

Cozen Cities - October 9, 2024

Gig Economy & Technology

LOS ANGELES — L.A. Metro Testing AI Weapons Detection System

L.A. Metro is considering implementing a weapons detections system being tested in Chicago that uses existing security cameras to scan the transit passengers plus artificial intelligence (AI) to identify a brandished weapon.

LOS ANGELES — New Data Dashboards Track Homelessness in City, County

In a move to promote greater transparency of how tax dollars are being used to address the homelessness crisis, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority made new data dashboards available to track work being done across the city and county.

Labor & Employment

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Council Passes Protections for D.C. Circulator Workers

The D.C. Council passed emergency legislation urging the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to develop a more comprehensive transition plan to support employees of the D.C. Circulator, which is being phased out.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE — City Council Introduces TIF to Combat Blight

The Baltimore City Council has shifted its strategy to tackle blight from implementing a land bank authority to introducing a new tax increment financing (TIF) structure aimed at renovating vacant housing.

CHICAGO — Mayor Johnson Announces Education Board Nominees

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson debuted his nominees to the city Board of Education this week, his latest move to wrest back control of the Chicago Public Schools system after weeks of strife between him and embattled CEO Pedro Martinez.

DETROIT — City Council Member Launches Mayoral Candidate Committee

Detroit City Councilmember Fred Durhal III launched his candidate committee to build support for his potential mayoral campaign in 2025, emphasizing his commitment to improving the quality of life for Detroit residents.

DETROIT — City Council Approves Ordinance Requiring Protest Buffer Zones

The Detroit City Council approved an ordinance that would create a 100-foot buffer zone around health care building entrances requiring protesters to stay 8 feet away from anyone entering a clinic.

LOS ANGELES — City Council Approves Bill Package Strengthening TAHO



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Related Practice Areas

• Government Relations - Cozen

The Los Angeles City Council has approved amending its tenant anti-harassment ordinance (TAHO) to include clearer definitions of harassment, increased penalties, and a longer statute of limitations for filing complaints.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — Minneapolis City Council to Take Deeper Look Into Frey Admin's Books

The Minneapolis City Council voted to take a deeper look into the financial reporting of Mayor Jacob Frey's administration after the two clashed over the Council's recent decision to make budget cuts to save a downtown homeless shelter.

NEW YORK — Prosecutors Warn of More Charges Against Mayor Adams, Associates

Days after New York Mayor Eric Adams entered a not guilty plea to bribery and fraud charges, federal prosecutors informed a judge that they may file additional charges against him and others involved.

PHILADELPHIA — City Council Considers Regulating "Anti-Competitive" Landlord-Tenant Practices

The Philadelphia City Council is considering a new bill that would allow the city to sue landlords for price-fixing rental rates, a practice that harms low-income tenants, and impose hefty fines for violations, aiming to enhance fairness in the housing market.

RICHMOND — Mayoral Candidates Discuss Issues at VPM Forum

Last week, VPM hosted a mayoral forum, providing candidates running to become Richmond's top executive the opportunity to discuss taxes, public health, City Hall efficiency, business support, city infrastructure, mental health services, and more.

RICHMOND — Mayor Stoney Proposes Housing Relief Programs

Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney proposed a suite of housing relief programs — including monthly grants for low-income residents, a freeze on property tax increases for seniors and disabled homeowners, and a one-time tax rebate for all property owners — to help residents cope with rising housing costs.

SEATTLE — City to Move Forward With Smaller School Closure Plan

Seattle Public Schools will propose consolidating five schools next year, a scaled-back plan from earlier proposals to close up to 21 schools.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Council Rolls Back Pandemic-Era Eviction Protections

The D.C. Council passed an emergency bill to roll back pandemic-era eviction protections and rental assistance policies, which were deemed to have caused a crisis of unpaid rent and jeopardized affordable housing.

Public Health & Safety

BALTIMORE — City Secures \$80M Opioid Settlement with Walgreens

Baltimore secured an \$80 million settlement with Walgreens over opioid epidemic claims, with funds allocated to opioid remediation and various local support initiatives.

BOSTON — Opioid Overdose Deaths Drop After Rising in 2023

According to "encouraging" data from the Boston Public Health Commission, opioid overdose deaths in Boston significantly declined in early 2024 after rising last year.

