



**STATE OF THE CITY**  
**Mayor Ralph Becker**  
**January 4, 2011**

I am honored to stand before you this evening, in this new year, as the mayor of our fine City.

Tonight I am going to part with tradition. A list and narrative of the past year's challenges and accomplishments will NOT be part of my remarks in any detail tonight.

Rather than reviewing the list here tonight, I have made available a written summary on the web of the remarkable progress Salt Lake City has made during the past year in a wide array of endeavors.

Tonight I am going to focus on the future, and how we are moving forward on one of our top priorities of 2010: The Sugar House Streetcar.

This project reflects – in style and in substance – the goals, values, and priorities we have set for our great city. It exemplifies our continued commitment to move Salt Lake City forward despite challenging economic conditions. In fact, I see the Sugar House Streetcar as a metaphor for the State of Our City.

Think of the Sugar House Streetcar as just one snapshot from an album filled with pictures of promising and transformative City projects that await us in the near future.

Salt Lake City's 2010 photo album is a collective of people, businesses, places and projects that tell the story of how we, as a community, continue to advance the livability, vitality, and accessibility of Salt Lake City.

But before I delve into the Sugar House Streetcar and the stage it sets for the future of our city, I want to acknowledge two strong forces that were at work in 2010 – one very positive and one very difficult.

First, the difficult: The absolutely agonizing economic downturn has impacted far too many of our residents, and the hardships people are facing cannot be overstated. Since I proposed my first budget nearly three years ago, the City's general fund has shrunk by \$21 million, and unemployment has more than doubled. Too many people have lost their jobs, their homes, and suffered countless financial struggles.

Fortunately, Salt Lake City has delivered basic services, but we have also continued to plan for, and advance, many initiatives that improve the long-term quality of life here in this beautiful Capital City of ours.

Which brings me to the second force – a very positive force – at work here: That is the talented and committed leadership and employees of Salt Lake City. I express my appreciation and admiration for this exceptional group of individuals.

This City functions so effectively – despite the drastic budget cuts and belt-tightening we have undergone – thanks to the many skilled, dedicated people who work each day to make Salt Lake City a better place. This includes my staff and department heads, hard-working City Council members and the Council staff, and department employees who rarely see the spotlight. This dedication was no better displayed than during the two oil spills in 2010. It is a tribute to all of you that Salt Lake City continues to grow in prominence as a Great American City.

Four years ago, when I was running for Mayor, I set out to detail my vision for Salt Lake City. Many people at the time told me that making specific goals and promises was unnecessary or politically unwise. But I knew that in order to lead effectively, I needed to communicate clear and concise goals to the public and employees of the City.

During the campaign, I stood on an abandoned railway in Sugar House, surrounded by community members who shared my vision, and declared that during my first term in office we would work to bring a Streetcar to Sugar House. At the time I made that promise, the project was thought to be more than 20 years away; I was committing to making it happen in closer to five years. This made many of the "experts" uncomfortable, and while we had a strong vision and a dream, we didn't have any prospects for funding it.

When I took office in January 2008, we began collaborating with UTA and South Salt Lake, and eventually with the Obama Administration to develop the Sugar House Streetcar plan and the important federal relationships that would help Salt Lake City get this project noticed, and ultimately funded, in record time.

We also engaged the Sugar House community, and organized tours for business leaders, developers, and community members to see how streetcars have transformed neighborhoods in other great American cities – Portland and Seattle.

Today, just three years later, and thanks to this cooperation and strong, united support from the Sugar House community, construction is expected to begin by the end of this year. The Sugar House Streetcar could be completed and serving our community as soon as 2013.

How we did this, and what it will do for our city, exemplifies the State of Our City. Let me briefly describe how two factors – successful partnerships and a focus on livability goals – brought us to this point.

### **Working Together**

If there was only one takeaway lesson from our work to return streetcars to Salt Lake City, it would be the value of partnerships between our governmental entities and our associates in the private sector and the non-profit world.

To achieve the successes we want, we must have the confidence to involve everyone with a stake in the outcome and a shared vision, to help us achieve our goals. We cannot go it alone as a municipality. While Salt Lake City is a unique community in Utah, we also have much more in common with our neighbors than we do differences.

We have worked – for years now – with our partners South Salt Lake Mayor Wood and the Utah Transit Authority engaging the community, analyzing and documenting transportation options, funding plans, routes, and countless other details that resulted in a grant this past fall of \$26 million from the federal government. There is no doubt in my mind that we would not have been successful had we attempted to secure those funds without developing those key partnerships.

