

Luz Escamilla for Mayor Housing Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Salt Lake City has seen incredible economic and population growth. Our skyline is filled with cranes and new residential buildings. However, many of these new buildings are apartments that provide housing to people with higher incomes. What's missing is housing that is affordable to those in our city who are just starting their careers, who are on fixed incomes, or who are struggling to make ends meet. Access to affordable housing will also help some of those people experiencing homelessness.

We cannot wait 10 years to address this issue. We've seen that large, one-time funding efforts fail to make meaningful progress because we have focused on projects rather than strategy. Our solution to the 7,467 shortage of rental units is not simply construction; we need a strategy that:

- Preserves existing affordable housing,
- Assists those who have housing but pay more than they should, and
- Coordinates with the state, county and other cities to develop more affordable housing.

SLC HOUSING FACTS

- SLC has more renters (54%) than owners (46%)
- The greatest need for affordable housing is for rental homes for low-income earners at 40% of the area median income (\$30,075 for a family of four).
- 25% of SLC's renters are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs.
- 50% of the city's renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs (the recommended allowance any household should spend on housing).
- Rental rates have outpaced income growth. From 2000 to 2018, growth in average rent in Salt Lake County more than doubled the rate of inflation and almost doubled increases in renter median income.

LUZ ESCAMILLA'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 1. Dedicate reliable, significant, and ongoing funding to the Housing Trust Fund and the Redevelopment Agency.**
- 2. Use existing and underutilized City-owned property to develop affordable housing.**
- 3. Create Permanent Supportive Housing, an important component to addressing homelessness.**
- 4. Partner with the state to create a housing voucher program.**
- 5. Use the City's Community Land Trust to fund the preservation of existing affordable housing.**
- 6. Encourage a variety of affordable housing options that are accessible to a mix of incomes in all communities across the City.**
- 7. Promote sustainability by becoming an Enterprise Green Community.**
- 8. Ensure City zoning ordinances and approval processes are aligned to provide the right types of housing in a timely and efficient manner.**

1. Dedicate reliable, significant, and ongoing funding to the Housing Trust Fund and the Redevelopment Agency.

Over the past five years, the Salt Lake City Council has approved annual funding for affordable housing that has ranged from \$120,000 to a one-time amount of \$21 million; however, it hasn't addressed in any significant way the need for those who have lower incomes, or those at 40% area median income or below. In addition, allocating large amounts on a one-time basis may help for a short period of time, but affordable housing needs reliable, ongoing allocations.

As Mayor, Luz will recommend the Salt Lake City Council dedicate a reliable, significant, and ongoing annual funding amount to be leveraged with other resources for affordable housing. Sources for this funding include the City's Redevelopment Agency Citywide Housing Funds (this is the source used each year to supply the Housing Trust Fund) and Funding our Future. Just as important, Luz will implement strategic policies to deploy those funds that include creation of new units for those at 40% or below area median income, preservation of existing affordable housing, and develop housing specifically for those experiencing homelessness.

2. Use existing and underutilized City-owned property to develop affordable housing.

Land values are at all-time highs in Salt Lake City, which prohibit affordable housing from being built. One of the best ways for the City to increase its affordable housing stock is to develop its existing or underutilized properties.

Within her first two months of office, Luz will work with the Redevelopment Agency and the Housing and Neighborhood Development Division to create an exhaustive inventory of all City-owned assets and put a timeline in place to develop those with the greatest amount of impact in the fastest timeframe possible. This also includes strengthening relationships with the Housing Authority of Salt Lake City, non-profit and mission-driven for-profit developers, and financing institutions to work collaboratively in bringing housing on those properties to those who are in greatest need.

3. Create Permanent Supportive Housing, an important component to addressing homelessness.

We all know that “Housing First” is a major component to addressing homelessness; however, Permanent Supportive Housing (housing for those experiencing homelessness, which includes ongoing supportive services to help tenants succeed) requires significant federal subsidies and ongoing funding for case management. Without the case management, these tenants have a higher likelihood of returning to homelessness.

