



Law Department
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Year in Review 2025



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About Us



The Law Department's **mission** is to serve the residents of Philadelphia by providing excellent legal counsel as trustworthy partners to our clients, no matter the challenges we face. We promote an environment of comradery, accountability, and inclusiveness where our staff can do their best work while achieving balance in their lives. Above all, we are dedicated to bettering the city of Philadelphia for all residents.

300+
Attorneys

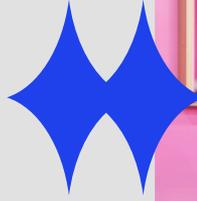
115+
Professional Staff

40+
Interns

Integral to achieving our mission is the proud celebration of the rich diversity of our staff, the City's workforce, and the residents whom we serve.



Our Practice Groups



COMPLIANCE + LEGISLATION

- Compliance Unit
- HIPAA + Privacy Unit
- Legislation + Legal Counsel Unit
- Right-to-Know Unit
- NEW: E-Discovery + Data Strategies Unit

CORPORATE + TAX

- Tax Litigation + Collections Unit
- Property Assessment, Boards, + Commissions Unit
- Commercial Law Unit
- Real Estate + Development Unit
- Regulatory Law Unit

LITIGATION

- Civil Rights Unit
- Code and Public Nuisance Unit
- Labor + Employment Unit
- Tort Litigation Unit
- Affirmative + Special Litigation Unit
- Appeals Unit

SOCIAL SERVICES

- Child Welfare Unit
- Health + Adult Services Unit

Led by **City Solicitor Renee Garcia**, our legal practice covers diverse areas such as federal, state, and local agency litigation, commercial and real estate transactions, regulatory law, social services, tax collection, and legislation. Our attorneys specialize in a range of issues, providing legal counsel to clients across the City of Philadelphia government.

Our Responsibilities Include:

- Advising and representing the City, its officials, and employees in all legal matters;
- Drafting, negotiating, and approving City contracts;
- Collecting unpaid taxes, fines, and other debts; and
- Preparing law for introduction in City Council.



Budget

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

FY 2023	\$ 20,280,371
FY 2024	\$ 23,644,960
FY 2025	\$ 26,673,339
FY 2026	\$ 28,727,895

PURCHASE OF SERVICES

FY 2023	\$ 9,406,946
FY 2024	\$ 14,684,007
FY 2025	\$ 14,843,876
FY 2026	\$ 14,993,145

MATERIALS + SUPPLIES

FY 2023	\$ 216,403
FY 2024	\$ 227,379
FY 2025	\$ 225,497
FY 2026	\$ 235,726

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

FY 2023 \$ 29,903,720

FY 2024 \$ 38,556,346

FY 2025 \$ 41,742,712

FY 2026 \$ 43,956,766

2025 Highlights

BY THE NUMBERS

BOARDS + COMMISSIONS

- The Property Assessment, Boards, and Commissions Unit represented the Office of Property Assessment in market value hearings pending before the Board of Revision of Taxes for over **6,000 properties** with assessed values totaling \$13.5 Billion.
- The Boards and Commissions Division provided representation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for **1,830 case listings**, to the Board of License and Inspection Review for **3,326 case listings**, to the Fair Housing Commission for **166 case listings**, and to the Board of Building Standards for **68 case listings**.
- The Code and Public Nuisance Unit defended the City in **2,427 administrative hearings** before the Board of Licenses and Inspections Review and the Tax Review Board.

INFORMATION + OPERATIONS

- The Law Department supports operating departments in their public communications, particularly in scenarios involving risk, public safety, or issues regarding litigation or legal transactions. In 2025, we responded to over **250 press requests** in addition to counseling clients on responses to press requests.
- The Right-to-Know Unit responded to a record number of requests received in 2025, **approximately 3,000 requests** – a 15% increase from 2024.
- The Tort Litigation Unit saw new **1,024 claims** filed in 2025. 840 were closed, 367 without the City paying. Settled claims in 2025 totaled \$31.6 Million.
- The Compliance Unit counseled the Department of Prisons on achieving substantial or partial compliance with 23 out of 24 requirements outlined in a Sanctions Order issued by the Federal Court under the terms of the settlement agreement reached in Remick v. City of Philadelphia.



