



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | *MANISTEE HOUSING COMMISSION*

Soul of the Water. Spirit of the Woods

CMHC CITY OF MANISTEE
housing commission

THE OPPORTUNITY

The City of Manistee Housing Commission (CMHC) is looking for a highly-motivated individual to be responsible for assisting in all aspects of the general operations of the Housing Commission; An Executive Director with experience in property management, affordable housing and/or LITHC management who can provide administrative, financial and technical leadership to the Commissioners, employees, and Manistee is highly desirable!



IDEAL CANDIDATE

- Change Agent
- Strategic Planner
- Customer Service-focused
- Intergovernmental Collaborator
- Hands-on Public Housing Specialist
- Goal-setter, Team Builder & Influencer

EXPRESS INTEREST BY NOVEMBER 19TH

History of MANISTEE Michigan

Pre-historic

Before European settlement, the Manistee area was home to Indigenous peoples, including the Odawa (Ottawa) and Ojibwe (Chippewa) of the Anishinaabe. Archaeological evidence—such as burial mounds—shows that humans occupied the region for thousands of years. The name Manistee comes from a Native term often interpreted as “spirit of the woods” or “river with islands.” The area was part of the homeland of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, whose descendants still live in the region today.



Early History

The first European presence came in the early 1800s with missionaries and traders. A Jesuit mission was established near Manistee Lake around 1826. The Stronach Brothers built the first sawmill in 1841, marking the start of permanent settlement and the lumber boom. From 1836 to 1848, much of the area was an Odawa reservation, later opened to settlers.

Manistee grew rapidly through the lumber and salt industries, becoming one of Michigan’s busiest ports by the late 1800s. As settlers arrived and economic activity (especially lumbering) began, local organization took shape under township governance. The area that is now the city fell under **Manistee Township**, which was one of the original townships organized when Manistee County was formally organized (February 13, 1855). Before incorporation, land use, basic infrastructure, and law enforcement were managed by the township government, and during the 1860s, Manistee saw rapid growth, population increases, and expansion of services. In March 1869, the **Michigan state legislature** granted Manistee a **city charter**. On March 15, 1869, the **first municipal election** under that charter was held and the City’s first mayor and aldermen (from four wards) were chosen. After incorporation, the city undertook improvements in infrastructure: fire protection, water, sewer, street lighting, and organized parks.

A **devastating fire in 1871** destroyed most of the town, but it was rebuilt in brick and stone. By 1885, Manistee had more than **40 sawmills** operating. By 1900, the population had reached 14,260. The city was wealthy and vibrant—boasting theaters, rail connections, and more millionaires per capita than almost any U.S. city of its size. Over time, the lumber resources were depleted, and industries like the Manistee Iron Works and the salt plants declined.

Today

With a population of 6,200, Manistee remains the county seat and a gateway to Lake Michigan recreation. The city has preserved much of its historic architecture, including the **Ramsdell Theatre** (1903) and buildings along River Street. Manistee’s historic downtown, **Victorian architecture**, and Riverwalk attract visitors year-round. Tourism, small manufacturing, and cultural events now drive the economy. The **Little River Band of Ottawa Indians**, federally recognized in 1994, contributes through enterprises like the **Little River Casino Resort** and cultural programs.

Modern Manistee blends its industrial past with heritage tourism and outdoor living—offering a small-town atmosphere rich in history and natural beauty.



