

# Report to the Citizens of Cedar City

December 3, 2025 – Cedar City, Utah

I come tonight with a sense of deep humility as I reflect on the opportunity I have had to serve as the Mayor of Cedar City. When I first considered offering this report, I felt the weight of the years behind me — years of work, of learning, of successes, and of plenty of mistakes along the way. I am 76 years old now, and when I began this journey, I was 71. I thought I had already lived a full professional and personal life. But nothing could have prepared me for what these past four years would demand or what they would give back to me.

Before becoming mayor, my life had been a long mixture of business, service, and faith. I spent nearly twenty years in banking, and another twenty running a business. When that season ended, I turned my energy toward humanitarian work — in Kenya and Uganda, in Malaysia and Mexico, throughout Europe, and across the Philippines. Those experiences gave me perspective, gratitude, and a measure of success that blessed my family. We raised five children, and they have supported me every step of the way. I truly thought my days of big assignments were behind me.

Then along came Paul Cozzens — a friend, a former city councilman, and a county commissioner — insisting that I needed to run for mayor. I’m not sure he fully understood what he was asking of me. And I’m not sure, at the time, that he knew exactly what he was getting. I have never been a quiet or cautious operator. I’ve often been described, sometimes affectionately and sometimes not, as a bull moose in a china cupboard. When I take on a challenge, I take it on completely. I throw every fiber of my being into the task, hold nothing back, and move fast. It’s the only way I know.

So in November of 2020 — in the middle of a nation divided, during a presidential election that stirred passions everywhere — I began preparing for a mayoral campaign. Donald Trump was running against Joe Biden, and like Trump, I tend to be direct, unfiltered, and relentless once I set my mind to something. I believed that if I entered the race, I could figure it out, work hard, and get things done. And that belief carried me through a difficult campaign.

The election was no easy contest. I ran against the sitting mayor — young, articulate, a lawyer, well-liked, and well-prepared. I spent my own money. I asked no one for campaign donations. I used some unconventional methods. And when the votes were counted, I won by the narrowest of margins — a little over a hundred votes. It was a humbling victory, and in some ways, it set the tone for my entire term: nothing would come easy, but everything worth doing would be worth fighting for.

When I took office in January of 2022, I was confident but not naïve. I knew Cedar City faced serious challenges, and I also knew exactly what I had promised the voters. I had made several

strong commitments — not vague campaign talking points, but real goals that I intended to accomplish. I wasn't interested in symbolic victories. I wanted results. And I was ready to work. From the beginning, I focused on five or six major initiatives that I believed were essential to the future of Cedar City. First and foremost was water — our most urgent and important long-term challenge. I also committed to building a gym and new parks for the community, recruiting a grocery store for the north end of town, improving our roads, and starting a book club for the children of the community — the now-beloved BSBC, the Banana Split Book Club. On the water question alone, I knew my work would break down into two monumental battles: navigating the newly imposed Groundwater Management Plan, and finding a way to save and reuse our wastewater.

These commitments became my roadmap, my compass, and in many ways, my constant companions. I did not take them lightly. I intended, from day one, to deliver on them fully. And as I begin this report to the citizens, my hope is to walk you through each of these efforts — the obstacles, the victories, the frustrations, and the reasons I believe Cedar City is stronger today than it was when I took office.

This is not simply a list of accomplishments. It is the story of a community that faced major challenges, made hard decisions, and continued moving forward. It is the story of what we attempted, what we achieved, and what still remains to be done. And it is my privilege to share it with you.

## **Section 1 — Roads and Infrastructure**

Cedar City's roads and infrastructure presented one of the most complex challenges of my administration. There were dozens of projects that deserved attention — from long-needed east–west connections on the south end of town, to the unfinished extension of Center Street, to the important improvements still needed on 2400 North. All of these remain important for the future. But early in my term, I identified what I believed to be the single most critical road project for the long-term function of our community: establishing a true north–south route that would allow residents to travel through Cedar City without being forced onto Main Street.

The most logical and achievable option was 100 East, a route that many parts of town had already partially developed over the years. Some areas had segments of 100 East, others had Wedgwood Lane, Fairway Drive, and even 75 East, all tied together loosely by an existing bridge over Coal Creek at 200 North. The foundation for a true corridor was there — but the gaps made it impossible for anyone to travel from one end of Cedar City to the other without funneling onto Main Street.

The single largest obstacle was completing the connection across several parcels of land. Fortunately, a beautiful bridge already existed at 200 North and 200 East, built decades ago and perfectly placed to serve this project. From the north interchange, the route could proceed north along Wedgwood Lane, then through what we know as the Trader Park, across Fairway Drive, and onto 100 East as it passes through the Paiute Tribal area.

From there, the road would continue south, connecting to 600 South, where drivers could transition to either 75 East or 300 East, and then move southward toward the subdivisions near the South Interchange. The most significant remaining gap lay between Fairway Drive and 600 North — but this section was on land the city already owned or held rights-of-way for. The property bordered the golf course and was near enough to Main Street to benefit from nearby traffic signals, making the corridor safer and more functional.

