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PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Archer & Greiner seeks to double Philadelphia presence behind new office managing partner

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Former City Solicitor Shelley Smith took over Thursday as Philadelphia managing partner for Archer & Greiner, taking the helm of an office targeted for expansion.

Smith succeeds Patrick Doran in running the Center City office that South Jersey's largest law firm opened in 1988. Doran remains a partner in Archer's labor and employment practice and serves in the cabinet of President Marc Rollo, which guides strategic decisions for the firm.

Voorhees-based Archer had a small presence in Center City for about 20 years before it absorbed the dissolving, 21-lawyer Pelino & Lentz in 2008. It moved into 21,666 square feet on the 35th floor at Three Logan Square when it signed a long-term lease in 2017. The firm declined to say when its lease at Three Logan expires, but Smith said the firm can accommodate significant growth in its current space.

Archer's website lists 20 lawyers as practicing full-time in the office building at 1717 Arch St., but Smith said an additional 10 from nearby locations in New Jersey and Delaware also spend a good deal of time in Center City. She said the firm wants to expand in Philadelphia.



SHELLEY SMITH OF ARCHER & GREINER

"Our target is around 50 lawyers over the next couple of years, but we're certainly looking to expand as we look to expand our capabilities across some key practice areas that really dovetail with the city's key industries," Smith said.

Areas of focus are litigation and transactional practices in higher education, healthcare, life sciences, sports and entertainment, nonprofits and land use.

Rollo said Archer already has strong lawyers in Philadelphia in those areas but wants deeper bench strength.

"We don't want to go into areas where the firm has no experience or no connection to it," said Rollo, who became firm president in January. "If that number [of lawyers] becomes double in the next couple years, that's great. … That would give us, we think, the critical mass to do all the things we want to do in Philadelphia."

Archer has remained at roughly 175 lawyers overall for some time. Rollo said the firm has focused on organic and measured growth, with little

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interest in being acquired and no firm plans to expand geographically – save for a potential new office in Philadelphia's western suburbs to serve its trusts and estates practice.

The firm also has offices in Hackensack, Red Bank and Princeton, New Jersey; Wilmington, Delaware; New York and Houston.

Smith said while several lawyers from nearby locations spend time in Philadelphia, she wants the office to have its own identity. As a Mount Airy native who can trace her family's history in the city to the 1700s and who led the 325-person Philadelphia Law Department for eight years, Smith said she has a unique perspective about what's going on in the local political and business environments.

"And I think that's going to be instrumental in building and reinforcing our identity," she said.

From 1992 to 2006, Smith rose through the ranks of the law department to become chief deputy city solicitor and chair of the corporate and tax group. She then moved to the private sector as associate general counsel for regulatory affairs at Exelon Energy Corp. and as counsel at Ballard Spahr before returning to run the City Solicitor's Office under Mayor Michael Nutter in 2008.

She joined Archer & Greiner's Center City office as a partner in the



MARC ROLLO OF ARCHER & GREINER

commercial litigation and labor and employment practices after Nutter's second term expired in 2016. Her practice focuses on discrimination and other employment litigation matters as well as constitutional tort cases, civil lawsuits where a person sues a government employee or agent for violating their constitutional rights. The City of Philadelphia is among her clients.

Since 2021, Smith has also served as the firm's chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer.

Rollo pointed to partner Kate Sherlock's work as outside counsel to Race Street Partners as an example of Archer's new fractional general counsel model. Under that structure, firm attorneys can serve as extensions of in-house roles, with either a monthly flat fee or fixed fee that gives pricing certainty rather than implementing the traditional billable hour.

That work came in part through Smith's city connections. Race Street Partners was co-founded by Nutter, Eric Robbins and Carlos Rogers to help bring the Philadelphia Cycling Classic back to Philadelphia in 2026 after a 10-year hiatus.

"We've gotten some real good opportunities, and we expect it to grow with regard to offering individual attorney services to help in-house attorneys," Rollo said. "The idea is that they would work 20 hours a week helping out a company and spend one or two days with the client and [the remainder of the week] back in our offices."

ARCHER & GREINER PC
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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