

Employment Opportunity

City Manager

City of Howell



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Isn't it great when the place you'd choose to work is also the place you want to live? A thriving, irreplaceable downtown, creative restaurateurs, responsive schools, solid neighborhoods and a commitment to green space and active recreation makes this community an easy choice.

Howell, Michigan is a dynamic, full-service city of nearly 9,500 residents chartered as a council-manager form of government located in Michigan's south east region. It is financially and politically stable and looking to hire its fourth manager in 30 years.

While only a short drive to some of the state's most celebrated urban amenities and vigorous labor markets, Howell is a self-contained preferred destination of its own where real estate sales are marked in days. Winner of a 2018 Great American Main Street Award, the vibrant and historically preserved downtown attracts visitors from throughout the region. It's well supported school system, safe walkable neighborhoods and distinctive personality have kept this family-friendly town growing even during Michigan's great recession.



The 2019-2020 total operating budget of \$20,089,289 (general fund budget of \$7,096,487) supports 61 full and part time employees who excel in an interdependent and supportive culture.

Only creative, energetic and approachable professionals with a strategic mind-set and forward focus will be considered to work with this pro-growth council. Howell will offer a competitive compensation package including a salary within the range of \$90,000 to \$103,000 depending on the qualifications and experience of its next executive.

- ▶ **POPULATION**
9,524
- ▶ **SIZE**
5.19 sq. miles
- ▶ **BUDGET**
\$20.1 million
- ▶ **STARTING SALARY**
\$90,000—\$103,000



▶ THE COMMUNITY

The city of Howell grew from a humble stage coach stop along the Grand River Trail shipping farmers' wares to a southern neighbor, Detroit, and north to what would become the state capitol. Its abundance of public houses, what we now call taverns, made it a highly popular stop-over in the mid-1800's.

Howell tips a hat to its history by capturing that spirit of welcome, inclusion and celebration while creating an atmosphere all its own.

Today Howell serves as the center of commerce, education and service to upwards of 50,000 nearby suburban and rural residents who claim honorary citizenship. It has the advantage of location; beautiful, well-maintained neighborhoods with diverse housing across all price points; an award-winning downtown; a strong sense of place and community pride; and a capable and experienced workforce. Howell is financially and politically stable, safe, and well-maintained. And, for the first time in 15 years the position of City Manager is open.

Howell is the County seat of Livingston County located in Michigan's southeast region. The County, one of the highest income counties in the United States, is made up primarily of small unincorporated bedroom communities and is home to 75 lakes, 123 miles of trails, 20,000 acres of parks and open space and the Mount Brighton ski area.

Rooted by Thompson Lake within its borders and enviable and accessible green space beyond, Howell is an easy commute to multiple urban centers with professional employment, education and medical center markets.

It is a half hour commute from Lansing, the state capitol and home to Michigan State University; one-half hour from Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan and the world-class U of M medical campuses; and less than an hour from downtown Detroit with all the entertainment and commercial options of a major city center.



Forty-one colleges and universities are within 50 miles (under an hour commute) from Howell. Cleary University is right next door and within 30 minutes college-bound commuters can reach the University of Michigan, Concordia University, Michigan State University, Oakland Community College, Washtenaw Community College, two Baker College sites plus Baker College for Graduate Studies, and Eastern Michigan University.

Even with the strong job markets nearby, 29% of Howell's residents work in the city, a 7% increase over the last 15 years.

Howell has aggressively pursued economic development options and now offers its workers diverse commercial and industrial opportunities which protect against abrupt economic swings. The largest employers include Thai Summit America Corp, Citizens Insurance, Livingston Educational Service Agency, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Howell Public Schools, Livingston County, Pepsi Bottling Group and Norvares US.

Unemployment is low, hovering around 3.8% and people are most commonly employed in these industries: health care, transportation and equipment, construction, finance and insurance, education, accommodations and food service, and public administration. Average household income in 2018 was \$51,722, close to the Michigan state median.

Neighborhoods are well-maintained, lawns are manicured, and streets are tree-lined. Housing styles are diverse and range from well preserved historically designated architecture from the mid-1800's to new condominiums. No cookie-cutter developments in this true hometown environ.

The average sale price for single-family homes in 2018 was \$217,287. The number of rentals, new and converted, at each price point has grown in recent years, likely a market response to the desirability of the community. Howell's cost of living factor is 90 (out of 100) making in an affordable option in which to live.