Several local businesses supported this effort, including my own children, whose block of property lies along that prospective route. They ultimately purchased the old “sheepshed” property and converted it — through an enormous effort — into the American Preparatory Academy (APA). That campus now borders the planned 100 East alignment and will benefit from proper road access.

However, the most difficult negotiations involved the U.S. Forest Service, whose parcel lay between Fairway Drive and the golf course. We worked for years to resolve those issues, and I am pleased to report that we successfully acquired the necessary deed to complete the corridor. This not only enables the road, but also supports improvements to the driving range and golf course.

Another section crossed the old drive-in theater property, and the Tong property. We purchased the needed land and secured an easement to the theater property. The Jones family was already working along their area and was supportive, providing yet another cooperative step toward completion.

As of now, the project is out for bid, with construction expected to proceed to 900 North, and with additional segments being developed as a double-chip sealed roadway from there to Fairway Drive. This represents significant progress toward a true north-south alternative to Main Street.

I must, however, offer a caution. To secure the crucial right-of-way from the Whittingham family, I personally agreed — in exchange for the land — that the city would build a double-chip sealed road through their section. This concession was vital in obtaining the right-of-way at no cost to the city. There has been discussion that funding may fall short for that segment. My strong counsel to the City Council and administration is this: honor the commitment. If

additional funds are required, find them. We gave our word, and keeping it will protect the city from future liability and maintain our integrity in future negotiations.

There remains one last major gap: the section through the Trailer Park. Each time I raised it, I was assured that plans were underway. But progress has stalled, and I now urge the incoming administration — Mayor Steve Nelson, Council Members Waldo Galán and Phil Schmidt, and City Manager Paul Bittmenn — to make this a priority. Finalizing that segment, along with a small future extension toward 75 East near the Leavitt property, will complete the corridor and deliver the north-south connection Cedar City has needed for decades.

This road project was where I invested the greatest portion of my time on infrastructure. It will serve the community long after my term ends, improve traffic flow, provide safer access to Main Street through signalized intersections, and support both residential and commercial development across the east side of town. I look forward to seeing its completion in the coming year.

## **Section 2 — Parks and Recreation**

When I took office, Cedar City's park system was already in a period of transition. Several projects were underway, each addressing long-standing needs in different parts of the community. Two of those parks — Discovery Park on the south end of town, and the West Canyon Park on the east side — had already been initiated before my administration began. Discovery Park, with its aging wooden structures, had reached a condition that was no longer safe or suitable for children, and it required complete reconstruction. At West Canyon Park, the Rotary Club had taken on a significant improvement project that included water features and other enhancements. Both projects moved forward successfully with little direct intervention from the mayor's office, and I applaud the organizations and volunteers who brought them to completion.

My primary focus, however, became the long-promised park for residents of the Fiddlers Canyon area — a commitment made many times over many years, but never fulfilled. The city owned a sizable parcel of land east of Fiddlers, obtained through a land trade with SITLA, but that parcel came with numerous restrictions and challenges. It lacked road access, included steep hillside that could not be used for development, and required costly improvements to become functional as a park.

To overcome these obstacles, I negotiated a land exchange with SITLA for a far more suitable location: two high-value parcels along Main Street at the intersection of Nichols Canyon Road, future site of a new traffic signal and future crossing for 2400 North. The city received two excellent pieces of property — one on the northwest corner and one on the northeast corner of

that intersection — with only a small building lot excluded from the deal. We then secured an additional acre on the northwest corner to complete the site, giving the city an ideal footprint for a new north-end park.

The City Council wisely determined that rather than wait for years and attempt to build a massive 15-acre facility, we would use the funds we had to construct a high-quality, functional 3- to 4-acre park. This approach ensured that the residents of Fiddlers Canyon would finally receive the park they had been promised, without unnecessary delays or over-planning.

Engineering and architectural design work has been completed, and the project is steadily moving forward. Because funding was limited, I strongly encouraged the city to use our own Public Works Departments to perform key infrastructure elements. Our road crew has been building the grade, establishing the shape and level of the future park. Our sewer department is installing the main line and the restroom stub-outs. The drainage ditch is being realigned for proper flow. The water department is installing the water service. With this work progressing through the winter, the site will be ready for full construction by spring, when bids can be let and the park itself completed. I anticipate that the families of the north end will finally enjoy this long-awaited neighborhood park in the months ahead.

The other major park project during my tenure is located west of Cedar City on land generously donated by former Mayor Joe Burgess. Early in my administration, Joe approached me with an extraordinary offer: he would deed the city 93 acres of land, along with 93 acre-feet of water, for use in creating a large multi-use recreational complex. The initial parcel conveyed to the city was 33 acres, along with all the water needed to irrigate future fields. The land had previously been excavated, leaving a natural bowl — a perfect location for athletic fields.

Our road department mobilized quickly and shaped the first large soccer field, which was planted and established over the course of last year. That grass is now mature, and by this coming spring, it will be ready for league play. The design of the complex includes five or six additional soccer fields, three of which are full-size professional fields. The county has already installed the bases for field lighting, and the City Council approved funding for a restroom facility with anticipated help from the youth soccer foundation. With minimal additional improvements — an asphalt or gravel parking lot — the complex will open for full use.

