Good evening. Another year is in the history books. It has been an excellent year with much accomplished as we continue our theme of partnerships and cooperation. I personally appreciate the dedication and diligence of city council members, and our ability to work together on a variety of projects.

My number one goal and priority is fiscal responsibility, and we continue on that path with reserves in all significant areas, conservative budgeting and realistic spending. Departmental budgets have generally stayed flat, and we carefully watch expenses, streamline operations, and operate efficiently in all departments. Our outstanding Executive Team makes that happen, and I would like to thank and recognize them for their excellent work.

Goal number two is to invest in infrastructure, and that budget number increased by 11% this year. Our exciting Center Street project was part of that goal by replacing all aging infrastructure under the street, and was also the first step towards goal number three, which is downtown revitalization. We are grateful for the financial partnership of the Center Street owners as we created a beautiful, functional, pedestrian-friendly block for the next fifty years, which will draw people to our downtown. We also thank the partners who donated funds to make the beautiful archway possible. It is the “icing on the cake.”

Our grand opening, lighting celebration, and Christmas parade created a wonderful community gathering with a festive spirit
and demonstrated people want a gathering place and a genuine
experience downtown! It also showed if people want to come
Downtown, parking is not a problem. We had over two
thousand people lining one block of Center Street to see Santa
and the beautiful Clydesdales!

In the spring, we will finish the Center Street planters with
decorative stone, and plant flowers. Center Street will be a
“legacy project” to benefit our citizens for years to come!

I continue to pursue the goals listed in The 20 Ingredients of an
Outstanding Downtown. The Center Street project met a
number of those goals including
• Start with just one bock
• Curb appeal
• Sidewalk café dining
• An intimate setting
• Create a downtown gateway, and more.

The next step as we focus on Downtown is dealing with vacant,
crumbling buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. In
addition to the physical problems of the structures, part of the
challenge is to bring new uses which draw people downtown.

That is why I will continue to advocate for the goals of
• Living and staying downtown, and
• A gathering place with constant activity
As you know, we presented a plan for a potential $28 Million dollar public-private development with a plaza, ice rink, housing and some restaurant/retail to revitalize Center Block, which would have met those goals. The plan included demolition of the Emporium and several adjacent structures. That request was denied by the Historic Preservation Committee, primarily because of concern that the project might not go forward, but also concern that two of the facades had some historic value. If there is beautiful history worth saving, I am the first to advocate for that. There are always tradeoffs: for a price, anything can be fixed. But if you spend a lot of money to save marginal buildings that will continue to be “old” and not function well, nor attract new uses even after the investment, that doesn’t make sense to me.

We are working with our development partner to bring a more detailed plan, including finances, to council. One reason we did not have specific financials is that we have modified the plans four or five different times since September to better meet the needs of property owners around the block. There have also been some alternate proposals from downtown business owners, and Council and the public will have the opportunity to consider all proposals at the council meeting on February 18th. We need to get this right!

By way of background on the project, we have been building significant reserves in our RDA, or Redevelopment Agency fund, which is specifically for economic development. We are still refining the specifics, but if we move forward, estimates project a city investment in the range of $7-8 million, with
private investment of about $20 million to create a significant new development for downtown.

For those that might not know, an RDA is a financing tool the state provides cities to assist with economic development. RDA's must set aside a certain percentage of increment generated for housing. The city has accrued $2 Million of housing funds, which if we don’t use, revert to the state’s Olene Walker Housing Fund. This proposed project would be an excellent use of those restricted funds, and is one component of our proposed financing.

To be clear, these are NOT general fund dollars that pay for roads, parks, public safety and more … so this does not mean we are spending less money on those important services, nor does it mean we are raising taxes for this project. With this proposal, the city would retain ownership and operations of a public plaza, but the remainder of the significant development would be on the tax rolls, providing revenue to the school district, county and city.

Turning to another topic, I am pleased to announce some exciting news which will enhance open space and trails. For some time, we have been talking with Parks and Public Works about the value of the "Kunzler property" for open space preservation, trail connection, river restoration and flood plain and storm water management. The property is agricultural land west of 1000 West, on the opposite side of the river from the Trapper Park Trail and Trapper Park. We had it on our wish list for acquisition – but did not have the funding. This summer a
grant opportunity became available when the state legislature once again funded the LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Fund.

The application process was challenging, but staff all helped pull the rigorous application together on a very short timeline, including participation from the landowners. We applied for funding to place a conservation easement on 73 acres of property along the river, which will still allow the Kunzler family to develop some portion of the upland property.

We were recently notified by the state we received the full amount requested, $875,000! This grant does require an equal match which we will continue to work towards through RAPZ and other grant requests. Per our Trails Master Plan, it will allow us to further continue our trail system north along the river from Trapper Park, and will get us part way to the planned 600 South Park (at 1900 West), property which the city owns, providing a great park and significant connections when funding allows completion. We expect to finalize details by late February to complete the transaction.

I mentioned teamwork: each department in the city works diligently, and supports what we do as a city in various ways. I’d like to share a brief highlight from each, which helps summarize the state of the city:

Our Economic Development Department has worked diligently on the projects already mentioned, as well as creation of a new redevelopment area and beautification effort in south Logan, with two significant new projects underway on South Main
which will greatly enhance the entrance to Logan, as well as contribute to Logan’s economic viability and our long-term tax base. We also negotiated with the developers to provide public trails along the river in both developments, which will be great public amenities.

The Finance department has worked long hours on converting to a new software system which will better serve residents as well as staff. The financials and utility billing component are completed, which was the most complex change, with other departments converting over the next year. We know that changing utility billing software creates short term frustration for our customers, and for that we apologize, but the new software will improve security and efficiency in the long term. As always, finance keeps us on track and on budget at all times with financial recordkeeping and monitoring.

