

AMERICA'S BEST CITIES

A Ranking of U.S. Place Equity



THE TOP 10 U.S.
LARGE CITIES

P. 8

THE TOP 10 U.S.
SMALL CITIES

P. 26

CITY RANKINGS
BY CATEGORY

P. 38



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BestCities.org

HI. WE'RE RESONANCE.

As leading advisors in real estate, tourism and economic development for more than a decade, Resonance Consultancy combines business strategy and marketing creativity to shape the future of destinations and developments around the world.

Our services span development strategy, place branding, place marketing and placemaking. To date, our team has completed more than 100 visioning, strategy, planning and branding projects for destinations and developers in more than 70 countries.

To learn more about us and our services, please visit ResonanceCo.com.



Welcome to the 2018 ranking of America's Best Cities

Why Resonance Consultancy is building the most comprehensive city ranking on the planet.

First things first: thank you for sharing our obsession with American cities—their distinctive magnetism, their potential and their leading role in the nation's future.

Resonance Consultancy is a global advisor on tourism, real estate and economic development for countries, cities and communities around the world.

For more than a decade, we've created place branding strategies, tourism and economic development plans, and trend reports for destination and economic development organizations.

Our goal? To provide city leaders—from destination marketing organizations to mayors—with new tools and perspectives on the key factors that shape a city's competitive identity, community well-being and future prosperity. In the course of our work, we've come to understand that traditional performance indicators alone—economic output, investment and visitor numbers, for example—don't reveal the whole story for cities and their tourism and economic development agencies.

Increasingly, a city's reputation or perceived quality of place is determining where talent, tourism and investment go. While other rankings consider similar statistics such as air quality or educational attainment in their methodology, no other ranking incorporates data from online channels such as TripAdvisor, Yelp and Instagram to measure the experiential quality and performance of a city. As our research with partners such as Ipsos has shown, these experiential factors are now some of the most important in shaping opinion about the desirability of cities as places to live, visit and do business.

We developed America's Best Cities to quantify and benchmark the relative quality of place, reputation and competitive identity for America's large and small cities (our methodology is on pg. 6). This helps cities understand their strengths and weaknesses through the lens of the people who matter most: talent, tourists and business leaders.

The hunger for our insight is growing, and we have presented our Best Cities program in a dozen cities in the past year. Every month, more and more cities inquire about using Best Cities tools to build a foundation of data from which they can confidently launch everything from tourism master plans to economic development strategies.

Our Best Cities program is also being used by National Geographic for a diverse range of global editorial projects—from annual city rankings to deeper monthly travel stories. Please turn the page for more on that exciting partnership.

To stay up to date on America's—and the world's—best cities, and to find out how your city measures up, visit BestCities.org.



With deep data on hundreds of cities worldwide, Resonance can help your city or destination—large or small—analyze and understand your key strengths and the differentiating characteristics that define your competitive identity. To learn more about our approach to place branding and building stronger cities and destinations, visit us at ResonanceCo.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Fair', written in a cursive style.

Chris Fair, President
Resonance Consultancy Ltd.
cfair@resonanceco.com

Why American Cities Need to Tell Their Stories

And how Resonance Consultancy and National Geographic Travel are empowering the narrative.



The American city's identity has never mattered more. National politics are gridlocked with the federal government frequently acting against vital urban priorities. Even as Washington withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, 80% of U.S. mayors said it's their civic duty to address climate change, according to the 2018 American Mayors Survey. Meanwhile state governments bleed red ink. The threats of rising walls and falling budgets mean America's urban areas have to become ever more resourceful. To succeed in the 21st century, our cities need a story—their own.

That's why this year's report from Resonance Consultancy matters even more. The firm's *2018 America's Best Cities Report* that you're holding offers cities a chance to contextualize the forces shaping their futures and burnish the qualities that will form the basis of their own compelling narratives.

What's new this year? The top performers are still the top performers. Small cities, however, have moved around a lot. Population growth, rapid investment (Brownsville, Texas, as Space Town USA!) tend to have swift impacts. The pages ahead are like alluring cities: you'll find surprises around every corner.

As National Geographic Travel's director of editorial projects, I'm pleased to share the fruits of our collaboration with Resonance with our readers around the world. We recently published *Cities on the Rise*, a custom index that highlighted the spectacular ways smaller American cities continue to make their mark. Resonance combined core statistics with social media data to identify the best small cities in the U.S. and help our readers decide which to visit.