In addition to the initial land transfer, Mr. Burgess later gifted roughly 20 more acres, enabling the city to construct a pond on the property. That pond is now complete, awaiting water. The plan is to fill it using a combination of runoff from the surrounding subdivision, flow from the Coal Creek irrigation ditch, and drainage water. Mr. Burgess is currently drilling a well to service his agricultural pivot, and he has promised that once he no longer needs that well, he will transfer it to the city. The well is being drilled to municipal standards, allowing the city to use it

for irrigation of the athletic fields. The city can assign its 93 acre-feet to that well, creating a sustainable long-term water supply for the entire complex.

These two major parks — the Fiddlers Canyon park to the north and the Burgess-donated recreational complex to the west — represent the largest expansions of parkland in Cedar City in many years. Combined with the successful reconstruction of Discovery Park in the south and the Rotary-supported improvements on the east, the community now stands with four significant park projects completed or underway during my administration.

Each one enhances quality of life. Each one meets a long-standing need. And each one represents cooperation between citizens, service organizations, city staff, and generous community partners. I am proud of the progress we have made, and I am confident these parks will serve Cedar City families for generations.

## **Section 3 — Gyms**

Early in my administration, I expressed interest in building a series of low-cost, value-engineered gymnasiums — simple, clear-span metal buildings similar to those offered by CO Building Systems and other manufacturers. These structures are efficient, affordable, and widely used in other communities for basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and indoor recreation. My vision was to place individual gyms in or near neighborhood parks, distributing them throughout the community so that families and children would have convenient access to indoor recreation close to home.

To my surprise, there was not much enthusiasm for this approach. The City Council felt strongly that a single, large recreational complex would better serve the community. Specifically, they were interested in expanding the existing Aquatic Center and adding three full gymnasiums to the building — an option that had been anticipated in the original construction plans many years ago. While I understood their reasoning, I did not support that direction. In my view, standalone gyms would have provided far more use for far less money. Rather than spending an estimated ten million dollars for three gyms attached to the Aquatic Center, I believed we could build four or five independent gyms for roughly half that cost.

Ultimately, the Council chose to proceed with their preferred concept of an Aquatic Center expansion. That is their prerogative, and future councils may continue down that path or choose another. As of the end of my term, no construction has begun. The city has placed a two million dollars into a recreation fund, but that fund has not grown nearly as fast as needed to undertake a major project of this scale.

Meanwhile, Cedar City remains without a single indoor public gymnasium — a surprising situation for a community of our size and growth. We did, however, complete an important recreational improvement during my administration: the construction of a beautiful outdoor pickleball complex, which has been well used and well received by the public.

I continue to believe that Cedar City would be well served by creating indoor gym space for youth and adults alike. Whether through neighborhood gyms, a large centralized complex, or a hybrid of both, future leaders will have the opportunity to meet this need in the way they feel best serves the community.

## **Section 4 — Grocery Stores**

Early in my administration, I met with residents from the Fiddlers Canyon area who expressed a strong desire — and a long-standing frustration — regarding the lack of a grocery store on the north end of Cedar City. Our community has grown rapidly, yet the nearest full-service grocery options remained far to the south: Walmart at the southernmost end of town, Smith's at 600 South, and Lin's in the center of town. For families living north of there, the distance and congestion has been a real inconvenience. The need was obvious, and the opportunity was tremendous.

As a businessman who has built and operated successful enterprises, I initially believed that attracting a grocery store would be a straightforward process. But I learned quickly that large commercial decisions are driven by internal models, long-term projections, and corporate strategies that do not always align with community needs or local enthusiasm. Even when every indicator pointed to a strong market, it took time — more time than I expected — for the right parties to move forward.

I met with numerous business owners, developers, and entrepreneurial visionaries, many of whom agreed that the north end of Cedar City was one of the best untapped retail opportunities in Utah. Yet even with that level of universal agreement, no one seemed ready to take the first step. National chains, regional operators, and private developers all expressed interest, but the project simply did not materialize as quickly as any of us hoped. However, persistence pays off. In recent months, I am pleased to report that two major grocery initiatives have finally moved forward.

First, WinCo Foods has now committed to building a large grocery store on the north end of town, just south of the Love's Truck Stop. This will be a major addition to the community, bringing lower prices, broad selection, and a proven business model that thrives in fast-growing communities like ours.

Second, the Smith's Grocery Store chain has announced plans to construct two new stores in Cedar City. One will be located farther south than their current 600 South location, nearer to the South Interchange. The other will be placed on the north end of town, east of the bowling alley near the North Interchange. Both stores are planned to be substantial facilities — approximately 123,000 square feet each.

These developments mean that Cedar City will soon have not just one, but two full-scale grocery stores serving the northern section of our city. I am grateful to the companies who ultimately recognized the tremendous opportunity, and I wish them great success as they build and open these stores. They will serve our citizens well and strengthen Cedar City's economic base for decades to come.

