Law Department

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https://www.seattle.gov/cityattorney

Department Overview

The department provides legal advice to City officials, represents the City in litigation, and protects the public health, safety, and welfare of the community by prosecuting violations of City criminal and civil ordinances and state law. The four department divisions are described below.

The **Administration Division** provides executive leadership, communications, and operational support for the entire department. It is comprised of the executive leadership team, human resources, finance, media relations, and information technology staff.

The **Civil Division** provides legal counsel and representation to the City's elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels of county, state, federal courts, and administrative agencies. The Civil Division is organized into seven specialized areas of practice: Employment, Land Use, Constitutional and Complex Litigation, Government Affairs, Torts, Civil Enforcement, and Environmental, Contracts & Utilities.

The **Criminal Division** prosecutes misdemeanor crimes in Seattle Municipal Court, provides legal advice to City clients on criminal justice matters, monitors state criminal justice legislation of interest to the City, and participates in criminal justice reform efforts, policy development and management of the criminal justice system. The Criminal Division is comprised of a Prosecution Support Unit, Case Preparation Unit, Domestic Violence Unit (prosecutors and victim advocates), Appeals, Review and Filing Unit, Specialty Courts Unit (Infractions, Mental Health, Veterans' Court, Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD), and Pre-filing Diversion), and Trial Team Unit.

The **Precinct Liaisons** support a program where attorneys work in each of the City's police precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough, and effective approach.

Budget Snapshot

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	46,543,622	48,537,547	48,846,722	49,606,905
Other Funding - Operating	0	0	319,083	321,073
Total Operations	**46,543,622**	**48,537,547**	**49,165,805**	**49,927,978**
Total Appropriations	**46,543,622**	**48,537,547**	**49,165,805**	**49,927,978**
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	209.80	213.80	217.80	217.80

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here*

Law Department

Budget Overview

The City's 2027-2028 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Law Department. Changes include a new prosecutor to handle traffic camera infraction hearings, reduction of space rent costs due to a renewed lease, and minor Citywide technical changes.

Also included are ongoing changes legislated in 2026 which added three positions. A paralegal will assist with traffic camera infractions, an Assistant City Attorney to pursue Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and an Assistant City Prosecutor will address felony human trafficking cases.

Incremental Budget Changes

Law Department

	Dollars	FTE
2026 Adopted Budget	**48,537,547**	**213.80**
Baseline		
Increase Funding for King County Firearms Agreement Inflation	11,122	-
Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment for Local 77	32,000	-
Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate	(375,878)	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	836,021	-
Proposed Operating		
Addition of Infractions Prosecutor	175,885	1.00
Proposed Technical		
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	544,108	3.00
Reduction of Space Rent in Columbia Center	(595,000)	-
Total Incremental Changes	**$628,258**	**4.00**
Total 2027 Proposed Budget	**$49,165,805**	**217.80**

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

<u>**Baseline**</u>

Increase Funding for King County Firearms Agreement Inflation

Expenditures $11,122

In 2017, the City entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with King County to stand up and staff a regional unit to enhance public safety and public health with effective processing, service and enforcement of Protection Orders and Orders to Surrender Weapons. This adjustment reflects the inflationary adjustments to the MOA.

Law Department

Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment for Local 77

Expenditures	$32,000

This item adds $32,000 to account for wage increases included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Local 77 that were not included in the baseline budget.

Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate

Expenditures	$(375,878)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2026, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.06% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 13.48% for 2027 and 13.52% for 2028.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures	$836,021

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Proposed Operating

Addition of Infractions Prosecutor

Expenditures	$175,885
Position Allocation	1.00

This proposal adds 1.0 FTE Assistant City Prosecutor and funding to the Criminal Division in the Law Department, funded by the Automated Traffic
Safety Camera (ATSC) Fund. The Infractions Unit handles contested infractions and other violations of the Seattle Municipal Code. This position is needed to address the growing number of citations issued by the City which are contested. Contested hearings on traffic camera tickets are expected to double in 2027 with the addition of new cameras. While some of the contested infractions are addressed by Rule 9 Legal Interns, a Prosecutor is needed to assist and handle more complicated infractions.

Proposed Technical

Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures	$544,108
Position Allocation	3.00

This change includes ongoing or position changes resulting from current year legislation passed by City Council in 2026. In the 2026 Mid-Year Supplemental Budget Ordinance (1127496) the following positions were added:

- A Paralegal ($143,000) funded from the Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) Fund to provide administrative support for increased traffic camera infractions cases. This position will respond to discovery requests and calendaring.
- A City Attorney, Asst ($225,000) to pursue Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) which require the immediate surrender of firearms and concealed pistol licenses from those the court deems high risk through a civil action. This resource will help combat gun violence across the City.