1st Congregational Church

First Street Beach
“Best Beach in Michigan”
~ USA Today 2024 & 2025

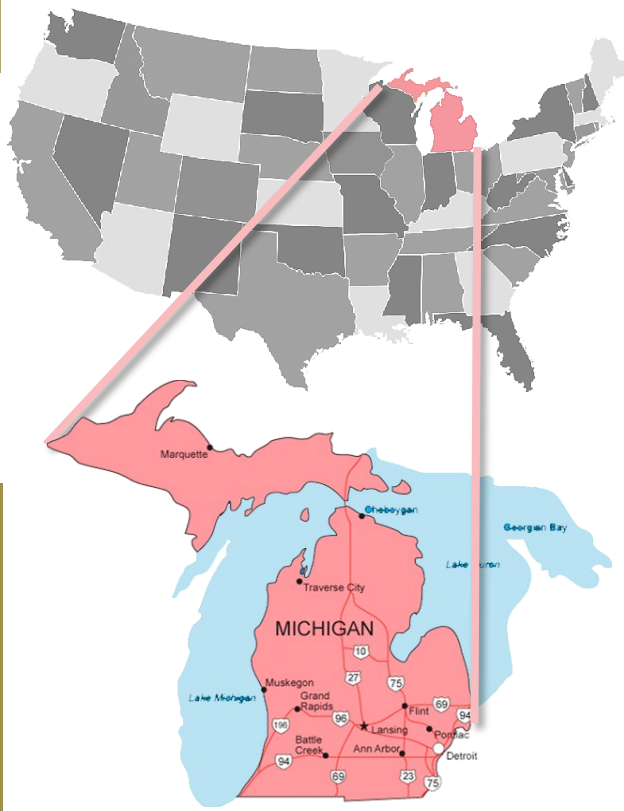
The News Advocate
“Newspaper of the Year”
~ Michigan Press Association 2022

GEOGRAPHY

Manistee lies in the southwestern part of Manistee County in Michigan's northwestern **Lower Peninsula**. It's situated on an isthmus between Manistee Lake and **Lake Michigan**, the Manistee River flows through the city center toward Lake Michigan.

Manistee is within a day's drive to Lansing & Detroit (MI), Chicago (IL), Milwaukee (WI), Indianapolis (IN), and Columbus (OH).

The City has an incorporated area of 4.53 sq mi total - 3.28sq/mi (72%) is land and 1.25sq/mi (28%) is water.



Air Travel

- **Manistee County Blacker Airport** has 2 flights daily to Chicago.
- **Traverse City Airport (TVC)** 60 miles north of Manistee.
- **Gerald R. Ford Airport (GRR)** is 130 miles south of Manistee.

TVC and GRR are serviced by Allegiant, American / American Eagle), Delta / Delta Connection, Frontier, JetBlue, Southwest, United / United Express, Sun Country, and Avelo.

Top destinations include: Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Minneapolis,, New York City, and Orlando.



Driving Distances

Grand Rapids, MI	(2 hrs)
Lansing, MI	(3 hrs)
Detroit, MI	(4 hrs)
Milwaukee, WI	(4 hrs) + ferry
Chicago, IL	(4 .5 hrs)
Indianapolis, IN	(6 hrs)
Columbus, OH	(7.5 hrs)
Minneapolis, MN	(11 hrs)
New York City, NY	(15 hrs)

COMMERCE

Historically, Manistee thrived during the late 19th-century logging and shingle industry boom. As the lumber era waned, Manistee became known as the "Salt City," hosting major facilities like Morton Salt, Packaging Corporation of America, and Martin Marietta. Tourism, fishing, and recreation remain important economic pillars. Manistee Harbor is an active deep-draft commercial port, regularly maintained through dredging to preserve essential shipping access.

Top 10 Employers in Western Michigan

Business	Sector	FTEs	Business	Sector	FTEs
Corewell Health (fmr. Spectrum Health)	Healthcare	25,000	Amway Corporation	Consumer Goods / Direct Sales	4,500
Trinity Health (Grand Rapids area)	Healthcare	8,500	MillerKnoll (aka Miller + Knoll / furniture)	Manufacturing (Furniture)	3,621
Meijer, Inc.	Retail / Grocery	5,000	Perrigo	Manufacturing (Health products)	3,500
Gordon Food Service	Wholesale Food (Distribution)	5,000	Steelcase	Manufacturing (Furniture)	3,500
Gentex Corporation	Manufacturing (automotive)	4,500	Grand Valley State Univ.	Education	3,306

