

**Mayor Ralph Becker**  
**2008/09 Budget Proposal to the City Council**  
**May 6, 2008**

Thank you for this opportunity to present my first budget recommendations as Mayor of Salt Lake City.

Crafting a budget for the Capital City is an opportunity not only to reflect the policy goals and management principles of a new Administration, but also to shape the path our City will take into the future.

As you well know, the priorities and vision of a City are reflected in the way a City appropriates its resources. Our decisions define who we are. At a time of tough budget constraints, our City's true core is illustrated even more as we set our priorities. I am hopeful we, along with the residents we represent, share common priorities and vision.

Our City currently faces challenging economic times. Over the last several weeks, I have worked closely with department heads to identify efficiencies as we confront a slowing economy and staggering increases in fuel and health care costs.

I have come to appreciate the high level of competence and dedication among our City management. Our shared vision, combined with their experience, knowledge, and thoughtful recommendations, have helped to guide this budget proposal I bring before you tonight.

The budget I am presenting reflects shifting priorities for our City, keeping campaign promises, and making decisions in our changing times. The 180-day action plan has channeled much of this effort, which includes:

1. A budget that reflects a commitment to sound financial management and a continuation of the high level of service our constituents expect and deserve. Our job is to serve the residents and businesses of Salt Lake City.
2. The proposed budget supports implementation of strategies to conserve our resources, improve our air quality and protect our open spaces.
3. The proposed budget aims to meet the needs and aspirations of our community, and support the nearly 3,000 dedicated employees who provide the services for the people who visit, live, and work in our Capital City.
4. The budget recognizes the regional nature and the needs of our Capital City

**1. SERVING OUR RESIDENTS**

As mayor of Salt Lake City, my first obligation is to residents and businesses. High quality City services delivered to our residents and businesses in a cost-effective, timely manner is a top priority. This obligation becomes challenging when we face one of the largest budget gaps in our City's history.

I think we have struck the right balance between being fiscally responsible and making choices that support our vision and priorities for Salt Lake City.

I made an early decision not to raise taxes to fill the budget gap, partly in response to the actions of the Utah State Legislature. In the last General Session, the Utah Legislature unilaterally increased the property taxes of Salt Lake City residents and businesses by \$11 million — \$6 million toward the cost of the Jordan School District split and \$5 million to cover a shift in property taxes from Delta Airlines to other Salt Lake City property taxpayers.

Because of the State Legislature's actions, a \$200,000 home will be assessed an additional \$120 per year, and some businesses will pay hundreds of thousands of dollars more in annual property taxes. I believe we need to hold the line and protect Salt Lake City residents from additional tax hikes.

As part of my 180-Day action plan, I outlined several ways our City could better serve its residents, including engaging and involving our residents in decision making.

- For example, our Salt Lake Solutions initiative will help establish an open, transparent, and inclusive approach to decision making in our City. I have appreciated the Council's support of this effort.

We are adopting an approach to solving problems that engages all segments of our community, follows standards, considers alternatives, and arrives at the best possible solutions. I have requested continuing funding for the Solutions program. As you know, we have begun the Fisher Mansion project, and are just beginning the Pioneer Park project.

- We will further support City residents by enhancing our emergency readiness program and devoting Fire Station #5 to emergency medical response and citizen emergency response training, or CERT.

On average, 80 percent of the calls received at Station # 5 are medically related. Only 20 percent of the calls are for fire. The Administration proposes that the fire service functions of Station #5, including the engine and ladder truck, be moved to nearby stations. Station #5 is surrounded by other fire stations able to respond quickly to calls well within the five minute range, which is consistent with the national standard.

The medical unit will remain at the station and will be supported with an EMS response vehicle. Additionally, the Station will become the headquarters for the CERT program, forming the basis of a comprehensive community-based public safety infrastructure in which groups of citizens will provide a first line of defense against disasters.

- The budget aims to strengthen security and neighborhood safety. Changes we have made in the Police Department will allow more officers to be present in our communities, strengthening police presence and responsiveness throughout the city.
- We are developing the best variety of transportation options for our citizens, by expanding light rail to the airport and other parts of the city, having safe, coordinated bike trails, working to synchronize traffic signals, funding a study to replace coin-operated parking meters with meters that accept cards, moving development of the Sugarhouse streetcar forward, and having Central Station as the destination for the region for commuter rail so that Salt Lake City is a model of efficient, accessible, and convenient mobility.

## 2. BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Our region faces environmental challenges. Just last week, the American Lung Association reported Salt Lake City is the seventh most polluted city in the United States.

We have natural disadvantages in addressing air quality because we live in a mountain basin. We must take stronger measures to counteract the ill effects of trapped pollutants. Our City has risen to the occasion to address different challenges. We can certainly “rise up” to meet the challenges of climate change and air quality.

I believe Salt Lake City can be a national leader in environmental stewardship and sustainability through wise energy use, climate-change avoidance measures, regional air pollution reduction, watershed protection, wise water use, support of local businesses and local food production, and first-class pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities. In fact, as we continue to articulate and define our goals and work with the Council, our City may soon have the first comprehensive sustainability ordinance in the country. Vicki Bennett, our new Sustainability Director, will provide great leadership as she helps move our City forward.

Our fiscal constraints may actually help us achieve a desired environmental public policy. Budget decisions support our policy goals to increase use of mass transit and decrease our dependence on cars:

- A new plan for alternative transportation anticipates and mitigates the demand for fuel. This proposed budget recommends the City convert 10 vehicles to electric

cars, saving money in fuel costs this year and in the years to come. Electric cars are cleaner and will help contribute to improving air quality in Salt Lake City.