## **Section 5 — The BSBC (Banana Split Book Club)**

Many years ago, when a few of my own grandchildren were struggling to read, I created something simple and fun to help them: the Banana Split Book Club, or BSBC. The idea was straightforward — you pick out a book, you read the book, and you earn a banana split. It worked beautifully for my grandkids, and when I ran for mayor, my campaign team asked me whether I had anything that might soften my reputation. They told me I was too gruff, too bold, too big, too male — too everything. When I told them I had once started a book club for kids, their eyes lit up. They said, “The mamas will love that. The grandmas will love it even more.”

So I made a promise: if I were elected, Cedar City would have a Banana Split Book Club.

And that is exactly what we did.

During the summer months of my first two years in office, children from across the community came each week to choose a book and enjoy a banana split. When they finished reading their book, they brought it back, picked another one, and earned another banana split. We held events at the Cedar City Library and on the lawn of the city park on the south side. Thousands of children participated, and thousands of banana splits were served. Parents and grandparents still tell me how much their children looked forward to reading — because reading meant ice cream, sunshine, and fun.

I had already made a promise to the kids at the end of year two — that some of the BSBC books would be taken to the Philippines, where I have long-standing business operations and employees. We prepared a full pallet of books, more than 1,300 in all, and shipped them to Bacolod in the Visayas.

There, in partnership with a major public market in the center of the city, we recreated the Banana Split Book Club experience for Filipino children. The turnout was remarkable. From 9:00 a.m. until about 1:00 p.m., we served more than 1,500 banana splits and distributed every single book. As quickly as our team could scoop ice cream into a banana boats and slide it across the table, children carried them off to load them with whipped cream, sprinkles, and toppings. We literally emptied the ice cream freezers of one of the largest grocery stores in town.

The books have now all been given away. They are in the hands of children in the Philippines. The children here in Cedar City ate their banana splits, read their books, and grew in their love for reading. It was fun, it was simple, it was joyful — and it worked.

The Banana Split Book Club is one of the happiest things we did during my term. It served our children well, and it created memories that I hope will last for them as long as they will for me.

## **Section 6 — Wastewater Treatment and Reuse**

During my campaign for mayor, I made a bold promise: Cedar City would no longer waste its wastewater. I believed strongly then — and even more strongly now — that in a desert community, we simply cannot afford to throw away a resource as valuable as treated water.

Cedar City owns and operates a large, modern wastewater treatment plant on the far north end of the valley. It is a beautiful facility and consistently produces high-quality Type 2 effluent, a level perfectly suitable for many non-contact uses but not yet clean enough for irrigating turf, parks, school grounds, or areas where the public might come into contact with the water. To make the water suitable for those purposes, it must be further refined to Type 1 effluent, which can safely be used on grass and in public settings.

Every year, this plant produces approximately 3,400 acre-feet of treated water — a massive amount of potential irrigation supply in one of the driest regions of the United States. Yet for decades, this water was discharged onto the Mud Springs property, a hardpan, clay-heavy area north of town. Some of it grew sparse grass, and most simply evaporated. In a desert climate where every drop matters, this was a lost opportunity.

I was determined to change that.

From the beginning of my administration, I pushed to capture this water, refine it, and bring it back into Cedar City where it could be used to irrigate parks, schools, public facilities, the golf course, and other green spaces. Not only would this reduce our dependence on culinary water for irrigation, but it would also preserve our deep aquifers, strengthen our long-term water security, and improve neighborhood quality of life with green spaces that help moderate heat and provide beauty and recreation.

The road to accomplishing this was not easy. The project was complex, expensive, and filled with regulatory, engineering, and funding challenges. But step by step, we moved it forward. We secured grant funding. We appropriated city funds where we could. After reviewing technologies at trade shows and through engineering evaluations, we determined that the best approach was to install a cloth-media filtration system — capable of refining our Type 2 effluent to Type 1 standards.

We designed a new treatment building at the plant, and the project was put out to bid. Action Contracting — a company I founded 25–30 years ago, now owned and operated by my sons and another community member — submitted an excellent bid and was awarded the contract. They have done outstanding work. The building is complete, the filtration equipment is installed, and the final plumbing is now underway. The facility will be finished within the next month or two, finally allowing Cedar City to produce Type 1 effluent water.

The next phase is critical. We must now construct a pump station and a pipeline — roughly seven to eight miles in length — to deliver this water back to Cedar City. Once connected to the existing secondary water system, this supply can irrigate our schools, university, golf course, cemetery, public parks, churches, and other green spaces. This will allow us to replace a significant portion of the pristine culinary water currently used for irrigation, preserving it for indoor use and ensuring long-term sustainability in a time of shrinking groundwater resources.

I am deeply grateful to the construction workers at the wastewater treatment plant, to the city staff, and especially to our city engineers, including Jonathan Stathis, for their diligence and vision in pushing this project forward. And I am proud that we accomplished the first phase without issuing bonds.

The remaining work — building the pump station and pipeline — will be costly. It will likely require a combination of grants, loans, or bonding. But it must not be delayed. Cedar City should begin using its reclaimed water as soon as possible. It is time to stop wasting 3,400 acre-feet of water each year and put it to work for our community.

