



CITY MANAGER

Des Moines, Washington



THE WATERLAND CITY

With its sweeping view of the snowcapped Olympic Mountains to the west and majestic Mount Rainier to the southeast, Des Moines, Washington, truly offers the best of the Pacific Northwest. The meeting of land and sea gives rise to a landscape of unparalleled beauty and diversity — amid natural splendor, residents enjoy easy access to vibrant cities like Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Portland. Still, breathtaking views, mountains, green spaces, parks, and waterfronts are never far away, providing a respite from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Nestled conveniently between the cities of Seattle and Tacoma on the eastern shore of Puget Sound, “The Waterland City” has a population of over 32,400, covers about six square miles, and is just a short drive from Sea-Tac International Airport and Interstate 5.

The King County community is also part of a greater metro area with a population of 3.5 million. Rich in history, diversity, and natural beauty, this charming coastal community is proud of its local character shaped by its varied and unique businesses and abundant natural resources.

In the early days of Des Moines, the land was cultivated by Coast Salish Tribes, who relied on the streams for catching spawning salmon and clam digging, fostering a deep connection with the land and its resources. In 1872, John Moore was granted the first Des Moines homestead claim. By 1890, the Des Moines News would describe the community as “the best and most prosperous city on Puget Sound.” Named Des Moines after the Des Moines City Improvement Company — which was named after Des Moines, Iowa, where many of the community’s early settlers were from — the City was incorporated in 1959.

With mild seasons that provide an occasional snow day in the winter and summer temperatures rarely exceeding 90 degrees, Des Moines’ residents enjoy various recreational and cultural amenities year-round, with easy access to additional amenities in surrounding cities. The community has five miles of shoreline on Puget Sound and four public waterfront areas that draw regional tourism. Des Moines’ 850-slip Marina, the only public marina between Seattle and Tacoma, is located next to the small-town shopping district, which offers locally-owned specialty shops and restaurants. Des Moines is also home to the MaST Center Aquarium. This Highline College facility serves to educate the public about the Puget Sound.

Beautifully maintained parks dot the area, including the 18-acre Des Moines Beach Park, a National Historic Landmark, and Saltwater State Park. The City’s Park and Recreation Division provides various programs and services for the whole family, from sports programs and after-school camps to fitness programs. The City also offers [facility rentals](#) and hosts cultural events. The Senior Activity Center specializes in engaging activities and creating a sense of community for its more “seasoned” residents. Cyclists and folks on foot can enjoy the Des Moines Creek Trail, a quiet, wooded two-mile leg of the Sound to Lake Trail System, and sailing, boating, fishing, and beach exploration are popular pastimes. Skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing are only an hour’s drive away.

The City hosts several annual festivals, including Fireworks over Des Moines, Burning Boat New Year’s Eve Festival, Polar Bear Plunge, and a summer concert series at the Beach Park. Destination Des Moines sponsors the popular Waterland Festival, and the Des Moines-Normandy Park Rotary Club sponsors the Poverty Bay Blues and Brews Festival. The City’s Art Commission hosts Theatre in the Park and several other annual events. The City also features an Art on Poverty Bay sculpture program. Every Saturday from June through October, the Marina’s Waterfront Farmers Market presents creations from local artists and fresh flowers, produce, meats, and cheeses from local farmers.

Highline School District provides quality education opportunities to over 18,000 K-12 students, and ethnic diversity and success characterize the local academic climate. Some students also attend Federal Way Public Schools, and several private schools serve the area, including Holy Trinity Lutheran School and St. Philomena Catholic School, along with a charter school called the Why Not You Academy.

