



Boomtowns '06: Hottest Small Cities

Employment Base of Less Than 150,000.

From: [Inc. Magazine, May 2006](#) | By: Joel Kotkin and Michael A. Shires

1 Yuma, Arizona

Once a small farming community, this border town is one of the nation's fastest-growing areas, with a burgeoning Latino population and a steady stream of Californians in search of a lower cost of living. Surging trade with Mexico has sparked strong growth in services and transportation.

Overall Rank 1 | 1-Year Job Growth 8.3% | 5-Year Job Growth 32.0% | Index Score 100.0

2 St. George, Utah

Located in the state's scenic southwest corner, St. George is a magnet for both retirees and young families. That's sparked businesses in a range of industries--from IT and business services to manufacturing and retail and wholesale trade.

Overall Rank 2 | 1-Year Job Growth 7.9% | 5-Year Job Growth 38.2% | Index Score 98.8

3 Fort Walton Beach-Crestview, Florida

Growth in this panhandle community is driven by low taxes and good weather. It's also home to an estimated 350 technology firms, which do brisk business with contractors at Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base.

Overall Rank 4 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.4% | 5-Year Job Growth 21.1% | Index Score 96.4

4 Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

With its picturesque lakes and stunning vistas, Coeur d'Alene has long been a top vacation spot. Now it's drawing refugees from pricey, high-regulation places like California (see "[The Buck Stopped Here](#)"), spurring growth in services and manufacturing.

Overall Rank 5 | 1-Year Job Growth 7.9% | 5-Year Job Growth 23.6% | Index Score 96.3

5 Bellingham, Washington

With the San Juan Islands to the west and Mount Baker looming to the east, Bellingham attracts urban refugees, who have launched hundreds of small service firms, manufacturers, and consultancies.

Overall Rank 6 | 1-Year Job Growth 6.0% | 5-Year Job Growth 18.7% | Index Score 95.7

6 Port St. Lucie-Fort Pierce, Florida

Tourism remains a major force on Florida's Atlantic coast but recent action is in the sciences, spurred by facilities like a U.S. Department of Agriculture research lab and the Smithsonian's marine research station.

Overall Rank 7 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.7% | 5-Year Job Growth 22.6% | Index Score 94.8

7 Naples-Marco Island, Florida

Collier County's population has jumped more than 55,000, to 307,000, since 2000, making the region the nation's leading destination for young, single, and educated people in terms of net migration. That's sparked major growth in industries like health care and financial services, drawing newcomers like M&I Bank, which recently opened a local facility.

Overall Rank 8 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.8% | 5-Year Job Growth 26.1% | Index Score 94.4

8 Idaho Falls, Idaho

With a revitalized downtown district, Idaho Falls is big on small-town charm. But it also boasts a diverse band of high-tech companies primarily revolving around the Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory.

Overall Rank 10 | 1-Year Job Growth 5.0% | 5-Year Job Growth 19.7% | Index Score 94.2

9 Casper, Wyoming

A bona fide energy boomtown, Casper has benefited from an influx of construction and manufacturing companies serving the state's oil and natural gas industries. Labor is in such short supply that the city is recruiting laid-off Detroit autoworkers.

Overall Rank 11 | 1-Year Job Growth 3.4% | 5-Year Job Growth 18.6% | Index Score 94.0

10 Bremerton-Silverdale, Washington

For years, Bremerton's waterfront was nothing more than a parking lot for the city's top employer, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Boarded-up buildings have been replaced with retail stores thanks to a harborside development program that includes a \$47 million conference center, hotel, and condo complexes.

Overall Rank 13 | 1-Year Job Growth 3.6% | 5-Year Job Growth 17.0% | Index Score 93.1

11 Panama City-Lynn Haven, Florida

Tourists pump nearly \$1.5 billion into the economy, providing more than 14,000 jobs. Uncle Sam also provides a boost, with an Air Force base and Naval Support Center that farm out business to local contractors.

Overall Rank 14 | 1-Year Job Growth 5.0% | 5-Year Job Growth 15.5% | Index Score 92.2

12 Morgantown, West Virginia

Home to West Virginia University, Morgantown is a magnet for the health care industry. Major employers include two large hospitals, several government labs, and companies such as generic drug maker Mylan.

Overall Rank 15 | 1-Year Job Growth 3.3% | 5-Year Job Growth 14.7% | Index Score 92.1

13 Prescott, Arizona

Settled during the gold rush days of the 1800s, Prescott is experiencing a boom among seniors. They're drawn to the city's numerous retirement communities, mild climate, and historic downtown area.

Overall Rank 16 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.5% | 5-Year Job Growth 19.6% | Index Score 92.1

14 Bend, Oregon

Bend's population has more than tripled, to about 70,000, over the past 15 years, with refugees from Portland and California drawn by a scenic location and low cost of living. The influx has transformed a timber-based economy, bringing in manufacturing, aerospace, and semiconductor firms.

