



Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson  
2022 Mayor's Proposed Budget Address  
October 21, 2021

I'd like to thank the Council, elected officials, County employees and County residents for attending or logging in to this morning's address.

Due to COVID-19, the 2022 proposed budget is a bit different than our typical annual budgets... It is a road map for our county to fund traditional programs but also addresses the ongoing challenge and impacts of COVID.

The proposed budget reflects the mission and priorities of Salt Lake County.....To deliver quality services to our constituents in the most equitable, effective and cost-efficient way.

The COVID challenge, almost in its second year, continues to impact our county. We have ongoing costs, but we also have opportunities to invest. Months ago, the federal government recognized that in order to return towns, cities, counties and states back to health – both traditional health but also economic health, we would need to fund our recovery. For that reason, this year I am offering both a traditional budget and I am recommending \$64.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding. This is not the totality of Salt Lake County's ARPA allocation as the funds are available until the end of 2024 and we haven't received the full appropriation, yet there are several priority programs that I am recommending today.

I'd like to thank so many dedicated county employees and elected officials for their work on this year's budget. As well as my "Mayor's Office" team.

And a heartfelt thanks to Darrin Casper, Rod Kitchens and the entire budget team given the complexity of this task. The team literally built two budgets, and then merged them together into the plan we are presenting.

### **Budget Process**

It's as if you took a piggy bank and turned it upside on the kitchen counter. And then along came your cousin and emptied her piggy bank to the pile. But then, your uncle came in and checked every penny, nickel, dime and quarter and divided up how it would be spent.

This has been the complexity of the past few years as our budget and legal teams evaluated every penny. I can assure you, we have been on top of this process, drawing

down our maximum eligible federal funds, and wisely addressing both the health crisis and economic challenge in our community.

The 2022 Mayor's budget addresses traditional county needs but also honors the needs the pandemic highlighted in specific communities.

During the pandemic, our County developed systems to engage directly with the community in order to better understand and address COVID's impacts. Our intentional focus on diverse and underserved communities for COVID vaccine and testing, as well as the creation of grant programs such the Economic Inclusion Assistance Program, Small Business Impact Grant Program, and Community Partners Grant Program were the direct result of community feedback. Additionally, we have engaged with County elected leaders and the public through visioning sessions, town hall meetings, community outreach surveys, and through the efforts and input of our Council on Diversity Affairs.

### **Health Crisis and Health Department**

With no immediate end to the COVID pandemic – our health department keeps plugging away with vaccination clinics in neighborhoods, at churches and at community events. Dr. Angela Dunn and her team have connected with schools and community partners to counsel, support, test and contact trace. This work will continue until, finally, COVID is behind us. And we will continue to fund these efforts, utilizing ARPA dollars.

In hindsight, we all could have predicted which communities were going to bear the largest burden from the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the same communities that have historically experienced limited access to quality healthcare, low household incomes, and limited formal education. However, our traditional public health system has typically focused on conditions in silos. One program addresses high diabetes rates, another combats opioid addiction, another monitors air quality, and still another ensures that restaurants are operating safely – even though the same communities are impacted by all of the issues.

In the 2022 proposed budget, our Health Department seeks to become less condition-centric and move toward a more holistic, community-centric public health model. One that evaluates and discovers the root causes of a community's health concerns, and works with local partners to implement solutions.

We seek to ensure health and safety for all our residents, with a particular focus on those communities that have been left behind. And we will serve our residents by integrating their opinions, priorities, and needs into our public health practice. Hearing directly from them what they need, and providing our services in languages they understand.

## **Parks, Recreation, Trails**

Our county's parks, playgrounds, pathways and libraries are vital to our physical and mental well being. The community turned to these public spaces during COVID and demand is not returning to pre-pandemic levels. This budget continues Salt Lake County's long standing commitment to these places of gathering, reflection, learning and of play. From pickleball to swim lanes to trailheads, Salt Lake County will continue to build and maintain these vital assets.

The 2022 budget includes funding for the long-awaited countywide trails master plan, and an investment in trail development in Salt Lake County's west range Oquirrhus, a move that will ultimately provide access to dozens of miles of multi-use trails and, hopefully, pull some demand away from the Wasatch range trails that are being loved to death. Thank you Council Member Alvord and, all Councilmembers, for your commitment to this project!

The budget also includes additional investment in our Open Space land acquisition account. With this funding, Salt Lake County will purchase high quality undeveloped parcels that will be protected as open space for the use and enjoyment of today's and tomorrow's County residents.

## **Human Services/Homelessness/Criminal Justice**

Our community has the biggest heart in the nation when it comes to supporting those facing substance abuse, with mental health concerns, those with housing needs, and those with non-violent offenses who have misstepped with the law but are ready for a second chance. We partner, we engage, we problem solve and when there is a way to support a pathway to recovery and self-sufficiency, we embrace it.

