

Cozen Cities - January 3, 2024

Gig Economy & Technology

BALTIMORE – Mayor Scott, BDE Introduce Free Public Wi-Fi Network

In December, Mayor Brandon Scott and the City’s Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (BDE) launched FreeBmoreWiFi, a citywide free public Wi-Fi network. Funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the initiative marks a significant milestone in the City’s commitment to digital equity and inclusive access to technology for residents.

CHICAGO – Rideshare Drivers Demand City Pass Ordinance for Improved Safety, Living Wage

If passed, the Chicago Rideshare Living Wage and Safety Ordinance would raise drivers’ wages, improve driver safety and create a transparent system to handle driver deactivation.

SAN DIEGO – San Diego Tech, Energy Firms Make WSJ’s “Best Managed Companies” List

San Diego-based companies made the Wall Street Journal and Drucker Institute’s annual “Best Managed Companies” list.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – City Unveils AI-Powered Career Platform

In December, the D.C. Department of Employment Services and Eightfold AI launched Career Ready D.C., a new artificial intelligence-driven (AI) matching technology platform that aims to help match residents with employment opportunities more efficiently and equitably.

Labor & Employment

CHICAGO – City’s Paid Leave Policy Delayed by Six Months

The six-month delay will help ensure businesses have a longer lead time to understand and comply with the new provisions in the ordinance before potentially running afoul of the rules.

Policy & Politics

BOSTON – City Council Passes Measure Allowing Non-Citizens to Vote in Local Elections

The Boston City Council approved a home rule measure that would allow immigrants legally living in Boston to vote in local elections. However, the initiative must still be approved by the mayor, the state house, and the governor.

CHICAGO – Former Alderman Burke Convicted in Landmark Federal Corruption Trial; Jury Convicts One Co-Defendant, Acquits Another

In a verdict that will reverberate through city politics, Burke was convicted of racketeering conspiracy and a dozen other counts for using the clout of his elected office to try to win private law business from developers.

CHICAGO – City Has Lost All Communication About Migrant Drop-Offs Since New Penalties, Official Says



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Related Practice Areas

Migrants are no longer being dropped off at the city's landing zone on buses from the southern border, causing people to wander with no direction looking for shelter, according to an aide to Mayor Brandon Johnson.

LOS ANGELES — Five Big Things to Watch in L.A. City Hall in 2024

According to the L.A. Times, issues and events to keep an eye on in Los Angeles heading into 2024 include homelessness, tenant protections, City Council elections, independent redistricting, and corruption and ethics cases.

LOS ANGELES — Reform Advocates Share Strategies to Fix L.A. Redistricting

Leading experts and academics on governance reform called for an independent redistricting commission, expansion of the L.A. City Council and stronger ethics rules as city leaders continue efforts to restore public trust.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayor Parker Inaugurated

This week, Cherelle Parker was inaugurated Philadelphia's 100th mayor, the first Black woman to hold the prestigious position. She marked the occasion by releasing an action plan for her first 100 days in office.

PHILADELPHIA — Councilmember Johnson Elected City Council President

Four-term City Councilmember and a former state representative Kenyatta Johnson became Council president Tuesday, taking the gavel of Philadelphia's legislature and becoming the second-most powerful city official.

RICHMOND — City Council Enters New Year Eyeing New Leadership

This week, the Richmond City Council held its organizational meeting to vote on new officers following the departure of Dr. Michael Jones. City Councilmember Kristen Nye (District Four) was elected president of the governing body.

RICHMOND — Mayor Stoney Discusses Issues With Local Paper of Record

Mayor Levar Stoney — who is also currently a candidate for Virginia governor — recently sat down for an interview with the Richmond Times-Dispatch about topics ranging from gun violence to affordable housing to economic development.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Mayor Bowser Faces Possible Lawsuit From D.C. Council for Withholding SNAP Benefit Increase

The D.C. City Council may sue Mayor Muriel Bowser over a battle to support enhanced food assistance for D.C. residents in need. According to the Council, the mayor may not single-handedly divert or withhold appropriated funds for a purpose expressly established in an appropriations act.

Public Health & Safety

BALTIMORE — Baltimore City Sues ATF Over Improper Denial of Gun Crime Data

In December, Baltimore City filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), alleging that the agency improperly denied critical gun crime data. In 2023, Baltimore stayed under 300 killings for the first time in years, the decline in homicides coinciding with a slight decrease year over year in nonfatal shootings.

