

CITY MANAGER OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN



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THE POSITION IN BRIEF

The City Manager is responsible for the city's day-to-day operations, including budgets totaling approximately \$174 million as well as a workforce of approximately 650 employees in a financially stable organization. The City Council is looking for a forward-thinking, collaborative, and transparent professional with strong communication skills to lead Oshkosh forward to a successful future.

THE COMMUNITY

The [City of Oshkosh](#) is an award-winning community in the heart of the Fox River Valley, approximately 90 miles north of Milwaukee and 50 miles south of Green Bay. Oshkosh is a progressive and participative community that offers small-town friendliness with big city features and a high quality of life for people of all ages and interests. As a great place to live with an excellent school system, outstanding health care facilities, abundant entertainment opportunities, and a low cost of living, Oshkosh is an ideal destination.

On the western shore of the state's largest inbound body of water, Lake Winnebago (217 square miles), Oshkosh is also banked by the Fox River and Lake Butte des Morts (8,800 acres). Oshkosh has been ranked in Money Magazine's "Top 100 Best Places to Live in the United States." Business Week placed Oshkosh among "The Best Places to Raise Your Kids."

Oshkosh's history dates back thousands of years as the ancestral home to the Ho-Chunk and Menominee tribes who lived in the area prior to European settlers. The establishment and growth of the lumber industry after the Civil War fueled the development of Oshkosh. The structures which now make up the city's historic areas are a result of the capital and materials generated by the lumber and associated wood manufacturing industries.

Oshkosh was incorporated in 1853. The 1859 arrival of rail transportation provided an important opportunity to meet the demands of a larger and rapidly growing construction market. By 1870, Oshkosh had become the third largest city in the state.

Today, the City encompasses 24 square miles. It is the largest municipality in [Winnebago County](#), with a population of more than 66,000. The Oshkosh/Appleton/Neenah CSA has a population of more than 415,000. It is the state's ninth largest city. Oshkosh is served by US Highways 41 and 45, the Appleton International Airport, and General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee.

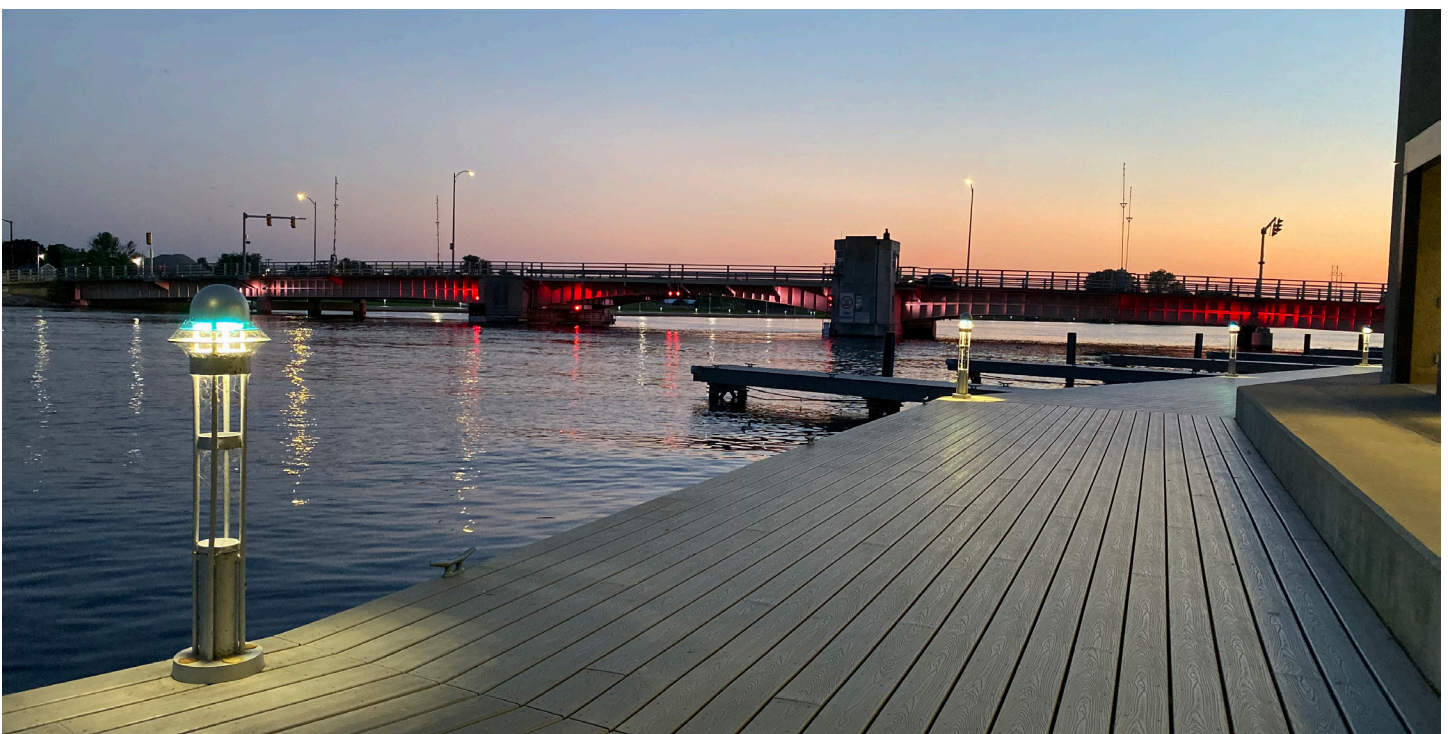
The City's median household income is \$59,186, and the median home value for owner-occupied units was \$156,900 based on 2022 U.S. Census data. The largest employment base is manufacturing followed by education. Top employers are Oshkosh Corporation, Amcor, Silver Star Brands/Miles Kimball Company, US Bank, Oshkosh Area Public Schools, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Aurora Medical Group, and Winnebago County.