Luz’s Housing Plan addresses this in several significant and impactful ways:

- First, while a small amount of the funding from the RDA has gone to those at 40% area median income, even less has gone to house those who are either living in resource centers or on the streets. Luz’s Housing Plan will direct a portion of the annual housing allocation to leverage federal resources in the construction of these important housing units.
- Second, Luz’s legislative experience and relationships uniquely position her to work with the State Commission on Housing Affordability to create an ongoing funding source for increased case management and wrap-around services that will help those in Permanent Supportive Housing remain in their homes.
- Finally, to ensure that those who are living in resource centers or on the streets are moved into these units, Luz will work directly with service providers such as The Road Home, Volunteers of America and Catholic Community Services to move those who are chronically homeless into the housing units.

4. Partner with the state to create a housing voucher program

Many residents in our city have housing but face escalating rents and are spending too much of their income on their housing costs. The nearly 7,500 rental units needed includes those who are housed but are cost burdened and can’t afford their rent in addition to everyday living expenses.

The State’s Commission on Housing Affordability is considering a state-funded voucher program that will assist those entering into new housing and those who are currently housed to be able to afford their rent for a set period of time, which will help reduce homelessness. Luz will leverage her strong relationship with the Legislature to move this program from discussion

to adoption so that we can reduce the stress and burden of those who are housed but may need a little assistance to get back on their feet.

The significance of this program is that it highlights that we don't need to build our way out of this housing crisis nor is this a crisis that belongs solely to Salt Lake City. We need funding sources to implement less expensive but equally impactful programs to strengthen those in our communities and work with the state and others to solve this problem regionally.

5. Use the City's Community Land Trust to fund the preservation of existing affordable housing.

State estimates show that we are losing approximately 1,500 existing affordable housing units to developers who are flipping units to market rate. This means those tenants who are dependent on these units are required to find a new place to live in a market where such units don't exist.

Using the funds allocated as part of her Housing Plan, Luz will partner with housing providers to acquire and preserve existing affordable units using the City's Community Land Trust.¹

To ensure ongoing affordability, the City will contractually require developers who use City funds to keep units at affordable rental rates and put safeguards in place so that the buildings remain safe and healthy.

6. Encourage a variety of affordable housing options that are accessible to a mix of incomes in all communities across the City.

The best community development includes access to housing for people of all incomes. Housing location is a choice—we want to live in places that are safe, have access to opportunity, and where we can get to know our neighbors. Too many of Salt Lake City residents can't do this because they cannot find housing that is safe, healthy and affordable.

As Mayor, Luz will work directly with leaders in all communities throughout the city to understand their needs and find ways to bring housing that is

¹ A community Land Trust is a mechanism where the trust owns the land and another entity owns the building. This way the building can appreciate in value, but the land value remains the same since it is held in trust and thereby keeps the property affordable in perpetuity.

affordable to their neighborhoods. Luz will also work with developers of apartment buildings to provide funding so that a portion of their units can be affordable to those with lower incomes.

7. Promote sustainability by becoming an Enterprise Green Community.

One of the first things Luz will do as Mayor is to implement the residential building standards from the Enterprise Green Community national program. Doing this means that Salt Lake City will adopt as part of its housing policy that all projects built follow the Enterprise Green Community criteria. Projects built using these criteria cost less to operate and maintain, use fewer natural resources, generate less waste and contain fewer toxic materials and as a result contribute to a healthier environment. For those who live in these sustainable buildings, their housing will be healthier, and be more affordable because they will spend less money on utilities.

8. Ensure City zoning ordinances and approval processes are aligned to provide the right types of housing in a timely and efficient manner.

Part of the solution to the affordable housing crisis is to provide a wider range of housing types that are accessible to people of varying incomes. And good community development also considers where different housing types best fit in the fabric of the existing community. As Mayor, Luz will work with the City's Planning Division and community leaders to use their expertise to update zoning ordinances and find new and innovative ways of providing ***all*** types of housing in our city where it makes the most sense. By providing an increased mix of housing types, it creates greater accessibility to different degrees of affordability for people with a range of incomes and housing preferences.

Luz also recognizes the need to streamline the time and cost of bringing affordable housing to market. The longer it takes a project to be approved through the city processes, the more expensive it becomes to cover on-going financing costs. As Mayor, Luz will create the first ever Affordable Housing Planner position that will reside in the City's Building Services Division. This individual will be assigned to any project that includes affordable housing units and will fast track them to reduce the amount of time it takes for approval. This Planner will also have the authority to reduce or waive impact and building permit fees thus increasing the project's affordability. It is time that the City is a partner rather than a barrier in bringing housing that is affordable to our communities.

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