PUBLIC HEALTH + SAFETY

- Child Welfare attorneys assigned to the Adoption team reduced the number of children awaiting finalization by 37%, from **~700 in 2024 to ~400**.
- The Health & Adult Services Unit successfully resolved 46 lead remediation cases and filed 7 complaints to enforce hazardous lead remediation. HAS collected **\$110,500 in fines from lead remediation complaints**.
- HAS prepared approximately **12,000 mental health hearings** this year and over 5,000 resulted in involuntary commitments to ensure that individuals in need of treatment received timely, necessary, and appropriate healthcare.
- The Regulatory Law Unit initiated enforcement actions to collect almost **\$300,000 for air and water pollution violations**.

CODE ENFORCEMENT + TAX COLLECTION

- The Code and Public Nuisance Litigation Unit filed approximately **1,500 enforcement matters** related to compliance of the Philadelphia Code and collected over **\$3.7 Million in fines and fees** related to non-compliance.
- Code attorneys executed **20 Nuisance Abatement Plans** to set standards of operation for businesses designated as chronic or critical nuisances.
- The Code and Public Nuisance Litigation Unit filed **36 short dumping enforcement actions**.
- The Tax Litigation and Collections Unit collects Use and Occupancy Tax on behalf of the School District. The Unit utilized liens to collect more than **\$3.5 Million** in delinquent taxes during 2025.





Success Stories

As counsel to the Mayor's Office and operating departments, City Council, Boards and Commissions, our team is working to support our clients in providing exemplary city services.

From providing counsel to drafting contracts and initiating litigation, our attorneys and professional staff made the following efforts possible in 2025.

Adjusting to a Changing Federal Landscape: With the transition to a new federal administration and an ever-shifting federal legal landscape, meeting the needs of the City in this moment can require 24/7 monitoring with nuanced, collaborative, and creative legal advice, solutions and action. To that end, the Law Department formed several teams and workgroups, comprised of a wide range of subject matter experts at all levels across the organization to assess, triage, and deliver rapid responses to urgent and exigent client needs. The Law Department advised on new interpretations of federal case law by the United States Supreme Court, including efforts to reform existing equal opportunity programs by shifting focus to promotion of local and small businesses. Notably, attorneys across the department provided real-time advice to operational departments through changes to federal funding and grant criteria to minimize disruptions to essential programs and capital project progress, and established an emergency fund to support families impacted by a freeze of the SNAP benefit program.



2026 Special Events Planning:

Philadelphia will host international audiences for the country's semi-quincentennial (250th) anniversary celebrations and the 2026 FIFA World Cup, in addition to large-scale events such as the PGA Golf Championship and the MLB All-Star game. As counsel to the Office of Special Events, the Law Department participated in working groups with local, state, and federal stakeholders to prepare for supplemental infrastructure, security, communications, and operational support, and will continue to advise operating departments through the upcoming festivities.





Calder Gardens:

Over the course of several years, the Real Estate and Development Unit advised on the development of a lease for the new museum, which sits on City of Philadelphia property. The 1.8 acre Calder Gardens museum featuring indoor and outdoor spaces, including public park space, opened to the public in September 2025.



Expansion of Schuylkill River Trail:

Through a collaborative effort between attorneys in the Commercial Law, Real Estate and Development, Regulatory Law, and Affirmative and Special Litigation Units, the Law Department counseled the City on the development of the Christian to Crescent Trail Connector, which extended the Schuylkill River Trail via a cable bridge that crosses the river. The project, opened to the public in 2025, added a half mile of distance to the existing trail, creating a connection to the Grays Ferry Crescent. From advising on the real estate transaction and construction in the right-of-way, to drafting and approving related Public Works contracts, the Law Department played a critical role in the success of this project.