We sorted cities into three groups based on their population: 40,000 to 100,000, 100,000 to 200,000, and 200,000 to 600,000. Resonance applied its own algorithms to the mix to discover that Santa Cruz, California, has the sharpest ears for pop music; Portland, Maine, is the most Instagrammed; and Boulder, Colorado, is the most caffeinated—with as many coffee shops as bicyclists.

Interest in the index was voracious, and not just from our own readers. More than three million people consumed the story in print and online, and the feature generated 87 national and regional news stories.

There will be more to come. National Geographic Travel's relationship with Resonance continues to expand. In the months ahead, look for coverage on America's friendliest cities and deeper dives into the indexed cities that shine brightest in categories such as green spaces, art smart, and yes, even hipster-friendly. Find it all at www.natgeotravel.com.

As an inveterate traveler, I see this report as an invitation to discover the innovations in many of America's superlative cities. I hope you'll find the data in this report useful in building your city's unique narrative. I'm looking forward to hearing your stories.



“As an inveterate traveler, I see this report as an invitation to discover the innovations in many of America's superlative cities.”

Andrew Nelson, Editorial Projects Director
National Geographic Travel

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Best Cities Methodology

Urbanist Richard Florida argues that “quality of place is a key driver of the wealth and prosperity of communities and cities in the 21st century.” In *Rise of the Creative Class*, he defines quality of place as a set of “territorial assets”:

- “What’s there—the combination of the built environment and the natural environment; a stimulating, appealing setting for the pursuit of creative lives.”
- “Who’s there—diverse people of all ethnicities, nationalities, religions and sexual orientations, interacting and providing clear cues that this is a community where anyone can fit in and make a life.”
- “What’s going on—the vibrancy of the street life, café culture, arts and music; the visible presence of people engaging in outdoor activities—altogether a lot of active, exciting, creative goings-ons.”

But how does one *measure* these experiential factors in assessing the competitive identity of a city? Resonance has developed a unique methodology that analyzes user-generated ratings and reviews in digital channels such as TripAdvisor to measure these qualitative factors. This user-generated data provides a rich source of information to benchmark the experiential quality of one city to the next. Data for these factors is then combined with core statistics for perception-shaping quantitative measures (such as the number of Global Fortune 500 companies) to provide cities with 360-degree views of their competitive identities, which they can also use to monitor and measure their performance over time.

Our approach to benchmarking and measuring the quality of one city to the next is rooted in Ipsos’ exclusive research of the key factors that citizens and business influencers in the U.S. consider most important in choosing a city to live, visit and invest in.

Ipsos surveyed more than 1,000 people across the U.S. in 2018 to monitor and identify 28 factors that influence the perception of cities today. These include:

- Housing affordability and job opportunities
- Quality of the natural and built environments
- Quality of key institutions, attractions and infrastructure
- Diversity of people
- Promotion via stories, references and recommendations shared online
- Economic prosperity
- Quality of the arts, culture, restaurants and nightlife.

We grouped these factors into six categories: Place, Product, Programming, People, Prosperity and Promotion. In sum, a city’s

performance across these six categories reflects the relative “place equity” and competitive identity of one city to the next.

The six pillars in this report are treated with equal importance and, as such, are weighted equally. Within each pillar, we tally the variable scores to produce an overall score for that indicator. The overall ranking reflects the average score of a city across all six pillars.

The rankings that follow are divided between America’s large cities (principal cities of U.S. metropolitan areas with populations of more than one million) and America’s small cities (principal cities of U.S. metropolitan areas with populations from 200,000 to one million). Principal cities are defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.

Pl Place

The perceived quality of a city’s natural and built environments, including the subcategories of Air Quality, Weather, Crime Rate, Neighborhoods & Landmarks, Parks & Outdoor Activities, and Commute Time To Work.

Pd Product

A city’s key institutions, attractions and infrastructure, including the subcategories of University Rankings, Airport Connectivity, Convention Center, Attractions, Museums, Sports Teams, and Housing Affordability.

Pg Programming

The arts, culture, entertainment and culinary scene in a city, including the subcategories of Shopping, Culture, Culinary, and Nightlife.

Pe People

The immigration rate and diversity of a city, including the subcategories of Education, Foreign-born Residents, and Languages Spoken at Home.

