

Special Report

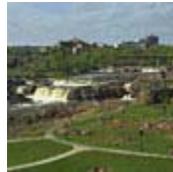
Best Places For Business And Careers

Kurt Badenhausen 04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET

The news on the economy in recent months has been uninspiring. The subprime lending mess threatens to accelerate the housing slowdown. Gas prices are at their highest in eight months. Gross domestic product growth this year is expected to be less than 3% for the first time since 2003. But one part of the country consistently manages to produce strong economic growth and still keep costs down. For the second straight year the Southeast placed 5 metros in the Top 10 of our Best Places for Business and Careers. While most economies in the West have also outperformed their peers in the Northeast and Midwest over the past four years, living costs there have risen dramatically. Housing prices in Phoenix, spurred in part by easy lending, are up 57% in the past two years, knocking it off our Top 10.



In Pictures: [Best Places for Business and Careers](#)



In Pictures: [Best Small Places for Business and Careers](#)

For this year's ranking we relied on economic research firm Economy.com (owned by Moody's) for its indexes on business and living costs. It also supplied five-year historical figures on job and income growth, as well as migration trends. Other data used in the rankings came courtesy of Portland, Ore. researcher Bertrand Sperling. He considered the education of the workforce in each metro area, as well as such quality-of-life issues as crime rates and cultural opportunities. [More...](#)

Sort Best Metros By:

[Rank](#) | [Metro Area](#) | [Cost Of Doing Business](#) | [Job Growth](#) | [Educational Attainment](#) | [Population](#)

Sort Best Smaller Metros By:

[Rank](#) | [Metro Area](#) | [Cost Of Doing Business](#) | [Job Growth](#) | [Educational Attainment](#) | [Population](#)

The Best



The Worst

Best Metros

1. [Raleigh NC](#)
 2. [Provo UT](#)
 3. [Boise ID](#)
 4. [Des Moines IA](#)
 5. [Knoxville TN](#)
 6. [Albuquerque NM](#)
 7. [Durham NC](#)
 8. [Fayetteville AR](#)
 9. [Nashville TN](#)
 10. [Olympia WA](#)
- [Complete List](#)

Map



Best Smaller Metros

1. [Sioux Falls SD](#)
 2. [Bismarck ND](#)
 3. [Columbia MO](#)
 4. [Fargo ND](#)
 5. [Iowa City IA](#)
 6. [Bloomington IN](#)
 7. [Rapid City SD](#)
 8. [Las Cruces NM](#)
 9. [Morgantown WV](#)
 10. [Johnson City TN](#)
- [Complete List](#)

Vote

Where would you start a new business?

- Raleigh, N.C.
- Provo, Utah
- Boise, Idaho

Best Small Places For Business And Careers

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Speed



#9 Morgantown WV

Population: 115,000

Colleges¹: 56
 Cost of Doing Business²: 57
 Cost Of Living³: 95
 Crime Rate⁴: 29
 Culture & Leisure⁶: 163
 Educational Attainment⁶: 26
 Income Growth*: 5
 Job Growth*: 11
 Net Migration*: 76

[More on Morgantown WV](#)

Courtesy of Morgantown.com

¹Measure of 4-year colleges in area with extra credit for highly rated schools.

²Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.

³Index based on cost of housing, utilities, transportation and other expenditures.

⁴Crimes per 100,000 residents.

⁵Index based on museums, theaters, golf course, sports teams and other activities.

⁶Share of Population over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher.

* 5-year annualized figures.

NA: Not available, not applicable.

Sources: *Economy.com*; *Sperling's BestPlaces*; *FBI Index of Crime*.

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#9 Morgantown WV

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Population: 115,000

	RANK
A+ Colleges ¹	56
Cost of Doing Business ²	57
Cost Of Living ³	95
Crime Rate ⁴	29
Culture & Leisure ⁵	163
Educational Attainment ⁶	26
Income Growth*	5
Job Growth*	11
Net Migration*	76
Overall	9



Courtesy of Morgantown.com

See Also:

- [West Virginia Metros](#)
- [Smaller West Virginia Metros](#)



< [Previous: Las Cruces NM](#)

[Next: Johnson City TN](#) >



- Rank
- Metro Area
- Cost Of Doing Business
- Job Growth
- Educational Attainment
- Population

¹Measure of 4-year colleges in area with extra credit for highly rated schools.
²Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.
³Index based on cost of housing, utilities, transportation and other expenditures.
⁴Crimes per 100,000 residents.
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 * 5-year annualized figures.
 NA: Not available, not applicable.