Straw Purchasing Ordinance:

Mayor Parker signed a new law, drafted by the Law Department, requiring all licensed firearm dealers in Philadelphia to post clear warning signs that straw purchasing of guns is a crime.

Switch Ordinance:

The City of Philadelphia successfully defended its switch ordinance, outlawing rate-of-fire acceleration devices, which are attachments to convert ordinary handguns into machine-gun style weapons. The Court of Common Pleas dismissed a lawsuit filed by gun advocates, which sought a court order to prevent the enforcement of the ordinance.



Tribune Photo/Abdul R. Sulayman

Insulin Pricing Scheme:

The City filed a lawsuit against several Pharmacy Benefit Managers and drug manufacturers alleging that the companies have contributed to increased costs of insulin by intentionally engaging in a pricing scheme to drive up their profit margin, while misrepresenting to the public that they are working to decrease drug costs.

Opioid Epidemic Litigation:

Partnering with outside counsel, the City filed suit alleging that several Pharmacy Benefit Managers engaged in conduct that facilitated and enhanced the opioid addiction crisis, and the multitude of social harms that result from it.



Combatting Plastic Waste:

The City filed a lawsuit against a bakery product manufacturing company a manufacturer of household supplies. Both companies sell plastic bags or products packaged in plastic bags. The lawsuit alleges that the companies have misled consumers by deceptively advertising that their single-use plastic bags (made of “plastic film”) are recyclable, when they are not.

Disaster Recovery - Plane Crash:

The Law Department provided emergency legal support in the aftermath of a plane crash near Roosevelt Boulevard in early 2025, which claimed the lives of 8 people. As the crash caused significant damage to the roadway and neighboring homes, attorneys across the Law Department rapidly established the One Philly Fund to assist residents with covering essential costs in the aftermath of the disaster. We provided legal advice as operational departments responded to the scene and assisted with communications regarding public safety and roadway operation. In coordination with state and federal partners, our attorneys counseled the Mayor through recovery planning.



Vision Zero:

The Regulatory Law and Legislation and Legal Counsel Units supported the City's implementation of Vision Zero by developing authorizing legislation for automated red light enforcement on Broad Street and automated speed enforcement in school zones. The Law Department continues to counsel the City on the implementation of those systems.

Smart Cities Pilot Program:

Commercial Law Unit attorneys provided counsel and contract drafting support to the Office of Information Technology in its effort to pilot several different products for monitoring the condition of City infrastructure in public rights-of-way. This effort will enable OIT to compare different products under realistic long-term legal terms, which will put the City in a position to quickly scale-up deployment of the most effective and cost-efficient option.



Digital Accessibility:

The Department of Justice has implemented changes to compliance rules under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, going into effect for municipalities in April of 2026. In compliance with the upcoming deadline for compliance with the new rules, the Compliance Unit continues to counsel the Office of Innovation and Technology on website updates to ensure digital accessibility for people with disabilities.



Solar Farm:

The Regulatory Law Unit assisted in the drafting and review of the Request for Proposals, proposed lease, and related documents for a distributed solar photovoltaic project at the Northeast Philadelphia Airport in conjunction with the Philadelphia Energy Authority. This project will advance the City's commitment to 100% renewable electricity for all City building electric load by 2030, and encourage local economic development and a diverse work force.

