

# CITY ATTORNEY



City of **Lawton**, Oklahoma





## THE COMMUNITY

The City of Lawton is the sixth largest community in the state and serves as the seat of Comanche County in southwest Oklahoma. The almost 90,400 residents enjoy its natural beauty and many cultural opportunities. Here, residents can hike, rock climb, and hunt. They can get out on the water for a day of boating and fishing in Lake Lawtonka or Lake Ellsworth. Families can enjoy the Lake Elmer Thomas Recreational Area, including swimming, biking, mini-golfing, bird watching, canoeing, volleyball playing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and even scuba diving. LETRA, as it's more casually known, is also available for camping year-round. Visitors can pick between RV sites, tent camping, primitive camping, and modern cabins. The City also manages over a dozen parks featuring sports fields and courts, spray parks, playgrounds, wading pools, two golf courses, a municipal pool, and more.

Just northwest of the community is the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge spreading across 60,000 acres — the oldest managed wildlife facility in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service system — and Mount Scott, the region's most prominent geological feature, rises 2,464 feet. Nearby, the state's original resort town, Medicine Park, offers a winning combination of recreation and relaxation.

Lawton is also a cultural center for a greater metropolitan area of 124,000 people. The Fort Sill National Historic Museums, Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center, Museum of the Great Plains, and U.S. Field Artillery Museum offer perspectives on the area's roots and those who have called it home for generations. The Leslie Powell Foundation Gallery features some of the most impressive art in the region, and the Historic Mattie Beal Home provides a peek into the past. Or, for a truly unique stop, pay your respects at the gravesite of famous Apache leader and medicine man Geronimo and some of his family members at the Apache Indian Cemetery inside Fort Sill.

Residents can also enjoy a full calendar of live music and performances thanks to the Lawton Community Theatre, Southwest Oklahoma Dance Alliance, Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra, and Lawton City Ballet. There are also a slew of popular special events that help families stay busy year-round, such as the Wichita Mountains Classic, Spirit of Survival race, Arts for All Festival, International Festival, Lawton Rangers Rodeo, Annual Tomato Festival, Fort Sill 4th of July Concert, and Armed Forces Parade.

## MISSION, VISION & VALUES

### MISSION:

Providing efficient, effective and responsive services. Promoting a quality of life based on harmony and cooperation. Crating leadership and opportunity for Southwest Oklahoma.

### VISION:

Providing public services that empower citizens to focus on personal goals, hopes and dreams.

### VALUES:

- **Integrity:** We are honest and ethical in all actions taken, even when no one is watching.
- **Accountability:** We are accountable to the public, and we take responsibility for the actions and decisions of the City employees.
- **Innovation:** We embrace change, are flexible, and responsibly experiment with new ideas, programs or technologies to improve effectiveness.
- **Communication:** We commit to the open, clear, timely, constructive and collaborative exchange of information with a results-focused approach.
- **Respect:** We are courteous and seek to understand and acknowledge the views and values of everyone.
- **Leadership:** We have the courage to go first, take risks, inspire others, and consistently work toward the betterment of the Lawton community.





Alongside Goodyear Tire and Rubber, Republic Paper, and a mix of area hospitals, Fort Sill military base is one of the largest employers in the community. The base was annexed into Lawton in the 1990s and is famous for being the world's largest military field artillery training base. That influence extends beyond the base as Lawton has welcomed defense contractors, highly specialized technology companies, and other businesses focused on supporting and modernizing the military.

Lawton schoolchildren attend Lawton Public Schools, a premier district with 25 campuses and a diverse student population of about 13,670 in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Nearby independent districts include Bishop Public School and Flower Mound Public School. Lawton is also home to a private campus — Trinity Baptist Academy and higher education options Great Plains Technology Center, Comanche Nation College, Platt College, and Cameron University. With more than 50 degree programs, Cameron is the largest university in Southwest Oklahoma.

The median household income in Lawton is around \$51,500, and the median home price hovers around \$145,000.

Lawton Growth Plan



## TRUE NORTH CULTURE STATEMENT

### WE EXIST SOLELY TO SERVE THE CITIZEN.

We seek to efficiently provide the opportunity for our citizens and visitors to thrive. We are committed to being a safe community that is known for providing World Class Customer Service and being Open for Business.

Our Destination is EXCELLENCE.

### THE CITIZEN

Everything that we do is for the Citizen. EVERYTHING.

### TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST

We commit to open communication, transparency in our actions, and accountable decision-making. We will continually earn and maintain the trust of our citizens.

### EFFICIENCY

We embrace the venture of benchmarking against our peer cities with transparency. We will deliver all services with efficiency and address all matters with a sense of urgency.

### SAFE COMMUNITY

We will be relentless in our efforts to provide a safe environment for our citizens to thrive.

