



# CITY MANAGER

Lawrence, Kansas

**Annual Salary:**

\$229,153 – \$338,769 DOE/DOQ



The City seeks a strong relationship-driven leader with demonstrated abilities in the following:

- Demonstrated economic development acumen and well-versed in development processes
- A skilled problem solver with excellent negotiation skills and a track record of creative/entrepreneurial solutions
- Building authentic, trusting, and productive relationships with Commissioners, staff, and community stakeholders
- Comfortable in a highly visible position and becoming part of Lawrence's professional and social fabric
- Experience in managing/leading a regional City

Executive Recruitment  
Provided by





## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Lawrence, Kansas is a dynamic, university-driven city known for its progressive values, cultural richness, and civic energy. Nestled in Northeast Kansas just off I-70 and K-10, Lawrence blends small-town friendliness with metropolitan access to Kansas City (30 minutes from downtown) and 40 minutes to new KCI Airport.

Home to the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University, the city boasts a highly educated population, a thriving arts scene, and one of the most celebrated downtowns in the country—Massachusetts Street (“Mass Street”).

Residents enjoy over 50 parks and trails, vibrant annual festivals like the Art Tougeau Parade and Busker Festival, and natural destinations like Clinton State Park and the Baker Wetlands. Community pride, innovation, and inclusion define daily life.

[History](#)



[Tourism](#)



POPULATION  
**94,934**



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME  
**\$62,608**



MEDIAN HOME VALUE  
**\$285,000**

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT  
**\$1,097**

## GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

Lawrence operates under a Council-Manager form of government. The City Commission consists of five at-large, elected members with 4-year terms and no term limits. The Mayor and Vice Mayor are selected by the City Commission annually.

The City provides a range of municipal services, including Administration, Municipal Court & City Prosecutor, Communications, Transit, Sustainability, Equity & Inclusion, Police, Information Technology, Public Works (including Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Engineering, Streets, Solid Waste, and Fleet), and Parks, Recreation, & Culture. The City partners with Douglas County to provide Planning & Development, Fire & EMS, and Homelessness Programs, with Economic Development partner agencies including the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Commission, Kansas University, and Douglas County.

Lawrence’s FY 2026 Total Annual Budget is \$432.5 M (General Fund \$118.2M), supported in part with an ad valorem Mill rate of \$33.674. Municipal services are provided by approximately 930 employees, with personnel in the Police, Fire, and parts of the Municipal Services Department represented under collective bargaining agreements.



# THE JOB

The City Manager’s Office provides executive leadership and strategic coordination across all municipal departments and partner agencies. The City Manager oversees all City operations and serves as the chief administrative officer of the organization.

## Reporting to the City Commission, the new City Manager will:

- Lead implementation of Commission goals and the City’s Strategic Plan
- Oversee development and administration of the \$432.5 million annual budget
- Guide economic development and growth management initiatives
- Foster strong intergovernmental partnerships with Douglas County, KU, and regional stakeholders
- Serve as the primary liaison between City staff and the Mayor & City Commission, ensuring informed policy decisions

[Full Job Description](#) 

**VISION:** The City of Lawrence – supporting an unmistakably vibrant community with innovative, equitable, transparent, and responsible local government.

**MISSION:** We create a community where all enjoy life and feel at home.

## ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

- Character
- Competence
- Courage
- Collaboration
- Commitment

[STRATEGIC PLAN](#) 

 **EMPLOYEES**  
**~930**

 **TOTAL BUDGET (FY 2026)**  
**\$432.5** MILLION

# CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES:

**Economic Development:** There is a desire to pursue economic development and growth of the city to diversify the economy and provide a greater mixture of employment opportunities and tax base from the historically high percentage of tax-exempt classifications. Economic development services are provided through a mixture of providers, including the City, Douglas County, the EDC, the Chamber of Commerce, and KU Innovation Park. Coordination among these partner agencies is deemed critical for the community to achieve its economic development goals. The City has also recently pursued a strategy of infrastructure reinvestment to support both reliability and new development, with the next City Manager expected to help guide this transition and ensure future development reflects desired community goals.

**Growth Management:** Lawrence comprises roughly 35 square miles and has not significantly grown in land size or population over the last decade. The City has targeted several possible areas for annexation in support of economic development opportunities, including high-skill employment, commercial, and expanded housing options. A current component of the City's growth management strategy will be the resolution of a new planned Fire Station, requiring the identification of financing for both future capital and operating costs.

