PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

CITY OF UMATILLA *Oregon*

GMP CONSULTANTS

Why Apply?

This is a unique opportunity for an experienced forward-thinking Public Works Executive to help guide one of Oregon's fastest-growing small cities through a period of significant expansion and long-term investment. Umatilla has proactively positioned itself for substantial residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructure growth already underway with significantly more anticipated over the next decade.

The next Director will help lead major capital investments, regional water strategy initiatives, infrastructure expansion, organizational modernization efforts, and administer and facilitate large-scale private investment in a city that values innovation, collaboration, and long-range thinking. This is an opportunity to join a financially stable community with ambitious goals, strong and visionary executive leadership aligned with the City Council, and the resources to accomplish meaningful work. The role is ideally suited for a leader energized by building systems, delivering major projects, working with operations staff to provide excellent service to the public and helping shape the long-term future of a growing city with a big future.

WELCOME TO UMATILLA

Located three hours east of Portland, Umatilla is a growing city of 8,617 residents situated along the banks of the Columbia River at the confluence of the Umatilla and Columbia Rivers. Umatilla is known for its desert scenery, easy access to outdoor recreation, and quieter pace of life while remaining connected to larger regional centers in both Oregon and Washington.

Umatilla is one of the fastest-growing small cities in Oregon due to its strategic location near Interstate 82 and regional transportation corridors linking eastern Oregon with the Tri-Cities region of Washington. Surrounded by rolling hills, irrigated farmland, and wide-open river landscapes, the city's growth has been influenced by the abundant waterways, a longstanding tradition of embracing new technologies, and the natural expanse of Eastern Oregon. While agriculture remains a major economic driver, and Two Rivers Correctional Institution serves as the city's largest employer, Umatilla is mid-stride in a major economic development transformation.

The city is also home to several large-scale data centers, the Port of Umatilla Industrial Park, a thriving construction industry, and multiple federal agencies connected to energy, environmental, and river operations. Nearby recreational opportunities are closely tied to the Columbia River system. Just outside town, the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge and McNary National Wildlife Refuge provide scenic trails, birdwatching, fishing, and seasonal water recreation that attract residents and visitors throughout the year. The Columbia River also supports boating, kayaking, and camping opportunities throughout the region.

Umatilla's location places residents within easy reach of the larger Tri-Cities area, including Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland, expanding access to shopping, healthcare, entertainment, and employment opportunities. Roughly 30 miles away, the Tri-Cities Airport serves the region with commercial air service to several regional hubs.

THE CITY OF UMATILLA

Incorporated in 1864, the City of Umatilla serves a population of 8,617 across 5.4 square miles with a total annual budget of $143 million and a team of 81 FTEs. Operating under the Council-Manager form of government, the six-member City Council is elected at large to staggered four-year terms. The Mayor is also elected to a four-year term but does not vote except in the event of a tie. Departments include Administration, Finance and Administrative Services, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Works.

Umatilla maintains an aggressive and well-funded capital improvement program supported by the City Council and a leadership team committed to long-range planning, infrastructure investment, and organizational alignment. The City values professionalism, initiative, collaboration, accountability, and solutions-oriented mindset.

FTEs
81

2026 BUDGET
$143 million

AREA
5.4 square miles

POPULATION
8,617

View job description at gmphr.com

THE PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

Reporting to the City Manager, the Public Works Director plans, organizes, directs, and oversees all City public works functions. Responsibilities include leading and coordinating activities related to engineering, streets, water, sewer, stormwater, irrigation, solid waste, parks, facilities, and fleet operations, as well as emergency response for snow, ice, flooding, and severe weather events. The Director establishes departmental goals and objectives in alignment with policy direction set by the City Council and City Manager. The Director will be expected to contribute not only as a department leader, but also as a trusted member of the broader leadership team helping shape the City's future direction.

The Public Works Department operates with a 2026 budget of $85 million and a team of 19 FTEs across Parks & Facility Maintenance, Water, Wastewater & Sewer, and Streets divisions. The department maintains 11 parks, more than 18.5 miles of roadway, and a 2019 state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant that treats an average of 700,000 gallons of wastewater per day, along with a municipal water system supplied through four of the City's five wells.

