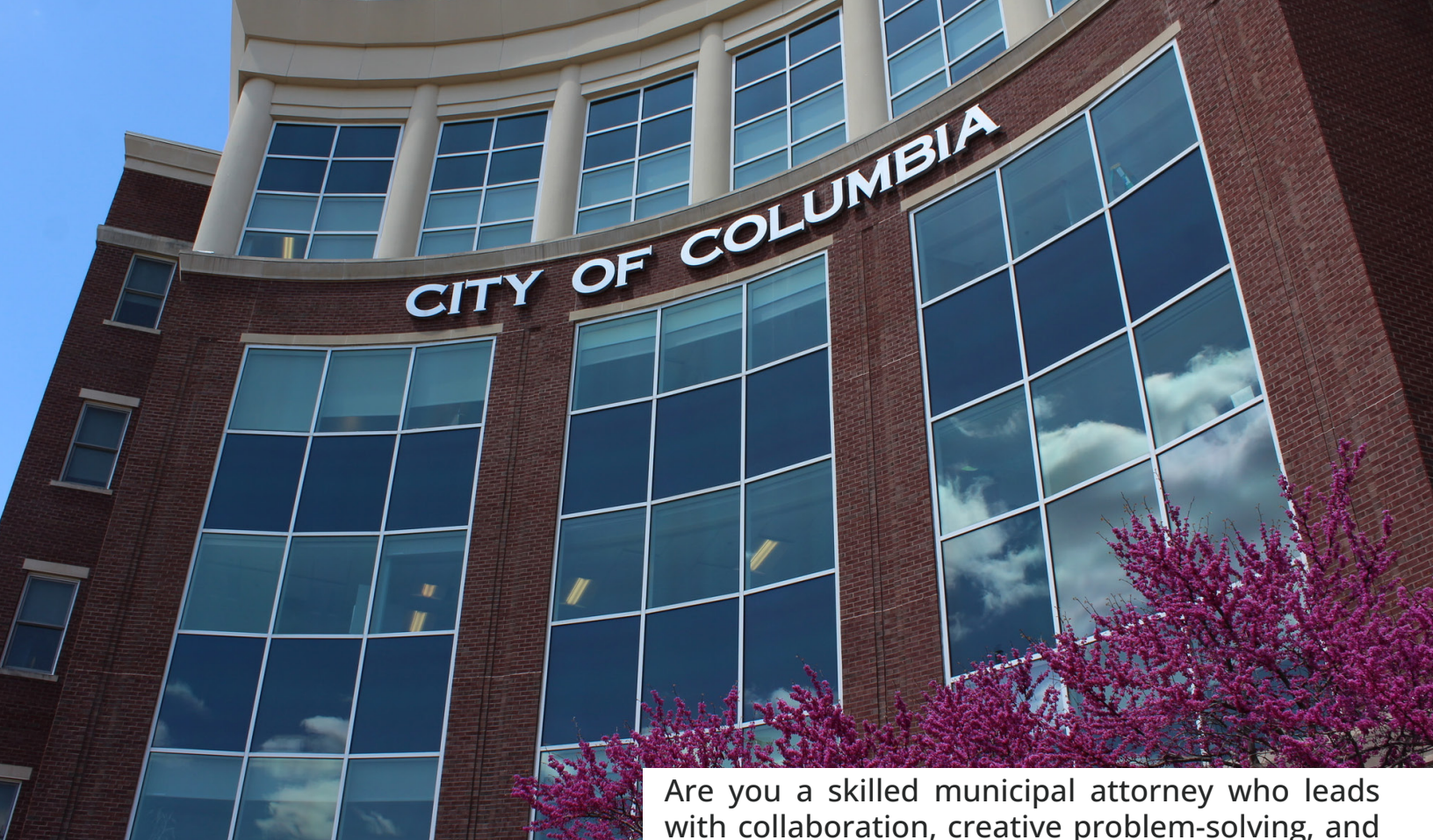




CITY COUNSELOR

City of Columbia, Missouri

Annual Salary:

\$148,366 to \$228,467 DOQ



Are you a skilled municipal attorney who leads with collaboration, creative problem-solving, and plain-spoken counsel? If so, apply to be the City of Columbia's next City Counselor!

