be announced shortly.
- **Twice yearly, provide training sessions for each planning-related board and commission.**
  - As part of the review of these boards, the City Planning staff's Public Process Team is developing the schedule and agenda for these board trainings.
- **Minimize the use of moratoriums.**
  - Both the Mayor and the City Council have agreed that this is a practice they will now collaboratively avoid except in unusual circumstances.

- **Reprioritize the Long Range Planning Program**
  - As part of the reorganization of the Planning Department, the new organizational chart includes a number of planners who will now be exclusively dedicated to long range planning. This is dramatically different from the past practice.
- **Twice yearly, prepare amendments to the ordinances.**
  - To accomplish this recommendation. Planning staff has now been assigned to complete this task.
- **Eliminate the "Planner of the Day." Add two planners at the One Stop Shop to help man the Buzz Center and for application intake.**
  - The "Planner of the Day" program has been eliminated. Recently, the City Council approved the addition of three new planning positions to staff the Buzz Center.
- **Place a high priority on and provide resources to document imaging of planning files and records.**
  - The City Council approved the purchase of Accela, a sophisticated \$1.7 million software program. The software is now being implemented and will allow the City to accomplish this recommendation.
- **Institute effective performance measures that relate directly to customer satisfaction with regard to timelines and clarity.**
  - A system of project streamlining and tracking has been created and baseline performance data is being gathered. These tools will allow this recommendation to be fully implemented in the near future.
- **Create an Assistant Planning Director position.**
  - This position has been created and an aggressive hiring search is being conducted. In the interim, Joel Patterson, a current senior planner at the City, has been asked to assume the role.
- **Prepare an overall guide that defines the roles of each of the decision-making bodies involved in the planning process. Review and update all planning related applications and checklists.**
  - Through the use of the new planning software Accela, this recommendation is nearly completed.

Mayor Becker explained the urgency of implementing the report's recommendations, "We moved quickly on many of the report's recommendations as soon as I was sworn into office. We were aware of many of the problems identified in the report and began looking for the best solutions even before the audit was complete."

The first phase of the Planning Department transition began two months ago when the Planning Department reorganization was initially announced. At that time, the search also began for a new Planning Director. Simultaneously, the Mayor initiated some important changes such as:

- The implementation of a pilot Buzz Center, and the securing of permanent funding. The Buzz Center - an outgrowth of ideas from the planning staff -- is a new way to ensure those who have business with the City are being served in the most efficient way possible by allowing them to address all of their planning and zoning needs in one place. The service hours have been increased to 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

-The alignment of staff along the key areas of Public Process, Ordinance Review, Long Range Planning and Current Planning.

- The adjustment of work schedules to meet service needs.

- The refinement of tools to help better coordinate (master calendar, project tracker, Buzz Center Data base, and the ongoing work of Accela.) These, and others, have occurred while regular planning work has continued.

Now, the City is moving into Phase 2 of the transition, which will take place over the next 60 to 90 days. The most critical next step is to recruit a new Planning Director. That effort is being spearheaded by Chief Administrative Officer Lyn Creswell.

In addition, a search is underway to fill three other senior positions in the Community and Economic Development Department; those positions include a CED Department Director, an Assistant Planning Director and an Economic Development Director.

"I believe we have accomplished a great deal, particularly considering the fact that we need to hire a number of key positions. Once we've brought those individuals on board, I believe Salt Lake City will be well on its way to putting this chapter behind us and moving forward with a stellar, highly functional Planning Department that we will move our City forward," concluded Mayor Becker.

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