

Salt Lake City Mayor Becker leads with gentler style

Milestones » Becker's accomplishments come from a be-there-in-person approach.

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He propped up gays and auditioned a downtown theater, but critics groan he glossed over gangs.

He crisscrossed the city's streets and cultivated Washington, D.C., for cash, but grimaced as Sugar House was savaged.

He righted the city's sinking budget ship and quietly crafted a sweeping sustainability plan, but has yet to completely fix planning.

Ralph Becker churned through his freshman year as Salt Lake City mayor, but made little noise. Instead, the workmanlike urban planner made strides smoothing Rocky Anderson's eight-year riptide.



And even though he rarely sought the microphone, Becker by most accounts was subtly effective, salvaging relationships with the Legislature and Davis County and inside City Hall -- all while plugging his progressive agenda.

"He's reached out to people who were sort of anathema in Rocky's administration -- to Davis County, for instance, and to the LDS Church," says Councilman Eric Jergensen. "There's such a difference in the spirit of cooperation between the council and the mayor's office. That has been a much better way to run a city."

Critics argue the mayor hasn't done enough to mend the capital's east-west tear. But a close look at Becker's record shows a surgical focus and check mark after check mark on a tally of campaign pledges.

"We are on track and pretty well on target," Becker says. "Certainly there are things that could have happened faster. But I don't have a lot to complain about."

Promises kept » Serving 10 years as an outnumbered Democrat at the Utah Legislature, Becker became the consummate compromiser. So taking his first turn as a public manager in a politically friendly capital, the new mayor brought a whopping wish list.

Most of the items are crossed off. Becker broadened bikeways and green-building codes. He found a spot on Main Street for a Broadway-class theater. He finessed a domestic-partnership-type registry through right-wing lawmakers. He hired heads of economic development, planning, education, the environment and trails. He launched a small-business initiative and scholarship program. He pushed a Sugar House streetcar and preserved the airport TRAX line. And he revamped a city planning bureaucracy he once blasted as a "shambles."

Full story www.ralphbecker.com.