And, I want to mention again that while we may have individual issues with transit in our community, we should join together in recognizing the incredible job that UTA—under the able leadership of John English and now Mike Allegra—does in transit development and management.

Just two weeks ago, I met with Atlanta’s Mayor and leading transportation officials to look at what they describe as the “best transit and rail program in the nation.” And in October, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood called Salt Lake City “A Model.” We strive now to continue serving as a model city, and to pursue successes through clear vision and committed partnerships.

The emphasis on partnership has been a hallmark of City operations over the last few years. We will achieve success by continuing to find willing partners and working together toward common goals.

## Livability

As a community we have shared a common goal of livability – the second factor leading to the Sugar House Streetcar success.

In my State of the City remarks one year ago, I focused on the theme of livability, and how that guides everything I do as Mayor. Throughout 2010, we stayed true to that theme, and have remained focused on our use of City resources to pursue it.

In the coming year, we will remain focused on advancing Salt Lake City's livability agenda. Fostering stronger neighborhood commercial centers through better planning and design, for example, means that more residents will have better access to goods and services; more bike lanes and pedestrian friendly infrastructure means more options for getting around town in ways that help improve both our air quality and the health of our community.

Strategically zoning for increased density means that more people will have access to more housing options as they look for creative ways to stay in their homes and with their families as they get older. In addition, I am happy to announce that electric vehicle charging stations are being installed around the City. This is an important addition to the range of transportation options for the residents and visitors of Salt Lake City.

The Sugar House Streetcar will incorporate all of these concepts, as the Parleys Trail is being planned concurrently with the rail line, and a rigorous corridor planning process is already underway for the area that will incentivize mixed use and denser development. And the impact on the City's operating budget is vastly reduced by leveraging federal dollars and working with local property owners to fund the capital program for the corridor.

The Sugar House Streetcar won't be just a transit line. It will be a wonderful asset in one of our most treasured neighborhoods, and will enhance the sense of place in each of the neighborhoods it serves—connecting two cities in ways we couldn't have imagined possible even a few years ago. The Sugar House area will be enhanced as a “destination neighborhood,” with bikeways and trails, locally owned eclectic small businesses, restaurants, shops and a wide array of housing options.

Next, look for Salt Lake City to quickly move towards a streetcar line in downtown. A recent federal grant of almost \$500,000 supplementing planning work already completed will take us toward a second streetcar line, and lead us back to the future of a city web of streetcars complementing commuter rail, light rail, and buses.

As our work to strengthen partnerships and livability in Salt Lake City continues, our path forward is informed by both our vision for the future and the accomplishments of the past.

When Salt Lake City was settled 164 years ago, it was apart from the United States, isolated, and of necessity, self-sufficient. Based on a prescient detailed city plan, a community was created that provided for its own food, protection of its lifeblood, water, and stewardship of its natural resources for survival. A community center, providing essential services and amenities with wide streets, was laid out. Today we would call it sustainable planning and design. Building on the efforts of the past year, and looking to the years ahead, we aim to complete a circle – a grand arc – back to that ideal first imagined over-a-century and a half ago.

In closing, I'd like to tell the story of one resident—Maurine Smith—a Salt Lake City native who has borne witness to a portion of this curve of advancement so firmly rooted in the past.

Maurine recently shared with the City some memories of her daily trolley ride to work at the Anderson Jewelry store in downtown Salt Lake City from her home in Sugar House. It was the 1930s and the cars were regularly packed with people headed for work or errands in the bustling downtown business district.

Maurine would later marry and help found the Smith Crown Vacuum store in the late 1940s—a business that continues today to serve residents from across the city at a Sugar House location just a few blocks from where Maurine was born.

Customers will soon be able to do business with the third-generation of the Smith family to operate the store, by way of a convenient trolley ride, once again, from downtown Salt Lake City. Thank you, Maurine, for joining us tonight.

While much has been accomplished, there is much more to do to help Salt Lake City achieve its potential as a Great American City. Salt Lake City is recognized time and again as a leader in sustainability, transportation, community, education, fitness, and, interestingly, even being bohemian.

I am fortunate—and honored—to be part of Salt Lake City in this transformative time. Many endeavors are in progress; others are part of my vision for our City.

My commitment to you, and to our residents, businesses, and visitors, is to continue to work together – and we will work with civility and respect – to produce the results that make Salt Lake City so livable, unique, and prepared for the future.

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