Source: [West Michigan's Largest Employers, 2023](#)



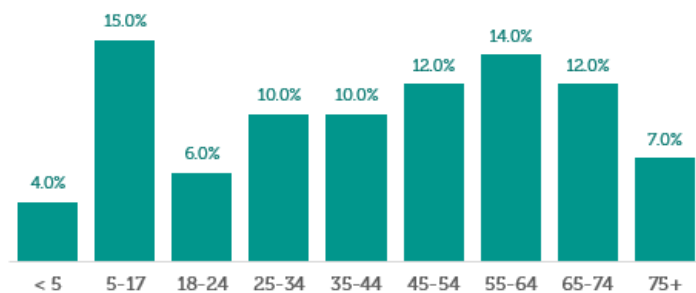
DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

2020 projections show a population within the City of Manistee of 6,275, Manistee County has 25,553.

Age Distribution

The median age in Manistee is 47.2 (IA average is 38). The largest segment of the local population are those over the age of 65 (23.7%), and under 17 years old (19.9%).



Ethnic Composition

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates, the city's gender and ethnicity composition to be 51.5% Female, 48.5% Male, 87% White, 5.7% Black or Latino, 1.4% American Indian.

Median Income

The median household income in Manistee is \$59,315. The median property value in 2021 was around \$166,000. Unemployment is 7.3%

Education

21.6% of residents have attained a degree:

- 2.0% Doctorate and Professional
- 4.0% Master's Degree
- 16% Bachelor's Degree
- 9% Associate's Degree

58% High School Diploma / some college

9% no High School diploma

Cost of Living

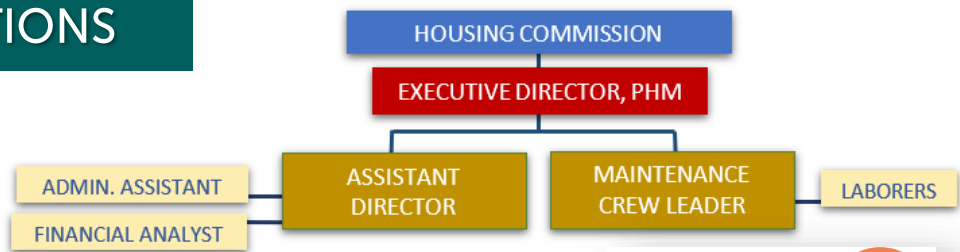
Cost of Living in Manistee is 87/100 - 13% lower than the US average. Housing is 83/100-17% less than the US average.

CLIMATE

Manistee falls under the humid continental climate category—meaning warm summers, cold winters and fairly even precipitation year-round. Average high and low temperatures are around 55–56°F and 37–38°F

Manistee receives an average of 37.8" of rainfall and 100" average snowfall annually.

Summer in Manistee is pleasant and mild, not typically oppressive, comfortable afternoons, cool nights, moderate humidity, and a reasonable chance of afternoon showers.



City of Manistee

The **City of Manistee** operates as a home-rule city under Michigan law, governed by a Council–Manager form of government. The 7-member City Council is the primary legislative authority. The City Manager the Chief Executive.



Manistee Housing Commission

The **Manistee Housing Commission (CMHC)** was permitted by Michigan statutes and formally created by local ordinance—by the City of Manistee—to address local affordable housing challenges and to administer an affordable housing program within the City. The Housing Commission carries-out housing policy, and manages federally-supported programs.



Although the **City of Manistee** and the **Manistee Housing Commission** are closely linked, they operate separately. The Manistee Housing Commission functions independently under its own bylaws and Board of Commissioners, The City Council appoints members to the Housing Commission Board to ensure city representation, alignment with broader municipal goals, and to provide **oversight and accountability**.

