

Mayor Peter Corroon
State of the County
(as prepared)
Council Chambers
January 10, 2012
11:00 a.m.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

(Open)

Mr. Chair, council members, elected officials, employees, citizens, friends: Good morning.

Today marks my final State of the County address (*do I sense a feeling of relief from the council?*).

At first I was described as a “Dull, boring politician”.

Then I was described as a “Dull, boring politician who hates soccer”.

I certainly don't hate soccer.

As for the rest, you decide.

This annual speech sets the tone for the Mayor's portfolio for the coming year.

I promise this year's speech will not define the last days of a lame duck administration.

What started as an 8-year marathon with an inaugural speech in January, 2005 is today a 355 day sprint with the finish line a smooth hand off to the next mayor. I believe we will hand off an open, honest, ethical and efficient government.

But before we reach that finish line there is a lot to do...and that is my message today.

We're not going to sit back and relax.

We have a great team and big issues to address.

Our goals are ambitious.

We WILL:

- Be a nationwide leader in customer service,
- Be one of the safest communities in the country,
- Be a leader in regional planning

We are determined to repair our public infrastructure in the unincorporated communities

We are improving our preparedness for manmade and natural disasters,

We're greening our fleet and building LEED certified facilities; and

Enhancing our services to vulnerable populations; and

We're improving the quality of life for our citizens

Those are lofty goals, but they fit perfectly with the priorities we have set over the past seven years. And we find there is always a way to get the job done if you have the right team, the right plan and the right attitude.

I think we do.

There are good reasons to be optimistic that we can achieve these goals.

We are seeing signs that we're slowly climbing out of the recession:

- Countywide sales taxes are up
- Last year 14,000 new jobs were created in Salt Lake County, and
- Forbes Magazine ranks Salt Lake 6th best performing metropolitan area, up from 49th a year ago

Simply put: the State of Salt Lake County is strong.

We are weathering the worst of the economic downturn and preparing for better times.

Planning and preparation are the keys.

(Yesterday)

Seven years ago when I first stood at this podium I proposed a Fresh Start for County government.

We began that Fresh Start by working to restore public trust and confidence in our government—making it more transparent and accessible to the public.

We opened meetings, strengthened our ethics policies, and became more visible in the community.

And we generated an atmosphere where our workforce became the key to making government work.

That first day on the job:

- I urged that we create a Unified Police Department to make our neighborhoods safer.
- I suggested we continue to seek alternatives to the enormously expensive incarceration of non-violent offenders
- I urged support for local businesses, the heart and soul of our economy
- And I promised to set aside more open space and collaboration on regional planning

The second day on the job, I wondered how we were going to accomplish what I suggested on the first day.

Even as a rookie Mayor, I knew one fact stood above all others: Our county workers were ready and willing.

And they have proved it every day since.

That first year we held the line on taxes, preserved some open space, kicked-off work on master plans for the unincorporated communities of Kearns, Magna and Millcreek, and we completely re-tooled our fleet policies and operations.

Within two years we completed three LEED certified buildings; Murray City was getting electric power from methane gas at the landfill; Discovery Gateway and the Salt Palace expansion opened.

And...the County Council finally reached consensus on furnishings for its office.

Indeed, 2005 & 2006 were banner years.

And five years later I'm pleased to report that we are still moving forward.

(Today)

From Junior Jazz basketball to Meals-On-Wheels for homebound seniors, Salt Lake County provides excellent public services.

From clearing debris from creek channels to the creation of our emergency services office, we work every day to protect people and property.

And, by providing immunizations for thousands of youngsters who can't afford them...to finding homes for abandoned domestic pets, Salt Lake County is here to serve.

And when I think about our services, I'm reminded of the gentleman I met at the new Magna Senior Center a couple of weeks ago. He told me that after his wife passed away, the center gave him a reason to get up in the morning. Now he frequently raises the flag at the center and has become a great helper at the facility.

I think of the grandfather who wrote that without Aging Services' Alternatives Program he would have had no one and might have been forced to lose his home and end up at a care center.

I think about the young mother-to-be in our Nurse-Family Partnership who not only ended up graduating from nursing school and becoming a registered nurse, but she also won US citizenship, and, more importantly, delivered one of the program's biggest, healthiest babies at 10 lbs.

These success stories are peppered throughout all our programs.

And there will be many more in the future.

For example, this spring we will open our new Millcreek Community Center.

This LEED Gold facility will include a Senior Center, Library and Recreation Center, and a new management model incorporating the three organizations.