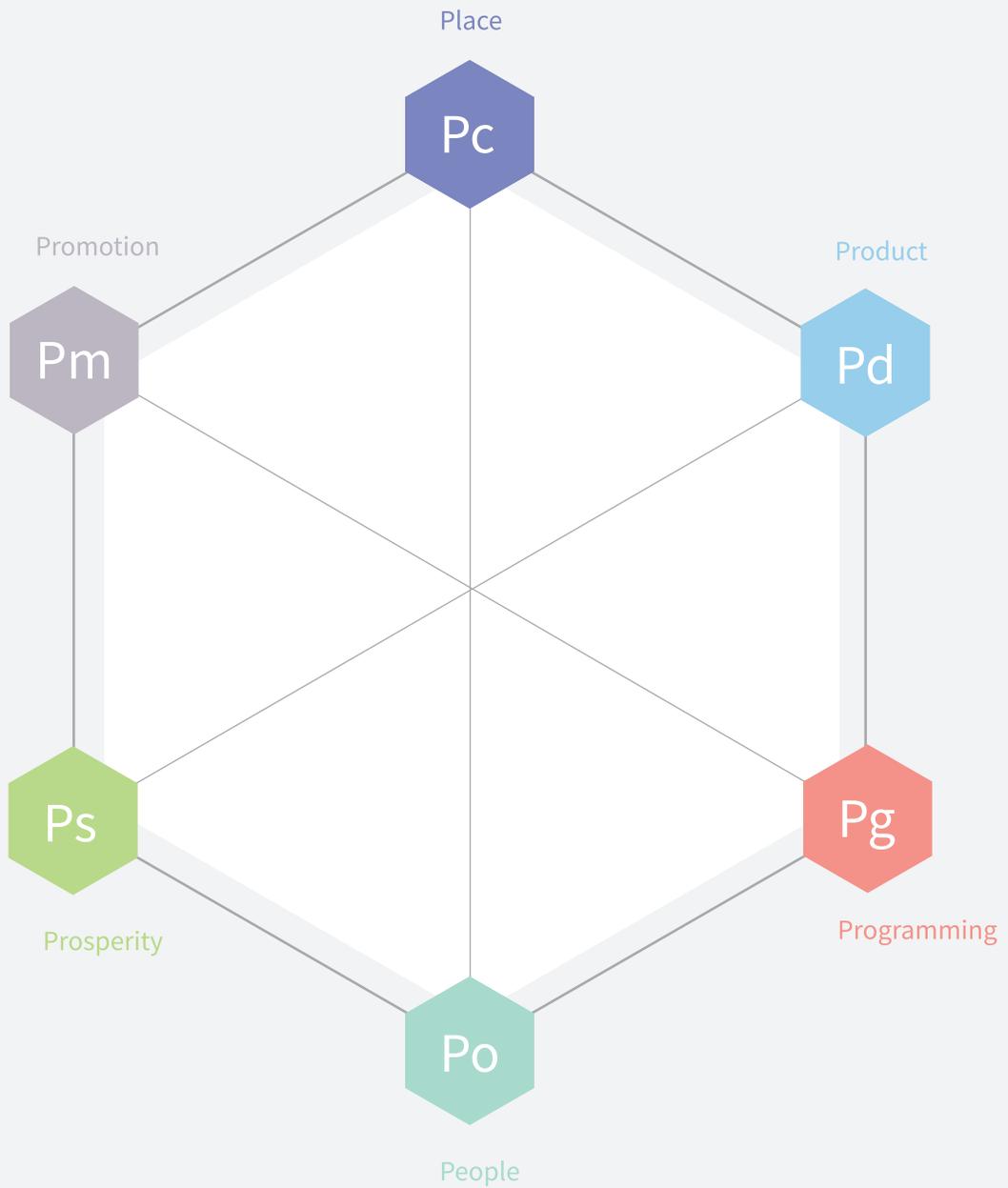
Ps Prosperity

A city’s employment, GDP per capita and corporate head offices, including the subcategories of Unemployment, Household Income, and Fortune 500 Companies.

Pm Promotion

The quantity of stories, references and recommendations shared online about a city, including the subcategories of Google Search Results, Google Trends, Facebook Check-ins, Instagram Hashtags and TripAdvisor Reviews.