Special Report
Best Small Places For Business And Careers
 04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET

Page 1 

RANK	METRO AREA	<u>COST OF DOING BUSINESS</u> ¹	<u>JOB GROWTH</u> ²	<u>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</u> ³	<u>POPULATION (THOU)</u>
1	Sioux Falls SD	1	49	31	210
2	Bismarck ND	13	35	32	100
3	Columbia MO	12	39	6	154
4	 Fargo ND	48	44	23	186
5	Iowa City IA	25	59	5	139
6	Bloomington IN	9	115	19	180
7	Rapid City SD	2	76	47	119
8	Las Cruces NM	53	15	56	193
9	Morgantown WV	57	11	26	115
10	Johnson City TN	30	40	89	190
11	Santa Fe NM	75	54	10	142
12	Logan UT	102	17	21	113
13	Waterloo IA	51	98	49	161
14	Greenville NC	4	82	39	165
15	Dubuque IA	35	42	62	92
16	St. George UT	61	1	72	126
17	Athens GA	89	63	16	178
18	Blacksburg VA	28	86	24	151
19	Charlottesville VA	70	41	7	190
20	Pocatello ID	32	60	40	86
21	State College PA	109	109	8	141
22	Coeur d'Alene ID	27	6	87	131
23	Dover DE	6	12	103	146
24	Lafayette IN	14	148	20	185
25	Billings MT	92	22	29	148

Page 1 

¹Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.

Special Report

2 of 8 [Best Small Places For Business And Careers](#)

04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET

Page 2 

RANK	METRO AREA	<u>COST OF DOING BUSINESS</u> ¹	<u>JOB GROWTH</u> ²	<u>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</u> ³	<u>POPULATION (THOU)</u>
26	Ames IA	38	132	3	80
27	Fort Walton Beach FL	110	5	42	186
28	Ithaca NY	168	95	1	101
29	Bowling Green KY	45	26	44	112
30	Idaho Falls ID	98	10	41	116
31	Sebastian FL	126	20	51	131
32	Grand Forks ND	52	46	36	96
33	Warner Robins GA	84	27	76	130
34	Winchester VA	46	29	100	118
35	Auburn AL	81	16	22	127
36	Bend OR	97	4	34	146
37	Missoula MT	90	43	15	101
38	Rochester MN	114	89	17	179
39	College Station TX	72	69	13	192
40	Jefferson City MO	8	125	69	145
41	Gainesville GA	76	55	93	171
42	Prescott AZ	56	3	66	207
43	Cheyenne WY	37	34	45	86
44	Wenatchee WA	73	30	78	107
45	Columbus IN	33	118	63	74
46	Sioux City IA	11	159	94	143
47	Springfield IL	22	158	25	207
48	Bellingham WA	153	13	28	187
49	Lawrence KS	67	145	4	104
50	Panama City FL	94	19	106	165

Page 2 

¹Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.



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Special Report
3 of 8 Best Small Places For Business And Careers
 04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET



Page 3

RANK	METRO AREA	COST OF DOING BUSINESS ¹	JOB GROWTH ²	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ³	POPULATION (THOU)
51	Hattiesburg MS	31	74	46	132
52	Flagstaff AZ	59	47	18	128
53	Cleveland TN	21	88	146	109
54	Abilene TX	41	75	81	160
55	Medford OR	119	33	57	198
56	Terre Haute IN	16	154	110	168
57	Corvallis OR	96	129	2	79
58	Bloomington IL	128	155	9	161
59	Burlington VT	167	133	12	206
60	Casper WY	34	14	75	70
61	Napa CA	170	97	33	134
62	Harrisonburg VA	77	85	50	113
63	Wheeling WV	122	105	145	148
64	Muncie IN	24	178	71	116
65	Kennewick WA	129	31	48	224
66	Great Falls MT	103	72	65	79
67	St. Cloud MN	118	107	68	182
68	Grand Junction CO	112	21	64	131
69	Jackson TN	36	92	70	111
70	Valdosta GA	58	25	109	127
71	Jacksonville NC	5	79	148	153
72	Jonesboro AR	17	96	102	113



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4 of 8 Best Small Places For Business And Careers
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Page 4

