



PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

CITY OF KEWANEE, ILLINOIS



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Starting salary: \$100,000 - \$120,000 +/- DOQ

Are you ready to lead transformational change in a community that's investing in its future? The City of Kewanee, a community named the "[Friendliest Small Town in America](#)," is seeking an innovative and relationship-driven Public Works Director to improve service delivery and champion excellence. With strong support from City leadership and significant capital improvement projects on the horizon, this is a prime opportunity for a hands-on leader to introduce new ideas and guide a department through meaningful cultural and operational evolution. If you're energized by the opportunity to make an immediate and lasting impact, Kewanee is ready to welcome your leadership.



MGT (formerly GovHR USA) is pleased to announce the recruitment and selection process for Public Works Director for the City of Kewanee, Illinois. This brochure provides background information on the City of Kewanee as well as the requirements for the position. Additional information about Kewanee can be found on the City's website: <https://www.cityofkewanee.com/>

Candidates interested in applying for the position should apply online with their resume and cover letter, along with contact information for five (5) work-related references at www.GovHRUSA.com by August 1, 2025 for best consideration. This position is open until filled. Questions regarding this opportunity should be directed to the Executive Recruiter working with the City of Kewanee:

MGT Impact Solutions, LLC
Ashley Eccles, Senior Consultant
Phone: 847-380-3240, x134

POSITION IN BRIEF

Kewanee, IL (pop. 12,509). Located in northwest Illinois, Kewanee is known for its tight-knit community, strong Midwestern values, and an increasingly ambitious approach to infrastructure improvement and service delivery. Kewanee is strategically located an equal distance from the Peoria and Quad Cities metro areas. Kewanee is home to Black Hawk College – East Campus, a municipal airport, and Amtrak Service. The City is seeking a collaborative, future-focused public works professional to join their dedicated leadership team.

As the next Director, you will be assisting elected officials in the planning and implementation of capital projects. This is a fantastic opportunity to lead a department poised for progress in a community where leadership and innovation are welcomed and supported. The Public Works Director will step into a well-resourced environment ready for transformation.

Reporting to the City Manager, the Public Works Director oversees a full-service department of 24 full-time employees in addition to seasonal staff. The Director has two direct reports, including the Public Works Foreman and Fleet Supervisor. The department encompasses a broad range of core municipal services, including streets, water distribution, sanitary and storm sewer systems, and the maintenance of the City's fleet and facilities. It also oversees contracted operations for solid waste collection and water and wastewater treatment. In FY2026, the department has an operating budget of \$6.9 million and a \$3.8 million capital program.

The Public Works Director is appointed and reports directly to the City Manager and actively contributes to the City's Management Team.

Additional information about the City can be found on the City's website: <https://www.cityofkewanee.com/>



CITY OF KEWANEE AT-A-GLANCE*

Incorporated: **1897**

Population: **12,509**

Land Area: **6.60** square miles

County: **Henry**

Median Household Income: **\$49,668**

Median Home Value: **\$70,000**

Households: **5,321**

Racial Makeup: 80% White, 12% Hispanic, 7% Black

**Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts*



COMMUNITY HISTORY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Kewanee takes its name from the Winnebago word for “greater prairie chicken,” a nod to the wildlife once native to the region’s tallgrass prairies. The area now known as Kewanee was first settled in 1836 with the founding of the Wethersfield Colony. Kewanee itself was established in 1854, coinciding with the arrival of the railroad—later part of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy (CB&Q) line—leading a number of Wethersfield residents to move closer to the railroad and sparking rapid development in the area. The city was officially incorporated in 1897. Kewanee’s settlement patterns continue to influence its infrastructure today, from the layout of streets to the alignment of water and sewer systems.

The city experienced its population peak in the 1920s, shortly after the neighboring community of Wethersfield voted to be annexed into Kewanee. While the two municipalities merged nearly a century ago, their legacy endures: Kewanee remains home to two distinct school districts—Kewanee CUSD 229 and Wethersfield CUSD 230—with Division Street serving as the boundary between the districts.

