Good Evening,

I’m honored to be here again to provide a status report with my annual State of the City address. Several of us had Elections in November, and that’s always a good way to check in with the silent majority. The voters sent a report card which said, “You’re doing a good job, keep it up!” That was reassuring. We’re on the right path.

As a reminder, my goals as Mayor have always been:

- First, exercise fiscal responsibility as we provide all the varied services our citizens expect and that make Logan a great place to live.
- Second, revitalize Downtown, to build on the assets of our historic city and invest for the next fifty-plus years.
- Third, upgrade aging infrastructure and invest in new.
- Fourth, continue to connect and expand our trails and parks, which add so much to our quality of life.

Our fiscal health is excellent. In spite of the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, our local economy has fared well. Our budget is balanced, we have excellent reserves in all critical funds for a rainy day, and this current fiscal year we allocated more money towards capital and infrastructure projects than ever before.

That said, as we begin to prepare budgets for the coming fiscal year, we are facing some unknowns. Our unemployment rate is the lowest in the entire country, putting pressure on wages. Inflation is also affecting our nation, both citizens’ pocketbooks and city budgets. Recent unanticipated changes to the availability of power purchased by the city
may affect citizens and businesses this summer and next. We will budget cautiously going forward.

Infrastructure is a very important priority, but with inflationary budget pressure and our desire to prioritize wage increases for employees, we will likely see a smaller — though we hope still significant — amount budgeted for capital projects this year.

After much planning and hard work, we have finally begun long-envisioned projects based on our goals for Downtown revitalization. The Center Block plaza is underway with the Emporium now demolished. New construction will begin in May. The programmed plaza will be a great amenity for citizens of the valley, a wonderful gathering place to make our city more active and pedestrian friendly and to draw people downtown year-round. It will also benefit our economic development efforts and our tax base. We had wonderful private support from individuals and foundations who saw value in the project, and last year we raised a total of $2,150,000 in private funds toward the public plaza. We are so grateful to our generous, community-minded donors led by the Laub Family Foundation’s $1M gift.

Our Economic Development Director has been busy, and we will soon be selling Plaza 45 and 41, which will return additional revenue to the project, put those buildings back on the tax rolls, and allow private enterprise to put in a restaurant which will enhance the plaza.

The City has assisted efforts to increase housing downtown which brings activity, helps with the shortage of affordable housing and encourages housing density where infrastructure is available, employment is nearby, and many services are walkable – all important items to consider as our valley grows and we try to drive less to enhance our air quality.

After years of planning, demolition of the old library is also underway, with new construction to begin mid-April. Our library staff worked tirelessly to get the library packed up, and we had great assistance from
many other departments in getting them moved to a new temporary location at the Service Center. It was a great example of teamwork with everyone working together, and we appreciate those employees at the Service Center and our Library employees who have all made adjustments to squeeze in together for eighteen months during construction, as it will keep the library open for limited services and save the city $100,000.

After crews demolish the old Library, they will move across the street to take down the burned-out Army Navy building and dilapidated muffler shop which the city purchased a few years ago with funds from the redevelopment agency. Those buildings have been an eyesore on Main Street and 300 North for years! We will use that space as a staging area for library construction and are in discussions with a developer about a possible future project on that corner.

The new $150M wastewater treatment plant, which serves seven cities, is finished and in the testing phase. It was completed on time and under budget, a major accomplishment for a massive, multi-year project. The Environmental Enterprise Fund has hired a number of new employees to run that very technical facility, and we appreciate their work as well. We will have a ribbon cutting this spring for those that would like a tour.

Another project we’ve been working on is a new fire station to replace our 50-year-old main station, based on our concern about seismic issues and functionality. After considering nearly a dozen potential locations over the course of eighteen months, we are acquiring property on the northwest corner of 100 East and 200 North and have just received proposals back for station design. We expect to start construction by fall.

Another big accomplishment this past year was creating the Kunzler Conservation Easement to protect 47 acres along the Logan River and provide additional trails and permanent public access. That was also a team effort with our staff from Parks, Public Works, Legal and
Community Development all pitching in along with help from the Logan River Task Force. We completed the nearly $1M easement purchase almost entirely with grant funding.