The Legal department reviews hundreds of documents and contracts annually, and oversees our risk management and safety training. Through their careful efforts – and the efforts of employees -- the city’s Workers Compensation Modifier score is one of the lowest for a municipality in the state, resulting in a premium decrease of nearly $50,000 this year.

Our City Recorder ran a successful election this past year, which requires extensive time, effort and attention to detail. With our vote by mail elections, the turnout is about 24%, an increase from in-person voting.

Our Municipal Court runs well, and we appreciate our new Judge and his good work.
Our Library is also a community center, hosting a number of programs and events as well as providing meeting space for 238 different community groups. Patrons checked out nearly 750,000 physical items, including such diverse offerings as a telescope, blood pressure kits or an e-reader. There were 97,000 digital items checked out as well. We continue to work on a potential site for a new building. In the meantime, our staff does an excellent job in an aging facility with many problems.

The Environmental Department added a new cell to the North Valley Landfill to handle county-wide waste, and improved the entrance to the current landfill and transfer station. Construction continues on schedule and budget for the new $135 million wastewater treatment plant. Our forestry division takes care of thousands of city trees, and puts up holiday lights and decorations, which looked so festive this year.

The recycling market has changed dramatically, but at least for now we continue to offer that service. With a USDA grant, we had two “tire amnesty days” – free tire drop off at the landfill -- and sent more than 100 tons of used tires to a waste-to-energy plant. We distributed close to 3,000 reusable bags as we educated the public to have a bag plan.

Our Renewable Energy Board is working to refine the city’s energy roadmap, we are working to understand the city’s carbon footprint, and we received UCAIR grants to replace diesel vehicles with electric at the golf course and cemetery. Our
garbage truck fleet is upgraded with clean diesel. Public works also received an Airshed Grant for older vehicle replacement.

This year, the city joined the Red Mesa solar and Carbon Free Power project to add to our renewable energy portfolio.

In other Light & Power accomplishments, they are very proactive in maintaining and upgrading lines, substations and distribution systems to provide reliable service to residents and businesses, and recently received an award from the American Public Power Association for System Reliability. This is a big asset to our businesses and for economic development. This year they rebuilt two significant sections of transmission lines, improved distribution underground along 1400 North, installed new decorative lighting on South Main and new underground on the Center Street project.

Our Parks Department received National re-accreditation, a rigorous process, and is still the only department in Utah to receive that recognition. They opened Bridger Bike Park, are part way through a “Dogs in some parks” pilot program, and continue to expand and improve our trail system, including the Canyon Connector Trail to connect the Hillcrest neighborhood and USU to First Dam. In your packet tonight, they submitted draft plans for a future “Blue Trail,” which is a river trail for kayaks and canoes, with potential access points at Stewart, Rendevous, Trapper and other city-owned parks. All of that while keeping our parks in wonderful condition. After significant scrutiny and effort, the Golf Course, which remained under current city management, has increased revenue by $50,000.
Our public safety staff are on duty day in and day out to ensure our citizens’ safety. Our police officers deal regularly with the best and the worst of situations, one example being the Lizzy Shelley homicide case, a tragic event which they were able to bring to resolution with intense effort on their end and great partnerships with other agencies. They have also enhanced in-house and cross training with these agencies.

Our Fire and EMS officers are continually busy as well. They have implemented significant new training programs for all employees including officer development, and have rigorously reviewed policies, procedures and data. The data showed our current Cache County Emergency Medical System (CCEMS) was significantly out of balance, to Logan’s detriment. The original contract was executed fifteen years ago and did not reflect the significant cost of service increase due to growth of population and number of calls outside of Logan. We have terminated that contract, which calls for a year-long winding down period where service remains the same. The county has issued an RFP to evaluate county wide Fire and EMS services, and we are keeping an open mind about whether Logan would participate in a newly-structured contract going forward, or whether we simply serve Logan citizens, and other cities with which we have a specific contract, beginning in 2021.

Our Community Development Department completed a Moderate-Income Housing Plan, initiated a Public Art Master Plan, helped coordinate Center Street, increased code enforcement efforts to improve neighborhoods, administered our CDBG program, and has initiated a 10-year review of the Logan
General Plan. Construction plan review has increased by roughly 25% this past year, as Logan continues to grow.

That plan review also affects Public Works, our largest department, as engineering also reviews all plans submitted for new development. It has been one of their busiest years ever. They also keep our roads patched, clear the snow at all hours of the day or night, fix water leaks, deal with storm water and work on many of our infrastructure improvements.

Bigger projects this past year include resurfacing Airport Road and rebuilding 1200 North on the east side. They have initiated proactive efforts to improve infrastructure with both lining and grouting of sewer lines to reduce infiltration. They have initiated projects to improve fire flow, as well as implemented a schedule to rebuild our most troublesome sections of water and sewer lines.

They also helped with Center Street, South Main improvements, River Restoration between Main and 100 East, and several railroad crossing improvements citywide.

Our Human Resources department keeps track of over 400 employees who serve our citizens, and has partnered with our insurance carrier to implement a wellness program to keep employees healthy and keep health care costs – one of our significant challenges – in check.

I would like to recognize those employees who diligently work and serve every single day, sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes in bad weather, so we have water to drink,
power that turns on, trash that gets picked up, parks and trails to enjoy, orderly development, books to read – and much more, including fire and police when we need them.

In summary, our city is progressive, proactive, well managed and we are planning for the future. I am pleased to be a part of that team effort!

Thank you.