Neighbors know and watch out for each other. They plan gatherings on their own blocks or often meet up downtown or on the Court House lawn for community-wide events. Neighborhoods are quiet, walkable and safe. Violent or property crimes are a rarity.

Howell's population is diverse in terms of age, education and income levels. While its senior population is growing, its median age is still below that of the state, effected by the number of families raising children. Ninety percent of the adult population have high school degrees or more and 22 percent have bachelor's degrees or above.

It has a blue-collar, hard-working sensibility. People are passionate about their community, their neighborhoods and their values. Community residents call themselves tolerant, friendly, welcoming and accepting of diversity. Many of the non-profits and business institutions today are helmed by professional women.

Howell is, at its core, a community built around its families. As part of a five-government authority, Howell can offer parks and recreation opportunities to children and adults at many times what can be provided by other communities its size. Eleven parks, hiking trails, sports fields, a skate park, a recreation center and aquatic center with fitness space are designed to encourage involved and healthy families and citizens. <https://www.howellrecreation.org/>

Part of the reason for Howell's continuous growth trajectory may be the success of its school district. The school district, consequently, owes much of its success to the support from the community. Earlier this year voters agreed to a new millage to finance increased safety and security measures, facility repairs, a revamp of instructional spaces and upgrades to the performing arts center and some of the athletic facilities. The 2015 Technology Bond allowed Howell Public Schools to become the technology leader in the county by increasing the student to computer ration to 2:1.

Howell Public Schools (HPS) <http://howellschools.com/> is the largest of the five districts in the county serving over 7,000 students in 10 buildings with 403 teachers. Involvement can begin with the Little Highlander Learning Center in the infant day care center and extend through to the high school which houses a Freshman Campus and the 10-12 High School building.

The school district believes innovative teaching empowers students to be successful. The Innovation Academy was created to provide high schoolers who fare better in a smaller setting with an individualized standard-driven education. One of the elementary schools is a magnet school for students whose first language is not English.



HPS is considered a leader in serving students with disabilities. The SNAPTIES programs was designed to pair students with peers on the autism spectrum. A K-5 classroom has been designated to serve students with emotional impairments.

While seventy percent of HPS graduates go on to college, trade or other advanced schooling, several unique Career Preparation Programs have been introduced into the curriculum to better serve all students. Among those are the opportunity to enroll in Emergency Medical Technician training or prepare for Firefighter I and II certification testing. The culinary arts students run the Highlander Restaurant.

While considering this great career opportunity, don't skip the research into downtown Howell. It must be experienced! Its mix of well-preserved architecture, eclectic entrepreneurs, and programming like "Rock the Block" attracts foodies, artists, musicians, neighbors and shoppers from miles around. www.downtownhowell.org

Combining the Main Street philosophy for preservation and self-determination with DDA funding tools Downtown Howell is the benchmark others aim for. This winner of a 2018 Great American Main Street Award <https://youtu.be/xUiw7vTuT5g> offers downtown residents and visitors 40 specialty retailers, dining, entertainment options and non-stop inducement.

It provides unique experiences against an architectural foundation that spans 140 years. Concerts, art classes, exhibits and the Acoustic Café are sponsored by the Livingston Arts Council which took up residency in the Howell Opera House built in 1881. The Howell Carnegie District Library is a fieldstone masterpiece designed by E.E. Myers, completed in 1906, and built from donations made by Andrew Carnegie. Independent films, documentaries and first run movies are shown in a fully renovated theater that has been operating since 1928.

The thriving art community makes its presence felt in downtown with galleries, live exhibitions and the May celebration of everything that is art during "Howell Art Project". Each year murals

are added to those that grace much of the shopping district.

An avowed growth community, Howell still applauds its history, its sense of place and community pride in some fashion most weekends year-round! Volunteers recruited by the Main Street Committees, the Chamber of Commerce, The Howell Area Historic Society, Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority and many more non-profits and business interests sponsor meet-up opportunities or major galas that cover all the bases.

Melon Fest looks back at the community's agriculture roots and family first philosophy. Concerts at the Court House fill the lawn throughout the summer. The Michigan Challenge Balloon Fest taps a state-wide audience and the Legend of Sleepy Howell and Fantasy of Lights bring new excitement to classic reasons for a party.

