



VILLAGE OF  
**WHEELING**  
ILLINOIS

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR



**GHR** GovHR USA  
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*Executive Recruitment*

A photograph showing two people riding bicycles on a dirt path through a wooded area. The person in the foreground is wearing a black tank top and dark shorts, riding away from the camera. The person in the background is wearing a red shirt and shorts, also riding away from the camera. The path is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage.

## **THE POSITION IN BRIEF**

The Director of Economic Development is a member of a management team serving an outer-ring suburb of Chicago that has continued to grow in the last several decades, and is experiencing significant reinvestment in the community. The Director coordinates all aspects of a robust Village economic development program that focuses on attraction and retention efforts in the retail, industrial, residential, and office sectors.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

Wheeling is located 27 miles northwest of Chicago's Loop. Neighboring communities include Buffalo Grove, Arlington Heights and Lincolnshire. The Village has a resident population of 38,878, and a larger daytime population due to commercial and retail businesses. The Village's population has been steadily growing in the last several decades.

Incorporated in 1894, the [Village of Wheeling](#) originated as an overnight rest stop for travelers journeying from Chicago to the Wisconsin Territory. The inns, taverns, and eateries established in the 1830's developed into Wheeling's Restaurant Row. Farmers took advantage of the area's fertile soil, and growing overland transportation network. Soon the stage stop community began to export its crops. Wheeling became particularly well known for its landscaping nurseries.

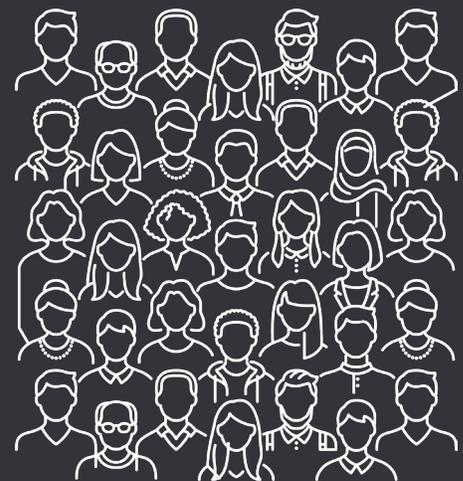
Later, in step with the growth of Metro Chicago, Wheeling emerged as a center for industry and commerce in the 1960's. Manufacturing plants that clustered in Wheeling brought rail transportation for the shipping of freight. These manufacturers were followed by the development of residential neighborhoods. Commercial development followed the population growth. More on the history of Wheeling can be found at the [Wheeling Historical Society's website](#).

Today, Wheeling residents and business owners enjoy the vibrant neighborhoods, public amenities, and community spirit fostered by this rich heritage. The community is undergoing significant redevelopment and revitalization.



## ***A snapshot of Wheeling's demographics and amenities:***

- Average age of 37 years old.
- White 66%, African American 2%, Hispanic Origin 33%, Asian 13%.
- Median household income, \$59,941.
- Median value of a Wheeling home, \$230,676.
- Exceptional School Districts serve the community. [Community Consolidated School District 21](#) and [Prospect Heights School District 23](#) serve the Village of Wheeling for primary and middle school education. Wheeling's secondary education students attend [Township High School District 214's](#) Wheeling and Buffalo Grove High Schools. Both schools offer a full range of courses with emphasis on college preparatory curriculum and career studies.
- An abundant supply of inexpensive water and sewage treatment capacity.
- Easy access to Interstates 90, 94, 294, 290; U.S. Hwy 45, and IL Routes 53 and 21.
- Metra commuter rail service on the North Central line is available at the Wheeling depot.



- Wheeling residents are served by two park districts: The [Wheeling Park District](#) hosts eight parks throughout the community with ample facilities including baseball, softball and soccer fields, tennis courts, a gymnasium and winter ice skating rink. In cooperation with the Northwest Special Recreation Association, the Park District offers year-end leisure opportunities for persons of all ages. Some Wheeling neighborhoods are also served by the [Prospect Heights Park District](#) with a host of park and recreational amenities.
- The [Cook County Forest Preserve](#) follows the Des Plaines River through Cook County's north suburbs. Accessible natural outdoor amenities entice visitors to take part in horseback riding, hiking, biking, fishing and nature watching throughout the Forest Preserve and along the scenic Des Plaines River.
- Full library services offered by two Public Library Districts serve Wheeling residents. They include [Indian Trails Public Library District](#) and the [Prospect Heights Library District](#).
- A comprehensive full health care and in-patient hospital, [Northwest Community Hospital](#), is located in nearby Arlington Heights.
- Distinguished institutions of higher learning are found throughout the greater Chicago area including the University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Chicago, Loyola University, Northwestern University, and DePaul University, among others. Local college campuses in Wheeling or immediately surrounding communities include [National Louis University](#), [William Rainey Harper Community College](#) and the [Robert Morris University - Arlington Heights Campus](#).