This project is essential for Cedar City’s future, and I strongly urge future administrations to carry it forward without hesitation.

## **Section 7 — Water: The East, the North, and the West**

Water is the lifeblood of Cedar City. Because we live in a closed basin, with no river flowing in and no river flowing out, we must live on what God blesses us with. Every decision we make

today about water will determine whether our children and grandchildren can remain in this valley tomorrow. For that reason, the most significant focus of my administration — from its first day to its last — has been water.

I will divide this section into three parts:

1. The East — Cedar Canyon
2. The North — Rush Lake and the Northern Drainages
3. The West — Quichapa, pumping fields, and long-term stabilization

## **Part One: The East — Cedar Canyon**

Cedar Canyon is the single largest natural source of water flowing into Basin 73. On the water map attached to this report, you can clearly see the major drainages that feed our valley. The eastern drainage, running from the high plateaus near Cedar Breaks, produces one of the strongest, most reliable water sources available to us. Snow melts on the cliffs, sinks into the rock layers, and emerges as springs and as Coal Creek itself. Coal Creek then flows down through our canyon and into the valley, where it eventually ends either north toward Rush Lake or west toward Quichapa.

For decades, Cedar City has pumped nearly all of its culinary supply from wells far to the west in Quichapa, and two additional wells near Enoch that come from the north east drainage. Meanwhile, the great eastern drainage from Cedar Canyon has remained largely untapped, except for the well fields at Cluff Springs and righthand canyon. Those springs produce anywhere from 800 to 1,200 gallons per minute, depending on the year and the snowpack. That water is clean, cold, and among the best quality water in the state.

### **The Threat to the Springs**

Unfortunately, the State of Utah has notified us that all Springs will require additional treatment if we intend to continue using it for culinary supply. We already chlorinate the water, and the quality is excellent, but new regulations require a second form of purification. Through extensive engineering and pilot studies, we have determined that cartridge filtration is the best solution. But the cost will be very high.

This forced us to rethink our approach. It became clear that before investing ten million into a spring treatment plant, we needed to secure additional sources of canyon water that could help fill our existing 8-inch and 10-inch pipeline that already comes down Cedar Canyon.

### **The Cedar Canyon Pipeline**

Cedar City owns a pipeline that begins near Cluff Springs and the Old Iron Mine in the upper canyon. It starts as an 8-inch line from the upper reaches down to Right-Hand Canyon. From

there, it becomes a 10-inch line that continues into the city. That pipeline can carry a significant amount of water — far more than the springs alone currently provide.

Several months ago, I made the decision that instead of rushing immediately into constructing an expensive new treatment plant for the springs, our first priority should be to fill that pipeline with clean water from a new well at Martin's Flat.

### The Martin's Flat Well

Our engineers informed us that there was excellent water at approximately 800 feet, and we drilled to that depth. The water we encountered met state standards. But it became clear that the true long-term opportunity lies in reaching the Navajo Sandstone, a formation that produces some of the best water in the western United States.

We therefore revised the plan and began drilling deeper. As of this writing, the Martin's Flat well is being drilled toward a total depth of 2,100 feet, with the goal of entering the Navajo Sandstone and securing a major new source of high-quality culinary water. If successful, this well alone could replace the water we currently receive from the threatened springs — and possibly much more.

### A Vision for the Canyon

My vision is clear:

1. Drill the Martin's Flat well into the Navajo Sandstone and secure enough water to replace the spring water temporarily.
2. Build a new treatment plant that can filter not only spring water but also Coal Creek water itself.
3. Construct a new, larger pipeline down Cedar Canyon capable of carrying: the spring water, the well water and the nearly two cubic feet per second of Cedar City's grandfathered Coal Creek rights.
4. Use elevation drop to push this water directly to the Square Mountain Tank without pumping.
5. Create a unified eastern supply system large enough to partially sustain Cedar City for generations.

Coal Creek water is excellent roughly 90% of the time. When heavy rains or floods hit, it becomes too muddy to use. With a proper filtration plant and a massive diversion gate, Cedar City could allow the clear water to enter the treatment system, and the flood water to bypass directly into Quichapa and Mud Springs.

This would unlock the greatest unused water asset in Basin 73: the creek that flows right through our canyon.

That is the vision for the East. And it is achievable.

## **Part Two: The North — Rush Lake and the Northern Drainages**

The second major water opportunity for Cedar City lies to the north. While Cedar Canyon feeds the eastern side of Basin 73, the northern drainage is nearly as significant, contributing roughly 21% of all water entering our closed basin.

This drainage begins far north — clear up toward Beaver — and includes:

- Bramlett's Creek
- The Black Hills region
- Broad areas of basalt flows and lava tubes
- Multiple tributaries that all slope southward

Everything drains toward one place:

### **Rush Lake — the Bottom of the Bathtub**

Rush Lake is the lowest point in Basin 73. It is the natural collection basin for all northern inflow and part of the eastern inflow. Because of its geology — lava tubes, basalt layers, fractured rock — the water quality around Rush Lake is exceptional.