- An Assistant City Prosecutor ($177,000) to serve as a Human Trafficking Prosecutor cross-deputized with the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to address felony human trafficking cases in coordination with the Seattle Police Department.

Reduction of Space Rent in Columbia Center

Expenditures	$(595,000)

The City of Seattle entered into a lease agreement with the Columbia Center to house the Law Department in 2014. The initial term of the lease was for 12 years and expires on March 31, 2027. Per the terms of the lease, the City negotiated a new rental rate for the five-year extension option commencing April 1, 2027. The City has recently finalized terms which have resulted in a decrease of $595,000 in 2027 for a partial year and $827,000 annually thereafter. In addition to the decrease rent, the Columbia Center is providing tenant improvements such as the buildout of six new offices within the existing leased space in addition to minor improvements such as painting and carpet replacement.

Law Department

Expenditure Overview

Appropriations	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration				
00100 - General Fund	14,706,849	15,663,502	15,895,594	16,616,833
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1100	**14,706,849**	**15,663,502**	**15,895,594**	**16,616,833**
LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil				
00100 - General Fund	19,022,157	19,525,023	19,348,730	19,365,204
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1300	**19,022,157**	**19,525,023**	**19,348,730**	**19,365,204**
LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal				
00100 - General Fund	12,103,088	12,509,318	12,772,809	12,795,023
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	-	-	319,083	321,073
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1500	**12,103,088**	**12,509,318**	**13,091,892**	**13,116,096**
LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison				
00100 - General Fund	711,527	839,704	829,589	829,845
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1700	**711,527**	**839,704**	**829,589**	**829,845**
Department Total	**46,543,622**	**48,537,547**	**49,165,805**	**49,927,978**
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	**209.80**	**213.80**	**217.80**	**217.80**

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Budget Summary by Fund Law Department

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	46,543,622	48,537,547	48,846,722	49,606,905
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	-	-	319,083	321,073
Budget Totals for LAW	**46,543,622**	**48,537,547**	**49,165,805**	**49,927,978**

Law Department

Revenue Overview

2027 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
333110	Ind Fed Grants	230,183	-	-	-
341180	Legal Service Fees	1,281,462	1,653,385	1,684,413	1,716,406
341900	General Government-Other Rev	11,414,104	11,643,384	13,074,181	13,279,668
343320	Recoveries-Sundry	100	-	-	-
360690	Building/Oth Space Rent	51,600	-	-	-
397010	Operating Transfers In	434,000	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		**13,411,449**	**13,296,769**	**14,758,594**	**14,996,074**
341180	Legal Service Fees	128,779	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 16600 - Office of Housing Fund		**128,779**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Total LAW Resources		**13,540,228**	**13,296,769**	**14,758,594**	**14,996,074**

Law Department

Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration

The purpose of the Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide executive, financial, technological, administrative and managerial support to the Department.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	6,745,789	7,489,324	7,222,218	7,579,909
Departmental Indirect Costs	4,018,968	3,500,441	3,491,038	3,492,086
Pooled Benefits	3,942,092	4,673,737	5,182,338	5,544,838
Total	**14,706,849**	**15,663,502**	**15,895,594**	**16,616,833**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

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The following information summarizes the programs in Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level:

Citywide Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	6,745,789	7,489,324	7,222,218	7,579,909

Departmental Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Departmental Indirect Costs	4,018,968	3,500,441	3,491,038	3,492,086
Full-Time Equivalents Total	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

Pooled Benefits

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Pooled Benefits	3,942,092	4,673,737	5,182,338	5,544,838

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LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil

The purpose of the Civil Budget Summary Level is to provide legal advice to the City's policy-makers, and to defend and represent the City, its employees, and officials before a variety of county, state, federal courts, and administrative bodies.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Civil	19,022,157	19,525,023	19,348,730	19,365,204
Total	**19,022,157**	**19,525,023**	**19,348,730**	**19,365,204**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	105.30	107.30	107.30	107.30

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LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal

The purpose of the Criminal Budget Summary Level includes prosecuting ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes, maintaining case information and preparing effective case files for the court appearances of prosecuting attorneys, and assisting and advocating for victims of domestic violence throughout the court process.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Criminal	12,103,088	12,509,318	13,091,892	13,116,096
Total	**12,103,088**	**12,509,318**	**13,091,892**	**13,116,096**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	80.00	82.00	86.00	86.00

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LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison

The purpose of the Precinct Liaison Budget Summary Level is to support a program where attorneys work in each of the City’s five precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough and effective approach.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Precinct Liaison	711,527	839,704	829,589	829,845
Total	**711,527**	**839,704**	**829,589**	**829,845**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

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