Oshkosh has a strong tradition of education and offers one of the finest school systems in the nation. The schools, both public and private, offer a variety of educational programs. Through thirteen elementary schools, five middle schools, two high schools, one charter school and an eAcademy, Oshkosh Area School District educates over 9,000 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. In addition, there are several private schools in Oshkosh. The [Fox Valley Technical College](#), headquartered in Appleton, has two locations in Oshkosh. Additionally, the [University of Wisconsin Oshkosh](#) is the third largest university in the state with a total enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. The University, founded in 1871, serves as an arts and cultural center for the 1.2 million citizens of northeast Wisconsin.

Oshkosh currently has two hospitals, Ascension NE Wisconsin and Aurora Medical Center with another health campus managed by Froedtert ThedaCare Health under construction. Other amenities in and around the community include more than 400 acres of parks and natural resource areas, numerous marinas and boat launches, the Fox River Riverwalk, Menominee Park Zoo, Pollock Community Water Park, Children's Amusement Center, and the Oshkosh Senior Center.

Attractions include the [Experimental Aircraft Association Aviation Center and Museum](#), the [Grand Opera House](#), Leach Amphitheater, Menominee Park and Zoo, Military Veterans Museum, Opera House Square, [Oshkosh Public Museum](#), Paine Art Center and Gardens, and the [Oshkosh Public Library](#). Many more year-round activities and events, such as the [Oshkosh Farmer's Market](#), can be found highlighted by the [Oshkosh Convention and Visitors Bureau](#).

The National Basketball Association's Milwaukee Bucks development team, the [Wisconsin Herd](#), play at the downtown [Oshkosh Arena](#).





THE MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION AND THE CITY MANAGER POSITION

Oshkosh has operated under the Council-Manager form of government since 1956. The [City Council](#) (also referred to as the Common Council) consists of seven members, each of whom is elected, at large, for staggered two-year terms. The Mayor, who is both a member and serves as the head of the council, is elected every other year by the voters.

The City Manager is appointed by and serves at the discretion of the City Council. The retiring City Manager has been in this position since 2008. The City Manager is responsible for the general administration of the City of Oshkosh, program coordination and development, preparation of City Council agendas, special staff reports, annual budget, and an annual statement of city programs and priorities. As Chief Executive Officer, the City Manager is directly responsible to the City Council for all operations of the City, as well as implementation of policies and programs adopted by the Council. The City Manager appoints all officers and employees of the City with the exception of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Library Director. Several groups of employees of the City, including Fire, Police, and Transit are organized into labor unions for purposes of conducting collective bargaining with the City.

Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is a full-service city. City departments include the City Clerk's Office, Finance Department, Fire Department, Administrative Services Department, Legal Department, Parks Department, Community Development Department,

Police Department, Public Works Department, Public Museum and Transportation Department. A complete description of each department can be found [using this link](#).

The City has a [FY 2024 budget](#) of more than \$174 million, including a general fund of more than \$56 million. The City's leadership has worked hard in the last several years to upgrade the City's infrastructure. As a result the City is at 43% of its debt limit. The City has aggressively used tax incremental financing to advance its economic development goals.

The City has an AA3 bond rating from Moody's Investors Service and an equalized value of \$6.3 billion. By policy, the City's leadership is committed to maintaining a reserve that is 16% of the general fund revenues; current reserves exceed almost twice that amount.