- We recommend expanding the Ecopass program to provide free transit service to City employees on Frontrunner.
- Overall the fuel budget was not increased at the level originally requested by departments. This helps vehicle operators support the City's idling policy and helps save money and keep the air cleaner.
- Budget revenues were enhanced in creative ways, including an increase in the cost of parking tickets. Base parking fines have not been increased in 12 years and are lower than fines in cities of similar population size to Salt Lake City. We're hopeful an increase in fines will encourage more use of public transportation when traveling downtown.
- The Budget accelerates the planning and funding for Salt Lake Bikeways, helping to provide alternative transportation. I propose to put ten times more City money into bikeway development, raising the City's investment to \$500,000 this year.
- I am also recommending the addition of a Bikeways and Trailways Coordinator. This position will lead the way to implement the Administration's vision of creating world-class bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the City.
- The budget also includes, through the Capital Improvement Program, funding to enhance the Jordan River Parkway in Salt Lake City. Our network of trails will not only allow us to navigate throughout the city, but will also soon connect Salt Lake City to other trails and bikeways in Davis County, including the Legacy Parkway trail, and to the south along the Jordan River Parkway to Utah County.
- Other sustainable measures in this budget include an expanded recycling program. This program places blue cans at selected park boweries, establishes glass recycling locations in four Council Districts, recycling receptacles in the Central Business District and Sugarhouse Business District, and also the 9th & 9th and 15th and 15th business districts, and provides for education and outreach.
- And finally, a proposed Irrigation Manager position will make a contribution to more effective water conservation. The request for additional attention to water conservation also includes associated automated irrigation system supplies and training.

### 3. RESPECTING AND PROTECTING OUR EMPLOYEES

The budget aims to respect and protect our City employees.

- Despite the economic challenges, I have recommended cost of living pay adjustments and merit increases for our employees.
- At the same time, as a result of the rising cost of health insurance and on the recommendation of the City Employee Benefits Committee, the Budget includes a 95 percent City, 5 percent employee split of the cost of health insurance premiums for those covered under the Summit Care Plan and other increases in premiums for those covered under other plans.
- As we have worked to provide increases in employee salaries, we have also identified efficiencies in our City operations without giving up service, and have worked to protect the status of our employees.
- For example, with reductions in the Fire Department, we will be able to maintain a high level of service and response to community needs and meet the needs of our dedicated firefighters, working to ensure that all City firefighters have jobs. We have met firefighters' requests for four-handed staffing and have confidence our stations will continue to operate safely and effectively.
- Because our professional staff need to maintain professional development in areas pertaining to their positions, the budget provides for professional development opportunities for many departments.
- For example, in the Planning Division, heightened complexity of development projects being reviewed by staff makes knowledge of best practices imperative, which necessitates participation in planning seminar and conferences.
- Compliance with our sustainability initiatives requires participation in annual LEED conferences. The training required for LEED education can also be used for certification/continuing education. The requested increase will permit staff to attend the relevant conferences and help support efforts to revise Salt Lake City's building codes to strongly encourage use of LEED (or LEED-equivalent) building standards.

#### 4. REAFFIRMING OUR POSITION AS THE CAPITAL CITY – A REGIONAL GATHERING PLACE; WORKING WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

We take great pride in being Utah's Capital City. Salt Lake City is the industrial, government, financial, religious, education and commercial center of our state – and of the region.

With that great privilege comes more expense in providing the needed services for all who come to this City.

Nearly 40 percent of the property within our City is either public or non-profit. Every day, Salt Lake City's population doubles in size as visitors, workers, and students come to take advantage of all our City has to offer.

- We will go before the legislature to seek a fair way for the state to allocate revenue for the services and costs inherent to our Capital City, seeking funding similar to the PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) funds allocated to counties with large, non-taxable federal land holdings.
- Recently I was in DC where I met with representatives of Homeland Security. Because of the numbers of our daytime population, we now qualify for the Urban Area Initiative grants. We will ask our state legislature to also consider the costs of our daytime population and allocate funds accordingly.
- You all know that in our lobbying efforts for the Capital City, the Administration created a position in the Mayor's Office with the responsibility of working on legislative issues in coordination with a City team. Because of the effectiveness of the effort, the Administration recommends the elimination of funds for ongoing outside lobbying.
- Of course, I will depend on you, the City Council, to continue to aid in the lobbying efforts and help in establishing open communications with state government and neighboring communities. I will build on relationships developed over a span of 25 years in governmental service and in my business and will reach out to our municipal neighbors, the county, and to the state legislature to address opportunities and challenges.
- Many city issues are dependent on those relationships, such as air and water quality, transportation, arts programs and structures, and economic development. Most of these regional issues require regional solutions. Because of my long-standing relationships and experience in coalition- and consensus-building, I appreciate a new era of partnerships with Salt Lake City.
- As the Capital City, Salt Lake City's greater downtown will continue to be a destination for both work and play. Our budget supports implementation of elements of Downtown Rising, the funding of a study to develop a downtown parking management program and the creation of a year-round Public Market.

#### CONCLUSION:

This is a time of opportunity for Salt Lake City.

Great things are happening within our City. We are moving ahead with City Creek Center, large-scale office and residential development, and creation of a downtown cultural district with a grand Broadway-style theater.

Throughout our City we are building networks of trails and an accessible, efficient transit system. We are implementing sustainable plans that will ensure a livable, workable stable environment and an enviable quality of life.

We have dedicated City employees who work for a creative, diverse, and vibrant population.

As we set forth our new budget and look to our future, we are poised to embrace our many opportunities.

Thank you for your support and your input as we work together to build and strengthen our Capital City.