How we measure the performance of America's Best Cities, at a glance.



AMERICA'S TOP 10 LARGE CITIES

The best-performing principal cities of the metropolitan areas within the United States with populations of more than one million. A principal city is defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.



Page 10 | #1 New York, New York

Page 12 | #2 Chicago, Illinois

Page 14 | #3 Los Angeles, California

Page 15 | #4 San Francisco, California

Page 16 | #5 Las Vegas, Nevada

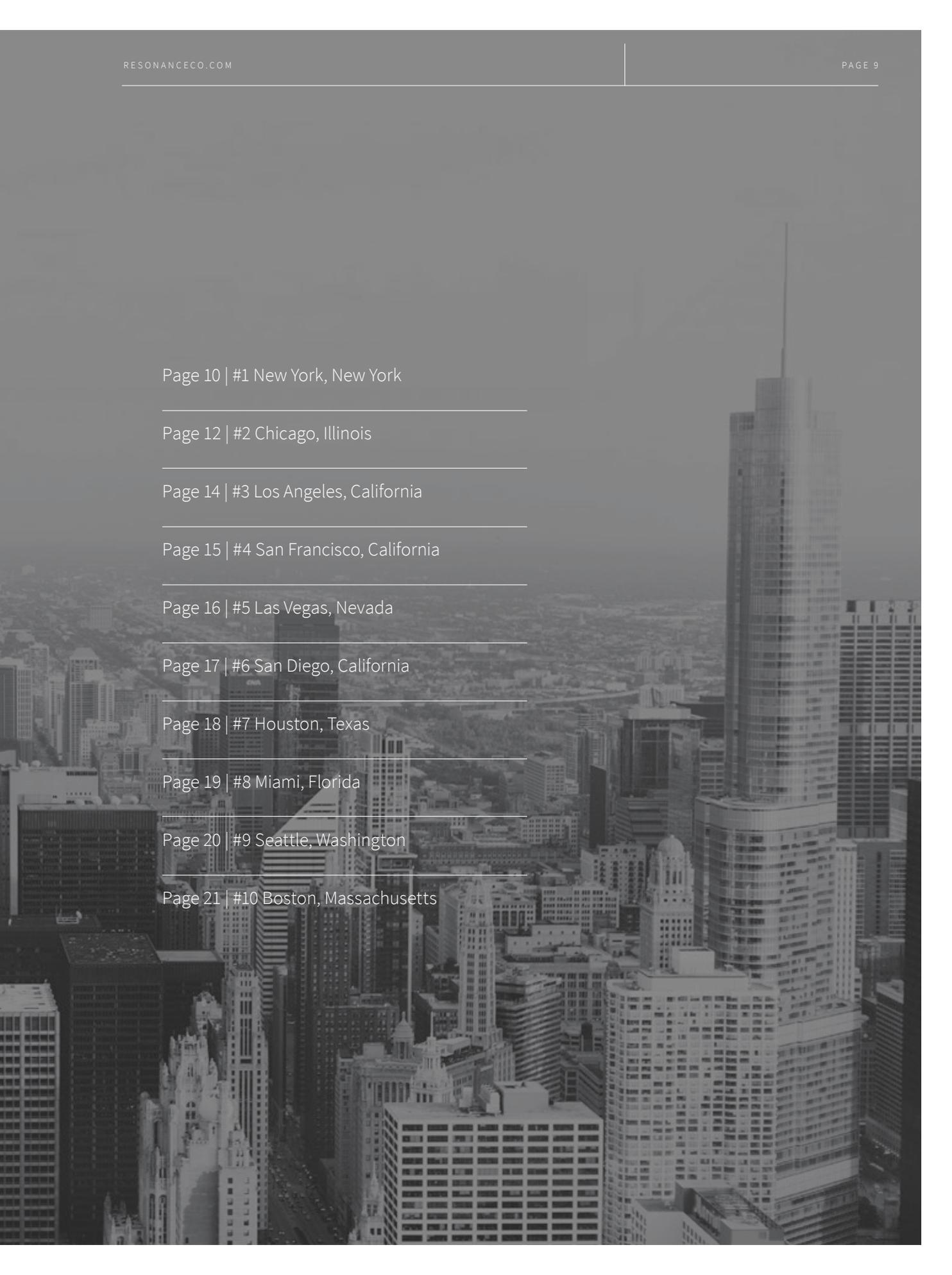
Page 17 | #6 San Diego, California

Page 18 | #7 Houston, Texas

Page 19 | #8 Miami, Florida

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Page 21 | #10 Boston, Massachusetts



1. NEW YORK

True York City wants to show you some new sights.

