

Alert

September 25, 2024



Cozen Cities - September 25, 2024

Gig Economy & Technology

CHICAGO — City's ShotSpotter Contract Ends

After months of contentious debate among city leaders, the City of Chicago ceased use of the gun detection technology ShotSpotter.

NEW YORK — Top Taxi, Rideshare Insurer Facing Financial Crisis

American Transit Insurance Company, the largest insurer of taxis and rideshares in New York City, is nearing financial collapse after its latest financial filing revealed insolvency. The financial crisis could force thousands of vehicles out of service and raise costs for drivers and passengers.

PHILADELPHIA — Gates Foundation-Backed Biotech Firm Aims to Increase Philadelphia Presence

Radiant Biotherapeutics plans to expand its presence in Philadelphia after securing \$35 million in funding, including support from the Gates Foundation, to develop its innovative antibody technology targeting cancer, COVID, and HIV.

Labor & Employment

BOSTON — Thousands of Boston Hotel Workers Walk Out

Nearly 1,200 Boston hotel workers walked off the job in the largest wave of a nationwide labor strike as part of their fight for a new contract. The strike, organized by Unite Here Local 26, includes workers from several prominent Boston hotels.

LOS ANGELES — L.A. Tourism Workers Demand Wage Increase Ahead of 2028 Olympics

Hotel and airport workers say it's time for the Los Angeles City Council to act after waiting nearly a year-and-a-half for an economic analysis report.

NEW YORK — Amazon Drivers Join Teamsters in New York

Hundreds of Amazon delivery drivers in Queens joined the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, seeking improved wages, working conditions, and safety standards. Workers employed by three Delivery Service Partners (DSP) are calling on Amazon to recognize their union and negotiate a contract.

PHILADELPHIA — Aramark Workers Strike at City's Three Stadiums

Aramark workers at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field, Citizens Bank Park, and Wells Fargo Center are striking for better wages and benefits amid ongoing contract negotiations.



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SAN DIEGO — City Council Passes Resolution Supporting Striking Hotel Workers

The resolution accords no funds or resources to support the workers or their cause. But it sends a message of *solidarity* with workers as the strike pushes into its third week.

SAN DIEGO — Local Nonprofits Awarded Nearly \$6M to Fund Youth Workforce Opportunities

A total of \$5.89 million is being *distributed* among 24 San Diego nonprofits, with grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$400,000, and will go toward paying for internships, apprenticeships and training programs for young people.

SEATTLE — Amazon In-Person Office Mandate Promises Big Boost for Downtown

Amazon's mandate for employees to *return* to the office five days a week beginning January 2025 is expected to boost foot traffic and support downtown Seattle businesses, which have struggled since the pandemic.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Transit Workers Urge Job Security Amid Expected Layoffs

Transit workers *protested* outside the D.C. Council building, urging Mayor Muriel Bowser and city leaders to secure new jobs within Metro as they face expected layoffs due to the phasing out of D.C. Circulator bus routes.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE — Council VP Middleton Opposes Ballot Measure to Shrink City Council

Baltimore City Council Vice President Sharon Green-Middleton (D-District 6) *opposes* a ballot measure to reduce the size of the council, arguing that it could harm constituent services in growing communities.

CHICAGO — Public Schools CEO Defies Mayor Johnson's Request to Step Down

Mayor Johnson's intention to replace Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez *follows* the mayor's push for district leadership to secure a short-term loan to cover a pension payment for non-teaching staff and additional costs associated with the pending Chicago Teachers Union contract.

CHICAGO — City Council Bans Lobbyists From Giving Campaign Cash to Mayoral Candidates

The Chicago City Council voted unanimously to *strengthen* the city's ethics ordinance by prohibiting registered lobbyists from sending campaign funds to the mayor or candidates running for the position.

DETROIT — Mayor Duggan, City Council Members Pitch Plan to Finance Affordable Housing

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, City Council members, and housing developers *pitched* the so-called Fast Track PILOT ordinance, a plan that would offer property tax cuts to developers based on rent prices.

LOS ANGELES — Harris-Dawson Assumes L.A. City Council Presidency

Los Angeles City Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson (D-District 8) was *sworn* in as City Council president last week. President Harris-Dawson will lead the 15-member Council in addressing homelessness, housing goals, and policies affecting nearly four million Los Angeles residents.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — Minneapolis City Council Votes to Track Homeless Encampment Evictions

A new ordinance *requires* Minneapolis City staff to submit quarterly reports covering each eviction,

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including the number of people impacted, the number of shelter beds available at the time, and the number of staff who help clear the camp.

NEW YORK — FDNY Chiefs Arrested on Bribery Charges

Two former high-ranking New York City Fire Department (FDNY) chiefs were arrested and charged with accepting bribes to expedite fire-safety approvals for building projects across the City from 2021 to 2023.

RICHMOND — Nov. Ballot Features Competing Measures to Change City Council Election System

Richmond voters will choose between two ballot measures in November that could change City Council elections to either a primary system or ranked-choice voting.

Public Health & Safety

BALTIMORE — City Settles Opioid Lawsuit with Johnson & Johnson

The City of Baltimore settled its lawsuit with Johnson & Johnson over its alleged role in the opioid crisis, marking the fifth such settlement in the City's ongoing litigation against pharmaceutical companies.

