



The City of Morgantown

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The best small towns for business Los Alamos, N.M. leads list of 39 places

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BizDemographics

UPFRONT: Best small cities for business

Los Alamos, N.M., enjoys the best business climate of any small city in America, according to a new study by BizDemographics.

The study analyzed the nation's 496 micropolitan areas in 18 economic and demographic categories, ranging from population growth and per capita income to job growth and local education levels. (A micropolitan area consists of one or more counties that are economically dependent on a central city with 10,000 to 50,000 residents.)

The top 39 small cities -- about 8 percent of the study group -- earned letter grades of A, a sign of excellent economic health. (Click here for an alphabetical list of all 39.)

Leading the pack is Los Alamos, about 30 miles northwest of Santa Fe. Its largest employer is the Los Alamos National Laboratory, which developed the first atomic bomb during World War II. The lab's facilities cover 43 square miles, devoted primarily to nuclear, biomedical and energy research.

Rounding out the top five are Midland, Mich.; Rogers-Bentonville, Ark.; Hilton Head Island, S.C.; and Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Click here for statistics in all 18 categories for the entire study group.)

Los Alamos leads all micros in the five categories below, propelling it to the top score overall:

* Los Alamos' per capita income of \$39,387 is nearly \$5,000 ahead of the runner-up, Key West, Fla.

* Inventors in Los Alamos earned the highest ratio of patents in any micropolitan area, equal to 200.8 patents per 10,000 residents during the 1990s.

* More than half of local adults (53.4 percent, to be exact) have earned bachelor's

(con't.)

degrees. No other micro is over 50 percent.

* Los Alamos also leads in graduate degrees, held by 29.7 percent of its adults. That's nine percentage points ahead of everyone else.

* Roughly a third (35.6 percent) of all Los Alamos workers are in professional specialties, including engineering, sciences, teaching and medicine.

The BizDemographics study was inspired by strong public interest in small-town life and business opportunities. More than 18 million people moved from metropolitan areas into small cities or rural counties during the 1990s, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And a 1998 poll by Professional Builder magazine found that two-thirds of Americans would prefer to live far from a major city.

BizDemographics will take a closer look at small-city business climates the rest of the week, focusing on the nation's four regions (East, South, Midwest and West) from Tuesday through Friday.

BY THE NUMBERS: Grade A small cities

Below are the 39 micropolitan areas that earned A's, the highest letter grade, in BizDemographics' exclusive ratings of small-city business climates. They're listed alphabetically, with ranks in the right hand column. [Click here for a spreadsheet with ratings and complete statistics for the nation's 496 micropolitan areas.](#)

U.S. rank

- Ames, Iowa 6
- Bend, Ore. 26
- Biddeford-Sanford, Maine 37
- Blacksburg, Va. 22
- Boone, N.C. 29
- Bowling Green, Ky. 19
- Bozeman, Mont. 10
- Brookings, S.D. 28
- Butler, Pa. 16
- Carson City, Nev. 17
- Columbus, Ind. 30
- Concord, N.H. 11
- Conway, Ark. 12
- Corvallis, Ore. 7
- Daphne, Ala. 20
- DeKalb, Ill. 35



(con't.)

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| • Durango, Colo. | 14 |
| • Findlay, Ohio | 32 |
| • Gainesville, Ga. | 9 |
| • Hilton Head Island, S.C. | 4 |
| • Jasper, Ind. | 37 |
| • Jefferson City, Mo. | 23 |
| • LaGrange, Ga. | 36 |
| • Laramie, Wyo. | 24 |
| • Lebanon, N.H. | 8 |
| • Los Alamos, N.M. | 1 |
| • Mankato, Minn. | 25 |
| • Midland, Mich. | 2 |
| • Morgantown, W.Va. | 21 |
| • Murfreesboro, Tenn. | 5 |
| • Oak Ridge, Tenn. | 34 |
| • Owatonna, Minn. | 33 |
| • Richmond, Ky. | 27 |
| • Rogers-Bentonville, Ark. | 3 |
| • Sanford, N.C. | 39 |
| • Statesville, N.C. | 18 |
| • Torrington, Conn. | 13 |
| • Traverse City, Mich. | 15 |
| • Tupelo, Miss. | 31 |

Source: BizDemographics research

