

Cozen Cities - January 27, 2023

Gig Economy & Technology

CHICAGO — Chicago Biotech Startup Unveils AI to Speed Up Breakthrough Drugs

In the wake of Evozyne's hiring of a seasoned tech-company executive as CEO, the Chicago-based biotech company announced it has developed an AI model that it hopes will revolutionize development of new therapeutic proteins, significantly accelerating the time it takes to bring drugs treating rare diseases to market.

RICHMOND — Flock Cameras Help Understaffed Richmond Police Department Solve Crimes

Richmond Police have recently been testing a new technology called Flock cameras to identify license plate numbers to help them solve more crimes. The cameras, which have been installed in high-crime areas and are only used to scan license plates have been a boon to a department that has recently been understaffed.

SAN DIEGO — How Much Faster Can Computers Get? UC San Diego Leads \$50 Million Effort to Find Out

A group of 10 universities led by UC San Diego is undertaking a \$50.5 million effort to greatly improve the speed and efficiency of computers, work that could do everything from make drug discovery faster to create better weather forecasts. The coalition, which includes such schools as Stanford and UCLA, hinges on making advances in software and next-generation computer chips. Among other things, both are needed to more rapidly move data from memory sources to processors.

SEATTLE — Sewage Tunnel Project Halfway Completed

Construction of a Seattle/Kings County custom-built 2.7-mile-long rail line, which will store up to 30 million gallons of sewage and stormwater during heavy rains, is halfway complete. The line will prevent polluted water from spilling into the nearby Lake Washington Ship Canal and Lake Union and Salmon Bay. The project is expected to be operational in 2026.

Labor & Employment

CHICAGO — Here Are the Latest Return-to-Office Numbers in Chicago

Chicago office-going has rebounded slightly after the holidays. That's according to data from real estate technology firm Kastle Systems, which analyzed building security card swipes and compared current figures to early 2020. The firm is measuring the Chicago metro area with an average of the country's top 10 cities to get a snapshot of where they stand as we come out of the pandemic. It also compares Chicago against the three biggest cities in the country.

DETROIT — Detroit Unemployment Dips to 6.4%; Still High Compared to State, National Figures

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan touted that the city hit a new decades-low unemployment rate, which he believes indicates that his administration's efforts to boost employment are working.

LOS ANGELES — Port of LA Campaigns to Bring Back Shippers Lost Amid Labor Talks



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Labor negotiations are still ongoing and cargo volume has taken a hit as a result. Importers have recently diverted goods to other U.S. ports, with the Port of New York and New Jersey benefitting the most — New York claimed LA's "busiest port" title late last year.

NEW YORK CITY — Assembly Staffers Launch Public Union Effort

A group of New York State Assembly staffers have announced their intent to organize and join the New York State Legislative Workers United group, which was launched by Senate staffers last year but remained unrecognized by the state Senate.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE — Governor Moore's Budget Includes Funding to Address Baltimore's Vacant Homes Issue

Recently inaugurated Maryland Governor Wes Moore unveiled his new budget last week, which includes \$20 million to Project C.O.R.E., which will help Baltimore address its widespread vacant homes issue. The city has approximately 15,000 vacant homes, which are hazardous to residents and first responders.

CHICAGO — Mayoral Hopefuls on the Attack as New Fundraising Totals Show Competitive Race

The mayoral candidates are bursting with attacks on each other recently while some interesting new financial totals are out — the mayoral race is very competitive, financially — and a reform group released results of a survey of aldermanic candidates on potentially revamping the city's remap process.

DETROIT — Detroit City Council 2023 Wish List Includes Food Safety, Neighborhoods

Detroit City Council is ready to tackle several policies, old and new, as members return to session January 10 after taking a break from their first year as a new nine-member body. Council approved several ordinances and a multimillion-dollar tax break to a billionaire in past months, but members have more on their radar for the new year. District 3 Councilmember Scott Benson unsuccessfully vied for a new food safety ordinance that would require restaurants to post their inspection grades, but he aims to bring it back to the table.