Housing Board of Commissioners

The 5-member **Board of Commissioners** is responsible for planning and establishing policies for the operation of income based affordable housing. The Board determines the need for housing facilities and the extension of programs. Board Members vote on resolutions and maintain oversight of property management and compliance, ensuring that management entities continue to fulfill the commission's mission. Selecting officers, approving policies, financial oversight, and strategic planning remain central to the Board's governance role. Officers include: *President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary*.

- **Steve Fosdick, President** | Since 2023; Term expires 2028. VP Grain Merchandiser & Apartment Manager.
- **Karen Goodman, vice-President** | Since 2025, Term expires 2030. Social Worker, County Commissioner
- **Virginia "Gini" Pelton, Commissioner** | Since 2022 Term expires 2027. Public Housing Specialist, Realtor
- **Mike Szymanski, Treasurer** | Since 2024; Term expires 2026. US military, City Council, Planning Commission.
- **Sue Majchrzak, Resident Commissioner** | Since 2025; Term expires 2029. Retail sales, Customer Service.

The Executive Director

The Executive Director has responsibility for administering, managing, maintaining, planning, and directing the Commission's public housing programs. He / she is the Commission's primary liaison with the County, HUD, and State and local entities on involving operations, staffing levels, budgets, policies and procedures to maintain efficient operations, capital projects and/or new programs . The Executive Director is responsible for working with the Board of Commissioners for **long-range strategic planning** and development of a **5-year plan** to carryout out and implement board approved strategies.

These tasks are to be performed in compliance with National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE), Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS), Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) and other HUD required evaluation systems. More about the Executive Director roles below.

[Executive Director Job Description <link>](#)

PAST CHALLENGES

The **Manistee Housing Commission** previously endured years of instability, poor leadership and mistrust with past management insisting on operating independence from City oversight, ignoring opportunities for collaboration. Some past challenges include:

- ◆ Failing to provide financial reporting transparency which triggered a forensic audit documenting the misuse of ARPA funds for bonuses, significant financial mismanagement, and even theft.
- ◆ Adversarial City Hall / Commission relations.
- ◆ Low morale & poor direction:
 - ◇ Board felt unclear about their roles, direction, enforcement and accountability.
 - ◇ Employees described burnout, a culture of fear, disorganization, often felt undertrained, overworked, lacked defined roles & direction.
 - ◇ Residents described fear of management and felt silenced in decision-making.
- ◆ Preventive maintenance was neglected, and some units were uninhabitable or unsafe.
- ◆ Occupancy rates were as low as 60–65%.

RECENT SUCCESS

A highly-professional Executive Director and Housing Board have successfully improved:

- ◆ Fiscal integrity, transparency, and public trust;
- ◆ Work culture and the residents' experience;
- ◆ Staff morale, professionalism and camaraderie;
- ◆ Employee accountability and teamwork despite limited staffing;
- ◆ Occupancy rates have increased to 95–98% due to stronger rules enforcement, timely follow-up, and improved customer service;
- ◆ Positive, visible community impact with ongoing housing conversions;
- ◆ Responding to high occupancy and housing demand, by advancing a **strategic "repositioning" plan**: transitioning scattered-site public housing units from **Section 9** public housing to the **Section 8** subsidy model preserving affordable housing availability;



- ◆ Earning a strong HUD NSPIRE inspection score—**92 out of 100** reflecting effective upkeep and tenant care;

OPPORTUNITIES

With strong progress, significant opportunities for advancement and improvement remain:

- ◆ **Housing shortage:** Locally, 600 additional public housing units are needed. Affordable housing is also scarce for incoming leaders and staff.
- ◆ **Staffing & Workload:** Only 5 FTE and 1 PT staff oversee 200+ units. High turnover, burnout, and overlapping duties create chronic stress.
- ◆ **Infrastructure:** Some facilities face aging systems, and insufficient preventive maintenance. The maintenance garage also needs replacement.
- ◆ **Technology & Modernization:** Transitioning to a digital workflow (e.g., electronic work orders and applications) remains a goal.
- ◆ **Reputation & Engagement:** The stigma around public housing persists, both within the community and among residents.
- ◆ **Leadership Development:** Staff want regular meetings, structured leadership, training, and a shared organizational vision.
- ◆ **City / Housing Commission Partnership:** The historic rift still lingers but offers a key opportunity for rebuilding trust.