SAN DIEGO — Residents, Business Owners Unveil Plan to “Clean Up” Downtown

A five-point plan to improve public safety and cleanliness in downtown San Diego was proposed this week by a group of residents and business owners. Mayor Todd Gloria endorsed the tough-on-crime plan during a morning rally.

SEATTLE — City Council Approves “Stay Out” Zones

The Seattle City Council voted to establish six “stay out” zones for drug-related activities and one for prostitution, granting judges the authority to bar individuals accused or convicted of these offenses from some of the city's busiest areas.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Council Considers Bill to Enhanced Oversight of Troubled 911 Call Center

D.C. Councilmember Brooke Pinto (D-Ward 2) introduced legislation to enhance oversight and transparency at the city's troubled 911 call center amid ongoing performance concerns.

Real Estate Development

BALTIMORE — City Council Considers Land Bank Initiative to Tackle Vacant Properties

The Baltimore City Council is considering a bill to establish a land bank aimed at addressing the issue of vacant properties in the city.

DETROIT — Work Begins on \$2.2B Detroit Hospital Tower Housing AbilityLab

A new 20-story patient tower will be among the most advanced in the country upon completion, featuring 432 patient rooms outfitted with state-of-the-art technology.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayor Parker Endorses Center City Sixers Arena

Philadelphia Mayor Chelle Parker announced an agreement with the Philadelphia 76ers to move forward with the construction of a controversial \$1.55 billion downtown arena. The administration intends to submit a legislative package to the City Council, who aim to make a decision on the project by the end of the year.

RICHMOND — City Council Declares Eviction Without Representation “Public Crisis,” Supports Right to Counsel

The Richmond City Council unanimously declared evictions without legal representation a “public crisis” and approved support for tenant counsel programs amid concerns over the impact of evictions on residents. The Council also recently announced an update to its Real Estate Database and Appraisal System.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Council Discusses Downtown Revitalization, Urgent Need for Affordable Housing

The D.C. Council’s Committee on Housing held a public roundtable to discuss revitalizing downtown D.C. and the urgent need for affordable housing as hundreds of families in D.C.’s Rapid Rehousing Program face the risk of eviction. The Council alleges that their decision to fund hundreds of housing vouchers has been undermined by the Bowser administration’s claim of insufficient funds.

Taxes & Spending

BALTIMORE — Mayor Calls for BOPA Forensic Audit

The financially struggling Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) is seeking City assistance, while the Mayor’s Office is calling for a forensic audit of the agency’s finances amidst ongoing deficits.

CHICAGO — City Officials Announce Hiring Freeze, Overtime Cuts

“Effective today, we are enacting a series of budgetary restrictions, including a citywide hiring freeze, and stringent limitations on non-essential travel and overtime expenditures outside of public safety operations,” Budget Director Annette Guzman said in a prepared statement.

DETROIT — City Reports Revised Revenue Estimates for FYs 2025-29

The Detroit Economic Outlook for 2023-2029 predicts the City’s economy will continue to see steady growth, along with higher wages and a growing labor force.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — St. Paul Residents Invited to Budget Proposal Listening Session

Community members in St. Paul had a chance to tell city leaders their thoughts on Mayor Melvin Carter’s proposed plan for the 2025 budget during a meeting. The proposed \$855 million budget includes a property tax increase of nearly eight percent.

RICHMOND — Audit Finds Series Of Failures in City Finance Department

A recent audit by a third-party government finance consultant revealed severe shortcomings in Richmond’s finance department, including thousands of unanswered communications and unprocessed documents, prompting city officials to take corrective action and restructure the department.

SAN DIEGO — Will Voters Reject Sales Tax Hike Again?

Fourteen years ago, San Diego voters roundly rejected a proposed sales tax measure during one of the worst economic downturns in history. Supporters of a new proposed one-cent sales tax hike (Measure E) say it would boost revenue enough to fix the city’s crumbling roads and other glaring problems.

Transportation & Mobility

BOSTON — City Leaders Expect School Bus Crisis to Last

Boston Public Schools officials anticipate it will take months for buses to reach a 90 percent on-time arrival rate, following the rollout of a new GPS tracking app, Zūm, which they believe is

necessary for student safety and future improvements. This comes after a poor first week of bus arrivals and calls from city leaders for a state investigation due to record low on-time rates.

LOS ANGELES – Port of L.A. Hit Near-Record Cargo Pace in August

The Port of Los Angeles saw “the biggest non-pandemic month ever” in cargo flow recorded in August, according to port Executive Director Gene Seroka.

PHILADELPHIA – Local Paper of Record Advocates for Proper SEPTA Funding

The Editorial Board of The Philadelphia Inquirer *advocated* for properly funding the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), calling the transit system crucial for the city’s economic health and warning that budget cuts and fare increases could lead to a downward spiral affecting ridership and regional stability.

RICHMOND – City Council Discusses GRTC North-South Pulse Project Funding

The Richmond City Council *discussed* funding for the Greater Richmond Transit Company’s (GRTC) North-South Pulse project, aimed at enhancing public transportation connectivity in the region.

RICHMOND – Mayor Stoney Calls for “Total Culture Change” to Improve Road Safety, Reduce Pedestrian Deaths

Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney is *calling* for a “total culture change” among drivers to improve safety and reduce pedestrian deaths amid rising crash statistics.