NEW YORK CITY — City Requests State Support for Asylum Seekers

Mayor Adams has indicated that NYC has reached its breaking point in the asylum seeker crisis. Over 40,000 migrants have arrived in NYC since last spring. Mayor Adams requested that New York State contribute funds to accommodate 500 asylum seekers.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayoral Forums Begin; Former PA Lieutenant Governor to Join Mayoral Race

The race for Philadelphia mayor is in full swing, and local officials and organizations have begun hosting mayoral forums with the candidates, with topics ranging from gun violence to Black economic opportunity. Meanwhile, former Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor Mike Stack is reportedly planning to join the race for Philadelphia mayor, making him the 11th candidate to enter the historically crowded field.

SAN DIEGO — In State of the City Speech, Mayor Gloria Strikes More Positive Note Than Last Year

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria highlighted affordable housing more than any other topic during his annual State of the City address, and its tone was more positive than last year. In his third annual State of the City address, Gloria uttered the phrase "affordable housing" seven times — more than any other two-word phrase — noting the housing package that the City Council passed last year and a second package that will be considered this spring.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — D.C. City Council Considering Free School Lunches

D.C. City Council is reportedly considering a proposal to make school lunches free for more than

96,000 students at traditional public, charter, and participating private schools. The proposal would continue a similar federal program that was implemented temporarily during the COVID-19 pandemic and is intended to help alleviate food insecurity.

Public Health & Safety

BALTIMORE — New Affordable Housing Development Breaks Ground in Park Heights Neighborhood

Ground was recently broken on a new affordable housing development called Woodland Gardens in the Park Heights neighborhood in Northwest Baltimore. The first section to be completed is intended for senior living, followed by a section intended for families.

BOSTON — Boston Police Department Ignored More Than 100 Immigration Detainer Requests in 2022

ICE reported that the Boston Police Department ignored over 100 immigration detainer requests under the city's sanctuary "Trust Act." BPD had noted in a report earlier in January that they only ignored 12 detainer requests.

BOSTON — COVID Wastewater Report Published by Boston Health Officials

Health officials in Boston have released their first city-specific COVID wastewater report, giving a closer look at neighborhood COVID data. This is part of Boston's new wastewater surveillance program, which uses samples from 11 manholes in the city.

CHICAGO — City Council Passes Bodily Autonomy for All Ordinance to Further Protect Those Seeking Reproductive or Gender-Affirming Care From Discrimination, Retaliation

On January 18, City Council passed the Bodily Autonomy For All ordinance. Under this law, landlords and employers alike cannot discriminate or retaliate against an individual who has received reproductive healthcare or gender-affirming care.

SAN DIEGO — Number of Homeless in Downtown San Diego Reaches Record High for Fifth Straight Month

The number of homeless people living without shelter in downtown San Diego is approaching 2,000 and has hit a record high for the fifth straight month. The number of homeless people in downtown encampments has been rising for the past few months despite an increase in shelter beds that have opened this year.

PHILADELPHIA — Experts Expect Real Estate Development Slowdown in Light of Interest Rate Uncertainty

Interest rates have reached their highest level in 15 years, which may make some real estate developers hesitant to move forward full steam ahead on projects that are not already well underway. According to certain funders, priority will generally be given to projects that are already pre-leased.

Real Estate Development

CHICAGO — Downtown Office Vacancy Hits Another New High

Downtown Chicago just wrapped up its best year of new office demand since 2019. But thanks to a deluge of space-cutting and sublease listings, there's still a record amount of available workspace. The vacancy rate among downtown office buildings finished 2022 at an all-time high of 21.4%, up from 19.7% at this time last year and remains far higher than the 13.8% vacancy rate when the COVID-19 pandemic began nearly three years ago.

DETROIT — Detroit Property Values Rise 20% in 2022, City Says

Residential property values in the city of Detroit were up 20 percent on average in 2022, Mayor Mike Duggan said January 13, continuing a six-year trend of rising home values, though there are still some pockets of the city where property values declined. The city also saw more vacant

homes rehabilitated than demolished last year, the mayor said.

LOS ANGELES — LA Home Prices Dropped Second Most in Nation in December; Inventory Remains High

A new study published by real estate company RE/MAX has found that home prices in Los Angeles are actually on the decline year-over-year. In December 2022, the median price of a home in Los Angeles was \$810,000; down \$40,000 or 4.7% from December 2021. That was the second largest decline in the study, behind only San Francisco which saw a 5.1% decrease.