We are managing AND operating more efficiently.

Our pursuit of becoming the greenest county in the nation can be seen on the roof of the Calvin L. Rampton-Salt Palace Convention Center.

I am pleased to report that construction has begun on the 1.65MW rooftop solar installation; this will be the largest rooftop array in Utah and one of the largest in the nation.

It's been accomplished through a Power Purchase Agreement, the first of its kind in Utah.

The Herriman and Magna libraries will be 'at least' LEED gold certified...maybe platinum.

And Millcreek and West Jordan Libraries are nearing completion.

Salt Lake County is a true leader in sustainable building.

And our citizens would also like to see our natural environment sustainable as well.

Outside of our county facilities we are vitally interested and invested in the future of our canyons and the Jordan River.

In cooperation with our public and private partners, we have embarked on a series of transportation studies within Millcreek and Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.

Those studies will be completed next fall.

That's when we can start serious transportation planning in our east side canyons.

And we will keep our momentum going to increase quality of life and green programs.

That's why I will pursue a Park Bond this year to build and upgrade parks and to complete important trails in the foothills and along the Jordan River.

Families will have safe, open recreation spaces preserved for them and for future generations to enjoy.

In our unincorporated communities, we are planning a major push to rehabilitate infrastructure: Roads, Curb, Gutter and Sidewalk—to make our communities safer and more attractive.

Mark Evans with our County Library Services spoke of his late father Nyle, who before his death noticed the upgraded services in his White City neighborhood.

He told Mark the level of service was noticeably improved in what he felt had been a neglected county island. He was rightly proud of what was being done in his community.

We need to do more for our unincorporated residents.

Countywide, with Council support, we have been able to do quite a bit in the past few years:

- Salt Lake County preserved 3,700 acres of open space thanks to passage of the Open Space Bond

- We reformed and rejuvenated the Fleet Division
- We became a charter member of the Jordan River Commission and have been busy repairing damaged sections of riverbank using federal and state grants
- Our health department kicked off our Commit- To-Be-Fit program, increased immunization coverage for Salt Lake County children and won the battles of Cryptosporidium and H1N1
- Salt Lake County’s infant Urban Farming program last year resulted in more than 130,000 pounds of produce harvested from three small county parcels
- We created the Office of Diversity Affairs with outreach into all sectors and corners of our community
- We introduced curbside weekly recycling to 80,000 homes
- We created redevelopment areas in Magna and Millcreek and we’re working on improvements in Kearns
- We balanced budgets throughout the recession without a major tax increase for more than a decade and, more importantly, without significant layoffs
- Our Animal Services Division is reaching “No Kill” status—unheard of among government shelters
- In a landmark effort, for the first time, every city in the county planned together developing a Cooperative County Plan leading to the HUD Sustainable Communities Grant and a new era of intergovernmental cooperation
- Meantime our Planning Division developed the General Plans for unincorporated communities
- After the floods of 2010 we restored Little Cottonwood Creek, filled sandbags with a record number of volunteers and escaped 2011 with no flooding—and we welcomed a new cooperative team made up of UFA/UPD and Public Works—the J-HATS, Joint Hazard Assessment Teams
- Last year alone, 6.3 million people attended cultural events sponsored by the County’s Zoo, Arts and Parks program
- And we opened or will open the four new Libraries, four new Senior Centers including Magna, Riverton, Millcreek, Draper; we opened two new recreation centers, the Sorensen Recreation Center in Herriman and Northwest Recreation Center in Salt Lake; and, as I mentioned we’ve got one more coming this spring in Millcreek
- We planned, designed and built a LEED Platinum certified public works administration building in Midvale and are planning new Fleet Shops nearby

All this amounts to merely the “CliffsNotes” version of what’s been accomplished.

We have done much...and we still have more to do in 2012.

(Tomorrow)

So, for tomorrow...what will our legacy be?

And what are our plans?

My goal is that Salt Lake County government operates efficiently after this administration and this council are gone.

I want a local government where employees enjoy their jobs and feel empowered.

We’re going to re-write our human resource policies and procedures so they will be more understandable and transparent to both managers and employees.

We’ll continue performance measurement to better focus our efforts.

Our volunteer group Bureaucracy Busters will carry on.

This is a group of highly motivated employees who believe Red Tape hinders and prevents action and decision making.

They assisted with changes leading to the use of the purchasing card...saving not only time, but possibly hundreds of thousands of dollars for the 18,000 transactions using the card.

