



Director of Development and Planning City of Portage, Wisconsin

Position Profile



Public Administration Associates



The Community

The City of Portage, known as "Where the North Begins" is the largest municipality in Columbia County, with a population of approximately 10,500. It serves as the county seat and is part of the Madison Metropolitan Statistical Area, adjacent to the Stevens Point Micropolitan Statistical Area. Located just 30 minutes from Madison and near the Wisconsin Dells recreation area, Portage offers an affordable, high-quality alternative to big city living. Its strategic location along Interstates 39 and 94 and U.S. Highway 51 enhances its regional appeal, while its commercial and industrial base contributes to a strong local economy.

Incorporated in 1854, Portage is uniquely situated between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, historically serving as a key travel route. This geographic advantage has supported the city's long-standing economic success. Portage features excellent neighborhoods, diverse housing options, award-winning schools, a thriving historic downtown, and a growing business district. Many historic sites and buildings are listed on the National, State, and Local Registers of Historic Places, preserving the city's rich heritage.

Portage's location along the rivers provides ample recreational opportunities, including fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and boating. The city's park system further enhances residents' quality of life, offering a variety of amenities. Nearby, the Swan Lake and Pine Island State Wildlife Areas provide additional outdoor activities. The Wisconsin Dells recreation area also offers nationally recognized entertainment and year-round attractions.



Director of Development and Planning Role

The Director of Development and Planning is a key member of the leadership team, responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing initiatives that promote the City's growth and development. The role includes supporting the retention and expansion of existing businesses, as well as assisting in efforts to attract new development of all types. The Director also manages and promotes the Portage Enterprise Center (PEC) and is responsible for interpreting and enforcing the Zoning Code.

The position frequently interacts with all City departments; members of the City Council, Boards, Committees, and Commissions; representatives of the business and development communities; and county, regional, and state agencies.

Key Initiatives & Projects

The new Portage Director of Development and Planning can look forward to a wide range of challenging and interesting work:

- Leverage the city's location, amenities, and TIF Districts to attract new businesses while supporting the growth of existing enterprises and foster vibrant development throughout the community.
- Expand local housing opportunities by collaborating with developers and community partners on new and existing projects, ranging from single-family and multi-family to senior housing and mixed-use developments through infill, revitalization, and community growth.
- Be a part of modernizing City codes and ordinances to reflect current development practices, improve clarity, and support fair, consistent, and collaborative implementation across the community.
- Lead the Portage Enterprise Center, a dynamic economic hub designed to help foster new businesses and provide skills training to the regional workforce.



Qualifications & Ideal Candidate Profile

Education: Bachelor's Degree from an accredited four-year college or university with a degree in planning, public or business administration, marketing, economics, finance, or related field.

Experience: Five (5) years progressively responsible experience in development, marketing activities in a public sector agency or in another equivalent organization that would confer a comparable skills base

Skills:

- Knowledge of local and state government operations related to development, along with skills in finance, marketing, communications, and problem-solving.
- Understanding of zoning administration principles and the ability to evaluate and recommend action on permits, site plans, plats, surveys, variances, non-conforming uses, and zoning amendments.
- Ability to build and maintain strong, collaborative relationships with elected officials, City staff, the business and development community, and regional agencies

Personal Qualities: The ideal candidate will be a high-integrity leader with open and positive communication skills, forward-thinking approach to opportunities, and a collaborative approach to governance. Strong listening skills and the ability to be a build strong collaborative relationships with stakeholders while advancing community development and organizational goals.

Compensation & Application Process

Salary Range:

\$90,000 - \$100,500 DOQ + excellent benefits

Application Deadline:

First review of applications, January 30, 2026 - position open until filled.

How to Apply:

Submit a cover letter, resume, 5 work-related references, and salary history as a single PDF to smcdade@public-administration.com.

For questions, contact **Sue McDade** at **(608) 516-9012**, Public Administration Associates, LLC.

Confidentiality requests must be made by the applicant but cannot be guaranteed for finalists.



Watch the Portage Director of Development and Planning Video Announcement: <https://youtu.be/P0FREB0udIs>