Our American Rescue Plan funding has provided an unprecedented opportunity to move several partnerships with the state, non-profit organizations and philanthropists forward in a way that will transform our community.

There are two initiatives that you have already supported - thank you Council!

First, the recent \$2M appropriation to the Switchpoint supportive housing initiative and second, the land and a \$5M investment in the new Huntsman Mental Health Receiving Center, to be operated by the University of Utah's Huntsman Mental Health Institute. Soon, loved ones supporting a family member in mental health crisis will have a place to take their loved one for entry into the mental health care system rather than the criminal justice system. Law enforcement in our Valley will also have access to this center. Our community partners in treatment and recovery will be on site to immediately support. No wasted time. When time matters the most.

And as a transition, in the 2022 budget I am requesting funding for a temporary solution until the new Huntsman Receiving Center is up and running.

## **Housing**

We all know that safe and affordable housing is desperately needed, yet Salt Lake County is 22,800 units short. Additionally, half of Utah's households cannot afford the median-priced home. Affordable housing - at all levels of household income - is not attainable in this market without partnerships between builders, non-profit housing providers, government agencies, and the philanthropic community. My 2022 budget includes an ARPA request of an unprecedented \$20M appropriation to Salt Lake County's housing trust fund.

Additionally, the 2022 budget leverages \$6M in housing funds as a grant match for a \$14M partnership with the State of Utah and community partners to purchase a housing facility for vulnerable community members who are aging, medically frail, or have other underlying health concerns. The facility will provide a permanent supportive housing solution for our vulnerable and medically frail population.

## **Jail Release Program**

A vital criminal justice reform program, also supported by the Sheriff, plans to fund a remodeled section of our jail where inmates, once released, are able to sit, gather their thoughts, have a cup of coffee or hot chocolate, and even charge their cell phones before they exit our facility and re-enter society. And most importantly, case workers will be on hand to support and provide these individuals with a productive path forward, connecting them to resources with the goal of keeping them from returning to jail.

## **Food Security**

When COVID hit, many, even those who had previously never worried about where the next meal would come from, went hungry. After a significant appropriation in 2021, the 2022 budget provides resources for the County's Food Security working group to continue collaboration efforts with the State of Utah and other municipal and community partners to deepen the focus on food security in our community. And if you haven't, check out our new website that provides information on all of the community partners providing food support. <https://www.slco.org/food>

## **D&I, ONA**

With over 700 refugees soon arriving in Salt Lake County to escape conflict in Afghanistan, our county is ready to receive them. Along with the state and committed community partners, we will extend a place of peace and refuge. As the first certified Welcoming County in the nation, our commitment to support New Americans and refugees is without comparison.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion continues working with our community-based Council on Diversity Affairs (CODA) to implement measurable actions toward addressing equity, access, institutional reform and racial justice. Additionally, the Office is developing a robust internship program focused on providing rich experiences to students from groups historically underrepresented.

The 2022 budget includes funding restoration for both of these vitally important programs.

### **Water Conservation and Planning**

In spite of rainy weather this week, we live in a desert and as a community we need to change the way we think about water use. We simply cannot continue to nourish lawns and lush landscapes with water intended for human drinking. My budget includes a commitment to engage with municipal partners to develop new land use standards aimed at water conservation. The budget also includes funding for xeriscaping at the Bingham Creek Library, for a new, non-culinary water source installation for the Riverton Golf Course, and funds to begin the process of increasing the efficiency of irrigation systems at nearly a dozen county parks.

### **County Elected Officials**

Our amazing team of elected officials are resourceful and effective in running first-rate operations. My recommended budget honors their professionalism and trusts their proven success by passing through most of their operational recommendations without substantial reductions.

As a group, many of these officials have been working on a multi-year long project to retire Salt Lake County's antiquated mainframe computer system. Relying on the mainframe to run our systems is like continuing to use a dot matrix printer when the rest of the world has moved on to 3-D printing capabilities. The 2022 budget includes funding to continue the transition and provides nearly \$6M to modernize the tax administration system by moving it off of the mainframe, a project that will enhance the services of multiple offices. (I know... very exciting stuff but it really is pretty important)!

I want to compliment our independent elected officials for the various shout outs and recognition they give to other offices, once again demonstrating the success of this County, each office deeply committed to their mandated mission and a fiscally responsible approach, but generous to others, leading to a cohesive and effective total county.

### **Smart Government**

And, Salt Lake County will benefit from a reflection and willingness to adapt to the organizational lessons learned from COVID. For this reason, I am proposing an internal program intended to incentivize efficiency, process reforms, cost savings, and innovations within our systems. Divisions, departments, and agencies can apply for funding if they have well-thought-out plans that will positively impact the bottom line. And we are intentionally working to provide holistic reforms for our workforce, operations and workspaces to meet the needs of post-COVID demands and opportunities.