### WORLD CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

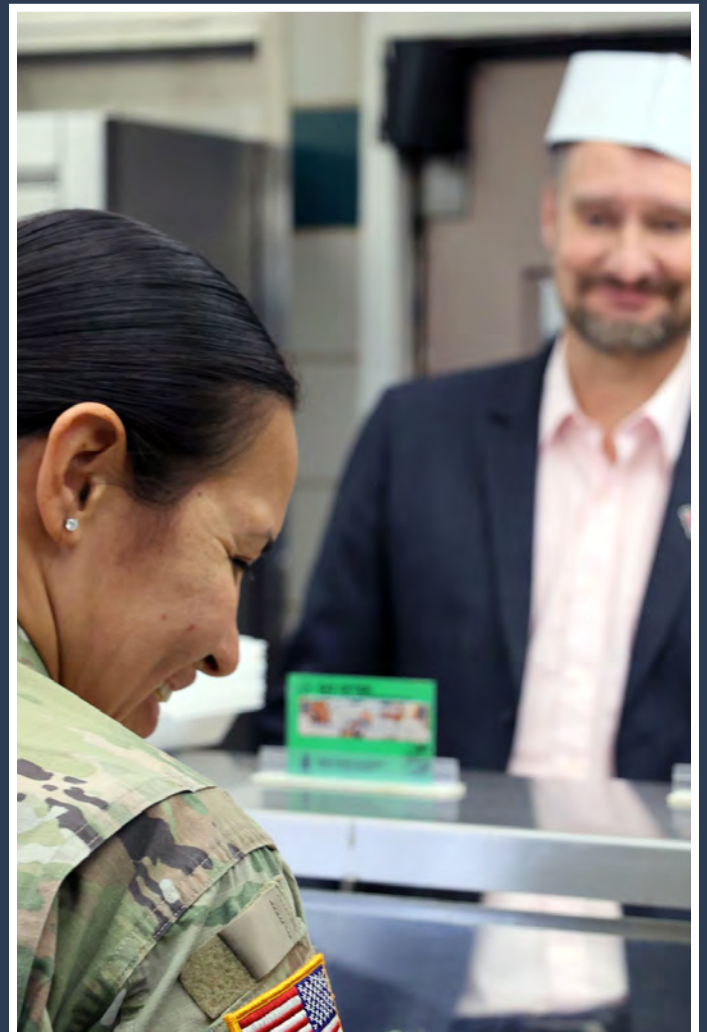
We will work to continuously improve the citizen experience in both doing business with the City of Lawton, and the quality of life.

### OPEN FOR BUSINESS

We will build a culture that lets the world know that Lawton is business friendly and business progressive.

### OUR PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

In our Pursuit of Excellence, we seek to set the standard for the State. We will not make excuses or “settle for” as we continuously improve.





## GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

The City of Lawton operates under a council-manager form of government in which the City Council sets vision and policy for the organization; approves the annual budget and tax rate; considers ordinances, resolutions, and select contracts; and, with the advice and assistance of their appointed City Manager, reviews proposals for community needs, initiates action for new programs, and determines the ability of the City to provide financing for City activities.

The City Council comprises one mayor, eight ward representatives, and a Fort Sill liaison. The mayor (elected at-large) and all eight council members elected in single-member districts serve three-year terms.

City Manager John Ratliff, who served as Lawton's city attorney before being promoted to the top spot in October 2023, is responsible for the daily operations of about 800 budgeted employees and administering a Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget of approximately \$388.8 million.







## ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Legal Services Department protects the City of Lawton's legal interests before various judicial and administrative courts, boards, commissions, and agencies and effectively and efficiently prosecutes all misdemeanor criminal offenses for violations of Lawton City Code.

With a team of 12 employees and an annual budget of about \$2.374 million, department staff provide the municipal government (City Council, city departments and divisions) with full legal representation; attend all meetings of the City Council; monitor open records requests; and provide legal reviews, advice, and opinions as needed. They also review City contracts, prepare ordinances and resolutions, assist in labor matters – to include labor negotiations and arbitrations, and investigate and render legal opinions on all claims against the City.

Department staff are split between civil and criminal cases, with one assistant city attorney and one legal assistant assigned to the Prosecutor's Office at Lawton's Public Safety Facility. The rest of the team is housed at City Hall and focuses on civil matters, including suits, arbitrations, mediations, and claims.

This past year, the City Attorney's Office represented the City in federal, state and municipal court, resulting in the dismissal of thirteen court cases, to include two cases alleging violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Representation continues in approximately 14 civil suits, various Worker's Compensation cases, several foreclosures, and numerous non-jury trials. Such representation includes defending the city, with the assistance of outside counsel, in three wrong death cases and three civil rights cases.

During the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, the department also closed 13 workers' compensation cases, filed 12 joint petition settlements, reviewed over 129 cases for disposition on the sounding docket, drafted various legal opinions, and reviewed numerous contracts for legal sufficiency.