The City Council has adopted a budget that maintains current services for the citizens. The budget reflects the priorities of the Council outlined in the [Strategic Plan](#) including Enhancing Quality-of-Life Services and Assets, Improving and Maintaining Infrastructure, Supporting Economic Development, Strengthening Neighborhoods, Providing a Safe, Secure, and Healthy Community, and Enhancing the Effectiveness of City Government.

A short promotional video about the city can be found here: [Welcome to Oshkosh](#)

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the development of this profile, the Mayor, City Council, city staff leadership, and community leaders identified these issues and initiatives that will need the next City Manager's attention in the upcoming years. In addition, an on-line survey available on the City's website was also conducted for this recruitment, the results of which will be available soon.

Fiscal Management. The City's latest [Annual Comprehensive Financial Report](#) demonstrates a strong financial position, with its fund balance exceeding 31%. Like all Wisconsin municipalities, however, the City's finances are tested by various parameters guiding the generation of new sources of revenues, as well as State of Wisconsin's tax levy limits. Correspondingly, infrastructure and capital improvements are always at the forefront of attention, and in Oshkosh a robust list of projects is always under consideration. The next City Manager can expect to work closely with the elected and appointed officials on seeking out new sources of revenue as well as continuing to find ways to deliver City services most efficiently. The new City Manager can also anticipate guiding the City to meet the city's infrastructure goals by forecasting how the City can keep on top of infrastructure and capital demands.

Organizational Design and Service Delivery. The new City Manager is encouraged to assess the municipal organization and, over time, evaluate service delivery processes, procedures and methods. A fresh-eyed look at departmental and divisional organization, resource-sharing, and interactions with residents and the business community is welcomed, as the City is open to continuous improvement, new approaches, and a customer-focused philosophy.

Community and Economic Development. Community and economic development issues are expected to be a significant focal point for the next City Manager. The city has an attractive and busy downtown with an active [Downtown Business Improvement District](#). In 2000, the city partnered with the [Oshkosh Area Community Foundation](#) and the [Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce](#) to develop a [Downtown Action Plan](#). The Downtown Action Plan provided a framework and agenda that has positively guided capital improvement projects and private investment for more than 15 years. Much success was achieved, and Oshkosh's downtown saw a significant transformation.





The City has since updated and built on that success. In 2017, the Imagine Oshkosh Plan was developed as an update to previous planning efforts, which now serves as a long-term vision and comprehensive investment strategy for the entire Center City including the [Sawdust District](#). The Sawdust District, known for its historic industrial uses, was once home to leading lumber and furniture companies. As the dominance of the lumber industry decreased in the community, development has evolved to a more diverse state. Today, the Sawdust District is experiencing a development renaissance starting with redevelopment of a site into the Oshkosh Arena that is the home court for Wisconsin's newest NBA G-League team, the Wisconsin Herd.

The city's geographic location presents a mix of challenges and opportunities. For instance, the City's proximity to larger urban centers such as Milwaukee, Green Bay and Madison, and being a host community to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, provides synergy and support to the area's retail, commercial and manufacturing businesses. However, despite an influx and constant turn of new and younger residents, the transience of this potential workforce and low unemployment makes for challenging recruitment and retention efforts for area businesses.

Historically a manufacturing community, Oshkosh is experiencing a transforming economy. The [Greater Oshkosh Economic Development Corporation](#), of which the City is a key partner, is focusing on transforming the regional business and economic conditions by increasing the region's overall personal wealth, business profitability, community investments, and standard of living – measured against other regions.

While [housing development](#) is occurring within the city's limits, the City has identified additional pent-up housing needs that span the financial spectrum, i.e., from workforce housing to higher-end single-family products. There is a significant share of multi-family housing and mixed-use available or coming on-line, and there is developer interest in this market, but single-family housing options are limited as is unimproved land, all exacerbated by higher interest rates. The City finds, too, that it competes with its neighboring communities as developers and homebuyers consider their building and buying options beyond Oshkosh in the Fox River Valley.

All told, the next City Manager can expect to work cooperatively with elected officials, the Oshkosh business community, the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Oshkosh Economic Development Corporation, and other economic development stakeholders to advance the area's common goals for addressing development, redevelopment, business retention and attraction, and housing growth opportunities.

Community Involvement and Intergovernmental Relations. The next City Manager should be comfortable having a visible role in the City, easily interacting with, and embracing a wide spectrum of residents, individuals, and community businesses and organizations. Stakeholders both inside and outside the organization expect the City Manager to embrace the community with a sincere passion for the welfare and advancement of Oshkosh.