Let me give you a quick example of how the Smart Government and Efficiency program could work. Recall that just a week ago, Treasurer Wayne Cushing shared how since

taking office he has increased tax collections in Salt Lake County from around 95% to today's current level of almost 98%. What he didn't share with you was the innovation he put in place to make this happen. In short, Wayne repurposed 2 FTEs from retirements, hired lower-cost temporary staff to research bad addresses on tax notices and resend the notices, resulting in millions of dollars in additional tax collections. Seems simple and in many ways it indeed is... but it took an effort by Treasurer Cushing, a plan and an investment that continues to pay off today. The Smart Government and Efficiency program is intended to fund more of these types of process improvements across County government.

## **Human Resources Investment**

As Council Members and independent elected officials worked with my office over the past several months to identify internal barriers to service delivery, there was consensus that the Human Resources function of County government is in need of investment of resources as well as process modernization. The 2022 budget provides an investment that will focus on enhanced recruitment and retention as well as timely service to the county's divisions, departments, offices, and portfolios.

## **Capital Facilities**

Additionally, there was consensus that investment in capital facility maintenance, with a focus on projects that enhance efficiency and help us better serve the community, is a priority. The 2022 budget includes an historic level of funding for both deferred capital maintenance and development of new capital assets to serve the community, including:

- funding for long overdue projects in flood control
- \$1 million for surplus canal property acquisition
- \$3 million to support the replacement of the Marv Jenson pool in South Jordan - thank you Chair DeBry for being a champion for this project!!
- Funds to rebuild the Valley Regional Park softball complex in Taylorsville
- Life/safety and security enhancements at the jail
- And many others

## **Commitment to Employees**

And none of this great work can be done without an investment in our staff and a commitment to their well being. As in years past, but especially during the pandemic, our County team has been our top priority. From the earliest days of the pandemic, we committed to no layoffs. We offered redeployments and created surge work overtime opportunities. We expanded leave benefits and continue to provide flexibility as working parents balanced the challenges of on-line schooling and closed child-care facilities. And just this week, the County Council, elected officials, and I came together to offer a strong and industry leading incentive to our workforce to get vaccinated.

Last June we raised salaries of our employees and I am proposing we again invest in their well-being by providing a market driven compensation package. For the general

workforce, I am proposing a 2.0% structural adjustment as well as 2.75% dedicated to merit increases.

I am most proud that the 2022 budget includes a minimum living wage of \$15 per hour for all permanent, full-time employees and a \$2 million down payment on a phase-in plan to increase all temporary employee pay to \$15 per hour by 2024. Thank you Council Member Granato for your partnership as we develop these programs aimed at providing living wages for all employees.

It's no secret that our public safety and corrections teams, under the direction of Sheriff Rivera, need a significant market pay adjustment to attract and retain employees. For that reason, the budget includes a public safety and corrections salary adjustment to stabilize the workforce in a very competitive market. Not only do the incredible employees working to keep us safe deserve competitive wages, but it is vital to our operations that we not lose them to other law enforcement agencies after our investment in training.

Similarly, our District Attorney and Legal Defenders Offices have requested support given the additional pressure on high-ranking prosecutors and defense attorneys, and similar to the challenge in law enforcement, we are investing in retention and hiring in this vital field.

In all, the 2022 budget includes nearly \$8M to help stabilize public safety staffing.

This morning, in the interest of time, I have highlighted just a few of the many significant proposals included in the proposed budget. While my budget includes funding for some big and long overdue community priorities, presenting a structurally balanced budget remains my top priority. In the budget documents that Darrin will be sharing with you, we have clearly identified where projects are intended to be one-time or short term - expiring when ARPA funding ends.

While my proposed budget allocates some of our ARPA dollars for 2022, I anticipate additional public engagement and working with the Council over the next few years as generational opportunities mature, we further respond to areas of community need, and we develop agreements to leverage every County ARPA dollar with an aim to double or triple our investments. Simply put, this budget has meticulously sorted the nickles, dimes, and quarters in the blended pile of coins for maximum impact.

Salt Lake County remains a beacon of ethical, responsible, and frugal governance during the most uncertain times we have faced in recent memory. Salt Lake County government is big and complex and it takes time to learn the nuance. We have dozens of funds, each required to self-balance, and a myriad of restricted revenue sources. The people who choose to serve this County and guide this system are world-class and it takes all of us working together, independent elected offices, Council Members, and dedicated employees to provide such valuable and crucial service to our residents. We all take pride in this mission!

I look forward to working with you over the coming weeks as you deliberate the budget. And now I would like to turn the time over to Darrin and his team to walk you through the details.

Thank you.