

## 2026 State of the City Speech

Good evening, everyone. It is an honor to stand before you tonight. I want to thank our Miss Murray 2025, Alexis Thompson, for that welcome, and Tracy Bird for the beautiful music that set the tone for this evening. Thank you.

I want to acknowledge our wonderful City Council, could you please stand? City Council is the purse strings of the city. Let's give them a round of applause. I also want to acknowledge our city's department heads and employees here tonight. Could you please stand?

These keep the lights on, the water running, the streets safe, the parks welcoming, our finances sound, and our community strong. Thank you for your work on behalf of the city. Can we please give them a round of applause? Thank you.

Tonight, I want to talk about something very important to all of us. I want to talk about who Murray is as a community. Murray is a city that believes compassion is not only a value, it's a responsibility.

Let me begin with a personal story about a friend's son that I know. This kid had a good friend at Murray High School who was amazing on the football team. He couldn't afford many of the things that other kids take for granted. Not a letterman jacket. Sometimes, not even school lunch. When our young friend's own savings started to run low, he was questioned by his Father. He was told he should save his money better. That night, he explained the truth to his father. He wasn't wasting his money. He spent his money helping his friend. He made sure his friend could eat lunch made sure he didn't feel alone. His friend had put a deposit on a letterman jacket and couldn't pay for it. This young man paid the difference to make sure his friend's efforts on the football field could be celebrated in the community with a letterman jacket.

Stories like this make up the character of Murray and they happen every day. It's the kind of kindness I believe should guide how we govern.

A city's success is built on the work of its employees, and in 2025 we continued to focus on what we call The Murray Way, service rooted in professionalism, compassion, and excellence. Throughout the year, we honored 14 outstanding Employees of the Month, recognizing individuals across departments.

We also took important steps to modernize how we operate. Murray adopted its first Generative Artificial Intelligence policy, positioning us as a forward-thinking municipality, and we updated our Parental Leave Policy to better support our employees and their families. These efforts help Murray remain a modern and caring employer. That same sense of care doesn't stop with our employees. It extends to how we keep our community safe.

Public safety remains a high priority. Our Police Department's Special Investigations Unit recently dismantled a major fentanyl distribution ring responsible for moving thousands of pills each month. Their work directly protects our community and we are grateful.

Our Fire Department continued to meet community needs with professionalism and compassion, responding to increased call volume, extinguishing 190 fires, saving 14 cardiac arrest patients, strengthening emergency preparedness, and supporting regional wildfire response, all while upholding the core values of Service, Honor, Trust, and

We thank our public safety employees for their dedicated service.

Compassion also means governing responsibly, so opportunity and stability can flourish together. I want to share a look at where our economy stands today. In 2025, we issued 3,856 business licenses, the highest total in recent years. 691 of those were new businesses, showing continued confidence in Murray as a place to invest and grow.

Our business community remains strong and nearly 93% of surveyed businesses say Murray meets or exceeds expectations as a place to do business. Many of these businesses are planning to expand or relocate within the city over the next two years.

Housing is a top priority. 817 housing unit permits were issued in 2025, a large increase over the prior year and more than 300 new housing units were entitled through the planning process, including townhomes, condos, and multifamily housing. We also supported other housing opportunities. In 2025, the city invested \$400,000 through NeighborWorks Salt Lake, supporting down payment assistance and home improvements for Murray residents.

Downtown and redevelopment efforts are moving forward. We reached a major planning milestone with the adoption of Form Based Code for downtown. This allows us to focus on the design and layout of buildings rather than just land use, helping make sure our future downtown is attractive, walkable, and consistent with the community's vision.

We also made the strategic decision to acquire 120 East Vine Street, completing the property assemblage behind the Murray Theater. This important step ensures parking, access, and flexibility we need for our emerging downtown district. In short, Murray is growing and being guided with eyes toward the future.