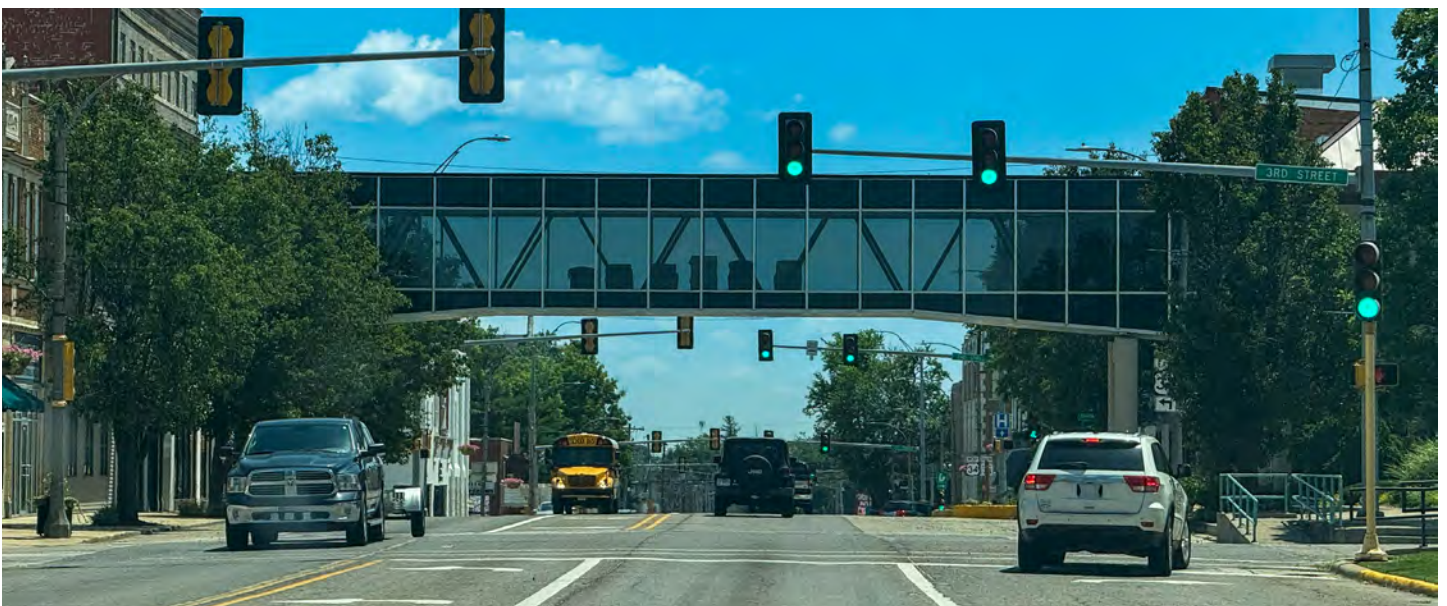
Kewanee has a proud industrial heritage, once known globally for its fire-tube boiler manufacturing. Founded in the late 19th century, the Kewanee Boiler Corporation operated for more than a century, becoming one of the world’s most well-known fire-tube boiler manufacturers before ceasing operations

in the early 2000s. The Kewanee High School sports teams still carry the “Boilermakers” mascot in tribute to that legacy, and Kewanee-manufactured boilers remain in operation to this day.

The community also enjoys a wealth of green space and outdoor recreation. The Kewanee Park District is notably expansive for a community of Kewanee’s size, and manages numerous parks within city limits, offering playgrounds, athletic fields, walking trails, and picnic shelters, while the City manages several park facilities, as well. Just beyond the city, residents and visitors enjoy access to camping, fishing, hunting, and boating at nearby Johnson Sauk Trail State Park and other natural areas.

Perhaps most famously, Kewanee proudly celebrates its agricultural roots with the annual Hog Days Festival, a tradition since 1947. When the USDA declared Henry County the nation’s leader in pork production, Kewanee—then and now the county’s largest city—launched what has become its signature community event. Held each Labor Day weekend, Hog Days features a parade, carnival, mud volleyball, live entertainment, and plenty of pork-inspired food and festivities, drawing thousands of visitors every year.

Today, Kewanee is a resilient, close-knit community that blends history, industry, and hometown pride with an eye toward the future.





CITY ORGANIZATION

The City of Kewanee is a non-home rule unit that operates under the Council-Manager form of government.

This structure features an elected Mayor and four City Council members—each serving as the legislative body—while a professionally appointed City Manager handles administrative and daily operations. The Mayor and Council are elected at large for overlapping terms of four years. Regular meetings of the City Council are generally held on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. Work sessions of the City Council are scheduled as needed for special topics or projects such as goal setting, strategic planning, or budget development.

The City Council appoints the City Manager, while the City Clerk is appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. The City of Kewanee and its day-to-day operations are administered by the office of the City Manager. The City Manager oversees all departments—community development, economic development, finance, fire, police, and public works—ensuring policies are executed efficiently. The City consists of a full-time staff of approximately 85 employee and 16 part-time/seasonal employees.

The City's department heads work closely together and value their team approach to management and decision making. The management team includes the City Manager, City Clerk, Chief of Police, Fire Chief, Director of Finance, Director of Community Development, and Public Works Director.

The annual General Fund budget for the City is approximately \$10.8M, with a total budget of about \$32.7M including all funds. The City's FY26 includes \$3.8M of capital projects related to public works.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The Public Works Department is committed to enhancing the quality by maintaining the infrastructure in the City and providing high-quality services to residents, businesses, and visitors. The Public Works Department is comprised of 24 full-time team members across five operating divisions.

The Streets, Stormwater and Sanitary Sewer Division is responsible for maintaining and repairing the City's streets, alleys, signage, traffic control devices, and for managing snow and ice removal operations, along with maintenance of the City's sidewalks, storm water collection, and sanitary sewer system.

