



EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

City Manager
Hart, Michigan

SALARY: \$105,000 - \$115,000 DOQ

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OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY

Hart, Michigan is a close-knit, full-service community located in the heart of Oceana County. Nestled between Lake Michigan's scenic shoreline and the vast Manistee National Forest, Hart is known for its natural beauty, small-town charm, and year-round outdoor recreation. From the iconic Hart-Montague Trail to the shores of Hart Lake and proximity to the Silver Lake Sand Dunes, the city offers residents and visitors an unmatched quality of life in a setting that blends history, innovation, and Midwestern hospitality.

Hart's identity is shaped by both its agricultural heritage and a growing entrepreneurial spirit. As the county seat and home to a historic downtown, Hart is the region's civic, cultural, and recreational hub. The community's dedication to placemaking, economic development, and strategic growth has made it a model for other small cities. Local assets such as The Starting Block, a regional food business incubator, and strong partnerships with organizations like the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (H.E.A.R.T.) and Michigan State University's (MSU) AgBioResearch have positioned Hart as a leader in rural innovation.

Hart operates under a council-manager form of government and is supported by a capable, experienced, and collaborative team of department heads and community partners. The city maintains its own hydroelectric facility, is a founding member of the Michigan Public Power Agency, and continues to pursue forward-thinking infrastructure and energy projects. Residents and staff alike value transparency, respect, and a shared commitment to getting things done—together.

The city is now seeking a City Manager to help guide its next chapter of growth and opportunity. The ideal candidate will bring strategic foresight, a genuine interest in community building, and the leadership capacity to navigate housing challenges, infrastructure improvements, and long-term financial planning. This is more than a managerial role; it is a chance to make a meaningful impact in a place where tradition and transformation go hand in hand.

If you are a results-oriented public servant ready to lead in a dynamic and supportive environment, the City of Hart invites you to explore this exciting opportunity.

HART FAST FACTS



POPULATION
2,053



HOUSEHOLDS
719



MEDIAN HOME VALUE
\$97,715



MEDIAN INCOME
\$55,066



PUBLIC TRAILWAYS
22.7 Miles
(Hart-Montague Trail)





REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

Hart, Michigan, offers a rich variety of attractions that draw both residents and visitors year-round. Nestled in the heart of Oceana County's fruit belt and surrounded by natural beauty, Hart combines outdoor adventure with small-town charm. From its historic downtown and scenic lakes to nearby sand dunes and year-round festivals, the city serves as a hub for recreation, culture, and community connection. Whether exploring local shops, enjoying the waterfront, or attending seasonal events, Hart provides endless opportunities for relaxation, exploration, and memorable experiences.

What attracts thousands of people to Hart, and what factors lead many to call this community home?

Downtown Hart Historic District: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, downtown Hart blends history with modern amenities. Visitors can explore preserved architecture, unique local shops, and restaurants, as well as cultural venues such as the restored 1920s theater and art gallery.

Hart Lake: A centerpiece of community life, Hart Lake provides opportunities for boating, kayaking, fishing, and swimming. Its shoreline hosts events and gatherings, and nearby Veterans Park offers a scenic place to relax or picnic by the water.

Hart-Montague Trail: This scenic 22-mile paved trail connects Hart to Montague and offers year-round recreation for cyclists, walkers, runners, and snowmobilers. Along the route, travelers can enjoy rural landscapes, orchards, small-town charm, and convenient access points to dining and attractions.

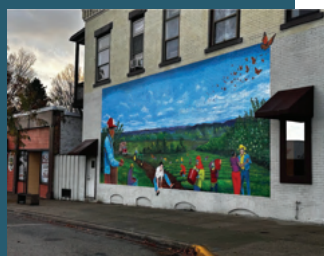
John Gurney Park: Overlooking Hart Lake, this historic 17-acre park offers camping, a sandy beach, playground, and recreational facilities. Visitors can enjoy boating, fishing, and wooded trails, all within walking distance of downtown Hart and nearby attractions.

Seasonal Festivals: Hart's calendar is filled with events that celebrate the community's heritage and culture, including the Oceana County Asparagus Festival, Winterfest, Music on the Commons, and the Hispanic Heritage Celebration. These events draw visitors from across the state and foster a strong sense of local pride.

Silver Lake Sand Dunes: Located just minutes from Hart, this world-class destination features towering dunes, miles of sandy Lake Michigan shoreline, and thrilling off-road vehicle areas. It is a popular draw for outdoor enthusiasts, families, and adventure seekers.

