January 12, 2024

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WASHINGTON CITY MAYOR AND COUNCIL ASK STATE TO RESPECT LOCAL LAND USE AUTHORITY IN RESPONSE TO UTAH LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT NO. 2023-16: "A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF UTAH HOUSING POLICY."**

Washington Mayor Kress Staheli issued the following statement with the unanimous backing of the City Council in regard to the Utah Legislative Auditor General's Report No. 2023-16:

> Like other cities, Washington City is troubled by the Utah Legislative Auditor General's report on state housing policy. The report largely puts blame on cities for a supposed housing deficit of approximately 28,000 homes annually.
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> Washington City currently has thousands of lots that have been zoned and entitled where no building has thus far taken place. Between 2019 and 2022, Utah's local governments permitted more housing units than any other four-year period in state history on record. As a whole, Utah's local governments have zoned for and entitled more than 190,000 housing units for which building permits have not been requested.
>
> The Utah State Legislature has already passed more than two dozen significant pieces of legislation aimed at improving land use planning to encourage affordable home ownership. Washington City has done well to comply with changes to state code, updating our own city code and establishing a robust moderate income housing plan.
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> Cities do not build houses. Our housing is driven by market demands, many of which cities cannot, and should not influence. There are many external forces at play that impact development and home building, including: interest rates, labor shortages, materials costs, and land costs.
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> We, as leaders in Washington City, respectfully ask that the state refrain from enacting any additional one-size-fits-all housing policies. Please give cities the opportunity to implement the many changes that have already come down from the state. Before taking additional action, it

would be wise to take the time to observe and analyze the results of recent changes before mandating additional changes.

Washington City has been, and will continue to be, a willing partner with the private sector. We are facilitating additional development of the “missing middle” by adjusting setbacks to encourage smaller lot sizes, simplifying processes, approving zone changes for higher density, reducing regulations for accessory dwelling units, and actively engaging and leading with organizations like The Housing Action Coalition.

Washington City believes that an overwhelming number of municipalities are using their land authority responsibly, balancing property rights with growth to foster prosperity through smart housing development, economic opportunities, expanded infrastructure, and wise use of open space. Governor Spencer Cox often shares that Utahns operate with a win-win mindset. We are not a zero sum state and our cities, for the most part, do not have a zero sum mentality. We want all Utahns to thrive and prosper. We are doing our part and we ask that the state trust local governments by respecting our land use authority.

Warm regards,



Kress Staheli, Mayor