SAN DIEGO — Home Prices Rose Slightly in December Amid Uncertain Outlook

San Diego County home prices more or less stabilized in December following a roller coaster ride throughout 2022 with an uncertain outlook for 2023 due to rising interest rates and inflation. The median price of a single-family home at the end of December was \$869,900, a 2.3% increase over November but well below the peak earlier this year when the median price was approaching \$1 million, according to the association.

SEATTLE — Seattle-Area Percentage of “House Rich, Cash Poor” Among Highest in U.S.

A new report indicates that Seattle homeowners rank sixth highest out of 25 metro areas for the ratio of home value to income - a phenomenon sometimes referred to as being “house rich, cash poor.”

Taxes & Spending

CHICAGO — State Lawmakers Approve Sending \$20 Million to Chicago for Care, Housing of Immigrants

Chicago is set to receive \$20 million from the state to care for immigrants arriving in the city. After state lawmakers passed an appropriations bill containing the millions for costs associated with “shelter, transportation, basic health and first aid, food” and other needs for asylum seekers on January 10. The bill awaits Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s signature.

CHICAGO — City Council Approves Fund to Redevelop LaSalle Street Storefronts

Mayor Lori Lightfoot has a new tool in her effort to inject street life into the LaSalle Street corridor the city hopes will become a mixed-use area with new affordable housing units. On January 18, the City Council approved a \$5 million fund to help small businesses redevelop vacant storefronts along the corridor that could help make living on the street, known for closing down after business hours, more appealing.

DETROIT — DDA Okays \$50 Million for District Detroit, But Not Without Some Objections

The Detroit Downtown Development Authority board has signed off — with some passionate dissent — on perhaps \$48.75 million in public funding for deeply affordable District Detroit area housing as well as infrastructure improvements. The approvals, which took place January 11, give way for \$23.75 million in DDA loans for 139 affordable units in three new developments at 50 percent of the area median income as well as up to \$25 million for road improvements, utilities, security and public space upgrades for the area.

NEW YORK CITY — New York Casino in the Works

New York State’s Gaming Facility Location Board announced a request for applications for three new casinos in the New York City area. A six-member Community Advisory Committee will now determine which site is optimal.

NEW YORK CITY — Mayor Adams’ FY24 Preliminary Budget Released

Mayor Adams released his preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2024. The proposed expense budget is \$102.7 billion, including \$20 million for the “Housing Our Neighbors” plan, \$1.8 million to expand the rat mitigation program, and \$1.6 million to hire several Chief Decarbonization Officers.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego to Spend \$77 Million Building Region's Largest Composting Plant to Comply With State Organics Law

San Diego will spend \$77 million on a large composting plant in Miramar to handle all the yard trimmings, food scraps and other organic material that city residents and businesses must begin recycling under a new state law. City officials say they expect the plant, which will be by far the county's largest composting facility, to help other local communities and trash haulers comply with the new law, SB 1383.

Transportation & Mobility

CHICAGO — Chicago Drivers Now Stuck in Traffic Congestion More Than Any Other U.S. City

Chicagoans were more impacted by time spent in traffic in 2022 than drivers in any other U.S. urban area, according to the latest annual report from transportation analysis firm Inrix. Drivers in and around the city lost 155 hours sitting in traffic last year. That's up from 104 lost hours in 2021, which earned the area the No. 2 ranking behind New York City.

LOS ANGELES — LA Traffic Deaths Rose in 2022, Surpassing 300 Fatalities for First Time in Two Decades

Traffic deaths climbed again in Los Angeles last year, with 300 people killed on city streets — the highest number in at least two decades, city officials said. According to Los Angeles Police Department data, 312 people were killed in traffic collisions last year, 5% more than in 2021 and a 29% increase over 2020. LA's streets remain particularly deadly for pedestrians and bicyclists, with 159 people killed in collisions involving pedestrians and motorists, a 19% rise compared with 2021, and 20 people killed in collisions involving cyclists and motorists, an 11% rise.