24-ft Tin Man Sculpture and Murals: Created through The Hart Project, these public art installations add color, creativity, and a sense of whimsy to the community. The 24-foot Tin Man greets visitors as a landmark of Hart's artistic spirit, while vibrant murals throughout downtown celebrate local culture, history, and imagination. Together, they showcase the city's growing commitment to public art and placemaking.

Veterans Park: Currently planned for redevelopment, Veterans Park will become a premier community gathering space with upgraded amenities, expanded recreational opportunities, and improved access to Hart Lake.



HART HISTORY

Hart, founded in 1856 by Nelson Grove and other early settlers, was named both for its central location in Hart's story begins in 1856, when Nelson Grove and a group of early settlers chose a spot in the center of Oceana County to build their new community. They named it both for its location in the "heart" of the county and in honor of Wellington Hart. By the early 1860s, the sounds of a grist mill and sawmill echoed through the settlement, signaling its growing role as an agricultural and industrial hub. The arrival of a post office and the Pere Marquette Railroad brought new connections, linking Hart to markets and opportunities far beyond its borders. As the county seat, Hart flourished, evolving from a modest village in 1885 to an incorporated city in 1946. Over time, brick buildings replaced wooden storefronts after a series of fires, giving the downtown its enduring character.

Nestled along Chippewa Creek near Lincoln and Union Streets, Hart's historic downtown remains the heart of the community. Designated a Historic District in 1984 and later recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, it stands as a testament to resilience, vision, and pride in place. Today, the preserved architecture and inviting streetscapes offer more than a glimpse into the past—they reflect a living history that continues to shape Hart as both a welcoming small-town center and a gateway to the natural beauty, agriculture, and culture that define the region.

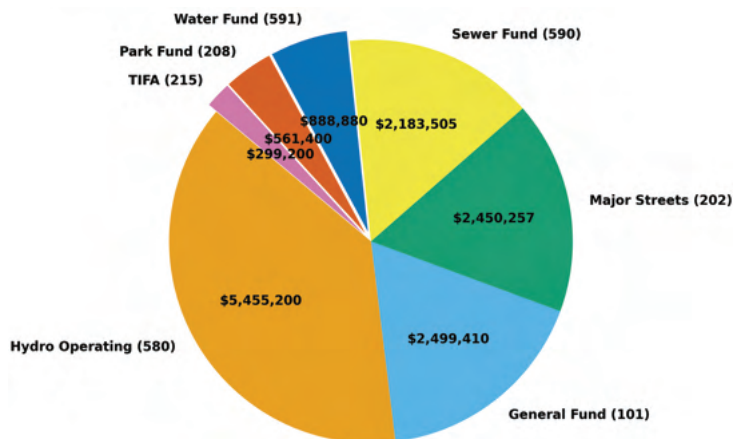


HART ECONOMY

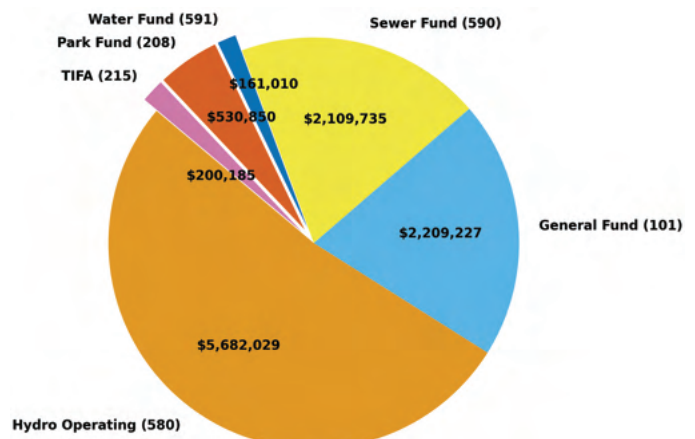
Hart's economy is anchored by a diverse mix of industries, with agriculture and food processing at its core. Peterson Farms, the area's largest employer with roughly 800 employees, leads a strong network of companies that includes Arbre Farms, Michigan Freeze Pack Co., and Gray & Company, all contributing to the region's reputation for high-quality food production. Manufacturing is represented by GHSP – Hart, which employs more than 260 people, while Mercy Health Lakeshore Campus provides essential healthcare services to the community and surrounding areas. Tourism also plays a vital role, with destinations like the nearby Silver Lake Sand Dunes and the Double JJ Resort, employing around 300 people, drawing visitors year-round. Together, these sectors create a balanced and resilient economy that supports both local livelihoods and Hart's welcoming, small-town character.

