



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Utah Cities & Towns Innovate to Maintain Services

Necessity is the mother of invention. You can see that concept firsthand in Utah communities as cities work to maintain valuable services. City leaders are supporting recommendations and leadership from Governor Gary Herbert and following the recommendations of Utah health experts with some unique modifications to basic services. Now, in cities and towns, you may find:

- **Video and photo inspections for building code approval**
- **Curbside senior lunch pickup**
- **Staggered work schedules**
- **Online yoga live from the local recreation center**
- **Virtual story time direct from the city library**

In an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, city leaders are quickly employing innovative methods to keep city hall “open for business” and lead by example. Yet, residents in Utah’s 249 cities and towns will notice that trash collection is still up and running, their tap water is flowing, and 911 calls are being answered. Utah city leaders’ commitment to protect public health and safety is paramount, as is their commitment to provide the services that residents rely on. In fact, very few city services have been thwarted by COVID-19.

In a ULCT survey of Utah’s mid-sized and large cities:

**98%** say city hall is conducting business as normal with appropriate modifications. Cities are working to provide the same level of customer service, albeit through technological methods.

**The majority of mid-sized and large cities are conducting city council meetings electronically** Other smaller cities and towns are beginning to hold online public meetings. This is now easier due to Governor Gary Herbert’s executive order on March 18 temporarily modifying Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA) requirements.

While the full or partial closure of some services and facilities (such as senior centers and recreation centers) is necessary to protect residents' health, city leaders and staff are implementing creative new methods to do inspections, handle payments, and provide meals to our most vulnerable residents. Parks are open with city crews cleaning on a more frequent basis. Most golf courses are open, although tournaments are cancelled and tee-times are adjusted to practice social distancing. St. George Mayor and ULCT Past President Jon Pike says, "Although COVID-19 has many concerned about the future, our residents and city employees remain optimistic and possess the "can-do" spirit that has characterized St. George since its founding in 1862."

In fact, according to ULCT survey respondents:

- 100% are using social media platforms, email, and their website to communicate with their residents about adjustments during the spread of COVID-19.

- 100% of cities' emergency services (police, fire, etc.) are uninterrupted, even with measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus

- 100% of water, sewer, and garbage collection services are functioning uninterrupted.

To protect city staff and residents, innovative measures are taken such as building inspections via video or photo documentation and in some areas drop boxes are outside city hall for plan review submissions, and the issuance of permits is being done by appointment instead of walk-up visits.

South Jordan Mayor and ULCT 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Dawn Ramsey says, "Nothing is closed here. We have people working from home, but our full staff is working. We've worked tirelessly to make sure our residents know the many city services that can be done by phone or online. All services are still happening!"

Cities are also working to ensure that first responders have access to child care for their children while schools are closed so that they can provide for the health and safety of all of us. Ogden Mayor and ULCT 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Mike Caldwell says "in Ogden, we are trying to relieve a burden on our first responders so that they can focus on serving our residents. We all have a role in taking care of each other during this crisis."

Through innovation, cities are leading by example. ULCT President and Spanish Fork Council Member Mike Mendenhall says, "City elected officials are trusted to communicate clearly and compassionately to their neighbors. We are realists, pragmatists, but above all, optimists. Brighter days are ahead for our cities and the State. We will look back at this moment and remember how we treated each other. We will be stronger together."

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The Utah League of Cities and Towns serves all 249 incorporated municipalities in Utah with a strong, unified voice at the state and federal levels and provides information, training, and technical assistance to municipal leaders. The Board of Directors includes 21 mayors and council members from across Utah.