For those seeking higher education, highly acclaimed Highline College has its 80-acre main campus in Des Moines, providing a terrific talent pool for employers. Central Washington University also has a campus located at Highline College; a partnership between the schools allows students to take classes from both Highline and CWU concurrently, with both bachelor’s and master’s degree programs available. Additional colleges and universities located nearby in Seattle and Tacoma include the University of Washington, Seattle University, Seattle Pacific University, the University of Puget Sound, Pacific Lutheran University, and the University of Washington-Tacoma.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



Population
32,400



Size
6 sq miles



Accessibility
Sea-Tac International Airport,
Interstate 5



Median Household Income
\$81,362



Median Home Value
\$525,000



OUR VISION

An inviting, livable, safe waterfront community embracing change for the future while preserving our past.

OUR MISSION

We protect, preserve, promote and improve the community by providing leadership and services reflecting the pride and values of Des Moines citizens.

RECENT ACCOLADES

Washington City/County Management Association Sustainability Program for Innovation in Local Government – August 2023

Des Moines Police Department Accreditation by the Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs 2009 – 2023 (Note: Less than 25% of the Police Departments in WA State are accredited agencies, and less than 1% for the entire country.)

Government Finance Officers Association Award - 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

City Clerk of the Year – Bonnie Wilkins, 2021

Livable Communities Award – Stormfest for Excellence in Creating Livable Communities: Local Government Excellence 2019

APWA and ACEC Project of the Year Awards for the Saltwater Seismic Retrofit Project

APWA Project of the Year Award for the Redondo Boardwalk Replacement Project

ACEC Project of the Year Award for the North Marina Bulkhead and Restroom Replacement Project

TOP EMPLOYERS

Highline Public Schools

Highline College

Federal Aviation Administration's Northwest Mountain Headquarters

South Correctional Entity (SCORE) Jail

Wesley Homes and Judson Park Retirement Communities

City of Des Moines

Outdoor Research

Bartell's Distribution Center

GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

Des Moines operates under a council-manager form of government, with a City Council comprising a mayor and six council members elected at-large and serving four-year terms. The City Council is a legislative policy-making body that determines not only the local laws that regulate community life but also public policy and gives direction to the City Manager to administer the affairs of the City government.

The City Manager serves as Des Moines' top management official and oversees day-to-day operations. The incoming City Manager will oversee an annual budget of approximately \$106.8 million. The City of Des Moines workforce is comprised of 144 full-time and 20 limited-term and extra-hire employees. Staff support City operations in 11 departments and divisions, including the City Manager's Office, Community Development, Emergency Management, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legal, Marina, Police Department, Public Works, Recreation Services, and Senior Services. The City also has a Municipal Court presiding over criminal misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, traffic infractions, and other City of Des Moines Code violations.

[City of Des Moines organizational chart](#)





ABOUT THE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

The City Manager's Office serves as the community's local government's administrative hub and executive branch.

- **CITY CLERK'S OFFICE:** The central administrative hub for official records, legislative processes, and public information. The City Clerk's Office provides transparency, accountability, and efficient governance by facilitating various functions essential to the operation of local government.
- **COMMUNICATIONS:** Enhancing the City's public image, promoting transparency, facilitating effective communication between the City and community, and promoting civic engagement while effectively conveying the organization's mission, values, and priorities to diverse audiences.
- **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:** Oversees and coordinates all emergency planning, emergency preparedness, and management operations for the City, including administering workplace safety programs and initiatives.
- **FINANCE:** Responsible for the City's financial planning, which includes all financial operations such as treasury, accounting, financial reporting, payroll, grants management, and procurement, ensuring responsible stewardship of financial resources.
- **HUMAN RESOURCES:** This department plays a key role in managing the employee "life-cycle" experience and is responsible for recruitment/selection, compensation/benefits, employee training and development, and employee and labor relations to enhance employees' experience with the City.
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** Responsible for directing, managing, planning, and coordinating the functions and activities of data operations and technology services citywide and serves as the technological "lifblood" of the organization.

The City Manager's Office also facilitates the operation of numerous advisory boards and committees, which are crucial in furnishing the City Council with recommendations on diverse policy matters.