NEW YORK — City Council Passes Solitary Confinement Ban, How Many Stops Act

The New York City Council passed several policing and criminal justice bills, including a ban on solitary confinement and an act requiring police officers to report information about lower-level investigative encounters with civilians. Mayor Eric Adams is opposed to the bills, which passed with a veto-proof majority.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayor Parker Declares Public Safety Emergency

On Tuesday, Mayor Parker declared a public safety emergency, directing new Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel and the Office of the Managing Director to develop “comprehensive plans that address public safety across the city.”

SEATTLE — Seattle Public Schools Win \$1.75 Million from Vaping Companies

Seattle Public Schools will receive a \$1.75M settlement as part of a federal lawsuit against Juul Labs, Altria, and other vaping companies for targeting minors in their advertising.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As Homicides, Carjackings Increased, D.C. Retreated on Policing Reforms

In 2023, Mayor Bowser and the D.C. City Council turned away from progressive strategies meant to ease the footprint of law enforcement in the community and embraced measures that promoted more aggressive policing, prosecutions, and detentions.

Real Estate Development

CHICAGO — Johnson Wants Recommendations to “Streamline” City's Development Approval Process

Mayor Johnson signed an executive order mandating city departments to report back to Deputy Mayor for Business & Neighborhood Development Kenya Merritt with “proposed changes to streamline processes and incentivize commercial and housing development.”

CHICAGO — Chicago Plans to Borrow More Than \$1 Billion as it Weans Itself Off TIFs

Mayor Johnson’s administration is looking at borrowing more than \$1 billion to fund affordable housing and development projects. The bond issuance would begin the process of Chicago weaning itself off the special tax districts created in the last three decades to incentivize development.

DETROIT — State, Local Leaders Join Mayor Duggan to Celebrate Groundbreaking of New \$18 Million Affordable Housing Project

Mayor Mike Duggan joined community developer MiSide Community Impact Network, along with state and local leaders to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Campbell Street Apartments, a brand-new affordable housing development located on long-vacant land at 5800 Michigan Avenue.

NEW YORK — Green Fast Track to Help Build More Sustainable Housing

New York City’s Department of City Planning rolled out the “Green Fast Track,” a streamlined environmental review process for small- and medium-sized housing projects across the city.

LOS ANGELES — City Council Cracks Down on Illegal Hostels

In an attempt to address the proliferation of illegal hostels in central Los Angeles, the City Council approved a motion calling for immediate corrective action in December.

LOS ANGELES — L.A. Secures State Funding for Four Housing Sites with Nearly 200 Units in Permanent, Interim Housing

Mayor Karen Bass announced in December that four Project Homekey sites have been awarded to the City of Los Angeles and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Could Be Top Real Estate Market in 2024

The National Association of Realtors' Real Estate Forecast Summit predicted lower mortgage rates next year and varying views on top markets.

Taxes & Spending

RICHMOND — "System Error" Blamed For 66,000-Plus Richmond Personal Property Tax Bill Mistakes

A recent audit determined that the City of Richmond made more than 66,000 billing mistakes in 2023. Personal property taxes are the second largest local revenue source for Richmond.

Transportation & Mobility

BALTIMORE — Former Mayor Young Calls for More Public Engagement on Bike Lanes

Former Baltimore City Mayor Jack Young said he regrets signing legislation that fast-tracked bike lanes in Baltimore, citing a need for more community engagement on the topic.

BOSTON — MBTA to Launch Discounted Fares for Low-Income Riders

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is planning to offer a 50% fare discount on buses, subways, commuter rails, and ferries to all riders between the ages of 26 and 64 who have incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

CHICAGO — United, American Airlines Push Back Against Rising Costs of O'Hare Airport Expansion

United and American Airlines want to ground — or significantly scale back — the massive O'Hare International Airport redevelopment designs. The change comes after the airlines signed an agreement to fund much of the bill through increased gate fees.

CHICAGO — O'Hare Traffic Could Recover Next Year, Aviation Chief Predicts

O'Hare, along with some other large airports with high levels of international traffic, has struggled to return to pre-pandemic travel volumes. The number of passengers traveling through O'Hare in September 2023 was about 8% below the same month in 2019, according to airport data. Through nine months, it's still down 13%.