HART BUDGET

REVENUE



EXPENDITURE



WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR...

Hart operates under a council-manager form of government, with policy set by the elected City Council and daily operations overseen by the City Manager. The City has about 30 full- and part-time employees across police, public works, utilities, wastewater, hydroelectric, and economic development. Department directors bring strong expertise and handle the day-to-day management of their areas, while the City Manager provides coordination, guidance, and alignment across departments to ensure consistency with council priorities.

Staff describe the culture as approachable, collaborative, and focused on results. It is an environment where teamwork is valued, communication is direct, and challenges are addressed quickly. The next City Manager will be expected to work closely with the City Council, provide clear communication, implement policy decisions, and support long-term planning. A leader who values transparency, engages staff constructively, and builds strong relationships with both employees and elected officials will thrive in this role.

IDEAL SKILLS

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Balances long-term vision with day-to-day practicality
- Aligns organizational efforts with community values and future growth
- Embraces innovation while respecting the traditions of small-town governance

MUNICIPAL EXPERTISE

- Deep understanding of city services, utilities, budgeting, and infrastructure
- Serves as Zoning Administrator and manages capital improvement projects
- Ensures regulatory compliance, effective planning, and sound fiscal stewardship

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Approachable, visible, and invested in Hart's civic life
- Builds relationships with residents, civic groups, and regional partners
- Listens well and seeks inclusive, transparent decision-making

TEAM LEADERSHIP

- Fosters trust and collaboration among department leaders and staff
- Invests in employee development, recruitment, and retention
- Leads with calm, consistency, and a genuine respect for others' expertise

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

- Communicates clearly across a range of audiences and formats
- Translates complex data into meaningful public conversations
- Facilitates productive dialogue among council, staff, and community stakeholders

INTEGRITY & RESULTS

- Demonstrates integrity and a commitment to follow-through
- Responds thoughtfully to challenges and holds self and others accountable
- Values fiscal responsibility and stewardship of public trust

DIVERSITY

Diversity of heritage, identity, thought, talent, and life experience bolsters the opportunities for enrichment, strengthening individuals, teams, organizations, and communities. The City of Hart is an Equal Opportunity Employer and shares these values. Candidates of all backgrounds, perspectives, who value public service, and seek to work with a team who appreciates our individual and unique differences are encouraged to apply.

ABOUT THE POSITION

The City Manager shall be responsible to the Council and shall serve as the chief administrative officer of the City. The City Manager shall be appointed by the Council on the basis of training and ability.

The City Manager need not be a resident of the City at the time of their appointment, but shall become a resident of the City within ninety (90) days after their appointment and shall so remain throughout their tenure of office.

The function of the City Manager shall be:

- To see that all laws and ordinances are enforced.
- To manage and supervise all public improvements, works and undertakings of the City. They shall have charge of the construction, repair, maintenance, and cleaning of streets, sidewalks, bridges, pavements, sewers, and of all public buildings or other property belonging to the City. The City Manager shall manage and supervise all City utilities and shall be responsible for the preservation of property, tools, and appliances of the City.
- To see that all terms and conditions imposed in favor of the City or its inhabitants in any public utility franchise, or in any contract, are faithfully kept and performed.
- To attend all meetings of the Council, with the right to take part in discussions, but without the right to vote.
- To be a member, ex officio, of all committees of the Council.
- To prepare and administer the annual budget under policies formulated by the Council and keep the Council fully advised at all times as to the financial condition and needs of the City.
- To recommend to the Council for adoption such measures as the City Manager may deem necessary or expedient.
- To be responsible to the Council for the efficient administration of all departments of the City government.
- To assume all the duties and responsibilities as personnel director of all City employees or delegate such duties to some other appointive officer or employee of the City. No such delegation shall relieve the City Manager of any responsibility for the proper conduct of such duties.
- To be the purchasing agent for the City.
- To perform such other duties as may be prescribed by this Charter or as may be required of the City Manager by ordinance or by direction of the Council.