The City of Columbia is seeking its next City Counselor to:

Serve as the City's chief legal counsel and lead a respected Law Department — nine attorneys and professional support staff across three divisions, with an operating budget of approximately \$2.7M;

Provide proactive, plain-language, "what if" legal advice that builds trust with the City Council, City Manager, departments, and the boards and commissions the department supports; and

Help guide a growing, full-service city through transparency, land use and redevelopment, risk management, and other emerging legal issues in a politically balanced, media-engaged community.

Work for the City that works for you — read on to learn more about this opportunity!

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Wide-open spaces and community spirit abound in Columbia, Missouri, a city repeatedly recognized for its outstanding quality of life. Centrally located in the continental U.S. at the crossroads of Interstate 70 and U.S. Highway 63, Columbia sits midway between Kansas City and St. Louis and offers convenient access to 11 major cities within 500 miles.

Columbia is known for its friendly community, vibrant downtown, home-grown establishments and businesses, and a deep well of arts and entertainment. The largest city in Boone County with a population of over 130,000, Columbia boasts a resilient economy rooted in education, research, healthcare, life sciences, manufacturing, and high-tech industry. As the home of the University of Missouri, it is a true “college community,” and the presence of higher education shapes the city’s culture, workforce, and civic life.

The arts come alive here with live music, theater, dance, visual art, and film year-round. Signature events include the True/False Film Fest, Art in the Park, the Unbound Book Festival, the Heritage Festival and Craft Show, and the First Friday gallery walk in the North Village Arts District. Cultural anchors include the Missouri Theatre, the Boone County History & Culture Center, and Ragtag Cinema.

Columbia Parks and Recreation oversees more than 3,500 acres of parkland, maintains 75 parks and over 60 miles of trail, and operates programs at a dozen recreation facilities. Beyond the city’s amenities, residents enjoy more than 2,200 acres of wilderness at nearby Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, the water at Finger Lakes State Park, and wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking, and camping in the Eagle Bluffs and Three Creeks conservation areas.

Columbia is also a place of exceptional educational attainment: 95.7% of residents age 25 and older hold a high school diploma or higher, and 56.7% hold a bachelor’s degree or higher — well above national averages. Families are drawn by a high-performing, award-winning public school system and by the University of Missouri and three colleges within the city limits.



POPULATION
130,851



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
\$66,498



MEDIAN HOME VALUE
\$284,600
MEDIAN MONTHLY RENT
\$1,097



GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

Columbia is a charter city operating under a council-manager form of government. The City Council is composed of six council members elected by ward and a mayor elected at large. Under the city’s charter, elected officials serve staggered, three-year terms and may seek reelection indefinitely so long as they continue to meet local residency and voter-registration requirements. The Council establishes policy and law and appoints the City Manager, who handles the day-to-day management of the organization. De’Carlton Seewood has served as City Manager since January 2022.

Columbia prides itself on being a full-service city, providing all utilities except natural gas — including its own electric, water, and sewer systems — and operating a regional airport and a railroad. The City has an adopted Fiscal Year 2027 total budget of approximately \$607M, 19 departments, and more than 1,600 full-time equivalent positions across all funds. There are six active labor unions, four of which have collective bargaining agreements, and the City maintains a self-funded benefits plan.

The City Counselor position is appointed by the City Manager and confirmed by the City Council.

THE JOB

The City Counselor serves as the City's chief legal counsel and director of the Law Department, providing independent, timely, practical, and strategic legal advice to the City Council, City Manager, departments, boards, commissions, and other City officials on matters affecting the city's interests and operations.

The City Counselor leads a Law Department of approximately 20.75 authorized FTE — nine attorneys plus professional support staff — with an operating budget of roughly \$2.7M. The department is organized into three divisions: the Counselor (Civil) Division, the Prosecution (Criminal) Division, and Risk Management. Its work spans managing all litigation involving the City; prosecuting municipal ordinance violations; drafting legislation; approving as to form all contracts, deeds, bonds, and documents signed in the name of the city; serving as the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator; and providing primary staff support to the Disabilities Commission. In FY25, the department assumed responsibility for the administration and coordination of Risk Management, which manages the City's Self-Insurance Program for general liability, automobile, workers' compensation, and property, along with proactive loss-prevention efforts.