They helped develop an expedited grant submittal process and urged the switch to electronic pay stubs.

With the encouragement of the Bureaucracy Busters, the County Communications Team revamped the website, making it more user friendly for employees and citizens; they also strengthened county branding by setting new logo standards.

We have a motivated workforce of committed public servants.

That’s the kind of legacy I will be proud to pass to the incoming Mayor.

I want to leave this government knowing that it embraces diversity and is focused on the health, safety and well-being of all of its citizens.

We all recognize the recession has taken its toll on personal, institutional and governmental finances.

It has also led to a heightened level of cooperation between local governments.

It’s in the best interest of our shared citizens that we grow this intergovernmental collaboration.

Salt Lake County and its municipalities share a population of over one million.

With this growing population, finite resources, and dwindling open space; even skeptics realize that uncontrolled and hasty development will be a major burden for future generations.

That's why, under the leadership of Councilman Max Burdick, we created The Future of Salt Lake County Committee: To determine how to best deliver services to our citizens for decades to come.

That's why this year we'll also be reviewing and renovating all ordinances, including F/COZ, to help organize future growth.

Decisions made today affect people's lives tomorrow.

Our children and grandchildren will have to live with what we do.

That's why we do not plan for the next year or two – We lay foundations for lifetimes.

Working in concert with our 16 cities, our metropolitan planning organization, and Wasatch Choices 2040—we get that regional view.

For more than 150 years, Salt Lake's catchword has been "growth."

The economy needs to grow in order for us to provide jobs, education, transportation, housing, recreation, and infrastructure for a population that is expected to double over the next half-century.

With population growth comes both economic growth and public safety concerns. That's why over the next year we will be working to better coordinate our different 9-11 systems and prepare for the "big one" this spring with the "The Great Utah Shakeout" exercise.

We must be smart in planning for the future, while improving the present and honoring the past.

I love quoting President John F. Kennedy.

He spoke clearly and directly about progress: "Our task now", he said, "is not to fix the blame for the past, but to fix the course for the future."

Our future must include clean, healthy air to breathe and water to drink; and clean, safe land to live on.

The smoggy air we see and breathe during inversions should become a thing of the past.

To help clean our air, we want to expand our energy smart loan program to help citizens make their homes more energy efficient.

This year we will also be very active in transportation planning—beyond the Canyons—drafting a Best Practices document to interconnect with the cities—including sidewalks, bike routes, streets, roads and highways.

With savings derived from our mental health contract with Optum, we will create a receiving center for those who can be diverted from the jail to deal with mental health and substance abuse issues.

Our building project menu this year has a strong “green” streak.

We’ll start construction of a new Salt Lake Valley Health Department administration building and clinic—designed to LEED Standards.

And we’re planning for a Net Zero district attorney’s headquarters building.

I think we’ve all heard rumors from the building’s future occupants that working in a Net Zero building means DA staff will freeze in the winter, boil in the summer, work in the dark using a manual typewriter and an abacus.

Not true.

Net Zero simply describes a building with zero net energy consumption and zero carbon emissions through a combination of energy producing technologies like Solar and Wind—while reducing the overall use of energy with extremely efficient H/VAC and Lighting technologies.

Net Zero today is what LEED was just a few years ago—a goal that many believed to be unnecessary yesterday, that is commonplace today.

We’re also going to spend some time discussing a convention center hotel.

That will be another piece of our downtown redevelopment in line with renovation of the Capitol Theatre and Ballet West building.

You know, I get a lot of credit for what this county government does, but I stand on the strong shoulders of our thousands of employees.

And I’m not sure that I’ve said “Thank You” nearly enough to our workforce; our valued employees.

So when I say we will leave county government better than we found it, that statement is possible only because of your hard work through the hard times...the pay cuts...benefit reductions and workload increases.

So, to our county employees: Thank you.

You are the best at what you do.

Public service is a very high calling.

And it’s a calling that has allowed us to get a lot accomplished in this marathon.

And it’s a calling that will mean we can still get a lot accomplished in our 355-day sprint to the finish.

I’d like to close with thoughts from my inauguration seven years ago:

“Being Mayor is not just a job, but a trust that has been given me.

I thank you for giving me your trust...and the privilege...and the honor of being your Salt Lake County Mayor.”

As William Alan White said, “I am not afraid of tomorrow, because I have seen yesterday and love today.”

To everyone of you, thank you.

And, as I tell my staff every week:

“Go forth and do good work.”

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