CURRENT & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES



- **Tourism and Visitor Capture:** Hart is well-positioned to grow its tourism economy by taking full advantage of its proximity to major attractions such as Silver Lake Sand Dunes, the Hart–Montague Trail, and Hart Lake. By enhancing marketing efforts, improving visitor amenities, and creating year-round experiences, the city can attract new guests while encouraging repeat visits that strengthen the local economy.
- **Downtown and Historic District Development:** The city has the opportunity to further enhance its historic downtown through façade improvements, expanded amenities, and the revitalization of underutilized properties. These efforts will not only preserve Hart’s charm but also create a more vibrant and inviting environment for residents, visitors, and business owners alike.
- **Business and Housing Growth:** Partnerships with developers, combined with the use of economic incentives, can help Hart attract new businesses and expand housing options. Increasing the variety and quality of available housing will support workforce growth, meet resident needs, and strengthen the city’s economic foundation.
- **Partnership Expansion:** Hart can continue to build strong, strategic relationships with organizations such as H.E.A.R.T., the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and MSU AgBioResearch. These collaborations will provide resources, expertise, and innovation to support local initiatives and long-term community goals.
- **Placemaking and Recreation:** From park redevelopment to improved trail connections, Hart has the opportunity to advance projects that enhance quality of life. Initiatives such as Safe Routes to School, expanded recreational amenities, and public space improvements will strengthen community identity and create spaces where residents and visitors can connect.

CHALLENGES

- **Housing and Rental Quality:** Hart faces the ongoing challenge of increasing housing availability for residents at all income levels while improving the quality of its rental stock. Strengthening inspections and code enforcement will be essential to ensuring safe, attractive, and well-maintained housing across the community.
- **Staff Turnover and Retention:** As a small organization without dedicated human resources support, maintaining staff stability is critical. Retaining experienced employees and attracting new talent will require a focus on professional development, workplace culture, and competitive compensation.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** The city must address aging water, sewer, streetscape, and public building systems to ensure reliable services and a safe, functional environment. Long-term planning and prioritization will be necessary to manage costs while maintaining quality.
- **Budget Constraints:** Balancing the day-to-day operational budget with the need for long-term capital investment is a key financial challenge. Sustainable funding strategies will be required to maintain infrastructure, deliver quality services, and support future growth.
- **Political and Council Transitions:** Changes in council membership and evolving priorities can impact long-term projects and community stability. Navigating these transitions will require consistent communication, strategic alignment, and a collaborative approach to governance.
- **Economic Diversification:** While agriculture and tourism remain strong, Hart’s future prosperity will benefit from diversifying its economic base. Expanding into new industries will help create a more resilient economy and broaden opportunities for residents.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Hart's strength lies in its ability to work together. The City Manager plays a key role in fostering relationships with a network of partners who share a commitment to economic growth, quality of life, and long-term community success. Through collaboration with these organizations, the City Manager helps align local priorities with regional and state resources, ensuring that Hart remains a vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

- **Hart Economic and Redevelopment Team (H.E.A.R.T.):** The city's primary economic development organization, H.E.A.R.T. supports local businesses, attracts new investment, and champions downtown revitalization projects.
- **Local Civic Groups:** Organizations such as the Hart Rotary and United Way of the Lakeshore foster community service, volunteer engagement, and charitable initiatives that enhance quality of life for residents.
- **Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC):** MEDC provides resources, funding programs, and statewide connections that help Hart expand its economic base and create opportunities for residents and businesses.
- **MSU AgBioResearch Center:** This Michigan State University facility conducts research in agriculture, natural resources, and food systems, supporting Hart's strong agricultural and food processing industries.
- **Oceana County Community Foundation:** A philanthropic leader offering grants, scholarships, and donor services that strengthen local nonprofits, support education, and invest in community improvement.
- **Oceana County Economic Alliance (OCEA):** OCEA leads efforts to promote economic opportunity in Oceana County. By partnering with The Right Place, OCEA combines local knowledge with regional expertise to support existing businesses, attract new investment, and build a resilient, diverse economy.
- **West Michigan Works!:** A regional workforce development agency that connects employers with talent, provides training opportunities, and supports a skilled labor force in Hart and the surrounding area.