The City Counselor attends the City Council's twice-monthly meetings and is expected to be forward-facing with the Council, departments, and the public.

[Full Job Description](#)



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The next City Counselor will step into a respected office at a moment of opportunity — one that invites a proactive, solutions-oriented approach to municipal law. Several themes will shape the first years in the role:

Build trust and a “what if” culture. The Council is looking for a City Counselor who leads a department known for proactive, collaborative problem-solving — an office that helps decision-makers find legally sound paths forward on difficult questions. Establishing credibility and trust with a Council that has seen significant turnover will be an early priority.

Serve as a plain-language translator of the law. Much of this role is internal-facing. The City Counselor must be able to read, interpret, communicate, and apply the law — explaining complex legal matters in clear, understandable terms to the City Council, City Manager, and departments, and guiding public meetings with command of parliamentary procedure and open-meetings requirements.

Navigate a politically balanced, media-rich environment. Columbia is a community rich in varied perspectives, and the City Counselor must be politically savvy without being political — maintaining professional independence and objectivity. The University of Missouri's nationally prominent journalism program contributes to an especially active local media climate, placing a premium on sound judgment around public records and transparency.

Guide the City through growth and emerging issues. A growing community elevates the importance of land use, zoning, and redevelopment law. Current and emerging matters where legal fluency will be valued include public-records/Sunshine Law compliance, the responsible stewardship of a recently approved dedicated one-cent public safety sales tax, automated license-plate/Flock camera technology, data center development (currently subject to a pause), and the legal dimensions of “town and gown” coordination with the University.

Steward specialized municipal enterprises and risk. Columbia's ownership of its electric, water, and sewer utilities, along with operating a regional airport and a railroad creates a distinctive body of legal work. Familiarity with utility, aviation, and rail matters — and with the City's newly integrated risk management function — will be an asset.



IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Columbia is seeking a skilled, well-rounded municipal attorney and manager to serve as its next City Counselor — a proactive problem-solver who leads with collaboration. The ideal candidate is a strong general municipal lawyer, a “jack of all trades” comfortable across the full breadth of local-government legal practice, who can read, interpret, communicate, and apply the law with sound judgment and a steady hand on balancing risk.

This individual will be an excellent communicator, able to explain the law in plain, accessible terms and to build genuine trust with the City Council, City Manager, and departments. They will be forward-facing and engaged — attending Council meetings with a firm grasp of parliamentary procedure and open-meetings rules, and offering constructive “what if” counsel that helps the organization find solutions to difficult political questions while preserving professional independence. The successful candidate will be politically savvy but not political, credible, approachable, and an effective leader of an experienced legal team of attorneys and support staff.

EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS

Required:

- Juris Doctorate from an accredited program.
- Nine or more years of legal experience in local government or public-sector law.
- Active license to practice law and membership in the Missouri Bar required prior to starting work.
- Valid driver’s license or reliable transportation.

Preferred:

- Broad general municipal law experience, including open meetings/public records (Sunshine Law), land use and redevelopment, public contracting, and risk management/governmental liability.
- Experience directing or supervising a legal department or division and managing a budget.
- Prior experience advising an elected governing body in a politically balanced environment.



SALARY & BENEFITS

The City of Columbia offers a salary range of \$148,366 to \$228,467 DOQ for the City Counselor position.

The City also provides a comprehensive benefits package, including medical, dental, life, and long-term disability coverage; 10 set and four floating holidays annually; and generous vacation and sick leave. Columbia participates in the Missouri Local Government Employees Retirement System (LAGERS), with contributions paid in full by the City, and participates in Social Security. Employees also have access to an optional 457 deferred compensation plan.

Residency within city limits is preferred but not required.

Benefits



HOW TO APPLY

Apply Here



For more information on this position, contact:

**Michael D. Mallinoff, Esq. Senior Vice President, Executive Recruitment
Strategic Government Resources**

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The City of Columbia is an Equal Opportunity Employer.