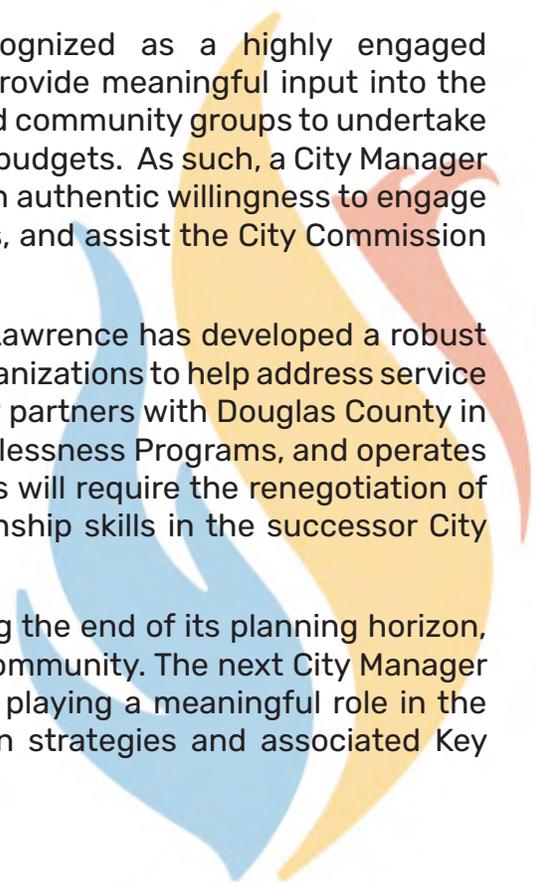
**Town-Gown Relationships:** In addition to being home to Kansas University, Lawrence benefits from the impacts of the land grant Haskell Indian Nations University and nearby Baker University in Baldwin City. Candidates with experience in managing "Town-Gown" dynamics are desired to build upon and nurture Campus-City-Community relationships.

**Affordability:** Given the mixture of tax-exempt property coupled with utility costs associated with recent reinvestments in the City's infrastructure, there are growing concerns expressed by residents regarding the "affordability" of Lawrence. Economic development growth will help address these concerns, and candidates with demonstrated strong financial acumen skills to evaluate municipal costs and programs are desired in the position.

**Highly Engaged Community/Stakeholders:** Lawrence is recognized as a highly engaged community comprised of residents and stakeholders desiring to provide meaningful input into the current and future affairs of the City. It is common for individuals and community groups to undertake independent, detailed research on various municipal programs and budgets. As such, a City Manager who is committed to transparency, trust, and accountability, with an authentic willingness to engage with residents, neighborhood groups, and community stakeholders, and assist the City Commission in navigating this landscape, will be successful in Lawrence.

**Intergovernmental Relationships/Partners:** As a regional City, Lawrence has developed a robust strategy of partnering with numerous organizations and outside organizations to help address service delivery and community challenges. For example, the City currently partners with Douglas County in the provision of Fire & EMS services, Economic Development, Homelessness Programs, and operates a Joint City-County Planning Commission. Many of these programs will require the renegotiation of Interlocal Agreements, requiring critical intergovernmental relationship skills in the successor City Manager.

**Strategic Plan Update:** The City's current Strategic Plan is nearing the end of its planning horizon, and foundational work is underway to develop a new Plan for the community. The next City Manager is expected to build upon the work currently underway, while still playing a meaningful role in the development of the new Strategic Plan, including implementation strategies and associated Key Success Indicators to track progress.





## IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will bring significant executive-level municipal management experience and a demonstrated record of economic development leadership. They will be a highly visible, emotionally intelligent leader who builds authentic relationships with elected officials, staff, university partners, and community stakeholders. This individual will demonstrate strong financial acumen, experience with public-private partnerships, and comfort navigating collective bargaining environments. They must be resilient, politically savvy, a visible champion for exceptional customer service, and capable of managing in a highly engaged community where transparency and accountability are expected. The successful candidate will be both visionary and pragmatic—capable of challenging the status quo, driving organizational action, implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs), while empowering staff and serving as a coach/mentor, and advancing the City’s mission of creating a community where all enjoy life and feel like part of the community

## EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS

### Required:

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities included in the position job description is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required knowledge and abilities would include the following:

- Master’s degree in Public Administration, Business Administration, or related field
- Ten (10) years of increasingly responsible management experience
- Five (5) years of administrative and supervisory responsibility
- Ability to establish residency within the City of Lawrence within six (6) months of hire

### Preferred:

- Experience leading a regional or university-centered city
- Demonstrated success in economic development and public-private partnerships
- Experience in collective bargaining and labor-management relations
- Strong background in municipal budgeting and long-range financial planning
- Proven track record in intergovernmental collaboration



## SALARY & BENEFITS

**Compensation:** \$229,153 – \$338,769 DOE/DOQ

**Health Benefits:** Medical and prescription coverage; optional vision; Health Reimbursement Account (HRA); Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA); group life and AD&D insurance; voluntary life, accident, critical illness, hospital indemnity, and identity theft insurance options.

**Paid Leave:** Vacation accrual up to 200 hours annually based on tenure; sick leave; holidays; professional development leave.

**Retirement:** Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERs) defined benefit pension plan; optional 457(b) deferred compensation through Nationwide; City also contributes to a 401(a) supplemental plan for the City Manager.

**Additional Perks:** Relocation assistance; automobile allowance; professional association dues and conference support; access to LMH WellCare Clinic; Employee Assistance Program (EAP); and other wellness incentives.

## HOW TO APPLY

Apply Here



**Doug Thomas**

**Executive Vice President of Executive Recruitment/Leadership Development**

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*The City of Lawrence is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subject to a comprehensive background check.*