In addition, the incoming City Manager should welcome opportunities to collaborate with regional interests that include the [Oshkosh Area School District](#), [Winnebago County](#), the [Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce](#), [Downtown Oshkosh](#), the [Oshkosh Convention and Visitors Bureau](#), the [Greater Oshkosh Economic Development Corporation](#) and the not-for-profit sector, which is serving a significant portion of the City's population. Consequently, a broad view of regional opportunities and partnerships will be required, and the next City Manager will need an appreciation that these interdependent relationships, interests and agencies all play a role into shaping the social and economic fabric of the community.

University and City Relations. The City has a positive relationship with the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh that reflects ongoing communication and responsiveness. Yet, not unusual in municipalities that host colleges, campus growth and student activities sometime add challenges to municipal resources. The next City Manager is expected to cultivate a high level of communication and collaboration and to maintain strong ties with the University by working confidently, creatively and objectively with University officials.

Intergovernmental Relationships. The City's desire for strong intergovernmental relationships within the region is keenly important. Since Oshkosh is one of the largest communities in the state, it plays a significant role in helping craft state legislation that affects all Wisconsin communities, and its leaders have developed important relationships and persuasive messaging on a regional and state level. In this regard, it will also be important to build a strong working relationship with Winnebago County, as many of the City's social challenges – homelessness, unemployment or under employment, and an influx of immigrants – are issues that require the County's role as they are the state's human services agent. The next City Manager can expect to play a leading role in developing close working alliances within the community, and with state, county and municipal partners and neighbors.





CANDIDATE QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

The following education, experience, management, and leadership criteria have been identified by the City's management team as important skills and abilities for candidates to possess and demonstrate.

MANAGEMENT STYLE AND PERSONAL TRAITS

- Have a background of professional and personal integrity, honesty and of leading/motivating personnel by example.
- Have the maturity, self-confidence, and strength of professional convictions to provide administrative insights and administrative counsel to the City Council and Staff, being able to firmly and diplomatically present professional views and carry out administrative decisions in a timely, professional, and impartial manner.
- Be politically astute, yet politically neutral. Be able to "read the Council," providing guidance, advice and counsel in a manner that is impeccably objective and based on facts.
- Be a proactive communicator with the City Council, reporting at least weekly to the Council through a variety of means, and seeking ways to interact with Council members one-on-one.
- Be someone who is comfortable listening to and talking with a wide spectrum of people; someone who can clearly and concisely present written and oral information to decision makers; willingly share information as appropriate.
- Be a creative thinker.
- Be a strong administrative leader and be able to help City Staff to identify, analyze, prioritize, and thoroughly deliberate and address administrative and management issues, which are critical toward meeting both current and longer-range needs of the overall community.
- Be comfortable in delegating responsibility and authority to professional staff as a team player while remaining informed and conversant on the status of all programs and projects.
- Be a "people person," sincerely personable, patient, calm and accessible. Have a sense of humor.
- Be one who can establish trust quickly with others and one who can relate to all elements of the community.
- Promote a strong, service-oriented, "customer relations" approach by all employees in dealing with citizenry. Lead with "Yes...."
- Possess an open mind in dealing with the City's complex and challenging issues that sometimes compete with one another.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

- A bachelor's degree in business or public administration, or related field, with a master's degree in public administration or closely related field preferred.
- Proven executive-level municipal management experience as either a chief administrative officer or assistant CAO, preferably in an independent, freestanding community of similar size and complexity, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.
- A team-oriented, strategic-thinking approach toward staff leadership with supervisory skills compatible with a high-functioning team.
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills.
- Strong financial, analytical, and budget management expertise.
- Have management experience in creating an environment of trust, integrity, and mentorship where employees respect one another and where the City's departments consistently function at a high level of customer service.
- Have a demonstrated ability to provide strategic leadership and long-range planning practices.
- Have a history of assessing the skills and abilities of existing personnel in an effort to maximize their talent and expertise, including opportunities for employees to take on new challenges as professionals.
- Excellent communication skills and significant career success in building collaborative, effective relationships across departments.



COMPENSATION, BENEFITS AND THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE

The starting salary is \$185,000 – \$225,000 +/- DOQ, plus an excellent benefit package. The City offers a competitive benefits package including health, dental, and vision insurance, FSA, paid time off, cell phone, and participation in the Wisconsin Retirement System.

The City Council possesses a strong respect for City staff's work. Among themselves, elected officials are collegial and respectful of differing perspectives and points of view.

The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The City seeks to attract the most talented people from a diverse candidate pool, and strongly encourages women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and veterans to apply.

HOW TO APPLY

Apply online at www.GovHRjobs.com with a resume, cover letter and contact information for five professional references by October 21, 2024. Confidential inquiries may be sent to: Lee Szymborski, Senior Consultant, MGT, Northfield, IL. Tel: 847-380-3240.



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