## ***THE ORGANIZATION***

The Village of Wheeling operates under a Village Board/Village Manager form of government. The Village has a Village President and six Trustees. Many of the elected officials have been on the Village Board for a number of terms.

The Wheeling Board of Trustees is the legislative branch of Village Government which creates all Village policies administered by the Village Manager. The Board of Trustees, along with the Village President, serve as the corporate authorities. Three Trustees are elected by the citizens of Wheeling every two years for four year terms.

As corporate authorities, the Board of Trustees possesses and exercises all legislative powers of the Village, determining the policies of the Village government through the adoption or approval of ordinances, resolutions and motions, approval of agreements, appropriations and fiscal budgets. The corporate authorities appoint, direct and, if necessary, remove the Village Manager.

The corporate authorities control the administrative function of the Village through the Village Manager and require effective administrative action at all times. Appointments to advisory boards and commissions are made by the Village President with the advice and consent of the Board of Trustees. Additionally the Board of Trustees exercises responsible leadership by critically examining and regularly reviewing Village policies, programs, and operations; assuming the role of community opinion leaders; and generating public support for Village programs and services.

The Village Manager is the chief administrative officer of the Village and is responsible for the management and operation of all the affairs and departments of the Village. The Manager is appointed by the Village President and the Board of Trustees. As the administrative officer, the Manager's

responsibilities include the management and control of all matters pertaining to the operation and maintenance of the properties of the Village and of all the Village's departments. The current Village Manager has been an employee of the Village for 29 years, the last 12 years as Manager.

The Village has a workforce of about 225 full-time employees, plus additional part-time and seasonal employees organized into several departments. Wheeling is a full-service community. Services include Police, Fire/EMS, Public Works and Engineering, Community Development, Information Technology, Finance, Human Services, Clerk and Administration (HR, legal, and economic development). The FY 2020 annual budget, all fund included, totals \$96,030,547.



## ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WHEELING***

Wheeling's economic development effort is headed up by the Director, with the division part of the Village Manager's Office. The Director of Economic Development position will build on, and deliver the Village's economic development program.

The Director will coordinate and implement goals and programs that promote the growth and retention of a vital economy within the Village with responsibility that includes recruitment and retention programming in the retail, industrial, residential, and office sectors. The Director reports directly to the Village Manager and supervises a business development coordinator.





## ***CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DIRECTOR***

The next Director of Economic Development will be faced with a number of challenges and opportunities, not the least of which will be to build on the Village's success. That success includes growing and retaining its businesses and its desirability as a place to live, work and play, as well as changing in a positive way, the perception of Wheeling. Wheeling is at a competitive advantage and, for example, enjoys \$600 million in retail sales and a 3% vacancy rate in its industrial park, but it is imperative in moving forward an economic development strategy that the Village not rest on its successes.

As a municipality, Wheeling was a pioneer among Chicago's northwest suburbs, serving as a travelers' outpost in the 1830s and incorporating in 1894. Over the years the Village has continued to grow and reinvent itself several times.

Today, Wheeling is home to the Chicago Executive Airport, the Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel and Convention Center, famous Restaurant Row, and 14 million square feet of manufacturing facilities. The community's recent transformation has been in the planning for more than a decade, with much progress made in the last five years. For instance, the Village is in the midst of over \$300 million in new development projects.

Specifically, the \$110 million Wheeling Town Center adjacent to the municipal campus is complete with 100,000 square feet of retail space, a movie theater complex and 300 residential apartment units. Updates to the Village's 25 year old Metra station, also in this area, are near the construction stage.

Across the Town Center development on the north side of Dundee Road, the \$90 million Uptown 500 mixed-use project with 321 apartment units and 10,500 square feet of retail space broke ground in October 2018, and is near completion.

Just to the west of the Town Center development and across the railroad tracks, work is underway to implement the Village's Station Area Plan, which will incorporate mixed use multifamily residential and retail/commercial development.

The Village is deeply committed to re-vitalizing its Restaurant Row along the Milwaukee Road corridor, and to that end has been hard at work with a consultant to develop a corridor plan that targets opportunities for improving this area which is key to the Village's historic and future image. The Economic Development division has run point on this effort.

Though Wheeling corporate borders allow for modest municipal expansion through annexation, there continues to be a considerable amount of property available for infill commercial and industrial development and redevelopment. For example, redevelopment of the old K-Mart property and some Dundee Road commercial properties are in need of attention. Seventeen acres at the corner of Lake-Cook Road and Milwaukee Avenue are under consideration for development opportunities.

The Village co-owns Chicago Executive Airport along with its neighbor, the City of Prospect Heights, and may need to contend with unique land-use and development issues that go along with such ownership. It is likely, too, that the Village is nearing the peak of its upward population growth.