I cannot overstate the importance of Rush Lake. It is the most strategic long-term water source in our valley.

Cedar City, being by far the largest community in the basin, with the largest population and the strongest financial ability, must secure water from Rush Lake and bring it to town. It is only 10 miles away — close enough to supply us for the next decade and beyond if the right infrastructure is built.

### **Cedar City's Northern Efforts**

The city has already pursued water in the north. We have drilled several wells over the past years — some successful, others not — and we have learned a great deal about the geology and the flow patterns that govern this part of Basin 73. Even so, the northern drainage remains underdeveloped, and its long-term value cannot be ignored.

### **The Rush Lake Ranches Opportunity**

The single greatest opportunity in the north lies with the Rush Lake ranches, where landowners are now drilling a major well at the lowest point of the basin, right in the “bottom of the bathtub.”

This location is important for two reasons:

1. It is immediately adjacent to the large lava tube system that underlies much of the Rush Lake region.
2. Decades of agricultural irrigation have helped maintain water levels in this pocket of the basin, making it one of the most productive and reliable sources in our valley.

The ranch owners have already sold Cedar City a substantial amount of high-quality water rights — some of the most valuable rights available in the entire basin.

Their intention now is to sell the city:

- The well itself once it is completed and producing at full capacity
- An acre of land surrounding the well
- The legal right to export that water from their property and deliver it to Cedar City

If this comes to pass — and I believe it can — it will provide Cedar City with access to an extraordinary volume of clean, stable water from one of the best geological formations in the entire region. The water quality at Rush Lake is exceptional, likely second only to the very best water that can be obtained from Quichapa or, at certain times, from Cedar Canyon.

## A Win-Win Potential

From the ranchers’ perspective, this arrangement also benefits them. Their plan is to drill, develop, and sell a high-producing well for municipal use, and then locate lower-quality water — water perhaps with slightly higher arsenic or mineral levels, unsuitable for drinking — to irrigate their crops. That is a perfectly reasonable arrangement and is common in agricultural regions throughout the West. It allows the city to purchase the premium water while leaving the lower-quality water for agricultural irrigation.

## The Scale of the Northern Drainage

When you look at the attached map, the numbers tell the story very clearly:

- 24% of our basin’s recharge comes from the dominant northern drainage.
- 10% comes from the Brapett’s Creek area, which is part of the same system.

Combined, 34% of all the water that enters Basin 73 flows from the north — and the vast majority of that ultimately converges at Rush Lake.

Add to that the eastern flows from Cedar Canyon that pass beyond our capture systems, and you can see immediately why Rush Lake is the most strategic location in the entire basin for the development of long-term culinary water.

In short:

Rush Lake is the best large-scale water opportunity Cedar City has — perhaps rivaled only by the full development of Cedar Canyon.

We must take this opportunity seriously and act decisively when the moment is right.

### **Part Three: The West — Quichapa, pumping fields, and long-term stabilization**

The western opportunity for Cedar City's future water supply is both promising and complicated. It begins several years ago, shortly after I became mayor, when I had the chance to purchase a significant block of water rights located not in our basin, but in Basin 71, the basin immediately west of Cedar City. That acquisition brought Cedar City 1,000 acre-feet of high-quality water — a substantial amount — even though the water itself lies outside the boundaries of Basin 73.

Basin 71 is a large agricultural region. The water there is excellent, clean, and plentiful, and for decades farmers have drawn from it to irrigate crops. Importantly, the distance from that water source to Cedar City's existing infrastructure is not as great as some people might imagine. With careful planning, it can be imported and used by our residents.

#### **The Conservancy District's Western Pipeline**

The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District (CICWCD) has been working in the western valley for years. They constructed a major pipeline that delivers water to a mine west of Cedar City, and along the way they have secured 360 acre-feet of Basin 71 water rights of their own. Their plan is fully compatible with ours:

1. Drill a high-production well west of Cedar City, near the WECO (azide) plant.
2. Pump Basin 71 water into their pipeline.
3. Combine their 360 acre-feet with our 1,000 acre-feet purchased earlier.
4. Deliver the total to a new 4-million-gallon storage tank the district has built west of town.
5. From there, import it into Cedar City's culinary system.

This arrangement benefits both the Conservancy District and Cedar City. It allows us to bring in new outside water — legally owned, fully appropriated, and ready for municipal use — without having to build the pipeline or pay for the large storage tank. Cedar City will be able to put its Basin 71 water directly into that system and drink it. That is a major achievement.

## The Limitation: Volume Versus Capacity

But there is an important caveat that the community needs to understand clearly.

Even if Cedar City pumps every drop of the 1,000 acre-feet we own in Basin 71 — full-time, year-round — the total amount of water moving through the system would be less than 500 gallons per minute.

That is not much water when compared to our needs.

To put it plainly:

- A three-inch pipeline could carry all of our Basin 71 water rights.
- Yet the Conservancy District's western pipeline is 18 inches in diameter.

This means that while the west-side importation project is very good, cost-effective, and beneficial for Cedar City, it is not large enough on its own to solve our long-term water needs. It is only one part of a much larger portfolio we must continue to build.

