



FREEPORT, ILLINOIS

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Executive Recruitment



The Position in Brief

The Community and Economic Development Director oversees long range planning, economic development, land development, zoning, code enforcement, TIF administration, and property acquisition for the City of Freeport, Illinois. The Community and Economic Development Director serves on the city's leadership team and reports directly to the City Manager. The position oversees a \$500,000 annual departmental budget and supervises five staff members.



The Community

Freeport Illinois is the county seat and largest city of Stephenson County in northwest Illinois. Freeport is known for hosting the second Lincoln-Douglas Debate of 1858, and as "Pretzel City, USA", due to a popular local German bakery known for its pretzels in the 1850s. The Freeport High School mascot is the Pretzel to honor its heritage. Freeport is located 20 miles south of the Wisconsin state line, and at the center of a large agricultural area, and 114 miles northwest of Chicago.

Freeport was formed in 1838 and became the seat of government in Stephenson County the following year. Linked by a stagecoach with Chicago, the community grew rapidly. In 1840, a frame courthouse was erected, and the first school was founded. Within two years, Freeport had two newspapers and in 1853, the two were joined by a third which published in German. By then, the community had a population of 2,000.

Freeport is home to the oldest Carnegie Library in Illinois and one of the first Carnegie Libraries designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Patton and Miller. It was renovated into Freeport's City Hall and City offices were moved to Carnegie City Hall in February of 2017.

Living in Stephenson County is affordable and offers the benefits of small-town life with easy access to larger city amenities. One of the most picturesque spots in Illinois, the area offers rolling hills and plenty of open landscape. The cost of living in Freeport is far less than nearby metro areas making it possible to have a larger home, build your assets, and live comfortably in less-crowded spaces. A wide array of housing options are available in Freeport and the surrounding area. From tree-line boulevards with historic homes, to contemporary single-family neighborhoods, to downtown lofts. Freeport offers housing sizes and styles in all price ranges.

City of Freeport

Recreation and Leisure

The Pecatonica River, a tributary of the Rock River, flows down from Wisconsin and meanders through Freeport. The river provides a wonderful refuge for all sorts of wildlife and creates many recreational and outdoor opportunities for Freeport area residents. The Pecatonica is considered a wonderful waterway for kayaking and canoeing. In fact, paddle boats, kayaks, and canoes are available for rent at Krape Park in Freeport.

Freeport has an abundance of recreational and leisure time activities which underpin the outstanding quality of life that its residents enjoy. There are over 800 acres of public parks and open spaces within the city limits which are managed and maintained by the Freeport Park District.

If golf is your game, there are three outstanding 18-hole courses in Freeport along with an 18-hole disc golf course that attracts disc golfers from throughout the region. In Freeport, there are also hiking and biking trails, aquatics facilities, youth & adult athletics, fishing, boating, and much more. Freeport has recreational programs and facilities to accommodate everyone's interest.

Education

Over 4,000 students attend Freeport Public Schools each day. The district serves children in Freeport, but also from nearby Cedarville and Ridott. The school district maintains ten very busy school buildings including an elementary International Baccalaureate school, five additional elementary schools (preschool - 4th grade), one grade 5-6 school, one grade 7-8 school, one high school (9th - 12th grade), and one alternative high school, as well as a smaller transitional education facility. The district employs 725 teachers and support staff. Freeport School District music program has been Grammy Award winning for the past 10 years.

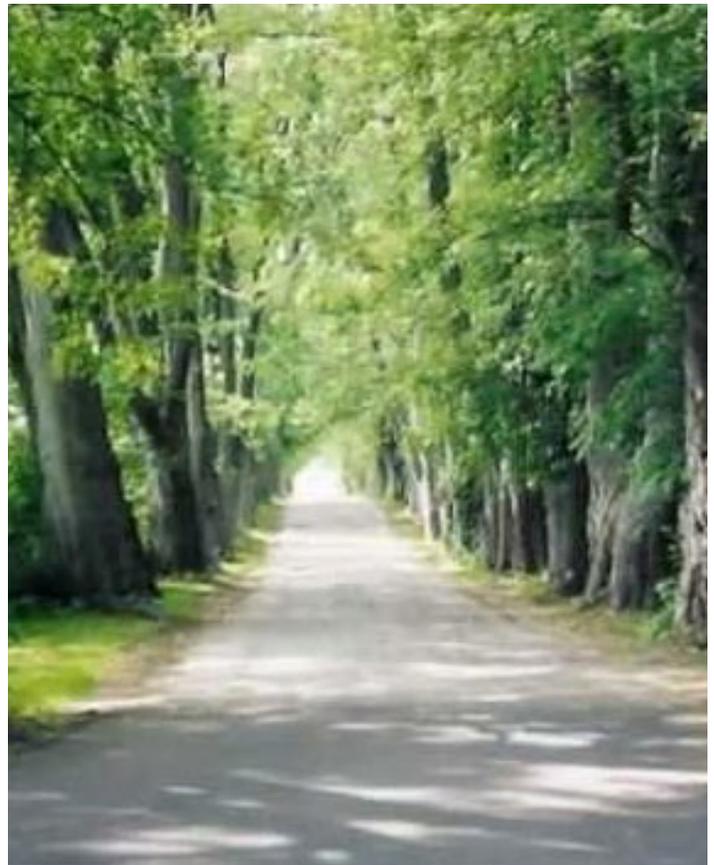
There are also a number of private and parochial school offerings in Freeport and Stephenson County. In addition, Highland Community College's 140 acre campus is located just minutes away.