ABOUT THE POSITION

Under the direction of the City Council, the City Manager is responsible for directing, overseeing, and evaluating the administration of City government in accordance with municipal management principles, City ordinances, applicable local, state, and federal laws and policies set forth by the City of Des Moines, Washington City Council, for the benefit of the community, of which they serve. This position provides strategic, technical, and administrative direction; facilitates the development and implementation of long- and short-range plans, policy guidance, goals, objectives, and programming activities to meet and maintain City service standards; and ensures that public services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Other essential duties include:

- Establishing appropriate service and staffing levels; monitoring and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and procedures; and allocating resources accordingly.
- Ensuring the City has a comprehensive, citywide strategic communications plan for internal and external communications, including public information, education, and engagement; media relations; marketing; and other communications as needed.
- Assessing and monitoring workload, administrative support systems, and internal reporting relationships; identifying opportunities for improvement and implementing as appropriate.
- Explaining, justifying, and defending City programs, policies, and activities; negotiating and resolving sensitive and controversial issues.
- Establishing liaison with federal, state, and county agencies, other cities, and governmental associations.
- Keeping abreast of the effect of proposed legislation on municipal government and lending support to legislation as necessary.
- Maintaining public relations to include responding to media inquiries, issuing press releases, making presentations, attending area events, and staying engaged in the Des Moines community.
- Preparing reports and recommendations for the City Council regarding organizational needs and capabilities, financial status, program effectiveness, and the effect of new or proposed legislation on municipal government.



MAJOR PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- [The Marina Steps Project](#) will enhance pedestrian connectivity between the Des Moines Downtown area and the Marina.
- Hwy. 509 Puget Sound Gateway Project in partnership with the Washington Department of Transportation.
- Sound Transit Link light rail into Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Seattle is being extended to include a terminal/access point in Des Moines.





OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The City of Des Moines's new City Manager will work with the City Council, Executive Leadership team, staff, and Community Partners to prioritize:

- **ENSURING FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY & LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING:** The City Manager must understand that financial transparency and long-term planning are essential to ensure the community's accountability, trust, and sustainable development. The City Council would like the City to be fiscally stronger and have a stable financial footing with measures such as a future tax levy for public safety and other property tax and development fee incentives. The selected candidate will work with the Council to improve their understanding of the budget and financial matters, refine the City's budget documents and reports, and find ways to increase revenue, particularly within departments that can levy more competitive fees or taxes.
- **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The selected candidate must prioritize transparency and frequency in communication to improve community engagement through various methods and platforms. They will seek feedback, follow up, and broaden communication efforts for a diverse population to increase participation, with outcomes that demonstrate a clear understanding of the public needs so that policies and services can be aligned with the community's priorities.
- **FOCUSING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/GROWTH:** Assisting the City Council in determining its development priorities and identifying new development to assist with job creation, increased revenue, and attracting public and private development to stimulate economic growth. As Washington state law requires, the City's five-year growth plan is also due for an update within the following year.
- **ENHANCING OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:** The new City Manager will embrace opportunities to optimize technology to streamline processes, improve efficiency, and adopt technology that allows for capturing trends, patterns, and areas for improvement. The manager will also review and update rules and/or regulations so that processes and procedures can reduce "red tape" and improve responsiveness.
- **REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:** The new City Manager will continue to build upon established relationships with regional partners and identify innovative and sustainable solutions to address complex community issues such as economic development/growth, airport environmental and social impacts, increased access to public transportation connectivity, workforce development/housing, and business vitality. The incumbent must identify other opportunities to establish and build strategic relationships with surrounding cities and community agencies that share mutual concerns and/or serve the area.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- King County Metro
- Port of Seattle
- Puget Sound Energy
- Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority
- SCORE Jail
- Sound Transit
- South King Fire and Rescue
- South King Housing and Homelessness Partners
- Valley Communications 911

IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Des Moines is searching for a skilled and experienced servant leader who is excited to guide The Waterfront City into the future. This role demands a high level of accountability and visibility and requires excellent interpersonal and communication abilities to build positive and effective relationships with various stakeholders. The right person for this position is principled, kind, and just. They understand the importance of listening and learning before acting and know how to build trust and consensus within a diverse and changing community.

