

Cozen Cities - November 11, 2022

Gig Economy & Technology

LOS ANGELES — Waymo Says It's Bringing Robotaxis to L.A.

Driverless car company Waymo, owned by Google parent Alphabet, said October 19 that it plans to add autonomous taxi fleet operations to Los Angeles. "L.A. is in the top three ride-hailing markets in the United States and globally," said Saswat Panigrahi, the company's chief product officer. "The commercial opportunity is huge."

SAN DIEGO — Boom is Over: Funding for San Diego Startups Stalls as Markets Swoon

San Diego startups continue to be swept up in the turmoil of global financial markets. Despite raising \$1 billion in the third quarter, venture capital flow to young local companies fell more than 60 percent compared with the same quarter last year. The San Diego region ranked eighth nationwide for venture capital raised in the third quarter, trailing San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Boston, San Jose, Seattle, and Miami, according to Venture Monitor. The region historically lands around the top 10 metropolitan areas for startup funding, thanks to dual pillars of life science firms and technology companies.

Labor & Employment

CHICAGO — Most Chicago Employers Are Mandating Workers Come to the Office at Least Once a Week

Most Chicago employers are requiring employees to return to the office on a weekly basis — but most companies without a mandate plan to keep it that way. More than six in 10 employers surveyed by Crain's reported that they are mandating employees come in at least once a week, citing collaboration and training as the top two reasons for this decision.

DETROIT — City of Detroit Unemployment Rate Matches 20-Year Low; More Than 10,000 Jobs Available Today

Mayor Mike Duggan and city officials announced on November 3 the city's unemployment rate has fallen to 7%, according to the National Bureau of Labor Statistics September 2022 Employment Data Report, down from 7.9% in August of this year, and from 12.5% this time last year. This matches the lowest rate the city of Detroit has seen since September 2000 and is attributed to continued development and investment in the city and its workforce.

NEW YORK CITY — Legal Fellows Program Launched by Mayor Adams

Mayor Eric Adams has launched the NYC Legal Fellows Program, a public-private partnership for junior associates at law firms across NYC. While Legal Fellows will be formally employed and paid by their firms, they will serve a one-year appointment in the legal department of various city agencies. Mayor Adams has also indicated early plans to expand a similar program to the tech



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Related Practice Areas

- Government Relations - Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies

PHILADELPHIA — Northeast Philadelphia Home Depot Votes Against Unionization

In a 165-to-51 vote, workers at a Home Depot in Northeast Philadelphia voted against becoming the first such store in the nation to unionize. The vote comes amidst a flurry of unionization efforts in the city, with notable successes among local coffee shops and several Philadelphia Starbucks locations.

SAN DIEGO — Newsom Endorses San Diego's Measure D Regarding Project Labor Agreements

Governor Gavin Newsom threw his support behind San Diego's Measure D on October 27, a ballot measure that would eliminate the city's ban on the use of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on city construction projects. PLAs are collective bargaining agreements between contractors and labor organizations establishing the terms and conditions of employment for specific construction projects.

SEATTLE — Washington Sues to Block Albertsons-Kroger Merger

Washington's Attorney General has requested that a court stop the West Coast-based grocery chain Albertsons from paying a \$4 billion dividend to their investors, ahead of a proposed merger with grocery rival Kroger.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — D.C. Voters Choose to Increase Tipping Minimum Wage

Initiative 82, a ballot initiative to gradually increase the tipped minimum wage to match D.C.'s standard minimum wage by 2027, was passed by voters during yesterday's election. Currently, tipped workers — such as restaurant servers, bartenders, and valets — earn a minimum wage of \$5.35 per hour, approximately one-third the non-tipped minimum wage of \$16.10 per hour.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE — City Council Votes to Advance Bill to Shorten Pension Requirements for Elected Officials

On Thursday, a Baltimore City Council committee advanced a bill that would decrease the number of years the city's elected officials would need to earn a pension from 12 to eight years. The bill was contingent upon the passage of Question K — an amendment to the city charter that establishes term limits for the mayor, councilmembers, and comptroller — which was passed by Baltimore voters yesterday.

BOSTON — First Female, Openly Gay Governor of Massachusetts Elected

Maura Healey was elected governor of Massachusetts last night, making her the first female and openly gay person to hold the position in Massachusetts' history. She is also the first lesbian to be elected governor in the United States. Democratic women won five of the six statewide offices in the state.

