

SYCAMORE, ILLINOIS

FIRE CHIEF

City of Sycamore

SYCAMORE, ILLINOIS
COMMUNITY HISTORY

Sycamore, IL (pop. 18,577). Located in the heart of DeKalb County approximately 60 miles west of Chicago and 30 miles south of Rockford, the City of Sycamore is a vibrant and welcoming community that blends historic character with modern amenities and an exceptional quality of life. Founded in the mid-1800s, Sycamore takes its name from the large sycamore trees that once lined the banks of the Kishwaukee River and surrounding settlement areas. The community's rich history remains evident today through its beautifully preserved architecture, established residential neighborhoods, and commitment to honoring its heritage while embracing thoughtful growth and development. The City's historic downtown serves as a focal point for the community, offering a mix of locally owned businesses, restaurants, boutiques, and gathering spaces that contribute to Sycamore's unique identity and welcoming atmosphere.

A centerpiece of the community is the Sycamore Historic District, a 99-acre area featuring more than 200 historically significant homes and buildings that reflect the City's architectural legacy and longstanding commitment to preservation. Residents and visitors alike appreciate Sycamore's tree-lined streets, well-maintained parks, and strong sense of community connection. The City also hosts numerous community events and traditions throughout the year, most notably the nationally recognized Sycamore Pumpkin Festival, which attracts thousands of visitors annually and highlights the community's spirit, volunteerism, and hometown pride.

CITY OF SYCAMORE AT-A-GLANCE *

Incorporated: 1858 as a Village; re-incorporated as a city in 1869

Population: 18,577

Land Area: 10.12 square miles

County: DeKalb County

Median Household Income: $84,120

Median Home Value: $265,700

Households: 7,401

Racial Makeup: 83.9% White, 3.2% Black or African American, 1.9% Asian, 0.4% American Indian and Alaska Native, 6.3% Two or More Races, 11.3% Hispanic or Latino

*Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts

Sycamore's strong and diverse local economy further enhances the community's appeal. As the county seat of DeKalb County, the City serves as a regional hub for government, education, healthcare, manufacturing, and commerce. The City is home to five of the county's top ten private-sector employers, along with major public-sector institutions including DeKalb County Government and Sycamore Community Unit School District 427. Businesses of all types find Sycamore a great place to locate and expand due to the community's very competitive tax rates and its excellent public services.

A competitive tax structure, stable economic environment, and strategic location near major transportation corridors continue to attract residents and businesses seeking both opportunity and a high quality of life. Sycamore offers convenient regional connectivity through Illinois Routes 23 and 64, providing residents and businesses with easy access to Interstates 88, 39, and 90. The community is also served by highly regarded schools, extensive recreational amenities, and convenient access to higher education opportunities through nearby Northern Illinois University.

Residents enjoy a balanced lifestyle that combines the benefits of a close-knit community with access to the cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities of the greater Chicago and Rockford regions. Whether enjoying local festivals, exploring parks and trails, supporting downtown events, or participating in civic and community organizations, residents take pride in the welcoming and engaged atmosphere that continues to define Sycamore as a community where people choose to live, work, and invest for the long term.

POSITION IN BRIEF



Salary Range: $150,000 - $160,000 +/- DOQ

The City of Sycamore is seeking an experienced and forward-thinking leader to serve as its next Fire Chief. This is an opportunity to lead a well-established department while helping shape its future through strong leadership, employee development, operational excellence, and long-range planning.

Reporting directly to the City Manager and serving as a member of the City's executive management team, the Fire Chief provides leadership and overall direction for fire suppression, emergency medical services, rescue, fire prevention, emergency management, and community risk reduction.

The Fire Chief leads a department consisting of 30 fire personnel, a Deputy Fire Chief, and a full-time administrative employee operating from two fire stations. In 2025, the Department responded to 2,926 emergency incidents. The City maintains an ISO Class 4 rating, while the Fire Protection District is rated Class 4Y.

While the Fire Chief provides executive leadership for the Department, this is also a hands-on leadership position. The Fire Chief shares rotating after-hours command and on-call responsibilities with the Deputy Fire Chief and responds to significant incidents when needed. The Chief is expected to be visible, accessible, and engaged with Department personnel and the community.

The Fire Chief is responsible for the management and oversight of a $7,965,060 Fire Department budget. The next Chief will have the opportunity to build on the Department's strong foundation while preparing the organization for future staffing, operational, and community needs.

Residency within the City of Sycamore is preferred. The City values having its Fire Chief live in or near the community and will consider reasonable residency arrangements for the successful candidate.

CITY ORGANIZATION



The City of Sycamore is a home-rule community operating under the Council-Manager form of government, which was adopted by referendum in 2003. The City has eight elected alderpersons, two from each of the City's four wards. Aldermanic elections are held every two years, electing half of the City Council at a time. The Mayor is elected at-large every four years. Regular meetings of the City Council are generally held on the first and third Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall.