Education

- ♦ Bachelor's in Public Administration, Housing, Planning, Business or a related field
- ♦ Master's Degree *desirable*, but not required
- ♦ A Public Housing Manager (PHM) or Certified Management Executive (CME) certification preferred or ability to obtain within one (1) year of hire.

Attributes & Skills

Approachable & Empathetic

- ◇ Approachable and positive, has an infectious attitude; mentors motivates and inspires others;
- ◇ Genuinely cares about residents, staff, and community well-being;
- ◇ Honest, enthusiastic, sincere and transparent;

Collaborative Communicator

- ◇ Builds bridges City–Commission relations and unites staff under a shared mission;
- ◇ Collaborates w/ staff and external stakeholders;
- ◇ Proven ability to improve intergovernmental relationships and community partnerships.
- ◇ Highly effective written / verbal communicator;
- ◇ Prepared with relevant details when speaking to the Board, City Manager, City Council & Public;

Change Agent

- ◇ Effectively identifies and corrects inefficiencies;
- ◇ Embraces modernization and innovation;
- ◇ Has a track-record of building highly-effective Management Teams, lifting an organization;
- ◇ Proactive, creative, and forward-thinking;

Delegator & Mentor

- ◇ Empowers others, values input, and develops leadership capacity within the team;
- ◇ Effectively delegates authority, and actively promotes performance measurement;
- ◇ Effectively assigns work, maintains accountability and reports progress;

Visible Leader

- ◇ Engaged in the community, accessible to residents, and active in professional housing networks (e.g., NAHRO);
- ◇ Instills passion and focus among employees;
- ◇ Meets regularly with Staff and encourages supervisors to lead effectively;



Experience

- ♦ Minimum 5 years in Housing Management, including 3 years in a supervisory role
- ♦ HUD-related programs, regulations and reporting requirements;
- ♦ Michigan housing standards and MSHDA desired;
- ♦ Experienced Customer Servant
- ♦ Strategic Planner

Customer Service

- ◇ Builds a strong Customer Service culture;
- ◇ Effectively communicates with and listens to residents, elected officials, department heads and employees privately and in public;
- ◇ Instills passion and focus among employees, boards and committee members; and
- ◇ Inspires trust and pride in the organization.
- ◇ Authentic, equitable, and consistent

Hands-on Housing Management Experience

- ◇ Proven understanding of LIHTC (Low-Income Housing Tax Credits), RAD conversion, Section 8, and Rural Development programs.
- ◇ Strong background in financial management, budgeting, and procurement.
- ◇ Experience leading staff training, development, and performance systems.

Strategic Planner, Structured

- ◇ Experienced at:
 - setting goals
 - succession planning
 - establishing clear expectations
 - performance measurement and reporting
- ◇ Experienced with:
 - Community Development
 - Economic Development
 - long-term Housing Policy
 - Sustainability

[Executive Director Job Description <link>](#)

COMPENSATION

Annual Salary

- \$86,900 to \$135,500 / year salary (DOQ)

Benefits

The Manistee Housing Commission offers a competitive benefits program which includes:

- Medical (80-100%)*, Dental & Vision (100%)
- Life Insurance: \$35,000 to 50,000
- Retirement: MERS or other
- Short-term Disability (60% of earnings)
- Long-term Disability (66 2/3% of earnings)
- Education Military & Family Leave
- Professional Development & Memberships
- Holidays: 13 days
- Vacation Leave: negotiable
- Sick Leave: 8 hours / month

* contribution may vary by family size

[Benefits information <link>](#)

Equal Opportunity

The City of Manistee Housing Commission promotes equity and inclusion of protected classes including sex, ethnicity, color, familial status, age, marital status, national origin, geographic background, race, creed, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, mental and physical disability, or veteran status in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities.