In everything we do as a city, we appreciate and acknowledge the efforts of our many employees and their consistent efforts day in and day out which result in clean water always flowing from our taps, the sewer flowing away, the lights on 24/7, garbage and recycling picked up on time, tree branches from unexpected major storms hauled away by the streets department and damaged trees on city property trimmed by our forestry crews. The streets are always cleared of snow and kept in good repair, including the massive yearly project of chip and seal on our roads. It may not be your favorite project, but it keeps our roads in good condition and saves tax dollars in the long run.

Help is always available from the Police, EMS and Fire personnel when an emergency arises, or simply when a citizen assist is requested. Our fleets and shops employees ensure our crews have the vehicles they need in good working order to take care of business, and we rotate those vehicles regularly on a program which saves the city considerable funds on both acquisition and maintenance.

During this ongoing Covid crisis, the golf course continued an already positive revenue trend and easily broke all past revenue numbers. Our parks and trails have seen a huge increase in citizens using our wonderful outdoor amenities and our staff has continued to apply for a number of grants to help fund projects. On the recreation side, they added some new indoor, non-competitive programs and sponsored community events downtown for Halloween and Christmas, adding to our sense of community. Our forestry crew installed the holiday decorations which make things look festive for all of us. We opted to keep the wicker deer and lights on until Valentine’s Day to brighten up our long winter nights, so those will now get put away until next year. The parks crews also clear many miles of trails and sidewalks each
winter to keep us moving all winter long while the streets departments focuses on the roads.

Our parks staff, shorthanded this past summer like several other departments due to labor shortages, continued to keep things operating smoothly, and also dealt with massive branch cleanup on our trails and parks.

Our GIS department – which maps all pipes and infrastructure city wide -- did a big project for parks this year and digitally mapped all the sprinklers, piping and cemetery lots in our 53-acre cemetery as we begin work on a new cemetery master plan. Once planned, we will work in phases to automate the cemetery sprinkling system, a massive and expensive effort. It will also include planning for a Columbarium, which houses cremains, and is much less expensive than an entire cemetery plot.

The parks staff and I have worked with the respective neighborhood councils and have developed two new park master plans. These are significant parks with large areas, so we will begin to develop them in phases, over a number of years, as we can allocate funding and leverage grant opportunities. One will be a regional legacy park of 150 acres – a recreational amenity on the site of the landfill which is being closed after 60 years of service. I like the idea of turning trash into treasure – a park for our citizens to enjoy.

The second new master planned park is the Foothill Park and will be a natural area of open space of about 30 acres with native plants and trails on the East bench. Both new plans will feature large sections of low-water usage areas. These are big dreams with big price tags, so as I mentioned, we will move slowly… but the first step is to have a vision, then a plan and a cost estimate. We have taken that step. Open space, trails and recreational space will have even greater value as we continue to grow.
Given our serious drought situation this year, we prioritized water conservation in our parks and other city-controlled areas and encouraged it throughout the city. We were pleased with the way our citizens responded. We will continue to pay close attention to water conservation going forward and next month you will be seeing new proposed ordinances from our community development department to facilitate water conservation city wide.

In other water news, a major infrastructure project in the water department replaced a large section of old and leaky water line in Canyon Road. They are currently rebuilding the Crockett well to ensure culinary water redundancy. A new ten-million-gallon water storage tank is under design, to be built in the next several years. The water crew was another one which was particularly shorthanded this summer, and when we had a couple of major leaks, those employees worked long overtime hours to get things fixed.

Our Fire and EMS personnel, even after wrapping up CCEMS and separating from the county, still handled almost the same number of calls for service with city growth.

For both our police, 911 dispatchers and fire employees, we continue to work to provide improved mental health services for those first responders who often see trauma, accidents, suicides and fires, things that most of us will never deal with. We truly appreciate their service and quiet, behind-the-scenes heroics. Our 911 staff provide that seamless interface so critical calls get answered with professionalism and skill.

Our Police are focused on community outreach and building relationships with a variety of groups and constituencies across our city. They are always working to protect our community, and among other things, I am impressed by the number of DUI drivers they consistently get off the road to make our city safer. With our growth, our crime has also increased to a certain degree, so they are ever vigilant.
The engineering department in public works has been focused for several years on improving city transportation infrastructure with the major project of connecting 100 West to US 89/91 with a new bridge over the Logan River at 100 West and new road from 500 South to the highway. This $11M project, for they are currently mobilizing, has involved tremendous effort, with long term planning, multiple property acquisitions and major grants applied for and received. We appreciate significant grant funding through the Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Council of Governments, which comes from the quarter percent transportation sales tax we all pay to improve roads county wide. As part of this project, and working with the Gateway Development, we are adding public trail along the river and under the new bridge.