CHICAGO — City Transitions CARE Program to Public Health

Mayor Johnson announced that the Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) program, which provides emergency response to people experiencing a mental health crisis, is transitioning to a staff of all public health employees.

DETROIT — City Launches Placard Program to Notify Diners About Food Safety Compliance

Detroit has launched a new placard program to inform diners about restaurants' food safety compliance, using red, green, and white signs to indicate inspection results at the entrances of the city's 1,900 licensed food establishments.

PHILADELPHIA — State Committee Partially Approves Kensington Revitalization Plan

Following an appeal by Philadelphia City officials, a state committee partially approved Philadelphia's Kensington revitalization plan, allowing some programs to be funded with opioid settlement money while rejecting others, including a home repair initiative and support for small businesses. The city saw a decrease in overdose deaths for the first time in five years in 2023, though death rates among Black men rose significantly.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Local Officials Weigh Approaches to Juvenile Crime, Justice Reform

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Attorney General Brian Schwab are at odds over juvenile justice reform, with the mayor advocating for faster rehabilitation plans and more oversight and the AG pushing for a more unified system involving earlier assessments of troubled youth. Meanwhile, the D.C. Council is considering a proposal to curb youth crime by establishing a mentorship program for at-risk youth.

Real Estate Development

CHICAGO — United Center's \$7B Transformation Could Break Ground Next Summer

A massive project that would transform part of Chicago's West Side could have fans enjoying some of the new amenities in the next couple of years.

DETROIT — Mayor Duggan Announces \$40M Third Phase of SNF

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan announced progress on the third phase of the Strategic Neighborhood Fund (SNF), a public-private partnership designed to reenergize Detroit neighborhoods.

PHILADELPHIA — Office Buildings Lose More Than \$1B in Value

Philadelphia's Center City office buildings have lost over \$1 billion in assessed value due to high vacancy rates, resulting in decreased tax revenue for the City as companies downsize their office space and embrace hybrid work models.

RICHMOND — City Council to Purchase Rejected Casino Site for Economic Development, Community Park

The Richmond City Council is moving forward with plans to purchase the 96-acre site of a voter-rejected casino for \$5.5 million, intending to transform it into a public park and economic development area to support growth in Southside.

Taxes & Spending

BOSTON — Mayor Wu Proposes Increase Commercial Property Tax

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has unveiled a tax proposal that includes a three-year tax hike on commercial properties to offset declining revenue from remote work's impact on office space values and avoid raising residential property taxes.

CHICAGO — Mayor Johnson Delays Budget Timeline

Mayor Johnson's delay in starting Chicago's budget process is adding pressure on City Hall to quickly address the nearly \$1 billion deficit before January while navigating political tensions and limited options for closing the gap.

CHICAGO — City Council Committee Advances \$1.5B Bond Refinancing Plan

The Chicago City Council Finance Committee passed a \$1.5 billion bond proposal to refinance debt as part of Mayor Johnson's efforts to close back-to-back deficits for the city.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — St. Paul City Council Sets Limit for 2025 Tax Levy

The Saint Paul City Council set a 7.9% limit for the 2025 tax levy while committing to ongoing budget reviews and finalizing the budget in December, with priorities including renter support, fire and safety services, library funding, and opioid epidemic response.

RICHMOND — Finance Dept. Unable to Track Compliance with Notification Mandate

Richmond's finance department is required by local law to notify taxpayers of any credits on their accounts within 90 days, but they currently cannot provide data on how many notifications have been sent since the law was enacted.

Transportation & Mobility

BOSTON — MBTA Launches Pilot Program for Bus Directions

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) launched the NextGen Bus Navigation Pilot with transit company Swiftly, providing bus drivers real-time, turn-by-turn directions via tablets to help navigate detours and road challenges, aiming to improve service for riders.

NEW YORK — Report Makes the Case for an Penn Station Expansion

A new report commissioned by Amtrak, New Jersey Transit, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) on Penn Station's future concluded that increasing train capacity requires expanding the station's physical footprint, supporting Amtrak's proposal to tear down a Midtown block for new tracks.

SEATTLE — Overlook Walk Opens on Seattle Waterfront

Overlook Walk, a new elevated park along Seattle's waterfront, opened ahead of its 2025 schedule, creating the first-ever pedestrian connection between downtown Seattle and the waterfront.