Umatilla is in the midst of significant transformation; and while the incoming Director will need to be well-grounded in municipal public works functions, the position offers more than a traditional Public Works Director experience. Beyond the ability to lead a highly motivated and professionally diverse department, success as the Umatilla Public Works Director will be defined by the delivery of several visible, high-quality projects that inspire community pride while ensuring infrastructure investments stay ahead of unprecedented growth. The ideal candidate will build a strong, adaptable team and operational systems capable of scaling with increasing community demands, while confidently navigating complex partnerships and earning the trust of the City Council, community members, leadership team, and staff.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Lead Delivery of Major Capital Projects

Umatilla is delivering and planning significant infrastructure investments across multiple systems and service areas. The next Director must be capable of managing numerous complex capital projects while maintaining schedule discipline, budget accountability, construction quality, and public confidence. Success will require strong organizational leadership, disciplined project management, and the ability to maintain momentum in a fast-moving environment.

Align Infrastructure with Community Growth and Economic Development

Infrastructure is viewed as a strategic enabler of growth and community success, not simply a public asset. The Public Works Director will play a central role in ensuring infrastructure systems remain ahead of demand. This includes supporting major employment and economic development centers, coordinating utility and transportation planning with ongoing development activity, and aligning infrastructure investments with the City's adopted plans and long-term vision. The Director will work closely with Community Development, consultants, developers, and regional partners to support economic development, livability, sustainability, and long-term resiliency.

Operate Effectively in a Complex Partnership and Funding Environment

The next Director must be comfortable operating in technically sophisticated and politically nuanced environments involving multiple interests, funding sources, and long-term regional implications. This includes supporting implementation of an Urban Renewal District anticipated in 2026, assisting with long-term funding strategies for major capital improvements, and coordinating with key regional partners.

Build Systems, Capacity, and Organizational Sustainability

The pace of development activity and the scale of current and future projects require a systems-builder capable of modernizing operations while maintaining reliable service delivery. The next Public Works Director will strengthen asset management practices, improve capital planning and project delivery systems, and continue building organizational capacity to support long-term sustainability.

Steward Long-Term Water and Infrastructure Strategy

One of the City's most significant long-term initiatives involves continued transition from groundwater dependence toward expanded Columbia River water utilization and broader regional water stewardship efforts. More than $150 million has already been invested, with substantial additional investment anticipated over the next decade. The Public Works Director will help coordinate major water infrastructure investments, irrigation partnerships, reuse strategies, Urban Irrigation Master Plan implementation, and related environmental and regulatory considerations.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

- Strategic and collaborative leader capable of partnering effectively with the City Manager and leadership team to align infrastructure planning with broader community goals.
- Strong technical and program management experience involving complex, multi-year infrastructure delivery, capital planning, and coordination across public works systems.
- Proven ability to execute large-scale, community-shaping capital initiatives involving water, wastewater, transportation, parks, and related infrastructure systems while maintaining effective day-to-day operations.
- Demonstrated success as a leader of , or within, a comparable municipal public works department or major division. A Servant- leader capable of connecting with operations staff through experience and a shared mission.
- Strong diplomacy, sound judgment, relationship-building skills, and the ability to effectively represent the City in technical, operational, and public-facing settings.
- Ability to coordinate effectively with agencies, utilities, tribal governments, consultants, contractors, and major private-sector stakeholders such as Amazon, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CTUIR, irrigation districts, PUDs, Port Districts, and related partners.
- Experience with large- and small- scale development, possessing sound engineering judgment with the avility to interpret and review engineering plans and proposals, to relate those plans to adopted comprehensive planning documents, and to anticipate environmental impacts and develop appropriate mitigation measures.
- Familiarity with state and federal grant programs, award and compliance, along with other funding mechanisms; e.g. bonding, low interest loans, PPP, capital facilities charges, Oregon Urban Renewal programs or similar economic development and financing tools.
- Proven organizational leadership experience involving public works operations, labor relations, employee performance management, team development, and organizational leadership.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- Bachelor's degree in business administration, public administration, civil engineering, water resources management, or related field.
- At least five years of progressively responsible administrative experience in municipal public works or a closely related field.
- At least three years in a supervisory capacity.
- Or equivalent education and experience that demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The City of Umatilla is offering an annual salary range of $115,476 to $141,408 for this position, dependent upon experience and qualifications, along with a comprehensive benefits package.

- Medical, dental and vision benefit plan for employee and one dependent. (Additional dependents may be added for a modest employee contribution)
- Life insurance
- Annual VEBA contribution
- PERS retirement plan
- 11 paid holidays
- Generous employee leave programs
- Deferred compensation program with City match (optional)
- Membership at City-owned golf course

RESOURCES

FY 2025-26 City Budget

Public Works Department

City Projects

2025-27 City Goals & Strategic Plan

Comprehensive Plan

Org Chart

Umatilla Chamber of Commerce

TO APPLY

Apply Online: gmphr.com

First Review: November 8, 2026

More Info: Dave Zabell, GMP Consultants
dzabell@gmphr.com / (509) 834-9343