

CITY OF LA PALMA

CALIFORNIA



invites your interest in the position of

CITY MANAGER



Recruitment Services Provided by Ralph Andersen & Associates

THE OPPORTUNITY

The City Council of the City of La Palma, located in Orange County, California is seeking an energetic and enthusiastic professional to join this financially healthy and well-managed organization. This talented professional will be an effective hands-on manager for a staff of 54 and a combined budget of \$33.5 million (General Fund budget of \$14.6 million). Ideally, the top candidate will be a generalist complemented by a strong working knowledge of finance, revenue generation, and quality customer service. The selected City Manager will also need to have an inclusive management style combined with a hands-on approach to day-to-day operations.

THE COMMUNITY

In 1955, the City of La Palma, then known as “Dairyland,” was home to 18 dairies spread across just 1.76 square miles. The City’s landscape and character were far different from today. In 1965, following the relocation of the dairies, the City was renamed “La Palma,” honoring both Orange County’s Spanish heritage and its central roadway, La Palma Avenue. Early in its development, City planners established a long-term vision for orderly growth, resulting in key projects such as the Civic Center and Central Park, which remain the community’s premier gathering spaces. In the early 1980s, the City’s major redevelopment project, Centerpointe, introduced new commercial and light industrial uses, further diversifying La Palma’s economy. La Palma operates under a Council-Manager form of government, emphasizing transparency, responsiveness, and fiscal responsibility. The City actively promotes resident engagement through a variety of community programs and services. La Palma consists of approximately 5,110 households, with 61% identified as family households and 64% as married couples. The median household income is \$115,833, about 20% above the state average, and 24% of households earn over \$200,000 annually. The median home value in 2024 was \$1,065,000, with 69% of residents owning their homes –compared to 56% statewide.

Today, La Palma is a well-balanced City that prides itself on a responsive municipal government with a strong sense of community. Its small-town atmosphere, combined with strong civic pride and high quality of life, has earned La Palma repeated recognition as one of America’s Best Places to Live by Money Magazine. With one of the lowest crime rates in Orange County, La Palma is a place where residents can rest easy and enjoy hometown living. For more information about the City of La Palma, please visit their website at www.lapalmaca.gov.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The City of La Palma has operated under a Council-Manager form of government since 1955. Policymaking and legislative authority are vested in a City Council consisting of the Mayor and four other Council Members. The City Council is responsible for, among other things, passing ordinances, adopting the budget, appointing committees, and hiring the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for carrying out the policies and the ordinances of the City Council, for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the City, and for appointing the heads of the various departments. The City Council is elected through a district-based electorate on a non-partisan basis serving four-year staggered terms. The Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem serve a one-year term and are selected for the position annually by the City Council as a whole.

The City of La Palma provides a range of municipal services through in-house City staff and contracts for fire and library services.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS

Goal 1: *Model municipal management excellence, fiscal discipline, and financial stewardship.*

Goal 2: *Maintain the City's low crime rate through continued investment in public safety best practices.*

Goal 3: *Encourage business attraction, retention, and workforce development opportunities through a proactive Economic Development strategy.*

Goal 4: *Create and maintain City assets, infrastructure, and neighborhoods to demonstrate municipal pride of ownership.*

Goal 5: *Provide residents and visitors with community events that encourage citizen involvement, foster human development, and strengthen community through people, parks, and programs.*



GOVERNING STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

CONTINUED

In addition to the City Manager's Office, the City has the following departments:

- ◆ Administrative Services
- ◆ Police Department
- ◆ Community Services
- ◆ Public Works
- ◆ Community Development
- ◆ Management Services

The City has a total 2024-25 budget of approximately \$33.5 million (\$14.6 million in General Fund operating expenses with an approximate \$13.8 million Capital Improvement Program), and a full-time staff of 54 along with 30 part-time staff. The largest share of the General Fund operating costs totaling \$6.1 million are attributed to police services representing 41.9% of the total budget. The City is financially stable with over \$7.7 million in general fund reserves.

Fire services are provided by the Orange County Fire Authority, and library services are provided through the Orange County Library District.

The City of La Palma is a well-balanced, full-service City and prides itself on having a responsive municipal government to match its strong sense of community. City employees work as a team delivering high quality customer service to its citizens, and hands-on involvement from supervisors and managers ensure excellence for its residents and businesses.



THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City Council is seeking a creative and innovative individual to utilize a team approach to problem-solving and be proactive in addressing issues of concern to the City Council and the community. Additionally, the City Manager will be able to develop and promote strategic initiatives for the Council's discussion and consideration, while also incorporating best practices in local government.

The next City Manager will:

- ◆ Have a collaborative approach with the City Council, department directors, and staff fostering an open dialogue.
- ◆ Truly enjoy working in the public sector; elected officials and residents alike have high expectations of the City Manager including involvement in civic, business, community-wide social gatherings, and inter-governmental activities on a local and regional basis.
- ◆ Be an experienced decisionmaker committed to organizational effectiveness, fiscal accountability, and continuous improvement of a municipal organization.
- ◆ Promote the use of technology and best practices in his/her approach to guiding and leading an organization.
- ◆ Be comfortable in an environment that constantly strives for high quality work-product, strategic planning, financial acumen, exceptional customer service, and timely responses to public inquiries.
- ◆ Have unquestioned personal integrity, honesty, and impeccable ethics paired with excellent communication skills.