Village officials look at this position as a key "strategist to the business community" that will address these conditions with marketing savvy, analytical abilities and keen interpersonal skills. In addition, the role of business community liaison is a function of the Village's economic development efforts, appreciating that Village businesses want a main point of contact. Keeping one's economic development "tuning fork" sharp to the business community's pitch and energy will be paramount.

For these reasons, the next Director of Economic Development can expect to work with Village officials and community leaders to build on these recent successes. The Director will be expected to establish high-performing and respectful working relationships with the Village's organization, business community, elected and appointed officials, and neighboring communities.

The Director will also be responsible for the critical analysis of appropriate Village development and redevelopment incentive programs and considerations. The Director should be of a mind that the development community are partners in moving forward common economic development interests and projects.



## ***THE IDEAL CANDIDATE***

### ***Must Haves –***

Candidates should have an equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities, as outlined below:

- A Bachelor's degree in community development, planning, business or public administration or related field. A related Master's degree is preferred.
- Five years of municipal experience in progressively responsible positions, with at least two years of economic development experience.
- Strong communication skills, the ability to think and act strategically, and the talent to tactfully negotiate and "close the deal."
- A demonstrated ability to work with a wide variety of stakeholders including Village officials and staff, brokers, developers, and local business owners.
- An ability to build relationships, not bureaucracy.
- Comfort working with an array of stakeholders including elected officials, Village employees, developers, real estate agents, and residents.
- Passion for work in a demanding, rewarding and collegial environment.
- A broad-based knowledge of economic development concepts and practices as well as a record of continuing education and training to keep current on the economic development field.
- The skills to diplomatically cut through bureaucracy on behalf of the business community.
- A record of experience that demonstrates the ability to see the "big picture" as well as to conceive and develop innovative long- and short-range strategies for addressing economic development challenges.
- A background in or familiarity with the principles and current techniques in land use, zoning, annexation, special use permit processes, and building and inspectional services, so as to understand their complementary relationship to achieving the Village's economic development goals.
- The ability to initiate and implement community branding, marketing and business retention and attraction strategies to promote Wheeling locally, regionally and nationally as an ideal business and industry location, by a variety of means including the use of electronic and printed promotional materials, publications, trade shows, and social media.
- Experience or strong exposure to modern land use trends and challenges including issues such as retail and mixed-use district vitality, as well as economic incentives for attracting and retaining businesses. Have the analytical skills to evaluate incentive programs requested by the business community.
- An economic development background that is well-rounded in the retail, office and industrial sectors.
- The ability to work with a wide spectrum of business owners or representatives, including those from national corporations to owner-operator businesses.
- Experience working with the business community, promoting and coordinating business development programs through personal contacts with existing and potential businesses, property owners, real estate developers and business associations.
- The ability to read, compose, analyze and comprehend documents pertaining to business development projects including master plans, construction site plans, budget documents, technical reports, term sheets, pro-formas, and development and redevelopment agreements.
- The ability to speak before groups and interact positively with the media; and the experience and ability to maintain effective public relations and news media relationships.



## ***Management Style and Personal Traits***

- Have complete personal and professional integrity, gaining respect and inspiring the trust and confidence of subordinates, co-workers, and elected and appointed officials, as well as the general public.
- Be a clear and concise communicator.
- Be able to present complex technical information to any audience in a manner that is understandable and jargon-free.
- Be creative in solving problems.
- Have the maturity, self-confidence, and strength of professional convictions to provide solid economic development advice to the Village Manager, Director of Finance and Village Board, being able to diplomatically present professional views and carry out administrative decisions in a timely, professional, and impartial manner.
- Be politically savvy, yet politically neutral. Be able to “read the Board,” providing guidance, advice and counsel in a manner that is impeccably objective and based on facts.
  - Have a high energy level and enthusiasm for meeting the challenges and responsibilities of the Director’s position; have a strong work ethic.
  - Possess well developed organizational skills with the ability to balance numerous projects and issues.
    - Project a professional presence in appearance, actions, and personal demeanor.
    - Be proactive, anticipatory and innovative; be someone who can make difficult decisions and stand behind those decisions.
    - Be willing to keep the Village Manager and others apprised of major activities in a consistent and timely manner, passing on both “good news and bad news” in a tactful, self-confident and professional manner.



## ***COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS***

A starting salary range of \$135,000 - \$145,000 +/- DOQ, and an excellent benefit package is offered.

## ***HOW TO APPLY***

Candidates should apply by November 16, 2022 with resume, cover letter and contact information for five work-related references to [www.GovHRjobs.com](http://www.GovHRjobs.com) to the attention of Lee Szymborski, Senior Vice President, GovHR USA, 630 Dundee Road, #225, Northbrook, IL 60062. Tel: 847-380-3197. The Village is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