Residents of Howell are attempting to find ways to pay reverence to the history of the community and honor what has come before while assuring future-focused residents are engaged and the success that comes from innovation is tapped.

All community members appear to agree on two things. First collaboration works. The Howell Parks and Recreation Authority is one example. The Howell Area Fire Authority was formed by the city and four townships. Howell's Information Technology Director is shared with the city of Brighton. The Howell Wastewater Treatment Plant serves several households in Marion Township.

Livingston County supplies building trades Inspection services to the city, and the city and Howell Public Schools work together to provide a School Resource Officer in the school buildings.

Second, residents are committed to and protective of Howell's small- town ambience and securing its future by maintaining and capitalizing on those place-markers that will keep it a unique and desirable place to live.

▶ THE ORGANIZATION



Howell is a council/manager form of local government by Charter. Six non-partisan, at-large Council members serve staggered four year-terms. The Mayor is elected independently and serves a two-year term. Elections are held every two years on odd-numbered years.

The Council appoints the Manager, sets policy and determines the strategic direction, and approves the budget and major expenditures while serving as the legislative authority through the approval of ordinances and major planning initiatives.

The seven elected officials describe themselves as holding diverse opinions on issues but working well together to find the most appropriate solution. Once a vote is taken they move on. The Council approaches discussions with each other and the public respectfully. They trust in the expertise of the city manager and professional staff; are proud of the low turn-over rate in the employee force and support work-life balance.

The Mayor and the Manager meet on a regular basis and review the council meeting agenda together.

All department directors report to the City Manager. All Directors excepting the Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor and City Attorney (who are appointed by the Council) are hired by the Manager. Three city managers have served Howell over the last 30 years with the last city manager serving for 15-years.

Howell is managed by administrators who are experienced, professional and highly capable with tenures, in some cases, ranging into two decades. The Administrative Team includes the Clerk, Finance Director/Treasurer, Police Chief, Deputy Police Chief, Director of Public Services, DPW Operations Manager, DPW Superintendent, Assessor, Information Technology Director, Director of Community Development and Main Street/Downtown Development Director. The position of IT Director is shared with a nearby community. The Clerk functions as the Human Resources Director and the Manager retains responsibility for labor relations and union negotiations.

There is little turnover, and the bench is strong. Fifty-six full time and five regular part-time employees, supported by seasonal hires, make up the municipal work force in Howell. Four labor unions represent police officers, police sergeants, public service departments and administrative supervisors.

The PD is completing final steps to being recognized as one of the 19 fully accredited police agencies in the State of Michigan. Howell has a strong commitment to the philosophies of Community Oriented Policing which are practiced in daily operations.

Fire protection is provided through a Fire Authority made up of the city and four near-by townships. Recreation programming, facilities and parks are managed and supported through the Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority, a joint operation of the city and four townships. Howell Carnegie District Library is funded by a separate millage levy and serves an area approximating that of the school district.

The position of Building Official and building inspection functions are contracted with Code Enforcement Services. Livingston County performs building trades inspections. Howell's corporate culture is first defined by a conscious decision to decentralize authority. Responsibility to solve citizens' issues is placed with the employee closest to the situation in an effort to meet needs with the greatest efficiency. Much autonomy rests with each outcome-driven Department Director who is hired or promoted for values including self-motivation, transparency, and loyalty.

Considered risk-taking is allowed and creativity and innovation applauded. Procedure manuals and process systems serve as bookends; fluidity within parameters is practiced assuring the best possible outcome for stakeholders.

At the same time authority is delegated, there exists a high level of interconnectivity between employees who are exceedingly well informed on all aspects of council business, development prospects, community and municipal projects and each other's challenges. Employees work across departmental lines to aid and assist each other and meet the needs of the residents and community stakeholders.

The Administrative Team meets weekly and shares reports on progress. Input is collected on possible impacts of projects and needs for resources are addressed. Council agendas and related information needs are reviewed by the group; and meetings are debriefed, implementation needs analyzed and tasks assigned.

Problem-solving and decision-making is often done in group as well. Every problem, issue or project will have an execution champion, but the entire team may provide feedback on best possible solutions and directions. Planning for "down-the-road" potential is brainstormed collectively.

There is a palpable level of trust and mutual respect within this group who offer they are all "one team".

To add value to this team, the new city manager will be the primary conduit to and from the city council. He or she will bring public relations skill to the table; be able to create and manage communication with elected officials, area stakeholders, residents and the media. They will be engaged in the community and remain educated on emerging municipal issues particularly local government finances.