That spirit of care and growth is also alive right here at our City Library. When limited space and changing needs could have limited what the library offered, our staff chose a brighter path. Under new leadership, they thoughtfully reimagined how every inch of space is used, making room for more books, but more importantly, for more people. Because of the changes, more children are discovering a love of reading, seniors are gathering for programs, and families are finding a new place to gather. Murray Library is more open, accessible, and alive than ever. This shows through growing attendance, increasing volunteer support, and expanding demand for physical and digital resources.

Moving outside of city limits, I want to share something extraordinary that Murray Power has worked on for several years. “Light Up Navajo” project is a nationwide volunteer effort that Murray Power supports. Crews work to provide safe, reliable electricity to families living without power on the Navajo Nation. In 2025, I traveled with our team to see our work in action. Murray Power worked to give electricity to those in need, including a 94-year-old Navajo elder who had lived his entire life without it. This April, we return to keep the work going. It is truly moving to see our employees volunteering to help those in need.

In 2025, we celebrated this spirit of Murray all year through the “Love, Murray” campaign. You’ve seen it, block parties in downtown Murray, shows in this historic theater, community service, and city pride. “Love Murray” is about what makes our city special and it’s our people.

One great example of that spirit is the Murray Armory, our re-imagined former National Guard facility inside Murray Park. It has become a beautiful and affordable community gathering place. The Armory opened in June 2025 and has already hosted 104 total rentals, generating \$148,800 in revenue, with 77 future reservations scheduled. We are proud that the rental cost is lower for Murray taxpayers happy that it is being used for special gatherings. Later tonight, we’ll celebrate more of our community spirit with the first ever

Compassion also means making sure basic life is safe and reliable. It’s easy to think of infrastructure as concrete and pipes, but for residents it’s much more personal. It’s the street you drive every day getting kids to school. It’s clean, safe drinking water when you turn on the tap. It’s brighter lighting that help you feel safe walking in your neighborhood.

Our Public Works teams focus on this work that quietly protects our quality of life. In 2025, they coordinated hundreds of plan reviews and inspections to keep growth moving responsibly, completed major street and intersection upgrades, and strengthened pedestrian safety with improved crosswalks and new signals.

They also supported long-term reliability, repairing and replacing aging water mains, responding to breaks quickly (often after hours), and ensured Murray’s water system remains safe and compliant. And this quality of life expanded with how we connect people to opportunity. The MVX Bus Rapid Transit project, completed in December 2025, provides better mass transit options for workers, students, and families.

During this same time, we also began construction on a new Public Works campus, a long-term investment that will improve efficiency, service delivery, and preparedness for our city for decades to come.

Also in 2025, the Murray Museum, located in the restored John P. Cahoon Mansion, received the statewide Community Stewardship award, honoring the importance of the building and the work that brought it into a new era. Murray Museum has become a

cornerstone of downtown and a beautiful combination of our historic past and bright future.

We were also officially designated a “Healthy Utah Community” by the Utah League of Cities and Towns in 2025, recognizing our commitment to wellness, recreation, and quality of life for residents of all ages. These awards acknowledge the work of staff, boards and commissions, and residents who work every day to improve our city.

#### Block One

And speaking of work, we’re standing on the edge of a new emerging downtown project called “Block One,” the name for the redevelopment area stretching from 4800 South to Fifth Avenue and State Street to Hanauer Street. This project has roughly 140 new homes and tens of thousands of square feet of shops and restaurants, thoughtfully designed to activate our streets and reflect the character of our historic downtown.

Underground parking, commercial storefronts, and inviting pedestrian spaces mean more life on our sidewalks, more customers for our local businesses, and more neighbors crossing paths and sharing moments downtown. Block One is a project that creates more choices for empty nesters, young professionals, and families who want to be part of a walkable neighborhood. By working together, we are building a people-centered future for Murray.

In closing, I want a to say again. I am proud of this city’s spirit of compassion. Proud of our employees. Proud of our residents. Proud of the way Murray shows up, again and again. Please stay engaged. Show up. And keep loving this city. Thank you.