POPULATION

CITY: 8,461,961 | METRO: 20,031,443

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

1 CULTURE **1** NIGHTLIFE

Everybody knows New York. Full of hustle and heart, dreamers and doers—the never-settlers. And almost everyone's been to New York: nearly 63 million visitors came in 2017—a new record, which averages out to more than 1.2 million humans in the city every single week of the year... in addition to residents (to give you a sense of the enormity).

But NYC & Company, the city's destination marketing organization, wants you back. You, who feast on beauty and buzz and seek out the train less traveled. You, who contribute to tourism's staggering \$64.3 billion impact on the local economy. New York's new marketing wants you to know that there's so much more to know of New York. And so much more to love.

New York ranks #1 in the country in our Neighborhoods & Landmarks subcategory, and this metric is key to the new campaign. Famous Original New York and #TrueYorkCity are invitations to discover the worlds of the boroughs that orbit the Manhattan sun. Brooklyn, but not just Williamsburg and Dumbo. And Downtown Brooklyn, home to brownstones and towers, as well as the Brooklyn Cultural District and the Brooklyn Academy of Music—a complex that helps the city top the nation in our Culture subcategory.

Then there's Queens—Jackson Heights to Astoria, Flushing to Long Island City—an increasingly important part of the city's #1 Culinary ranking for dining domination (along with the usual metrics of Michelin stars).

Even the visual perspective on the city has shifted. On the Famous Original website, photography is less iconic and more everyday—less of the city as legend and



BIG CITY VIEWS FROM BROOKLYN

Everybody knows New York. Full of hustle and heart, dreamers and doers—the never-settlers.

more as an environment for its people. Or as Fred Dixon of NYC & Company puts it, “New York City isn't a collection of movie sets and chain stores. The biggest threat our industry faces is homogenization.”

Mobility is a way to experience the city as local. The expanded NYC Ferry service quite possibly serves up the most NYC for the money (usually no more than the price of a subway ticket). You can get on

in Williamsburg and be on the Dumbo waterfront 15 minutes later, having seen the underside of the Williamsburg Bridge from the open air deck. From there, it's the Financial District and beyond!

There will soon be better ways to arrive into the city as well: \$10 billion is going into Kennedy Airport's terminals, highways and transit connections, while \$2.4 billion is being poured into a very tired Newark, all of which bodes well for the city's #3 ranking for Airport Connectivity.

And there is new life in the night. New York has appointed a Night Mayor, a new position that recognizes the importance—culturally and economically—of nightlife, a category for which NYC ranks #1 as well.

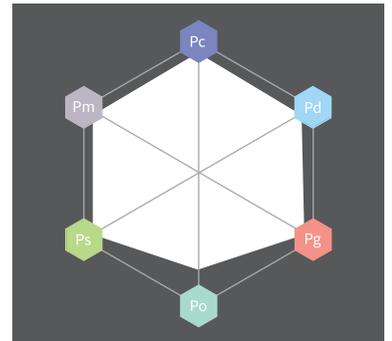


JULIA FREDENBURG

NYC NIGHT MAYOR ARIEL PALITZ (RIGHT)



CENTRAL PARK



Ariel Palitz, a longtime bar owner, has been tasked with maintaining the delicate balance between the collective desire for good times with the need to be a good neighbor. She has a \$130,000 salary, a 12-member advisory board and a \$300,000 budget to manage. First order of business: listening to the people on both sides of the party.

A little fresh air after a night out? Urban New York is home to 10,542 acres of forest, and the city amazingly ranks #3 for Parks & Outdoor Activities in the country. Yes, there's Central Park and the High Line, which has unlocked billions of dollars of real estate and tourism value along its path and at its Hudson Yards terminus. But there's also Governor's Island, an undersung 172-acre island in New York

Harbor that's a unique mix of historic military buildings, innovative recreational landscaping and, soon, new and adaptive real estate. In Brooklyn, the designers of the High Line have created a six-acre waterfront public park near the iconic Domino Sugar Factory, making both city history and the East River integral parts of the Williamsburg landscape.