## The Need to Acquire More Western Water

Because of the relatively small amount of Basin 71 water Cedar City currently owns, it is absolutely critical that we take every opportunity to acquire more if it becomes available.

Any Basin 71 water rights that become available in the future must be taken seriously. We should purchase every viable block we can, bring it out of the well the district plans to drill, and put it into the Conservancy District's western pipeline. That is how we maximize the value of the infrastructure already in place.

## A Good Deal — And Part of a Larger Vision

The west-side project is a good deal for Cedar City.

Consider this:

- We do not have to build the pipeline.
- We do not have to build the 4-million-gallon tank.
- The district will not charge us to put our water in their tank.
- We can run our water through their well, pipeline, and tank at minimal cost.
- The system will be connected to Cedar City's network in the near future anyway, strengthening reliability for the entire valley.

All of that is a tremendous advantage for Cedar City.

But we must be clear-eyed: the west-side importation system will only be as valuable as the volume of water we are able to put into it. With only 1,000 acre-feet, we are underutilizing an 18-inch pipeline. With more water — far more — the west could become a major artery supporting Cedar City's growth and stability for generations.

## **Section 8 — 375 PSI Is Too High: Fixing Cedar City's Over-Pressurized Water System**

When I campaigned for mayor, I did so with a very direct message about one of the structural flaws in Cedar City's water system. I summed it up in five words:

“375 PSI is too high.”

For decades — since the 1960s — Cedar City has operated its water system in a way that forces us to pump water from the very bottom of the Quichapa's well field all the way to the highest tank above Walmart, nearly 900 feet in elevation. That enormous elevation climb requires massive pumps. The well pumps at Quichapa run at 600 horsepower and must generate nearly 375 pounds of pressure just to get the water up the hill.

This design has always been unreasonable, inefficient, and unsustainable. And yet it has been allowed to continue for generations because it “worked” — even though it worked at too high a cost and too much strain on the system.

### **A New Problem Arrived: Mandatory Chlorination**

The real crisis came when the State of Utah finally stepped in and required Cedar City to chlorinate all municipal water, including the water that comes from the Quichapa wells. But there is a major problem:

There is no chlorination system anywhere capable of injecting chlorine into water at 375 psi.

No manufacturer makes such a device. No system exists that can safely or reliably do it.

If we continue to run our system this way, we will not be able to chlorinate our water. And if we cannot chlorinate, the State will issue fines, impose boil orders, potentially condemn our system, and put Cedar City in direct violation of state law.

## The Only Solution: Booster Stations

The long-term fix has always been the same: break up the excessive pressure with properly placed booster pump stations.

These stations reduce pressure to manageable levels, allow for proper chlorination, and bring our system into modern compliance.

## Cost Estimates and the Reality We Face

The city has been working with an engineering firm from Salt Lake City to design a full solution. Their proposal would fix the problem — but at a projected cost of \$17 million.

Cedar City does not have \$17 million available while also drilling at Martins Flat, developing Rush Lake, importing Basin 71 water from the west, building new pipelines from the wastewater treatment plant, expanding our secondary water system, and constructing new tanks and transmission lines.

## A More Practical Approach

Having spent 35 years in the pipe, valve, and fitting industry, and after working closely with a local engineering firm that also serves the Conservancy District, I am convinced that we can solve this problem for closer to \$10 million rather than \$17 million.

But even at \$10 million, the cost is significant. The city will need to find or raise these funds, and we will need to prioritize this project immediately. The booster system is not optional.

## This Must Be One of Cedar City's Highest Priorities

While we continue to explore Martins Flat, pursue Rush Lake, and import water from the West Desert, we cannot neglect the water system we already have. The Quichapa well field is critically important, and the water from those wells must meet state chlorination standards.

To do that, we must reduce the pressure in our transmission line, install booster stations, and finally bring Cedar City's infrastructure into the 21st century.

This is not merely a project of convenience. It is a project of necessity, and it must begin now.

## **Section 9 — Purchasing Water Rights: The Most Critical Accomplishment of My Administration**

When I first took office, Cedar City was facing a frightening reality. The State of Utah had finalized the Groundwater Management Plan for our aquifer — a plan that declared what many of us had feared but few wanted to admit. The state announced that it had issued 51,000 acre-feet of water rights in Basin 73, but that after careful study, they discovered the basin only produced 21,000 acre-feet of real water.

Their solution was harsh but unavoidable:

Over the next 50 years, the State would systematically cancel water rights until the total usage matched the sustainable yield. The first major cuts would begin in 2035.

When Cedar City analyzed its own water portfolio, we discovered something even more alarming:

- Out of 20,000+ acre-feet of water rights the city held on paper
- Only 2,000 acre-feet were safe-yield, senior, pre-1934s water rights that would survive the long-term cuts
- Yet our current demand is 8,000 to 9,000 acre-feet per year just to serve our residents.

We were living on borrowed water. And the clock was ticking.

### **Immediate Action: Conservation and Policy Reform**

We implemented strong conservation measures, required developers to bring water or buy the right to use city-controlled water at a high price, and put meaningful controls on new construction. Those steps helped. But conservation alone would not save Cedar City.