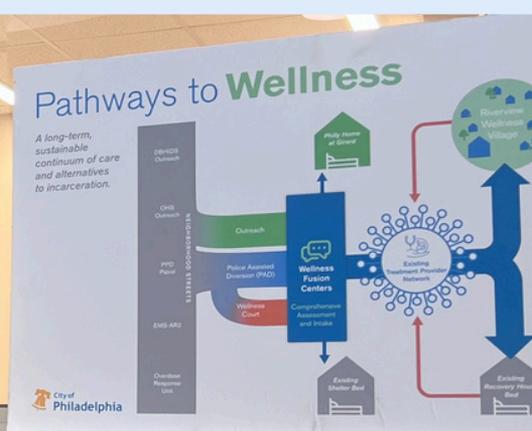
Expanding Housing Opportunities:

The Legislation and Legal Counsel Unit drafted state legislation authorizing the expansion of City tax abatements by twenty years for conversions of commercial and government buildings to residential units. Additionally, the unit worked on various legislative matters related to the issuance of bond ordinances for the Mayor's H.O.M.E. Initiative.

Unhoused Shelter Bed Capacity:

Attorneys in the Commercial Law and Real Estate and Development Units supported the Office of Homeless Services, in partnership with numerous City agencies, in their goal of expanding the City's emergency shelter capacity to 1,000 beds. The initiative also focused on connecting participants to case management and long-term housing resources to support their transition to stable housing. The Law Department played a key role by negotiating leases, assisting with drafting notices, executing supporting contracts, offering guidance on licensing and zoning requirements, and preparing letters of support of shelter site locations.





Riverview Wellness Expansion:

In 2024, the City of Philadelphia opened the first of its kind care and recovery center at Riverview Wellness Village. In 2025, the Code and Public Nuisance Litigation Unit worked over many months to secure a zoning variance that would allow for the expansion of those services through the erection of a new building on the site. The variance allows for 82 multi-family dwelling units and with 89 accessory parking spaces, thus enabling the city to provide services to hundreds more Philadelphians. Additionally, Commercial Law Unit attorneys continued to support efforts to secure and expand services for patients through comprehensive care, recovery support, and other services, including, but not limited to, culinary arts training, career exploration and skill development.



EDEY Expansion: Through continued collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia and the Mayor’s Office of Education, Commercial Law Unit attorneys continued to support Mayor Parker in implementing and expanding her Extended Day, Extended Year Initiative (EDEY). EDEY allows children to attend free extended before and after school care and camps during winter, spring, and summer breaks. In 2025, EDEY was made available to children at 15 additional schools, increasing the total number of participating schools from 25 to 40.



DC33 Work Stoppage and Labor Negotiations:

Having prepared for the potential that union members of DC 33 might strike six months before it occurred, the Labor and Employment Unit was able to rapidly file injunctions, asking the Court to order critical health and safety personnel to return to work while allowing the rest of the bargaining unit member to exercise their right to strike. The Law Department counseled operational departments through critical service gaps and disruptions during the work stoppage and successfully negotiated a fair and fiscally responsible contract with the members of DC 33 to return to full operational capacity.

Civil Rights Appeals:

Attorneys in the Appeals Unit secured two rare court reversals in civil rights matters, saving over a half of a million dollars in verdicts against the City. In Toner v. Severa, Commonwealth Court held that in spite of a jury's verdict, film of an incident demonstrated an officer had probable cause to arrest an individual for aggravated assault. And in Canela Perez v. Scott, Commonwealth Court reversed a jury verdict where a judge misinterpreted provisions of the PA Tort Claims Act.

Rendering



Police Forensics Lab:

The Real Estate and Development Unit successfully negotiated a long-term lease for the construction and operation of a new forensics lab for the Philadelphia Police Department, which is set to open in 2027.

Voluntary Disclosure:

The Voluntary Disclosure Program allows individuals and businesses to come forward with overdue taxes voluntarily. Working with the Revenue Department, the Tax Litigation and Collections Unit has reduced the years a taxpayer must disclose from 6 years to 3 years (standard in most jurisdictions). This change should both (i) increase the availability of this program to small businesses and (ii) increase revenue because large taxpayers make multi-jurisdictional disclosures previously have excluded Philadelphia because of additional years required.