Overall Rank 17 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.7% | 5-Year Job Growth 18.3% | Index Score 90.6

15 El Centro, California

Located in the state's southeast corner, El Centro has been riding the same global trade wave as other U.S. border towns. It also owes its growth to the Department of Homeland Security, which has boosted its hiring of security and customs personnel to police the busy border with Mexicali.

Overall Rank 18 | 1-Year Job Growth 7.3% | 5-Year Job Growth 14.5% | Index Score 90.1

16 Logan, Utah

Logan's longtime meatpacking plants and dairy processors have been joined by a host of biotech and communications firms drawn by the brainpower of Utah State University and a shiny new fiber optic infrastructure.

Overall Rank 21 | 1-Year Job Growth 3.6% | 5-Year Job Growth 17.4% | Index Score 87.8

17 Punta Gorda, Florida

Local firms have created 2,200 new jobs over the past two years, many of them in health care, IT, and specialty contracting tied to rebuilding after last year's hurricanes. Relatively low home prices attract newcomers.

Overall Rank 22 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.2% | 5-Year Job Growth 14.0% | Index Score 87.5

18 Greeley, Colorado

Historically an agricultural powerhouse, Greeley, located about 60 miles northeast of Denver, has made a new-economy transition, with a top-notch acute-care facility in the area, two ethanol plants on the way, and a strong manufacturing presence. The city has seen 14 percent growth in service jobs since 2003.

Overall Rank 23 | 1-Year Job Growth 3.8% | 5-Year Job Growth 13.6% | Index Score 85.2

19 Winchester, Virginia

Located 80 miles outside Washington, D.C., and home to Shenandoah University, Winchester is absorbing people priced out of northern Virginia communities like Fairfax. Growth has been particularly robust among federal government agencies, which boosted employment nearly 20 percent in 2005.

Overall Rank 26 | 1-Year Job Growth 4.8% | 5-Year Job Growth 12.0% | Index Score 84.2

20 Laredo, Texas

A manufacturing and trading center, this Texas border town boasts a growing banking industry and Texas A&M University. With the assembly plants of Nuevo Laredo due south, trade is driving the population of "los dos Laredos" toward one million.

Overall Rank 29 | 1-Year Job Growth 2.8% | 5-Year Job Growth 15.3% | Index Score 83.5

2006		Overall	1-Year	5-Year	Index
Rank	City, State	Rank	Job Growth	Job Growth	Score
21	Olympia, WA	30	4.0%	13.0%	83.5
22	Madera, CA	32	2.4%	22.3%	83.4
23	Dover, DE	33	2.3%	13.7%	83.2
24	Ocala, FL	37	2.9%	12.0%	80.9
25	Farmington, NM	39	2.9%	11.1%	79.6
26	Great Falls, MT	43	3.5%	8.9%	77.6

27	Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA	44	4.7%	8.2%	77.4
28	Auburn-Opelika, AL	45	0.8%	13.2%	77.1
29	Billings, MT	46	2.0%	13.0%	76.8
30	Hot Springs, AR	47	4.1%	7.6%	76.4
31	Las Cruces, NM	49	3.3%	13.5%	76.3
32	Harrisonburg, VA	50	2.9%	11.0%	76.2
33	Bismarck, ND	51	3.0%	10.3%	76.1
34	Tuscaloosa, AL	53	4.4%	6.3%	75.2
35	Yuba City, CA	55	5.4%	6.4%	74.8
36	Flagstaff, AZ	56	4.1%	6.6%	74.7
37	Wenatchee, WA	57	3.9%	6.4%	74.6
38	Hanford-Corcoran, CA	58	3.3%	11.5%	74.6
39	Fairbanks, AK	59	1.8%	10.7%	74.2
40	Johnson City, TN	61	2.0%	8.2%	73.5
41	Medford, OR	62	2.5%	9.1%	73.0
42	Pocatello, ID	66	3.7%	6.5%	71.1
43	Myrtle Beach, SC	67	1.3%	11.2%	70.7
44	Portsmouth, NH-ME	68	2.5%	10.8%	70.5
45	Hinesville-Fort Stewart, GA	69	0.6%	9.6%	70.1
46	Gainesville, FL	70	2.8%	7.3%	70.1
47	Missoula, MT	72	2.0%	11.5%	69.0
48	Merced, CA	73	2.7%	11.3%	68.7
49	Savannah, GA	74	1.6%	7.7%	68.7
50	Cheyenne, WY	76	2.1%	9.7%	68.2
51	Kennewick-Richland-Pasco, WA	79	4.4%	18.3%	67.3
52	Grand Junction, CO	80	1.3%	10.4%	67.0
53	Sioux Falls, SD	82	2.8%	6.8%	66.9
54	Carson City, NV	83	2.5%	5.0%	66.8
55	Salisbury, MD	84	1.6%	9.3%	66.7
56	Warner Robins, GA	85	1.4%	10.8%	66.7
57	Wilmington, NC	86	2.1%	7.2%	66.7
58	Lawrence, KS	87	1.9%	9.6%	66.5
59	Clarksville, TN-KY	88	1.6%	6.3%	66.4
60	Santa Fe, NM	89	2.6%	7.5%	66.1

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