Healthcare

As far as healthcare is concerned, Freeport is well served by the Freeport Healthcare Network (FHN) which includes FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport with 24-hour emergency care and affiliations with all three major hospitals in nearby Rockford, IL as well as with the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics in Madison, WI. The FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center in Freeport offers leading edge cancer treatment.

FREEPORT BY THE NUMBERS

Population (2020 census)	23,433
Land Area	11.89 sq. miles
Median HH Income	\$39,975
Median Age	41.6 years
Median Property Value	\$72,100
Ethnicity	
White	70.7%
African American	17.2%
Hispanic	4.9%
Asian	1.4%
Annual Municipal Budget	\$66.7 million
Number of City employees	186
Total Street Miles	210
Parkland	800 acres



Freeport's Economy

Freeport's economy is home to Fortune 500 companies and is driven by a strong manufacturing presence, retail sector, and a large healthcare and human services sector. Freeport serves as the hub for health care, retail, and manufacturing jobs within the region.

Freeport's largest employers are:

- FHN Memorial Hospital (Healthcare) 1400 employees
- The Helm Group (Construction) 850 employees
- Freeport School District (Public Education) 750 employees
- Berner Food & Beverage (Manufacturing) 650 Employees
- Honeywell (Manufacturing) 500 employees

Freeport's central business district is bustling and healthy. Downtown Freeport has a mix of unique and specialty retail shops and restaurants, along with many small businesses and non-retail enterprises. Those shops, restaurants, and businesses are supported by the Downtown Freeport Business & Building Owners Association that focuses on providing downtown special events, beautification, promotions, and small business training opportunities.

Local Government in Freeport

The City of Freeport is governed by a nine-member City Council including the mayor and eight alderpersons elected to four-year overlapping terms. The mayor and one Alderperson are elected at-large, while the remaining seven are elected by wards. The City Council appoints a professional City Manager who serves as the chief administrative officer and who oversees the day-to-day operation of the city. The city has an annual operating and capital budget totaling \$66,723,543.

The City of Freeport's mission is to "provide sound municipal leadership and efficient, high-quality services that enhance the safety, economic prosperity, quality of life, and public health of our community."

The city collaborates with the Greater Freeport Partnership in its economic development efforts. Their mission is to unite and advocate for the region, drive economic growth, and champion a "workforce-ready" community. The Greater Freeport Partnership was formed in 2018 to create a seamless economic development entity. The Freeport City Manager serves on the Board of Directors.