Manistee Harbor

Residency

The Executive Director is not required to reside within the City Limits, however being a visible member of the community would be valued.

Past Executive Directors

2 Executive Directors have served the Commission during the past 23 years. The current Director will be available to assist with the transition as desired.

Confidentiality

Expressions of interest are not employment applications, but are considered part of an evaluative process. Candidate names will be kept confidential until public disclosure of a candidate's name is required.



Manistee Harbor



Regional & Local Amenities

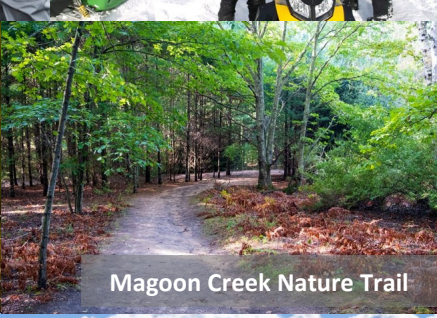
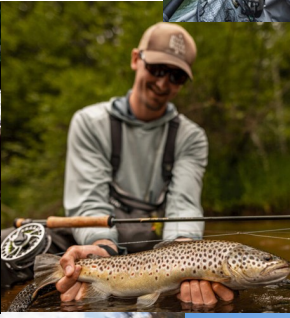
Autumn on Lake Michigan

Nestled between Lake Michigan and the Manistee National Forest, Manistee offers an incredible array of year-round outdoor and recreation activities:

- Bike, walk or run more than **20 miles of walking trails and bike paths, 182 acres of parks, and miles of beaches.**
- The **Port of Manistee** is a deep-draft harbor with a Marina protected by a breakwater pier. The marina supports Recreational Boating and **Small Boat Rentals.**
- Kayak or Fish the Manistee River for **Bass, Walleye, Brown Trout or Salmon** (Steelhead, Coho or Chinook); or Lake Michigan for many of its 68 fish species.
- Enjoy Fall and Winter family fun at the **Manistee Fall Festival, Old Christmas, and the Victorian Sleighbell Parade.**



Manistee National Forest & Little Mac Suspension Bridge



Magoon Creek Nature Trail



Orchard Beach State Park



Manistee Riverwalk



Summer Kayaking



Regional & Local Amenities

The Ramsdell Performing Arts Center

You will never say "I'm bored" with the incredible local amenities that Manistee has to offer:

- The Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts & Ramsdell Theatre is a historic theater / performance venue for plays, concerts, community shows.
- Amazing museums include the **Manistee County Historical Museum (Water Works Museum)**, Victorian-era Dempsey Manor, Arcadia Area Historical Museum, Brethren Heritage Museum Complex, Bottle House Museum, Old Kirke Museum, and the Bear Lake Museum to list a few.
- Historic Downtown's 19th Century architecture has shopping, dining, nightlife and an amazing walking tour.
- Action-packed regional sports with the **Grand Rapids Griffins** (AHL Hockey), and **West Michigan Whitecaps** (Baseball).



Historic Downtown Shopping



Manistee County Historical Museum



'The Music Man' at the Ramsdell Theater



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | MANISTEE HOUSING COMMISSION

EXPRESS INTEREST

RESUME & LETTER OF INTEREST
OR QUESTIONS TO...

ExecutiveDirectorMI@municipalsolutions.org

TIMELINE & SELECTION

19 November	Deadline to Express interest
24 Oct - 7 Dec	Screening & Evaluation
Early December	Finalists Selected.
Mid-December	Interviews & selection

*Expressions of interest are confidential
until finalists announced.*



This recruitment is actively managed by:



EXPRESS INTEREST BY NOVEMBER 19TH