The City of Kewanee has contracted Lakeshore Recycling Systems to handle garbage, recycling, and bagged landscape waste pickup for residents. However, the City still maintains the operations of the Transfer Station through the Public Works Sanitation Division.

The Water Division is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the City's water distribution system, water quality testing, water meter installation and repair, and some reading of water meters.

The Fleet and Facilities Maintenance Division is responsible for the upkeep, repair, and lifecycle management of municipal buildings and the City's diverse fleet, which includes everything from police cars and ambulances to fire apparatus, and heavy equipment such as backhoes, sewer jetters, and end loaders. The division performs routine preventive maintenance and repairs, manages detailed service records, evaluates equipment for replacement, and assists in procurement and decommissioning. It also coordinates with external vendors for specialized repairs, ensuring the City's fleet remains safe, reliable, and ready to support essential services.

The Cemetery and Parks Division is comprised of two full-time employees and 10-12 seasonal employees. The Cemetery Division provides mowing, maintenance, and cemetery services through the opening and closing of graves, cemetery plot sales and stone setting permits. There are eight (8) cemeteries within city limits covering 110 acres. Additionally, the division is responsible for the maintenance of numerous public places and city rights-of-way, three neighborhood parks, and one regional park equipped with 60 campsites, playground equipment, walking trails, and the historic Woodland Palace.





THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTED EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will play a significant role in managing several of the large capital improvement projects and lead department staff to provide modern and efficient operations with excellent customer service. The Director will offer strong leadership and use both interpersonal skills and a strong command of public works knowledge to support departmental decision-making focused on delivering high quality public services which incorporate staff development and efficiency improvements. These decisions will consider local government best practices, cross training, technological improvements, and integration of existing programs with new approaches to ensure exceptional service delivery.

- **Innovation:** Act as a change agent who brings a new perspective to the department's operations, structure, and service delivery. The City is seeking a leader who can evaluate existing practices, introduce modern solutions, and cultivate a results-driven culture. The ideal candidate will approach challenges with creativity and promote accountability. Building trust, fostering open communication, and inspiring a shared commitment to quality and service will be essential to long-term success.
- **Departmental Leadership & Oversight:** Serve as the City's lead authority on all public works matters, advising the City Manager on short-term operational planning and long-term capital improvement strategies. Promote a positive, team-oriented workplace culture through communication and consistent leadership. Provide hands-on supervision of day-to-day operations while fostering a cohesive, high-performing team aligned with department goals and best practices.



QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTED EXPERIENCE

- **Labor Relations & Staff Engagement:** Build and maintain productive labor relations with the City's AFSCME Local 764-represented employees. In April 2025, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute a three year collective bargaining agreement with Local 764. The Director will be expected to maintain collaborative labor relations and participate in future contract negotiations, labor-management discussions, and grievance resolution as needed with professionalism and a commitment to fairness.
- **Policy Development & Best Practices:** Lead the development and implementation of policies, procedures, and performance standards grounded in public works best practices and American Public Works Association (APWA) guidelines. Leverage technology, such as the City's LOCiS financial system, to improve efficiency and expand data-driven decision-making. Work to modernize workflows, strengthen accountability, and promote continuous improvement.
- **Strategic Capital Planning:** Act as a key partner in the planning and execution of capital projects, including grant-funded initiatives and infrastructure upgrades including lead service line replacement program, sidewalk improvements, and downtown streetscaping and revitalization. Collaborate across departments, with elected officials, and with external engineering and regulatory agencies to ensure projects are aligned with community priorities and completed on time and within budget. Familiarity with IEPA coordination and state/federal funding programs is a plus.
- **Intergovernmental & Regional Collaboration:** Strengthen relationships with neighboring municipalities, county, and regional agencies to foster collaboration and shared problem-solving. The City is seeking a Director who will proactively engage with peer communities to exchange best practices and align efforts on infrastructure, regulatory, and emergency response issues. Building a strong professional network and representing Kewanee in regional discussions will be an important part of advancing the City's strategic goals.
- **Fiscal Management & Resource Allocation:** Prepare, present, and manage the annual departmental budget with a focus on transparency, fiscal responsibility, and alignment with strategic priorities. Ensure compliance with City procurement policies, identify opportunities for cost savings, and lead targeted investments that improve long-term service delivery.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The anticipated starting salary range is \$100,000-\$120,000 +/- DOQ. The full salary range is \$90,000 – \$135,000. Residency is not required. The City of Kewanee offers a competitive benefits package that includes paid vacation, sick, holiday time; contributions to medical, dental, vision insurance; a complimentary \$50,000 life insurance policy; a take home truck; and Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund pension eligibility.

HOW TO APPLY

Apply online at www.GovHRjobs.com with a resume, cover letter and contact information for five professional references by August 1, 2025 for best consideration. The position is open until filled. Confidential inquiries may be directed to Ashley Eccles, MGT Senior Consultant, at 847-380-3240 x134.

The City of Kewanee is an Equal Opportunity Employer



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