



SANTA MONICA RENT CONTROL BOARD

General Counsel





The Position

This is a rare opportunity to serve as General Counsel to an independent agency under the Santa Monica Charter with a meaningful role in shaping housing stability, tenant protections, and public governance in one of California's most complex regulatory environments. As housing issues continue to command attention at the local, state, and national levels, the Santa Monica Rent Control Board plays a critical role in decisions that affect thousands of residents and property owners.

With regulatory updates ahead and modernization efforts underway, the Board seeks a seasoned, thoughtful General Counsel to help guide the agency forward. Supported by a knowledgeable Board, an experienced and cohesive legal team, and a culture grounded in integrity and collaboration, the next General Counsel will play a key role in the continued evolution of rent control administration in Santa Monica.

Reporting directly to the Rent Control Board, the General Counsel serves as the agency's chief legal advisor and principal litigation strategist and is a key member of the agency's management team. The role is central to the Board's work, providing trusted legal guidance that informs policy decisions, safeguards the agency's independence, and ensures the lawful and effective administration of the rent control program.

The General Counsel advises the Board, Executive Director, and senior leadership on complex matters involving rent stabilization, eviction controls, tenant protections, administrative law, and governance. This includes guiding the Board's exercise of its authority, ensuring due process, and maintaining compliance with open-meeting laws and ethical requirements. Legal advice is provided both confidentially and in open public meetings, requiring sound judgment, clarity, and confidence under public scrutiny.

As lead litigation counsel, the General Counsel oversees all litigation involving the Board, including administrative appeals, writs of mandate, constitutional challenges, and appellate matters. The role also includes representing the Board and individual Board members in legal proceedings arising from actions taken in their official capacities and managing legal strategy with careful attention to risk, precedent, and policy implications.

In addition, the General Counsel plays a significant role in shaping the agency's regulatory and legislative framework. Responsibilities include drafting and interpreting ordinances, regulations, Board policies, and legal opinions; monitoring and analyzing housing-related legislation and court decisions; and working closely with lobbyists and City partners to advance and protect the Board's interests.

The General Counsel provides leadership within the organization by supervising and mentoring legal staff in a professional, supportive, and coaching manner, while also overseeing the Legal Department budget and contributing to overall operational oversight.

This role requires technical legal excellence, strategic thinking, and the ability to navigate complex, public-facing decision-making with professionalism, credibility, and confidence.

Key Priorities

- Maintain a close, accessible, and trusted working relationship with the Rent Control Board, ensuring clear, timely communication and consistent legal support.
- Foster strong communication and collaboration between Board members, leadership, and staff to support informed decision-making and organizational alignment.
- Enforce and ensure the proper administration of the Rent Control Law (RCL).
- Maintain a thorough knowledge and understanding of the RCL and related City ordinances to provide accurate and effective interpretation of its provisions.
- Litigate as needed on the Board's behalf and oversee staff development through targeted training, mentoring, and knowledge-sharing within the Legal Department.
- Build and sustain effective internal and external partnerships, including close collaboration with City departments and coordination with external agencies and stakeholders.

The Successful Candidate

The successful candidate is a seasoned public-sector attorney who brings both depth of experience and a collaborative, people-centered leadership style. This individual is integrity-driven, independent, and trusted to provide candid legal advice—even in politically sensitive or high-pressure situations. They combine strategic thinking with practical execution and are comfortable advising a Board in open meetings where transparency and clarity are paramount.

The ideal candidate is an effective communicator who can explain complex legal issues in plain, accessible language to non-lawyers. They are thoughtful, detail-oriented, and solutions-focused, with strong judgment shaped by real-world public-sector experience.

As a leader, this individual is approachable, emotionally intelligent, and respectful—able to supervise experienced attorneys, provide constructive feedback, and maintain a positive, professional culture. They value collaboration over hierarchy, build strong relationships across departments and agencies, and are flexible in exploring options while remaining grounded in the law.



Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring public-sector legal experience, sound judgment, and a demonstrated ability to advise public governing bodies in complex, high-visibility environments.