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council, and the City Manager is responsible for the hiring and supervision of all other employees. The City Manager serves as the Chief Administrative Officer and is responsible for the management and coordination of all day-to-day municipal activities and programs. The City Manager is also responsible for the oversight of all financial activities of the City including the preparation and administration of the annual operating and capital budget.

The City's General Fund includes $25 million in annual expenditures, and the City employs 111 full-time equivalent staff. The City of Sycamore provides a full complement of municipal services including administration, Clerk's Office, community development, finance, engineering, human resources, police, and fire.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Fire Chief serves as the executive leader of the City of Sycamore Fire Department and is responsible for the overall administration, management, and direction of the Department. Reporting directly to the City Manager and serving as a member of the City's executive leadership team, the Fire Chief works closely with City leadership to ensure the continued delivery of high-quality fire suppression, emergency medical services, rescue, fire prevention, emergency management, and community risk reduction services.

Because of the size and structure of the Sycamore Fire Department, this is a working chief position. In addition to providing executive leadership, the Fire Chief is expected to remain actively engaged in emergency operations, training, employee development, and departmental activities.

Primary responsibilities include:

Department Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership and overall direction for Department operations, programs, and personnel.
- Develop departmental goals, objectives, policies, and long-range plans.
- Promote a culture of professionalism, accountability, teamwork, and operational excellence.
- Develop future leaders through coaching, mentoring, succession planning, and professional development.

Emergency Operations

- Direct fire suppression, EMS, rescue, and emergency management operations.
- Respond to significant emergency incidents and serve as Incident Commander when appropriate.
- Ensure operational readiness through effective staffing, planning, training, equipment, and resource deployment.

Administration & Personnel

- Prepare and administer the Department budget and oversee capital planning, grants, regulatory compliance, and the responsible use of public resources.
- Recruit, develop, evaluate, mentor, and retain employees and administer discipline fairly and consistently when necessary.
- Oversee staffing, scheduling, leave administration, and overtime to maintain effective deployment while responsibly managing personnel costs.
- Participate in collective bargaining, administer labor agreements and City policies, and maintain constructive labor-management relationships.

Community & Executive Leadership

- Serve as the Department's primary representative to the City Council, City leadership, community, and regional partners.
- Provide professional recommendations to the City Manager regarding departmental priorities, staffing, operations, and strategic initiatives.
- Build collaborative relationships throughout the organization while remaining visible, accessible, and engaged with Department employees.

The City is seeking an experienced, collaborative, and forward-thinking fire service executive who can successfully balance strategic leadership with active operational involvement. The ideal candidate will lead with integrity, professionalism, and accountability; develop and support employees; exercise sound fiscal and management judgment; build constructive labor-management relationships; and remain committed to exceptional public service and community trust.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The City seeks an experienced fire service executive with demonstrated success in fire department administration, emergency operations, personnel leadership, fiscal management, labor relations, staffing and scheduling, and organizational leadership. The Fire Chief must meet the Illinois statutory requirements for a fire chief as detailed in 65ILCS5/10-1-7.3.

Candidates must possess a Bachelor's degree in Fire Administration, Public Administration, Organizational Leadership, Emergency Management, Business Administration, Fire Science, or a closely related field. A Master's degree is preferred. The ideal candidate will have Fire Officer II (FO II)/Advanced Fire Officer (AdFO), Executive Fire Officer (EFO) or Chief Fire Officer (CFO) certification.

The successful candidate will have a minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible career fire service experience, including at least five (5) years of command-level leadership experience with substantial responsibility for emergency operations, personnel supervision, budgeting, labor management relations, staffing and scheduling, policy development, and organizational administration.
Successful leadership experience in a career fire department of comparable organizational complexity is required, including meaningful responsibility for subordinate officers and approximately 30 full-time personnel or an organization of comparable size and complexity.

Because titles and rank structures vary among fire departments, candidates will be evaluated based on the actual scope, complexity, and authority of their leadership responsibilities rather than title alone.
Significant leadership experience in an Illinois career fire department is strongly preferred. Candidates from outside Illinois should demonstrate executive experience in a highly unionized career department and the ability to quickly develop proficiency in Illinois fire-service labor, employment, promotional, pension, disability, and municipal governance requirements.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of fire service operations and administration, strong leadership and decision-making abilities, sound fiscal judgment, and exceptional interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

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The anticipated hiring range for the Fire Chief position is $150,000 to $160,000, depending on qualifications and experience.

The City of Sycamore offers a competitive benefits package that includes paid vacation, sick leave, holidays, and executive leave; medical, dental, vision, and life insurance; and participation in the Firefighters' Pension Fund, with an option to participate in a 401(a) defined contribution retirement plan in lieu of the Firefighters' Pension Fund.

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FIRE CHIEF



HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest and resume to:

Director Raymond Kay
Illinois FIre Chiefs' Association
Assessment and Consulting Services
rkay@illinoisfirechiefs.org

Applications will be accepted until 5pm on November 30, 2026

Review the Sycamore Fire Department's 2025 Annual Report here.