The more things change, the more money remains the same; the city is still ranked first for Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. But as Verizon and JP Morgan Chase go about their merrily profitable ways, Google bought the Chelsea Market across from its NYC HQ for \$2.4 billion, emphasizing the city's status as Silicon Valley East. Still in the running for Amazon HQ2, you can

see New York moving on from a rejection quicker than almost any other city.

If you're lucky enough to visit, camera in hand, you get bragging rights of the very best kind. Which is why New York, with its hustle and heart, continues to top our Promotion category that includes Facebook Check-ins, TripAdvisor Reviews and Instagram hashtags. Because no matter how often we visit, we can never get enough of America's Best City.

- Pc Place
- Pd Product
- Pg Programming
- Po People
- Ps Prosperity
- Pm Promotion



6AARCHITECTS, TOM HARRIS

THE CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL

2. CHICAGO

Programming and culture keep locals and visitors hopping, while robust infrastructure facilitates exploration. But it's the affordability of life here that keeps Chicago excited about the future.

POPULATION

CITY: 2,714,017 | METRO: 9,528,396

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

1 CONVENTIONS 2 NIGHTLIFE



LOLLAPALOOZA 2017 IN CHICAGO

ROGER HO

“In the war for talent, when the day is done, companies want to recruit talent and want them to have a good place to live,” says Andrea Zopp, the new president and CEO of World Business Chicago, a non-profit economic development group, and former deputy mayor and chief neighborhood development officer for the City of Chicago.

And the Windy City seems to follow this blueprint to the letter.

Companies like Amazon love Chicago. And the city, which spends a lot of time wooing these tech giants, succeeds year after year because a lot of young people want to live in vibrant neighborhoods with great dining and drinking options, with good public transit, and with stellar museums. As it happens, Chicago has all of the above in spades. Perhaps more important for companies looking to hire, the city has some pretty impressive higher education institutions. Not surprisingly, for

the second year in a row Chicago tops the nation in Resonance’s Product category—an index that evaluates the “hardware” of a city and includes the subcategories of Airport Connectivity, Convention Center, Museums, University Ranking, and Sports Teams. The hardware of a city often takes years to build and is expensive to maintain, but it is vital for urban exploration and empowering visitors to a city.

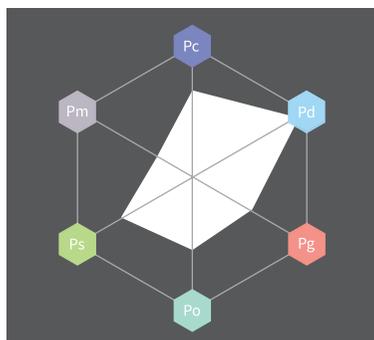
Chicago is slated to host the Beard Awards until at least 2021.

Compared to other heavy-hitters like New York and San Francisco, Chicago has stayed relatively affordable, too. Zopp points out that “you can be a young millennial and live downtown or a train ride close to downtown, in a cool, hip community, or move a few train stops away and buy a house that’s affordable.” In December 2017, Redfin analysts found just 25 neighborhoods across 80 major U.S. markets that fit the bill for affordability, and more than half were in the Chicago area, which Redfin called “the rare major metro area that has remained relatively affordable and has largely bucked the severe inventory shortage trend seen across much of the country over the past few years.”

Not just a great city in which to live and work, Chicago does pretty well when it comes to Programming, our category that measures a city’s Culinary, Shopping, Nightlife and Culture. An exciting epicurean destination, Chicago has delivered James Beard Foundation winners in 23 out of 24 years. In fact, after 25 years in New York, the foundation selected Chicago in 2015 as the new host city for its elite awards ceremony. Chicago is slated to host the Beard Awards until at least 2021.

With a long history as a welcoming artistic platform and stage for all, Chicago continues to attract cultural events and citywide celebrations—Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago Theater Week, Chicago Ideas Week, and Chicago Humanities Festival, to name just a few.

Come summer, Grant Park becomes a music festival playground as Lollapalooza (also born here) takes over for a three-day music and art extravaganza. With a central location in the heart of the country and a stunning urban backdrop along the lakefront, the city proves year after year that it can host hundreds of thousands of fans. Many are scoping tantalizing real estate and plentiful job listings as part of their visits.