The manager will be the leader and coach who links the professionals together propelling the organization in a unified forward motion. The chief executive will be an approachable, respectful public servant seeking input and encouraging an open exchange of ideas. Confident and competent, the city manager will allow for risk-taking without seeking blame.



The incoming city manager will find the following opportunities and challenges awaiting their attention in the City of Howell, in no particular order:

► OPPORTUNITIES

Howell possesses a solid foundation upon which to move forward. The budget is balanced, and the General Fund Balance exceeds 22%. The administrative team is professional, experienced and well respected by the community.

A vibrant downtown, replete with well-cared for historic architecture and diverse calendar of events, is a regional destination. The central business district has a reputation for creative independent retailers and restaurateurs. It serves as a safe, welcoming and highly energetic gathering spot for residents and visitors alike.

While the city is landlocked, attractive development opportunities are still available through reuse of vacant factories, a closed school site or obsolete buildings downtown. Vacant land on South Michigan Avenue has a Commercial Rehabilitation District in place.

► CHALLENGES

While the operations budget is stable there remains little additional revenue to take the next steps to distinction. The infrastructure condition is critical, and its repair and replacement must be addressed. Attempts to produce needed revenue, such as a Headlee override ballot issue, failed.

Public transportation options are severely limited, impacting access to services and amenities for certain populations.

Rental housing numbers have grown changing the personality of some neighborhoods.



▶ THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Howell will only consider applicants who are passionate advocates for the community they serve and who continually upgrade their professional skills. To be considered a qualified applicant, respondents must first have:

- A Bachelors' Degree in a relevant field of study; a Master's Degree in Public Administration or similar field is preferred **AND**
- A work history with continuous professional advancement culminating in a position with direct supervisory and budgetary responsibility. That experience should be in local government reaching the position of city, village, township or county manager or assistant manager **OR** achievement of an executive position in municipal operations with wide span of responsibility for several function areas. **AND**
- Membership In ICMA, MME or similar professional association with proof of continuous learning and adherence to a code of ethics desired

Any applicant who moves to the level of candidate will possess the experience and talent to build relationships and partnerships within Howell and the region. He or she will be a community builder with an understanding of the strategies that lead to growth and community prosperity. Among the other skills that are to be illustrated in a resume and letter of introduction are these:

- Superior oral, written, presentation skills; experience in communicating to Council, public and media sources
- Proof of proficiency in crafting public messages and engagement strategies to keep residents and businesses involved and informed in the business of local government
- Solid financial/budgeting acumen; understanding forecasting, revenue and expense projections

- Demonstrable success in leading employees; building and supporting well-performing teams; the ability to hire, and develop talent within a culture of cooperation and outcome orientation
- Familiarity with economic development concepts, downtown development and working positively with the business community
- Experience in building cooperative relationships and negotiating and facilitating agreements among multiple entities including intergovernmental partners and labor unions.
- Successful history in the acquisition and management of grant funds
- Aptitude to research, analyze and determine the local impact of state and federal legislation and regulation
- Ability to manage time, projects and multiple priorities

The new City Manager will be relatable, available and possess a spirit of volunteerism with an intrinsic desire to be an engaged member of the community and true participant in a well-working team. This new leader will be a coach, who seeks input before decisions are made and must be:

- A continuous learner
- Energetic
- Observant, thoughtful, respectful
- Kind, caring, warm
- Empathetic
- Willing to take risks and “press the envelope”
- Able to look at old issues in fresh ways
- A listener who seeks input and looks for group decision-making opportunities
- Decisive
- A strategic thinker
- Trustworthy, honest
- Reliable, follows through
- Approachable, relatable and available
- Passionate about local government
- Committed to a balance between work and life

APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLY BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS August 23, 2019

Please submit resume, cover letter, consent form,
and five professional references to:

Email:

execsearch@mml.org, Subject Line: Howell Search

-OR-

Mail:

Michigan Municipal League,

ATTN: Howell Search,

1675 Green Road

Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Questions can be directed to MML Executive Recruiter
Kathie Grinzinger at kgringizner@mml.org.

Candidates desiring confidentiality of their interest, as allowed
for and provided by Michigan law, must indicate such in a separate
subject line above the body of the cover letter.

This search is conducted by an Equal Opportunity Employer.