BOSTON — Redistricting Maps Official

Mayor Wu has signed Boston's City Council-approved redistricting maps. The "unity" map has shifted South Boston from District 2 to District 3, and southern Dorchester has moved from District 3 to District 4. Although the District 2 and 3 councilmembers, along with the at-large councilmembers who reside in those areas, voted no, the map passed in a 9-4 vote. The new maps will be used for elections in 2024.

LOS ANGELES — Caruso Takes Slight Lead in L.A. Mayoral Race, Still Too Close to Call

Businessman Rick Caruso held a razor-thin lead over U.S. Representative Karen Bass early Wednesday morning in the historically expensive race for mayor of Los Angeles, 51.25% to

48.75%.

NEW YORK CITY — City Council Approves District Maps

New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams sent a letter on behalf of the council to the chair of the NYC Districting Commission, stating that the council would be accepting the proposed district maps with no objections.

PHILADELPHIA — Pennsylvania House Republicans Begin Impeachment Proceedings Against Philadelphia DA Krasner

After weeks of investigation conducted by a state legislative committee — and the release of said committee's report that stopped short of recommending impeachment — Pennsylvania House Republicans filed two articles of impeachment against Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner in regard to his policies on gun violence.

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphians Vote Yes on Department of Aviation, Hiring Preference for CTE Graduates

Yesterday, Philadelphia voters approved both ballot questions, allowing for the creation of a new cabinet-level department that will allow the city's airport officials input on budget discussions, as well as allowing for the preference for candidates who graduated from Philadelphia Career Technical Education (CTE) on the civil service exam when applying for city jobs.

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia Voters Fill Four City Council Seats in Special Election

Yesterday, Philadelphia voters elected two new at-large city councilmembers — Democrats Jim Harrity and Sharon Vaughn — as well as new councilmembers representing Districts 7, Quetcy Lozada, and 9, Anthony Phillips. Council President Darrell Clarke called for special elections to fill these seats in September after multiple councilmembers stepped down in order to run, or consider running, for mayor in 2023.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At-Large Councilmember Bonds Reelected; Second At-Large Seat Too Close to Call

Yesterday, among a crowded field of eight possible candidates, D.C. voters re-elected incumbent Anita Bonds to her at-large city seat, with the second at-large seat still too close to call, though Independent 5th Ward Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie currently leads the count.

Public Health & Safety

DETROIT — Detroit City Council Rejects Proposed Restaurant Food Safety Ordinance

Detroit City Council shot down a restaurant food safety ordinance proposal on November 1 that has caused its fair share of dissension. Council voted 6-3 against the proposal, brought forth by Councilmember Scott Benson. The ordinance would have required that placards be placed in the windows of all 1,706 Detroit restaurants featuring one of three colors that reflect the results of a city Health Department inspection.

NEW YORK CITY — “Rat Action Plan” Passes City Council

New York City Council passed the Rat Action Plan, one of several measures to address the growing rat problem. The bill requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to identify “rat mitigation zones” citywide. Additionally, buildings that have received two or more rodent violations will be required to place their garbage in rodent-safe containers, rather than directly onto the curb.

RICHMOND — Richmond Police Chief Smith Resigns Amid Controversy

Late last month, Richmond Police Chief Gerald Smith tendered his resignation after two years of

service in the position. While no official cause for his resignation was given, he had recently come under scrutiny for claiming his officers had prevented a mass shooting, despite little evidence that these claims were true.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego County Will Be Getting a New Sheriff; What Changes Might Follow?

The two candidates — Kelly Martinez, the county's undersheriff, and John Hemmerling, former chief of the San Diego city attorney's criminal prosecutions unit — each say they will take a top to bottom look at the department with an eye toward making improvements. In interviews and at the forum both candidates spoke of changes needed in the jails and talked up the value of deputies de-escalating tense encounters on the streets. Both said they want to leverage technology to make improvements. Neither said they would end pretext stops.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Student COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate May Be Coming to an End

D.C. City Council is considering putting an end to the city's current student COVID-19 vaccine mandates, as nearly half of all D.C. public school students were not in compliance as recently as September 27. Rates of all Washingtonians who have received the most recent booster shot are down compared to the previous booster shot.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — D.C. City Council Votes In Favor of Changing Criminal Code; Mayor Bowser Likely to Veto

Last week, D.C. city council unanimously voted to pass a new bill eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for nearly all misdemeanor cases and significantly reducing maximum penalties for offenses such as burglaries, carjackings, and robberies — which would update D.C.'s Criminal Code for the first time since 1901. However, Mayor Muriel Bowser, who won re-election for a third term yesterday, has stated that she would likely not sign the bill into law.