We needed more old water rights — safe-yield water — and lots of it.

Truthfully, when I campaigned I never intended to become a water-rights negotiator. I did not foresee this challenge. But during my first months in office, the opportunity came — suddenly and unexpectedly — and I had to act.

### **The Holt Farms Purchase — 1,000 Acre-Feet**

Through long-standing relationships in the West Desert, I was introduced to an opportunity with a major agricultural operation in the Beryl Valley (Basin 71). They offered Cedar City 1,000 acre-feet of water rights — extremely valuable, senior, and high-quality — at a price below market.

The market value at the time was around \$15,000 per acre-foot. I was able to secure the purchase for \$12,800 per acre-foot. This became the first major acquisition.

### The Rush Lake Purchase — 960 Acre-Feet of the Famous Benson Right

Soon after, another major opportunity arrived — completely unexpected. The ranchers at Rush Lake were ready to sell 960 acre-feet of pristine old water, including some of the oldest and best water rights in the entire basin — dating back to the 1860s. This was the Benson right.

Again the asking price was favorable — \$12,000 per acre-foot — and again, the market value was closer to \$15,000. We moved quickly, the city had cash available, and we were able to close the deal.

This was a watershed moment for Cedar City.

### The Hardin Purchase — 540 Acre-Feet

Then it happened again.

The Hardin family, needing to settle an estate, approached us with another senior block of water rights — roughly 540 acre-feet — and they needed a fast sale. They offered it for \$10,000 per acre-foot, well below true market value.

We purchased the entire amount.

### Other Minor Purchases and Total Acquired

Through several additional smaller transactions, we acquired enough to bring the grand total to nearly 3,000 acre-feet of safe-yield water — the single largest increase in secure, senior water in the history of Cedar City.

This increased the city's safe-yield water ownership from roughly 2,000 acre-feet to more than 5,000 acre-feet.

When combined with:

- Our spring water
- Our coming production from the wastewater treatment plant
- Our future wells in Cedar Canyon, the North, and the West

Cedar City is in a far better position today than it was when I took office.

## The Financial Side

In total, we purchased about \$35 million worth of water rights.

We financed roughly \$18 million (about half), and we must continue paying that off wisely.

Meanwhile, our Water Acquisition Fee — paid by developers who do not bring their own water — brings in \$1 million to \$1.5 million every year. This money must always remain in a protected account, dedicated solely for future water purchases.

## Why This Matters

Cedar City can find water. We can drill it in the canyon, the north, the west, and everywhere in between. We have water in the ground.

But if we do not legally own the rights, we cannot pump it.

Acquiring safe-yield water rights is the only way to secure Cedar City's long-term future.

## My Final Word on Water Rights

Without question, the most significant accomplishment of my administration has been the acquisition of these nearly 3,000 acre-feet of senior, safe-yield water rights.

These purchases will safeguard Cedar City for decades — long after pipelines are built, wells are drilled, and booster stations are installed.

They will stand as a cornerstone of Cedar City's security, prosperity, and future growth.

## **Conclusion — A Final Word to the Citizens of Cedar City**

As I bring this report to a close, I am struck by how much has happened in just four short years. When I began this journey, I made several very specific commitments to the citizens of Cedar City. I said I would focus on roads, parks, gyms, grocery stores, children's literacy, wastewater reuse, and—above all—water security.

These were not small promises, and the work that followed was not small either. But as you can see throughout these pages, we tackled each of those commitments head-on. Some projects are

fully completed, others are under construction, and a few will continue under future administrations. But every one of them has moved forward in meaningful and lasting ways.

We built new parks.

We advanced roads that had stalled for decades.

We secured grocery stores that people said would never come.

We created opportunities for our children to read, learn, and laugh—one banana split at a time.

We reclaimed water that was being evaporated away, and we began building systems that will serve Cedar City for generations.

We drilled wells, built pipelines, and pursued water in every part of Basin 73.

And we bought the most valuable asset of all—nearly 3,000 acre-feet of senior, safe-yield water rights, securing Cedar City’s future in a way that may never be replicated.

But as important as these accomplishments are, they represent only a portion of what has been done. I could fill another report entirely with the rest:

- The new hold room at the airport
- Major improvements to storm drainage
- Enhancements to our public facilities
- Additions to the equestrian Center and the Arena
- Growth in our business community
- Improvements to public safety
- Countless small but meaningful upgrades in nearly every department

Truly, the list goes on and on.

And at some point—likely about 4:30 this morning—both the mayor and ChatGPT finally ran out of energy and agreed it was time to sleep. But the work itself did not sleep. It continued day after day for four years, and the results are now part of the city I love.

This report contains the core of what I promised the citizens of Cedar City when I first asked for their trust. It contains what I said I would do—and what I have done. I am grateful for the chance to put it on the public record. Soon, I will simply say goodbye and step aside for new leadership.

Thank you for your attention.

Thank you for your patience.

And thank you, especially, for allowing me the privilege of serving as your mayor.

It has been a wonderful four years.