



## LAW DEPARTMENT

The City of Austin Law Department is a mid-size, in-house law firm averaging 60 attorneys. The department meets the vast majority of the City's legal needs, ranging from areas as diverse as animal control to zoning. The Department is organized into several functional areas. Our key activities are to advocate and resolve disputes, to review and develop contracts, and to render opinions and advice.

Over the years, the Law Department has striven to develop "subject-matter" experts in certain demand areas, while maintaining a balance of full-service lawyers to meet the City's overall legal needs. Below is a general description of the department's broad range of services.

The department is organized into 9 divisions:

- **General Litigation** - The Litigation unit both defends actions against the City of Austin and initiates actions on the City's behalf. Litigation handles several hundred cases in the civil courts, including those involving civil rights, collections, contracts, eminent domain, and tort (e.g., slip and fall) matters. Litigation has two (2) claims investigators who are responsible for investigating, evaluating and disposing of claims against the City involving property damage and bodily injury. They process 700-900 claims against the City per year and respond to telephone inquiries from citizens, City personnel, attorneys and insurance companies regarding claims against the City and investigate accident scenes involving City vehicles and personnel
- **Affirmative Litigation** – This is a new function created in November 2008 during a department reorganization. This Division handles eminent domain, collection of hotel taxes, damage to City property, and other collection related issues. The Division averages 300-400 collection cases per year. The Division also assists with City Code enforcement, assists APD with nuisance abatement, and assists the Fair Housing Office with discrimination complaints.
- **Land Use & Real Estate** – This Division handles specific City departments, such as Planning and Development Review, Watershed, Austin Water Utility, Neighborhood Housing, Economic Growth and Redevelopment, Solid Waste and Parks Department. The attorneys provide legal advice and contractual assistance on issues relating to annexation, development regulation and control, MUDs, zoning and land use, environmental, public rights-of-way, water, and wastewater. This division is the primary support for the Zoning and Platting Commission, the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Solid Waste Advisory Commission, Water and Wastewater Commission and the Environmental Board, among others.
- **Municipal Operations** – This Division handles specific City departments, such as Health and Human Services, Emergency Medical Services, Fire, Library, Convention Center, Information Technology Services, Budget, Purchasing and Financial Services. The attorneys also provide legal advice and opinions on municipal issues such as elections, open meetings, ethics, open records,

- **Employment & Public Safety** - This Division provides advice and counsel to all City Departments and operations on employment, labor relations, and civil service legal issues. This includes risk analysis and risk mitigation advice; compliance with employment and labor relations standards; assistance with drafting and interpreting policies, procedures, and other documents; and representation of the City in internal and external administrative proceedings arising from employment, labor relations, and civil service issues. In addition, the Division provides general legal counsel and advice to the City's Public Safety Division, including Austin Police Department, Austin Fire Department, and the Emergency Medical Services Department.
- **Criminal Prosecution** - handles prosecution of Class "C" misdemeanors under state laws and City ordinances. The prosecutors practice solely before the City's Municipal Court and average 60 dockets per week.
- **Austin Energy** - Attorneys representing the Electric Department are located in the AE office on Barton Springs Road. This group handles utility, regulatory and franchise issues as well as general legal issues for that department.
- **Financial Division** - Provides financial planning and budgeting for the Law Department, including business planning, purchasing and petty cash.
- **Administration Division** – Handles the day-to-day administrative matters for the department, including IT services (computers, hardware and software), Time Matter support, Timekeeping support, Library, reception, invoice processing, and oversees office space and maintenance.

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