Additionally, the ideal candidate will possess the following personal characteristics and attributes:

◆ Deep Community Engagement & Cultural Awareness

- ◆ **Community-rooted leadership:** Demonstrates a strong connection to the community – understanding its history, values, and diverse needs.
- ◆ **Public trust builder:** Creates mechanisms for meaningful two-way communication such as town halls, surveys, and citizen advisory boards to ensure public input shapes policies.
- ◆ **Service with empathy:** Leads with compassion, empathy, and humility; responsive to resident concerns and accessible to the public.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE *CONTINUED*

◆ Strategic Vision & Leadership

- ◆ **Forward-thinking:** Ability to develop and implement a long-term vision for the City's growth, sustainability, and economic development.
- ◆ **Policy alignment:** Works closely with elected officials to ensure City operations align with the community's goals and council priorities.
- ◆ **Crisis leadership:** Strong decision-making under pressure, especially in emergencies or during political transitions.

◆ Administrative Expertise

- ◆ **Budget management:** Deep understanding of public budgeting, financial forecasting, and fiscal responsibility.
- ◆ **Operational efficiency:** Ensures City departments run smoothly and deliver high-quality services (e.g., public safety, infrastructure, sanitation).
- ◆ **Project management:** Oversees capital improvement projects and other initiatives with timely execution and cost controls.

◆ Strong Communication Skills

- ◆ **Community engagement:** Open and accessible to residents; builds trust through transparency and regular communication.
- ◆ **Council relations:** Communicates effectively with the City Council, keeping them informed and involved in key decisions.

- ◆ **Conflict resolution:** Manages diverse viewpoints and resolves disputes among stakeholders diplomatically.

◆ Ethical Integrity & Accountability

- ◆ **Trustworthiness:** Upholds high ethical standards; avoids conflicts of interest and ensures government transparency.
- ◆ **Data-driven:** Makes decisions based on evidence and community needs, not personal or political agendas.
- ◆ **Performance tracking:** Implements systems to evaluate the effectiveness of City services and staff performance.

◆ Collaborative Management Style

- ◆ **Team builder:** Recruits and retains skilled department heads, encourages professional development, and fosters a positive organizational culture.
- ◆ **Intergovernmental cooperation:** Works with regional, state, and federal entities to secure funding and partnerships.
- ◆ **Innovation and technology:** Encourages modernization of City operations through tech and smart City solutions.

The new City Manager will provide strong leadership and be primarily involved in:

- ◆ Balancing an array of community needs including continuing the high-level of transparent, frequent, and open communications.
- ◆ Addressing ongoing infrastructure needs, service delivery, public safety, and overseeing overall enhancements through effective planning and community development.
- ◆ Ensuring and sustaining the City's long-term financial stability will be a top priority for the next City Manager. The new City Manager will need to be a highly strategic thinker to help the City identify opportunities for generating new revenues while still delivering high quality services and tackling the long-term needs of the City.

EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

The full City Council will be actively involved with Ralph Andersen & Associates in the initial screening and evaluation of resumes to determine the appropriate match of professional experience and education.

Experience: This is an ideal position for an energetic and high-energy, mid-career professional to assume the top position in a municipal organization. Candidates with applicable experience in a comparable size organization are encouraged to apply. Experience working with an engaged elected body is strongly desired. All highly qualified candidates, from existing City managers to aspiring professionals, are strongly encouraged to apply. The City Council will consider a broad spectrum of talented individuals with a preference for municipal service in California.

Education: A Bachelor's degree in planning, public or business administration, or a closely related field is required. An advanced degree is preferred.



COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The salary for the position is negotiable, and the City Council is committed to setting compensation at a level that is locally competitive and consistent with the high-quality candidate it looks to recruit.

The full compensation package will be commensurate with the experience and qualifications of the selected candidate. In addition, the City of La Palma offers a competitive benefit package to employees. Qualified employees receive enrollment in CalPERS retirement (2% @ 60 or 62), a City contribution to medical insurance, City-paid dental, auto allowance, deferred compensation and a 4-day work week. Other benefits include life insurance, LTD, paid holidays, vacation, and sick leave.

Candidates should be aware that the City **does not** participate in Social Security. Further details on benefits can be obtained through discussions with Ralph Andersen & Associates.



TO BE CONSIDERED

This is a confidential recruitment and will be handled accordingly throughout the various stages of the process. Candidates should be aware that references will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Candidates are encouraged to apply immediately, with the recruitment closing on **June 30, 2025**. Electronic submittals are strongly preferred via email to apply@ralphandersen.com, and should include a compelling cover letter, comprehensive resume, and five professional references. Ralph Andersen & Associates will work in concert with the City to conduct the initial evaluation of submitted materials to determine the best overall match with the established criteria as outlined in this recruitment profile. Confidential inquiries are welcomed to: Mr. Fred Wilson, Ralph Andersen & Associates, at (916) 630-4900.

The City of La Palma is an equal opportunity employer.

www.lapalmaca.gov