Real Estate Development

BOSTON — 2022 "Boston Housing Report Card" Indicates Crisis

The annual 2022 "Boston Housing Report Card" has been published and indicates that 45% of Boston renters are cost burdened. The report card also noted that the region has one of the largest racial homeownership gaps throughout the United States.

CHICAGO — Chicago Is No Magnet for Real Estate Investors, But Doesn't Repel Them Either

Real estate investors can still make good money in big northern cities like Chicago and New York, but they like the South a lot more. That's one key takeaway from the annual "Emerging Trends in Real Estate" survey, which once again places the Chicago metropolitan area in the middle of the pack in an 80-city ranking, far below booming markets like Nashville, Dallas, and Miami. Chicago ranks 31st for "overall real estate prospects" in the survey compiled by the Urban Land Institute and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

LOS ANGELES — Mortgage Rates Top 7% for First Time Since 2002, Chilling L.A. Housing Market

The cost of buying a home took another leap this week as the average rate on the popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage surpassed 7% for the first time since 2002. It was just last month that rates climbed above 6% for the first time in 14 years. The latest dramatic jump makes a home purchase even more unaffordable and stands to further slow a market already reeling from the rising borrowing costs.

NEW YORK CITY — Eric Ulrich Resigns as Department of Buildings Commissioner

Eric Ulrich stepped down from his position as the commissioner for the Department of Buildings (DOB) last Thursday, following reports of an illegal gambling investigation by the Manhattan district attorney's office. Kazimir Vilenchik, former first deputy commissioner, will be serving as acting commissioner.

PHILADELPHIA — New Life-Sciences Building Coming to University City

A new 13-story life-sciences laboratory and office building in University City has been proposed by Sterling Bay and Botanic Properties in the hopes of attracting biotech companies and academic tenants, following a city-wide trend of life-sciences-related property development.

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia Parking, Real Estate Company to Construct New Apartment Building in Center City

Philadelphia's Parkway Corporation has announced its plans to develop a 304-unit apartment building near Market Street, featuring two floors of underground parking and 31 units reserved for tenants with 60% of area median income.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Poised to Declare "Housing a Human Right," Strengthen Renters' Rights

San Diego City Council considered a wide variety of new tenant protections October 31 at a special meeting as homelessness and economic concerns for renters persist. As part of the meeting, the city council also worked on a resolution to declare "housing as a human right" — something that received support from various tenant, homeless, and environmental groups — but upset some landlord groups. The council did not formalize anything but held the meeting to consider future action.

SEATTLE — Kings County Housing Authority Sued for Gender, Racial Discrimination

Former executive director of the Kings County Housing Authority is being sued by three former high-ranking female staff members. The plaintiffs claim that Norman violated state and federal laws by discriminating against them due to their race and gender. The complaint lists examples of disparagement, pay disparities, and personal attacks that they experienced during Norman's tenure.

Taxes & Spending

BALTIMORE — Lawsuit Against Baltimore City, Baltimore City Public Schools Regarding Alleged Misuse of Tax Dollars to Move Forward

Last week, a judge denied a motion by Baltimore City and Baltimore City Public Schools to dismiss a lawsuit filed against them by two Baltimore residents regarding an alleged misuse of the city's tax dollars. The lawsuit cites the city's broken education system and its subsequent strain on the criminal justice and social welfare systems as undue burdens to Baltimore taxpayers.

BOSTON — Taxpayers Receiving Billions in State Tax Refunds

Millions of Massachusetts taxpayers have begun receiving state tax refunds, due to the triggering of a tax cap law for the second time in 40 years. The state received an excess of \$2.94 billion this tax cycle, which will be returned to 2021 state taxpayers.

CHICAGO — City Council Passes Lightfoot's \$16.4 Billion 2023 Budget

The Chicago City Council voted on November 7 to approve Mayor Lightfoot's fourth and final budget 32-18. The City Council also approved a separate \$1.7 billion property tax levy by a 29-21 vote. With no property tax increase, Mayor Lightfoot's "stability" budget closes a \$128 million budget gap using a combination of the extra revenue, \$56 million in surplus from tax-increment financing (TIF) districts, and a \$40 million upfront payment from Bally's as part of the Chicago casino deal but also sets aside an additional \$242 million toward beginning "a new pension fund policy of prepaying future pension obligations."

