

Careers in City Government

City Engineer

Justin Froseth, Mandan, ND
Population: 18,331

What are your duties and responsibilities as Engineer of your city?

To oversee the planning, design and construction of all capital improvement projects throughout the city. Capital improvement projects include new development and major rehab or reconstruction of existing infrastructure (namely roads as well as water and sewer). They do not include regular maintenance tasks or projects which are led by the Public Works Department. Much of the planning element includes identifying needs years in advance through studies we either lead or participate in and look for and apply for favorable loans or grants to fund such projects when applicable.

What type of education and/or training is required for your position?

A Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering is a common requirement for a City Engineer. Also, most Civil Engineers in a leadership role will have their Professional Engineer's license as I do. To obtain our Professional Engineer's license, we must 1) graduate with an engineering degree from an accredited university, 2) take and pass an eight-hour test near the time of our graduation 3) work for four years as an engineering intern, then 4) take and pass another eight hour test called the Professional Engineer's Exam. There are exceptions, but that is the typical path for education and engineering licensure. The licensure process is fairly uniform nationally but managed by a board within each state. Most Professional Engineers will include the letters PE at the end of their professional signature.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your position?

Seeing a project originate from the identification of need on through to successful completion. Some other engineers working with us as consultants may come in for just the design, or just the construction phase and provide their services for part of the overall project. As a City Engineer, we are involved at the very front end and all the way through project close out.

What advice would you give someone that is interested in working in city government?

An even-keeled demeanor is important. People will often talk to you when they are unhappy about something within the city. However, you have to be firm as well in times when what they are complaining about simply isn't the city's responsibility or when the solution isn't going to happen as soon as they would like. An ability to present your ideas and defend your positions clearly and confidently is important, especially in a leadership role. Listen to and put thought into the residents' complaints. There are many valid complaints and issues that are understood through the input from the community at large. Though we may not be able to get to all of them as soon as desired, it does bring awareness where we may not otherwise be aware. An understanding of how city government works is important. Items such as funds received vs. funds expended and how decisions are made for example, again, especially in a leadership role. For a position in engineering, some specific advice includes an emphasis on math and sciences as they are important for any engineering job really. An understanding of the funding programs that are available to apply for is important in order to pay for needs.

The BEST government is LOCAL government!