



CITY MANAGER CITY OF KEWANEE, ILLINOIS

MGT

CITY MANAGER CITY OF KEWANEE, ILLINOIS



The full salary range is \$135,000 – \$160,000 +/- DOQ

Kewanee, IL (pop. 12,509). 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 a City Manager to join their dedicated leadership team. This is a fantastic opportunity to lead a community poised for progress where leadership and innovation are welcomed. This is a prime opportunity for a hands-on leader to introduce new ideas and guide the City through meaningful operational evolution. For the next City Manager, Kewanee offers the opportunity to serve a diverse, tight-knit community where many cultures and backgrounds come together to shape the City's future. If you're energized by the opportunity to make an immediate and lasting impact, Kewanee is ready to welcome your leadership.

Located in northwest Illinois, Kewanee is known for its inclusive 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 Kewanee Park District is one of the largest in the state, and provides a full range of recreational opportunities, including the Oasis Family Aquatic Center.

The City Manager oversees all departments, including community development, economic development, finance, fire, police, and public works and ensures policies are executed efficiently. The City consists of a full-time staff of approximately 85 employees and 16 part-time/seasonal employees. The City's day-to-day operations are administered by the office of the City Manager. The annual General Fund budget for the City is approximately \$10.8M, with a total budget of about \$32.7M including all funds.

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 approval of the City Council. The City Manager oversees the day-to-day operations of City government and is the key point of contact to the Mayor and Council. The new City Manager is encouraged to look at the municipal organization and over time, evaluate service delivery processes, procedures, and innovative methods.

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.

Staff has a lot of daily interaction with one another and report strong interdepartmental relations. The City's department heads work closely together and value their team approach to management and decision making. The department head 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.

The City is assisted in its policy development by numerous Boards and Commissions consisting of residents who volunteer to serve on specific committees. The City Manager is the staff liaison to a number of these volunteer groups.



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, 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 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

AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning is at the heart of Kewanee's future. The City is currently undertaking a comprehensive plan rewrite to guide long-term growth and development. This forward-thinking approach ensures that policies, programs, and investments align with community priorities to create a clear roadmap for revitalization, economic vitality, and enhanced quality of life. By engaging stakeholders and leveraging data-driven strategies, Kewanee is positioning itself for sustainable success and resilience in the years ahead.

- **Encouraging Economic Development and Revitalization**

The City Council adopted a goal in 2015 to develop plans related to economic development. The City of Kewanee Economic Development Plan was approved in August 2016. Kewanee is committed to fostering sustainable economic growth while preserving its distinctive identity. Through strong partnerships and strategic planning, the City aims to enhance infrastructure, attract diverse businesses, and transform underutilized properties into vibrant spaces. The City's focus includes revitalizing downtown and key corridors and creating an inviting, pedestrian-friendly environment that celebrates Kewanee's historic charm. By helping to support locally owned businesses, increasing retail activity, and improving public services, the City strives to elevate quality of life. These efforts will ensure a fiscally sound, innovative, and welcoming community, making Kewanee a destination for families, visitors, and businesses alike.

- **Fostering Communication and Community Livability**

The City benefits from an active and engaged citizenry. Maintaining open communication, ensuring transparency, and fostering partnerships with residents, businesses, and community organizations will be essential for the next City Manager. A visible, approachable, and collaborative leadership style will help build trust and strengthen community bonds.

- **Maintaining Financial Stability and Exploring Revenue Opportunities**

The City has worked diligently to maintain its financial health. However, like many municipalities, it faces the challenge of balancing increasing service demands with constrained revenue streams. The next City Manager will work closely with the Council and staff to explore new revenue opportunities, identify cost-saving efficiencies, and ensure long-term fiscal sustainability and strong public services.





KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provides strategic leadership by assessing community needs and recommending programs, services, priorities, and economic development initiatives.
- Oversees day-to-day operations of all City departments, ensuring efficient, effective, and customer-focused service delivery in compliance with applicable laws and policies.
- Leads and manages staff, including recruitment, hiring, coaching, performance management, and overall organizational development.
- Manages the City's finances by preparing and recommending the annual budget, monitoring fiscal performance, and planning for long-term financial stability.
- Builds strong relationships with residents, community organizations, school districts, and business leaders; responds to concerns and promotes a positive image of the City.
- Attends City Council meetings, provides professional recommendations, and implements Council direction.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A Bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, or a related field is required.
- A Master's degree in public administration is preferred.
- A background in economic development, planning, or community development is ideal.
- At least five (5) years of municipal government experience, including supervisory duties. An equivalent combination of education and experience will be considered.
- Must possess a valid Illinois Driver's License or ability to obtain one.
- Residency within City limits is required within six months of appointment.



THE IDEAL CANDIDATE:

The successful candidate will be a knowledgeable, approachable, and highly professional local government leader with exceptional interpersonal and relationship-building skills. They will bring a strong background in economic development and a proven ability to build and maintain partnerships with key community institutions, including park and school districts, county and regional agencies, and business organizations. The next City Manager will be visible and engaged in the community, actively participating in civic and service organizations, and will excel at bringing people together around shared goals for Kewanee's future.

The ideal candidate will play a significant role in managing several of the large capital improvement projects and lead staff to provide modern, efficient operations with excellent customer service. 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.

The ideal candidate will strengthen relationships with neighboring municipalities, county, and regional agencies to foster collaboration and shared problem-solving. The City is seeking a City Manager 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.

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.

CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS

- Kewanee's next City Manager will play a vital leadership role in maintaining and enhancing the City's essential infrastructure and services. This individual will work closely with residents, elected officials, and other city departments to ensure public works operations are delivered efficiently, sustainably, and in alignment with community expectations.
- The ideal candidate is a skilled communicator with the ability to clearly explain complex technical issues to a wide range of audiences, including the City Council and the public. They will bring a forward-looking mindset to both day-to-day operations and long-term planning, advocating for innovation, continuous improvement, and cross-departmental coordination.
- Experience leading municipal capital improvement programs is essential, along with a strong grasp of fiscal management and resource allocation. This leader will serve as a connector, facilitating communication between staff, departments, and external partners, and will be known for their accessibility, responsiveness, and relationship-building strengths.
- The City is seeking someone who brings both steadiness and vision, able to navigate complex operational challenges while shaping a modern and responsive organization that reflects the evolving needs of Kewanee's residents and businesses.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

The full salary range is \$135,000 – \$160,000 +/- DOQ. The City of Kewanee offers a competitive benefits package that includes paid vacation, sick, holiday time; contributions to medical, dental, vision insurance; a vehicle allowance; discounted YMCA membership; 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 January 19, 2026 for best consideration. This position is open until filled. Confidential inquiries may be directed to Ashley Eccles at 847-380-3240 x134.

The City of Kewanee is an Equal Opportunity Employer