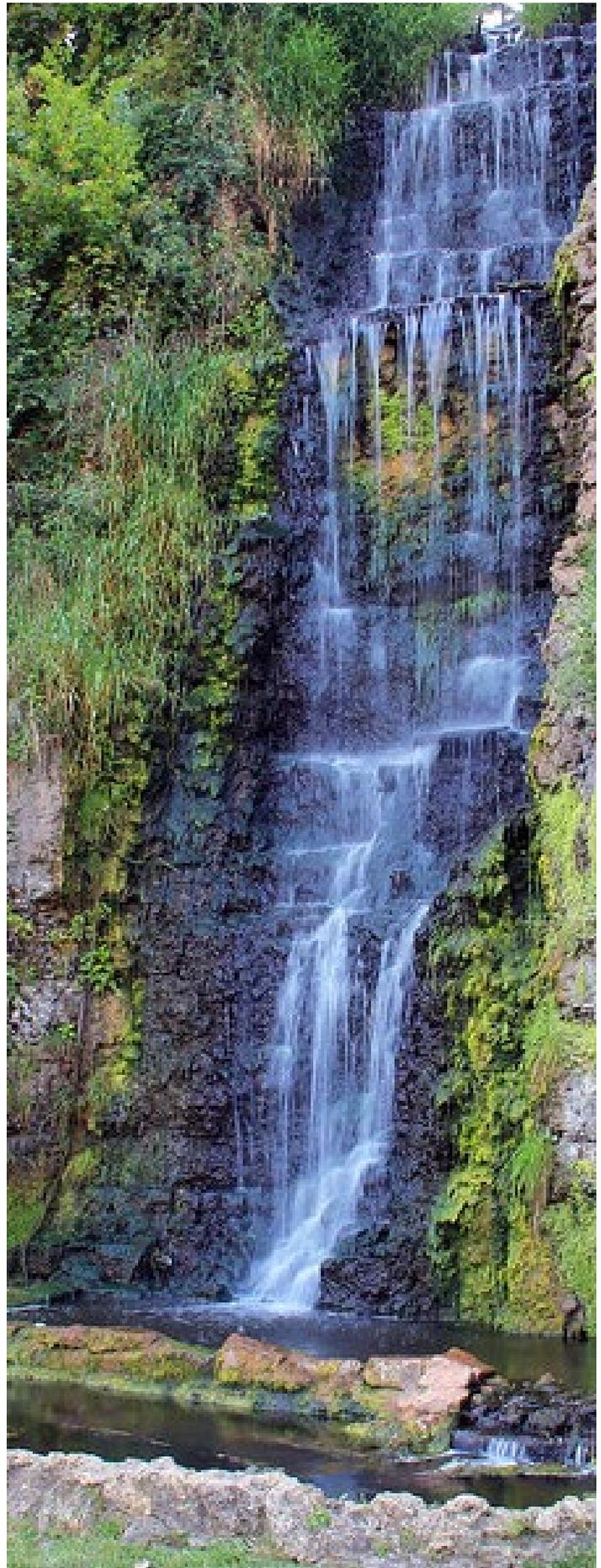


The Community & Economic Development Director Position

The Community and Economic Development Director serves on the City's leadership team and reports directly to the City Manager. The Director supervises five full-time employees and one part-time department employee. The Director also manages a \$500,000 annual departmental budget.

The Community and Economic Development Director oversees planning and zoning, public transportation, code enforcement, building inspection, neighborhood redevelopment, contractor licensing, floodplain & floodway administration, and economic development programs that include five Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts and an Enterprise Zone.

The Director also serves as the staff representative to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals.



Candidate Qualification Criteria

The city is seeking an enthusiastic, and results-driven candidate to join their forward thinking and innovative team. The following educational achievements and work experience have been identified by the City Manager as important for the successful candidate to possess.

Candidate Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in planning, public administration, urban studies, community development, or a related field. A Master's degree in planning, public administration, economic development, business administration, or some other related field is desirable.
- One to three years of experience in local government with particular emphasis on economic development and/or planning. Additional experience would be highly desirable.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- A good working knowledge of the principals associated with land development, planning, and zoning.
- An understanding of and/or experience with Tax Increment Financing (TIF).
- Experience with and/or knowledge of code enforcement and building inspection services are desirable but not required.
- Be a collaborator capable of advocating for department needs, but also understanding the need to support the overall mission of the city.
- Be a skilled project manager able to oversee complex initiatives and ensure project completion.
- Be able to build and maintain strong partnerships and relationships with diverse stakeholders.
- Be committed to excellent customer service and community engagement.
- Be highly responsive to community concerns, needs, and inquiries.



Opportunities and Challenges

The City of Freeport is an energetic city that is destined to grow and succeed through collaboration with local partners. The successful candidate will play a significant role in the city's success over the next decade. Summarized below are some opportunities and challenges that the next Community and Economic Development Director is likely to confront over the next several years on the job:

- Through a partnership with FEMA the city is currently in the process of acquiring several residential properties that have been impacted by local flooding and relocating these families to other parts of the city.
- Through the utilization of an Opportunity Zone grant the city is partnering with community organizations to reconstruct the city's six-block downtown entertainment district known as Chicago Avenue. The transformation of this downtown tradition will continue to enhance the city's quality of life for decades to come.

Compensation and Benefits

The starting annual salary range for the position is \$70,000 to \$90,000 DOQ/E. The City of Freeport provides a comprehensive package of fringe benefits. Relocation assistance for the successful candidate will be considered. Residency within the corporate limits of the City of Freeport is required within 6 months of appointment.

How To Apply

Please apply online at www.govhrjobs.com with a resume, cover letter and contact information for five professional references. Applications will be accepted until October 29, 2021. Confidential inquiries are encouraged and should be directed to Mark Peterson, Vice President, GovHR USA at mpeterson@govhrusa.com.

The City of Freeport is an Equal Opportunity Employer



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www.GovHRUSA.com