That will tie in nicely to the new Main Street pedestrian underpass at 600 South which will be designed this year and constructed next spring, after the city applied for and received a $4.1M grant from UDOT. This safe connection for bikes and pedestrians under Main Street will connect 17 miles of city trail east and west of Main, through the lovely river restoration and trail done by Wasatch Properties from Main to 100 East, on which the city and the Logan River Task Force partnered with grants, RDA funds and private dollars.

Another goal to help traffic flow is to improve the city’s East/West corridors. The focus this year and next will be major work on 1000 North, from about 50 East to 250 West, including a stop light at 200 West. Improvements will also be made on 1000 North at 1000 West, where the new COSTCO is being built, and eventually at 600 West.

On 1800 North, we will improve the intersection at 600 West and install a traffic signal. The two projects just mentioned on 600 West are dependent on resolving our litigation with the railroad over their unreasonable demands for crossing maintenance fees. There is some state legislation currently under consideration that may help us with the railroad.
I’m sure you’re also pleased the dangerous intersection at 700 North & Main Street has been straightened out and fixed. The city succeeded in getting UDOT to work with us to complete that project, and we appreciate their cooperation.

Community Development, which includes the building department, had a very busy year. In addition to approving an ever-increasing number of plans and permits, building inspections and handling enforcement for code violations, they handle business licensing and are working to offer that service online. The first phase, with Landlord licenses, should be implemented this summer. They also manage our fledgling Public Art Master Plan. We are currently contracting for two murals in parks this summer by professional artists, a fun project to add character to our city.

Our Light & Power department is building two new substations to serve our city and its growing power needs and completed a new circuit to handle significant added capacity required for the new water treatment plant. We’ve had some major business expansion and additional residential load as well. Through UAMPS, we did purchase 5 MW of solar power from the Red Mesa Solar Project on the Navajo Nation in southern Utah. That resource was supposed to be online and available to help with our peaking power needs this July, but they’ve had Covid-related supply chain issues and it won’t be complete until December, so that contributed to our concern about summer loads and power cost.

We’ve signed up for 5 MW of solar from the Steel II solar farm, located near Plymouth Utah. It’s still in the design phase, but we hope to add that renewable capacity by fall of 2023. We’ve also signed a power purchase agreement for 5 MW with the San Juan Solar Project, of which 2.5 MW includes battery storage capacity, which would extend solar power to cover some of our peaking power needs from 5-9 pm. But that project has no specific timeline right now, and all renewables must be balanced with baseload power when the renewables aren’t producing. Securing baseload power at reasonable prices has been a challenge of late.
Our Renewable Energy Conservation Advisory Board expanded into the Renewable Energy Sustainability Advisory Board, or RESAB, to include resource conservation and emissions reduction. We received a grant for a pilot project to test a small-scale battery system for Logan Light & Power that could eventually help balance variable renewable energy as battery technology develops. We completed our first carbon emissions study for the City to provide data to help make future decisions and added solar panels to the new Logan Library design. Our sustainability coordinator has begun implementing the plastic waste management plan for Logan businesses and she managed a commercial lighting incentives program which saved enough energy to power 55 average homes for a year and provided 104 incentives for smart thermostats and/or air conditioning. We continue to look for ways to add renewable power to our portfolio.

Our legal team also runs our safety and risk management programs and those efforts are paying good dividends. Our city is 32% safer than other cities in the state, which translates into lower insurance premiums.

The finance department is another key part of our team and oversees the critical task of tracking and managing city finances, including the utility billing department. They help us meet that number one goal of managing city resources wisely. The IT department keeps our technology operating smoothly – another of those behind-the-scenes, but very necessary, departments.

The city recorder ran a successful election with dedication and professionalism, and the human resources department also supported all of us city-wide. It was an especially challenging year for the HR folks, given our labor shortages. They implemented some creative solutions including ways to recruit and retain employees with flexible scheduling and other ways to show our appreciation.
In summary, thank you for allowing me to share this snapshot of some accomplishments of the past year, and some goals for the coming year. I extend a huge thank you to the council members for their support and cooperation. I appreciate our good working relationship and your support of our budget and goals. I’m grateful for teamwork! I look forward to a productive 2022 working with you, the outstanding Executive Team and all our city employees as we serve our citizens and manage their tax dollars wisely to accomplish great things for our beautiful city.