RANK	METRO AREA	COST OF DOING BUSINESS ¹	JOB GROWTH ²	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ³	POPULATION (THOU)
76	Burlington NC	10	149	92	142
77	Brunswick GA	80	36	84	100
78	Barnstable Town MA	179	113	14	231
79	Macon GA	78	117	91	232
80	Bangor ME	159	124	74	147
81	Goldsboro NC	3	164	137	115
82	Eau Claire WI	127	84	60	155
83	Elkhart IN	44	68	136	197
84	Myrtle Beach SC	100	8	88	232
85	Tuscaloosa AL	86	90	52	198
86	Pittsfield MA	169	141	30	133
87	Lawton OK	47	80	86	113
88	Lewiston WA	66	136	95	60
89	Punta Gorda FL	107	23	107	161
90	Texarkana TX	15	91	138	135
91	La Crosse WI	111	144	37	129
92	Hot Springs AR	18	52	105	95
93	Rome GA	108	64	132	95
94	Owensboro KY	43	139	130	112
95	Morristown TN	26	104	172	132
96	Oshkosh WI	146	138	53	161
97	Albany GA	50	103	125	164

98	Anderson IN	39	168	150	130
99	Michigan City IN	20	157	155	111
100	Greeley CO	139	32	61	232



¹Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.
²5-year annualized figures.
³Share of Population over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher.
 Sources: *Economy.com*; *Sperling's BestPlaces*.

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5 of 8 [Best Small Places For Business And Careers](#)

04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET

Page 5

RANK	METRO AREA	<u>COST OF DOING BUSINESS</u> ¹	<u>JOB GROWTH</u> ²	<u>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</u> ³	<u>POPULATION (THOU)</u>
101	Lebanon PA	155	62	140	126
102	Alexandria LA	40	48	134	153
103	Longview TX	64	57	122	204
104	Fairbanks AK	68	45	27	89
105	Hinesville GA	91	18	164	68
106	Cumberland MD	124	50	163	101
107	Pine Bluff AR	19	142	152	105
108	Joplin MO	55	101	123	167
109	Salisbury MD	151	51	80	117
110	Topeka KS	65	166	43	230
111	Rocky Mount NC	7	174	156	146
112	Dalton GA	29	106	177	135
113	Yuma AZ	101	2	171	186
114	Chico CA	174	81	58	217
115	Waco TX	130	78	85	227
116	Pueblo CO	123	112	96	153
117	Glens Falls NY	177	77	90	130
118	Weirton WV	74	167	173	126
119	Midland TX	140	28	38	124
120	Lewiston ME	156	126	153	109
121	St. Joseph MO	85	61	121	122
122	Carson City NV	121	73	97	57
123	Tyler TX	137	67	54	194
124	Elizabethtown KY	63	58	144	112
125	Mount Vernon WA	147	38	73	116

Page 5

¹Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.

Special Report

6 of 8 [Best Small Places For Business And Careers](#)

04.05.07, 6:00 PM ET

Page 6 ▾

RANK	METRO AREA	<u>COST OF DOING BUSINESS</u> ¹	<u>JOB GROWTH</u> ²	<u>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</u> ³	<u>POPULATION (THOU)</u>
126	Redding CA	172	93	119	183
127	Kankakee IL	117	162	143	109
128	Sheboygan WI	142	127	101	115
129	Racine WI	138	120	77	196
130	Johnstown PA	164	130	158	148
131	Florence SC	49	119	112	200
132	Parkersburg WV	135	122	147	162
133	Madera CA	178	7	174	145
134	Anniston AL	69	87	135	112
135	Dothan AL	62	99	120	137
136	Sumter SC	87	71	131	106
137	Anderson SC	71	170	124	177
138	Kokomo IN	23	176	108	102
139	Fond du Lac WI	134	121	111	100
140	Niles MI	133	175	82	162
141	Danville VA	42	177	176	107
142	Florence AL	93	128	116	142
143	Ocean City NJ	175	83	59	100
144	Wausau WI	105	100	98	129
145	Farmington NM	141	37	162	128
146	Altoona PA	145	110	157	126
147	Elmira NY	163	173	99	89
148	Williamsport PA	131	151	142	118
149	Battle Creek MI	152	140	128	139
150	Decatur IL	99	163	117	110

Page 6 ▾

¹Index based on cost of labor, energy, taxes and office space.



²5-year annualized figures.

³Share of Population over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Sources: Economy.com; Sperling's BestPlaces.