Office Culture

We promote collaboration, inclusivity, and wellness through recurring and special workplace events, professional development opportunities, interest groups, and continuing legal education.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Implementation of career ladders for both attorneys and paraprofessionals to establish clear evaluation criteria and outline pathways for professional development
- Establishment of an Of Counsel position, to ensure seamless transitions and sustained institutional knowledge through leadership and administration changes
- Creation of Paraprofessional Education Series to provide skills training tailored for para and administrative professionals



OFFICE EVENTS + ACTIVITIES

- Holiday Celebrations
- Annual Bake-Off
- Craft Lunch
- Plant Swap
- Arts and Crafts Fair
- Team Spirit Days
- Admin Appreciation
- Committees Fair

WRITING LAB

- 16** office hours consultations
- 30** one-on-one consultations

Writing Lab links staff with peer writing coaches to provide tailored writing advice and feedback, helping build the Law Department's writing competency from within

Life in the Big City

31st ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The Law Department hosted its 31st Life in the Big City Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Conference at the Philadelphia Convention Center. The 2-day annual conference, offered free-of-charge to Law Department attorneys, features a series of CLE-compliant ethics and substantive law courses presented by the Law Department.



The Law Department welcomed **Mayor Cherrille L. Parker** for remarks and the **Honorable Arianna J. Freeman**, Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, as the event's featured speaker.





The CLE Awards program acknowledges the phenomenal work of staff members, as nominated by their peers.

Longevity Award

Angela Yancey, Daniel Cantú-Hertzler, Paul Gianfrancesco, Jacqueline Crowell

Creativity Award

Mary-Kate Martin, Kathleen Kim

Team Player Award

Austin Miller, Philip Jones, Joseph Ramuno, Brian Zesdorn, Ashley Turner, Brian Mera

Collaboration Award

Ryan Smith, Michael Pfautz, Megan Malone

Community Service Award

Jacqueline Bethea, Mathieu O'Brien

Mentorship Award

Luisa Garcia, Sonia Lee, Reynelle Staley

Impact Award

Jennifer MacNaughton, Lakeisha Fields

Diversity Champion Award

Desjeneé Davis

Committees

Staff-led committees provide opportunities for colleagues to connect, collaborate, and further their personal and career goals.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION COMMITTEE

promotes a culture of inclusion through programming, supports the welcoming and retention of a diverse staff, and advocates for equity within the workplace.



Inclusion Workshop



Book Club



Hispanic Heritage Lunch

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

addresses the professional needs of employees of the Law Department by providing targeted programming and administers the mentorship program.



Intergenerational Communications Panel



Adjunct Professors Panel



Beat the Heat Happy Hour

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE

facilitates the creation of public service and volunteer opportunities for Law Department staff.



MANNA Volunteering



School Supply Drive



Racine Turkey Drive



In the Community

The Law Department was the proud recipient of two awards in 2025, affirming our commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace centered on community and public service:

BAR CHAMPION AWARD

The Law Department was honored with the Philadelphia Bar Association's Bar Champion Award, which recognizes legal organizations that demonstrate exceptional support through 100% membership, leadership involvement, active engagement, and meaningful community service.

INTERNSHIP SITE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Law Department was recognized as the 2025 Internship Site of the Year Award for Project Career Launch at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, a school-to-work transition program to prepare young adults on the autism spectrum for career-focused employment.

Through the Law Department's ongoing relationships with diverse bar associations, affinity groups, local nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and the International Municipal Lawyers' Association (IMLA), staff are frequently involved in leadership roles and service efforts.



Keep in Touch

Have a question, or looking to host a staff member of the Law Department for a speaking engagement?

Our office is open Monday to Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM.

Call us at (215) 683-5000

Stay up to date with what's happening at the Law Department on LinkedIn!



City of Philadelphia
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JOIN OUR TEAM

If you're interested in working with a passionate team of people who care about the future of Philadelphia, consider a career in the Law Department! We are always seeking talented attorneys and professional staff to join our team.



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We also offer unpaid, seasonal internship opportunities. Email us your resume at lawdepartmentrecruiting@phila.gov