TOP FIVE REASONS WHY YOU WANT TO BE OUR NEXT CITY MANAGER

1. **Lead with Impact:** Hart is a community where leadership is visible and valued. The next City Manager will guide transformative projects, shape long-term priorities, and deliver results that residents can see and feel.
2. **Build Strong Partnerships:** Collaboration is at the heart of Hart's success. This role offers the chance to work closely with an engaged city council, experienced staff, and dedicated regional partners to advance shared goals and drive meaningful change.
3. **Shape a Destination Economy:** Hart's proximity to Silver Lake Sand Dunes, the Hart-Montague Trail, and Hart Lake positions the city for year-round tourism growth. The City Manager will lead efforts to maximize these assets and strengthen the local economy.
4. **Enhance Community Assets:** From infrastructure improvements to expanded parks and recreation, this role allows the City Manager to champion projects that elevate Hart's quality of life, attract investment, and foster pride among residents.
5. **Join a Supportive Culture:** Hart is known for its creativity, collaboration, and steady leadership. The City Manager will be part of a welcoming environment that values teamwork and celebrates progress made together.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A bachelor's degree with experience in public management or related field.
- Three-year's experience in local government service (city, township, village, or county) with proven familiarity of multiple departments, services, and functions.
- A history of advancement culminating in achievement of a leadership role with a wide span of responsibility and administrative control.
- A varying combination of education, training, and experience may be considered. Additional training or experience in municipal finance/budgeting and utility provision and management is valuable.

SALARY & BENEFITS

- Compensation: \$105,000-\$115,000 DOQ
- Benefits: Health, Vision, and 401k options are available for full-time employees.



LIVING IN HART



Living in Hart offers residents the warmth and familiarity of a small town paired with access to abundant natural beauty, a welcoming community, and a lifestyle enriched by history, culture, and year-round recreation. As the county seat of Oceana County, Hart is both a vibrant civic hub and a gateway to some of Michigan's most celebrated outdoor destinations.

Education

Hart Public Schools serves more than 1,300 students on a single, attractive campus that includes an Early Childhood Center, Spitler Elementary, Hart Middle School, and Hart High School. Known for strong early intervention programs, an acclaimed performing arts program, and rising academic achievement, the district offers a broad range of extracurricular activities, career-technical opportunities, and dual enrollment options. Higher education is easily accessible, with institutions such as Ferris State University, West Shore Community College, Baker College, and Muskegon Community College within an hour's drive, and Grand Rapids-area universities—including Grand Valley State University, Aquinas College, and Michigan State University's Grand Rapids campus—within reach.

Healthcare

Hart residents benefit from local and regional healthcare providers, including Mercy Health Lakeshore Campus and nearby hospitals and specialty clinics in surrounding communities. The area also offers public health services, community wellness initiatives, and access to regional networks of care.

Lifestyle & Community Events

Downtown Hart is the centerpiece of community life—walkable, bikeable, and rich in historic charm. Residents and visitors enjoy an array of local eateries, boutique shops, and cultural venues, including a restored 1920s theater. The city's calendar is filled with signature events such as Winterfest, Music on the Commons, Hart Sparks, and the "Whatever Floats Your Boat Regatta." Hart also celebrates its heritage through the Oceana County Asparagus Festival, the Hispanic Heritage Celebration, and an annual Pow Wow hosted by area tribal members. Community pride is evident in the work of volunteer groups, civic organizations, and local arts programs.

Recreational Activities

Hart's setting is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. The city sits near 25 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, the Silver Lake Sand Dunes, and the Manistee National Forest. Residents enjoy access to Hart Lake, Veterans Park, and the Hart-Montague Trail, a 22-mile paved path for biking, running, and snowmobiling. Recreation opportunities include boating, fishing, hiking, pickleball, camping, disc golf, and golf at nearby courses. Parks and youth sports programs—offered through a partnership between the city, Hart Public Schools, and surrounding townships—further enhance the community's quality of life.

Family-Friendly Environment

Hart is known for its safe neighborhoods, friendly atmosphere, and genuine sense of belonging. Many families have roots that span generations, while others have chosen Hart as their forever home, drawn by its mix of tradition, opportunity, and small-town warmth. Whether greeting a neighbor on a downtown sidewalk or volunteering at a local festival, residents find Hart to be a place where connections are made easily and community is truly valued.





HOW TO APPLY

Accepting applications through September 26, 2025.

Please complete the application form using the link below.
DO NOT APPLY via LinkedIn.

**NOTE: To request confidentiality during this executive search process,
please indicate your preference in your cover letter.**

Send resume, cover letter, and professional references to:
Mitch Foster,
Economic Vitality & Small Community Specialist; Double Haul Solutions
mitch@doublehaulsolutions.com | 231-690-7609

www.doublehaulsolutions.com