### FY 2023-2024

- Grievances processed: **6**
- Assisted in declaring more than **170** properties dilapidated
- Tort claims processed: **62**
- Friendly suits initiated: **19**
- Processed collections: **24** processed, **15** collected, resulting in **\$37,145.00** in collections
- Processed citations: **19,135**
- Pre-trial conferences: **663**
- Non-jury trials: **53**
- Open records requests: **703**





## ABOUT THE POSITION

Under the direction of Lawton's Mayor and City Council, the City Attorney provides legal advice to and representation of the City and performs a variety of high-level administrative, technical, and professional duties in conducting and/or overseeing civil lawsuits, prosecuting municipal crimes, drafting legal documents, and advising City officials as to legal rights, obligations, practices, and other phases of applicable local, state, and federal law.

This position oversees the City's legal department, organizing assignments and managing and motivating its personnel, and prepares significant and complex cases for trial, representing the City in adversarial proceedings before the Municipal Court, District Court, Workers' Compensation Court, Court of Civil Appeals, Oklahoma Supreme Court, Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, the various United States Courts, state and federal administrative agencies, boards and commissions, and at other hearings of concern to the City. It also offers leadership and direction in developing short- and long-range plans; gathers, interprets, and prepares data for studies, reports, and recommendations; and coordinates activities with other City departments and county, state, and federal agencies as needed.

In addition to providing professional advice to City leaders, this role also communicates plans, policies, and procedures; makes presentations to a variety of internal and external stakeholders; manages the department's budget and expenditures; and oversees the City's workers' compensation program. Other essential duties include:

- Advising the City Council, city manager, and department heads on the current status and anticipated future trends of the law and issuing legal opinions.
- Drafting ordinances, resolutions, contracts, agreements, deeds, leases, franchises, etc. and reviewing documents prepared by other agencies or parties.
- Gathering evidence in civil, criminal, and other cases to formulate defense or to initiate legal action, drafting legal briefs, developing strategy and arguments, and reviewing testimony in preparation for litigation.
- Conferring with colleagues to establish and verify the basis for proceedings in specialized areas of the law, including serving as a liaison between outside legal counsel and City officials.
- Serving as a City spokesperson as required.
- Overseeing the City's compliance with Oklahoma's Open Meeting and Open Records Acts.
- Serving on the City's Disclosure Working Group, verifying that the City's disclosures to the Municipal Bond Market are timely and accurate as mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission.
- Guiding City Council, staff, and the mayor with regard to ad valorem, TIF districts and economic development, as needed, as well as the issuance of General Obligation and revenue bonds.
- Providing legal advice to the City's various trust authorities, as may be required from time to time.







## IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Lawton is seeking a strategic, innovative, and experienced legal mind with excellent judgment and work ethic to serve as its next City Attorney.

Candidates should have considerable knowledge and expertise in local, state, and federal laws, ordinances, charter provisions, etc. that affect municipal affairs, the purchase of goods and services, contracting, labor, employment, land use, environment, traffic, and more, as well as a thorough understanding of judicial procedures, precedents, and rules of evidence. They should also be skilled and fair-minded litigators, creative and collaborative professionals who enjoy staying updated on the latest developments in municipal and criminal law.

City leaders demand honesty, transparency, practicality, and hard work from their department heads, and this position is no exception. The ideal candidate is well-organized, detail-oriented, and able to manage stressful situations and tight deadlines while keeping a calm and friendly demeanor. They exhibit exceptional communication and interpersonal skills and build positive relationships with colleagues and key stakeholders throughout the organization and community.

This thoughtful and dynamic leader will work alongside City leadership to take Lawton to the next level, bringing best practices to the table, offering fresh ideas, listening to the needs of those around them, and advocating on behalf of the community. They will be politically savvy — though apolitical — and ensure a productive, effective, and efficient work environment that fosters innovation and mutual respect.







## EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

This position requires graduation from an ABA-accredited law school with a juris doctorate and admission to practice law before the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. Candidates should also have at least five years of experience as a practicing attorney — including evaluating, preparing, and litigating civil and criminal matters before city, state, and federal courts and before city, state, and federal administrative tribunals — and possess a valid Oklahoma driver's license.

Within six months of employment, the selected candidate should be admitted to practice law before the United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma and the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

Please note that residency within the City of Lawton is required for this position.



## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The City of Lawton is offering a competitive salary for this position, commensurate with qualifications and experience. The organization also provides a robust benefits package, including health, dental, vision, and life insurance; generous vacation and sick leave; and 12-13 paid holidays, including five flex days.

Lawton participates in the Oklahoma Municipal Retirement Fund, which features a City-matched 3.5% employee contribution, and offers a voluntary 457 deferred compensation plan.







## APPLICATION PROCESS

[Please apply online](#)

For more information on this position contact:

**Charles Kimble, Senior Vice President**

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910-261-6681



*The City of Lawton affords equal employment opportunity to all individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability status, or genetic information. Applicants selected as finalists will be subject to a comprehensive background check.*



## RESOURCES

[City of Lawton](#)

[Legal Services](#)

[Economic Development](#)

[Lawton Proud](#)

[Lawton Fort Sill Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Lawton Public Schools](#)

[Oklahoma Tourism](#)