Candidates should have a depth and breadth of local government knowledge, from the principles and practices of fiscal and strategic planning and policy development and implementation to pertinent federal, state, and local laws, codes, and regulations impacting daily operations. Experience with community and economic development, as well as public works, is particularly valuable, as is experience working in western Washington, given the unique challenges of the shoreline and the proximity to Sea-Tac International Airport and Seattle. Having worked within a comparable-sized city will also set candidates up for success. The City Council wants someone who understands small-city dynamics and the importance of community building to the organization's success. The new City Manager should take a collaborative approach to their work and be eager to work with elected leaders and staff to develop, improve, and administer Citywide goals, objectives, policies, procedures, work standards, and internal controls. Des Moines is looking for a confident and charismatic visionary who knows what it takes to reach lofty goals and has the professional maturity, adaptability, and fortitude to see them through. The ideal candidate is open and sensitive to the needs and desires of everyone they serve. They are politically attuned, comfortable being the face of the organization, treat everyone they encounter with respect, and respond thoughtfully to challenges and concerns, even when the City cannot resolve the issue at hand, or the answer has to be "no." The selected individual will be able to delegate with authority and clarity and engage City staff by instilling a shared sense of purpose, setting measurable goals, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

This position requires a bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, or a related field, with a master's degree in public administration or a related field preferred. Candidates should also have at least five (5) years of experience as a city manager, assistant city manager, department head, or senior administrative officer. ICMA-CM, CPM® and/or CML certification is preferred, and the selected candidate will be asked to obtain and maintain certification through the International City/County Management Association within 18 months of hire. A valid Washington driver's license will also be required within 6 months of hire. Experience managing municipal services such as a marina or aviation is a plus. An equivalent combination of education and experience may also be considered.

City leaders would prefer that the new hire establish residency within Des Moines' city limits, though it is not required. Please also note that because of the known effects of tobacco use, the City of Des Moines does not hire applicants who use tobacco products.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The City of Des Moines is offering a starting salary range of \$218,577 to \$253,024 for this role, commensurate with qualifications and experience.

The City Manager has access to their choice of Washington State Department of Retirement Systems Public Employee Retirement System plans. In lieu of Social Security, the City typically contributes 5% to the employee's 401(a) plan, with the employee contributing 6.2%. The City also contributes 1.52% to employees' 457 plans, and employees may make additional contributions. Vesting for the City's 401(a) contributions starts at 25% after two years, growing to 100% vested after five years of service.

The City's benefits package also features a selection of medical plans and dental, vision, life, and long-term disability insurance, as well as paid holidays and leave. Car, phone, and technology allowances are negotiable. The City also offers opportunities for a flexible schedule.

APPLICATION PROCESS

[Please apply online](#)

For more information on this position, contact:

David Tuan, Senior Vice President
DavidTuan@governmentresource.com
701-570-3519

The City of Des Moines is committed to hiring a diverse workforce and all qualified applicants, including all ethnic backgrounds and persons with disabilities, are encouraged to apply. The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability status, or any other basis prohibited by federal, state, or local law. Applicants selected as finalists will be subject to a comprehensive background check.

RESOURCES

City of Des Moines, WA
desmoineswa.gov

City Manager's Office
desmoineswa.gov/departments/city_manager

Human Resources Department
desmoineswa.gov/departments/human_resources

Economic Development Department
desmoineswa.gov/doing_business/economic_development

[Des Moines Promotional Video](#)

Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority
seattlesouthside.com

Destination Des Moines
destinationdesmoines.org

Des Moines Videos
desmoines.civicweb.net/Portal/Video.aspx