LOS ANGELES — Measure ULA Seeks to Enact Tax on Property Sales, Transfers

If Measure ULA, a city tax on expensive properties, is approved by voters in the upcoming election, it would be a “veritable death blow” to high-end real estate and put pressure on real estate values at every price point, said West Hollywood real estate brokerage The Oppenheim Group. What’s more, the company said, the measure would not only damage the market for homeowners, but also for property investors, developers and professionals involved in the sale and construction of real estate.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Unveils Specifics for Shifting Infrastructure Spending From Wealthy to Low-Income Areas

San Diego’s efforts to boost neglected neighborhoods in the southern part of the city took a key step forward in October when officials unveiled a new scoring system for deciding which infrastructure projects take priority. The new scoring system gives higher priority to neighborhoods that have been historically underserved, where incomes are low and where residents have relatively low access to economic opportunities.

Transportation & Mobility

BALTIMORE — Baltimore Department of Transportation Applies for \$2 Million Grant to Begin Demolition of “Highway to Nowhere”

The Baltimore Department of Transportation is seeking federal funding to demolish its infamous “Highway to Nowhere,” which bisects West Baltimore. The program the Department has applied for, called Reconnecting Communities, awards funding to projects that aim to repair harmful transportation infrastructure that has separated communities from economic opportunities.

CHICAGO — New 58-Mile Bike Trail Will Connect Chicago to Michigan

From Illinois to Indiana to Michigan, bikers and pedestrians will soon be able to travel across state lines on a scenic, non-motorized greenway along the south shore of Lake Michigan. The Marquette Greenway Trail Project will stretch 58 miles and connect Calumet Park on the city’s Southeast Side to downtown New Buffalo, Michigan. The project is funded in large part by a \$17.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

DETROIT — Mayor Outlines Future for City Airport Following FAA Approval of New Layout Plan

Detroit’s Coleman A. Young Municipal Airport (KDET) is poised to begin a massive transformation following FAA approval of the city’s first airport layout plan in 30 years, Mayor Mike Duggan announced Oct. 13. The approval, which follows nearly three years of drafting, community engagement, and FAA review, now makes City Airport, as it is commonly known, eligible for an estimated \$100 million in federal grants over the next 10 years.

LOS ANGELES — L.A., Orange County Slated for \$295 Million in Active Transportation Funding

The California Transportation Commission released a list October 20 of recommended projects for the state’s Active Transportation Program 2023 funding cycle, with projects in Los Angeles and Orange Counties accounting for more than \$295 million of the just over \$1 billion total. The Active Transportation Program, created by SB 99 and AB 101 in 2013, is designed to facilitate projects encouraging active transportation modes such as cycling and walking. Notable projects to secure funding in Los Angeles and Orange Counties can be found [here](#).

PHILADELPHIA — Norristown High Speed Line KOP Extension Project Continues Despite Criticism

SEPTA is continuing its quest to extend the Norristown High Speed Line to King of Prussia (KOP), despite widespread criticism concerning land use. Most recently, it invested \$390 million to the \$2 billion project.

SAN DIEGO — Parks, Bike Trails, Riverfront Dining: The \$700 Million Plan to Transform the San Diego River

The long-neglected San Diego River could be transformed under a new financing plan recently endorsed by county and city officials, who say they'll create enhanced infrastructure financing districts, or EIFDs, to make the river a regional attraction with recreational amenities and riverfront dining. Somewhere between \$380 million and \$750 million would be spent on new parks, bicycle bridges and flood-prevention projects that they hope will make private-sector investment more likely along the 52-mile river.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Metro's Silver Line Extension to Open in Less Than a Week

The D.C. Metro is in the final stretch of unveiling six new stations on its long-awaited Silver Line extension to Dulles Airport, which is set to officially open on November 15. The project is expected to be a game-changer for both the public transit system and the airport, increasing access for locals and visitors alike.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — D.C. Announces New Mobility Innovation District Project

Late last month, D.C. officials announced the creation of a new Mobility Innovation District, a public-private partnership which will experiment with innovative new transportation services such as on-demand shuttles and electrification hubs. The project will be spearheaded by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and the Southwest Business Improvement District.