Qualified candidates will possess:

- A Juris Doctor (J.D.) or equivalent degree from an ABA-accredited law school.
- A minimum of seven (7) years of progressively responsible legal experience, which must include at least five (5) years of litigation practice and at least two (2) years of municipal or other public-sector legal experience involving work with elected or appointed public bodies, public meetings, and compliance with open-meeting laws, including the Brown Act.

Inside the Organization

The Santa Monica Rent Control Board is comprised of five elected members, often referred to as Commissioners, and is an independent agency under the Santa Monica Charter responsible for administering and enforcing the City's rent control law and advancing tenant protections within rent-controlled housing. As both a legislative and quasi-adjudicatory body, the Board conducts its work openly and transparently, with public deliberation, written findings, and decisions that are closely followed by stakeholders and the courts.

Santa Monica's Rent Control Law was adopted by the voters in April 1979 in response to a shortage of housing units, low vacancy rates, and rapidly rising rents. The law was intended to alleviate the housing shortage and to ensure that owners received no more than a fair return. The agency carries out the law's basic goals, including:

- Regulating the rent that may be charged for residential rental units subject to the law and providing remedies if excess rent is collected.
- Determining the base amenities/services included in the rent and providing remedies for any reduction.
- Limiting the grounds for eviction.
- Ensuring rental-property owners a fair return.

While the agency operates and is financed independently from the City, it is an integral part of the City and collaborates regularly with City departments, including the City Manager and the City Attorney's Office, and external partners to ensure the lawful and effective implementation of rent control and related tenant-protection laws.





The Community

Santa Monica is a vibrant Southern California city, renowned for its coastal beauty, progressive spirit, and thriving environment. It offers a unique blend of urban living and beach culture, making it a highly desirable place to live and work. Located on Santa Monica Bay, just 15 miles from Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Monica enjoys a mild, year-round climate. Residents benefit from an exceptional quality of life with ocean views, 3.5 miles of beach, and extensive outdoor recreation in parks such as Palisades, Tongva, Clover, and Douglas Parks. The City is highly walkable and bike-friendly, with green bike lanes and the Marvin Braude Bike Trail promoting sustainable mobility.

Originally inhabited by the Gabrielino Tongva and Chumash people, Santa Monica was named in 1769. Founded on July 10, 1875, by Senator John P. Jones and Colonel Robert S. Baker, it was envisioned as a “great commercial center of the southwest.” Early development included a 16-mile rail line to Los Angeles and a substantial wharf. Incorporated in November 1886, Santa Monica grew into a premier resort destination by the 1920s, known for the iconic Santa Monica Pier and its “Gold Coast.” This history reflects the City’s enduring appeal and capacity for transformation.

Santa Monica is integral to the Los Angeles economy, with thriving tech, media, and lifestyle sectors, home to companies like Edmunds, Beachbody, Lionsgate, RAND Corporation, and Bird. The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) is highly regarded, with Santa Monica High School graduates attending top universities. Santa Monica College (SMC) is a leading community college for transfers to University of California and other four-year institutions. The City offers a rich arts and culture scene, featuring over 170 public murals, galleries at Bergamot Station, and venues like The Broad Stage. Its diverse culinary scene includes four weekly Farmers Markets.

Santa Monica features excellent public transportation, including the Metro E Line to downtown Los Angeles and a robust bus network. This, combined with walkability and bike-friendliness, offers diverse commuting options. Santa Monica seamlessly blends coastal living with a dynamic economy, educational excellence, and a rich cultural scene. Its progressive urban planning and commitment to sustainability make it an ideal place for public sector professionals seeking a fulfilling career in a vibrant community.



Compensation

The expected hiring range is \$195,588 – \$241,464, depending on qualifications. The salary is supported by an attractive benefits package which includes retirement benefits provided by CalPERS. A relocation package and other amenities may be offered, as appropriate, as part of the total compensation negotiated in the employment agreement.



How to Apply

Applications will be accepted electronically by Raftelis at raftelis.com. Applicants will complete a brief online form and upload a cover letter and resume. For full consideration, please submit your application materials by **Friday, February 27, 2026**.



Questions

For more information or questions, please contact Serena Wright-Black at swrightblack@raftelis.com and Robert Colichio at rcolichio@raftelis.com.