Pc Place Pd Product Pg Programming Po People Ps Prosperity Pm Promotion

3. LOS ANGELES

In the creative capital of the world, a new program aims to fuse big dreams with sustainable economic development.

POPULATION

CITY: 3,918,872 | METRO: 13,189,366

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

2 PROMOTION 3 DIVERSITY

Not long ago, “making it in L.A.” referred to little but celluloid dreams coming true: landing a coveted role, selling a script, getting a movie made... you get the idea. If asked what business you were in, the answer, inevitably, was “The Business.” And even though Hollywood isn’t the only business in town, Los Angeles, like the people who live here, knows a thing or two about selling itself. You could say promotion is in L.A.’s DNA.

Case in point: Mayor Eric Garcetti’s assertion that “the creativity in Los Angeles is unrivaled anywhere else.”

Indeed, Greater Los Angeles is home to a vast network of creative designers, technologists and makers as well as some 12,000 manufacturers and suppliers in industries that range from space and special effects to food and fashion. But they are largely disconnected. “Sometimes, the next big idea is just one nudge away from entering the marketplace, redefining an industry, and changing millions of lives,” says Mayor Garcetti.

With that in mind, MAKE IT IN LA was born in 2016. The initiative, a non-profit, spun out of Garcetti’s office after a study discovered that 57% of all factories in Los Angeles County had excess capacity and were eager to connect with new customers. Also bolstering the initiative is the local claim that L.A. is the largest manufacturing center in the country.

MAKE IT IN LA connects some of the most accomplished entrepreneurs and manufacturers across the city with the resources they need to turn creative

ideas into thriving businesses that power L.A.’s economy and create jobs. Search #madeinLA and you’ll turn up hundreds of thousands of posts of makers, big and small, showing off their products and ideas. Dive deep into the results and you’re likely to come across photos of locals and tourists alike posing in front of the Made in LA wall at 8025 Melrose—one of the most Instagrammed sights in the city.

In late 2017, Mayor Garcetti followed MAKE IT IN LA by launching a pilot program that further celebrates the creative capital of the world. The program, called LA Original, includes a distinctive logo—the letters L and A separated by a long, blank line—that gives the creatively inclined the space to use it as their canvas. Check out the pop-up shop at the recently redesigned Westfield Century City mall, the store at the Central Public Library, or the LA Original website and you’ll

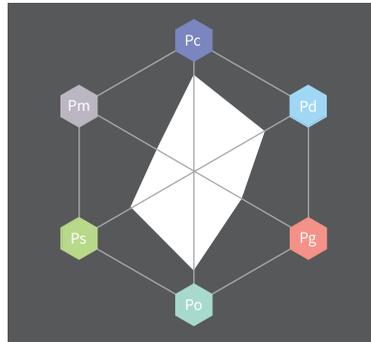
find a collection of T-shirts, phone cases, skateboards, bags and other wares branded with the logo. Of course, every product is designed, produced, assembled—made!—in L.A.

One of the program’s featured creators is the cupcake mini empire called Sprinkles. The name might not be instantly recognizable, but if you’ve ever indulged your sweet tooth at a cupcake shop (and really, who hasn’t?), these guys are to thank.

“Los Angeles is filled with creativity and is often a trendsetter for other parts of the country,” says Candace Nelson who, along with her husband Charles, opened the world’s first cupcake bakery in 2005. In doing so, they—and L.A.—inspired hundreds of copycats around the globe. “What makes L.A. so unique is how accepting it is of new ideas,” she says.

For its promotional campaign, LA Original rounded up a gaggle of local celebs to spread the buzz. But this being L.A., “local” also usually means “creatively iconic.” During the one-minute promo video, the city’s new logo frames musician Kendrick Lamar, artists Shepard Fairey and Tristan Eaton, Chef Roy Choi, architect Frank Gehry, LA Phil conductor Gustavo Dudamel, jewelry designer Maya Brenner and others—all the while Lamar’s “Humble” plays in the background.

A humble brag? Nah, just made in L.A.



THE DOWNTOWN L.A. SKYLINE

4. SAN FRANCISCO

Beautiful, smart and rich, San Francisco is unabashedly taking up the title as the capital of the Left Coast.

POPULATION
CITY: 850,282 | METRO: 4,577,530

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

- 2 HOUSEHOLD INCOME
- 3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

San Francisco was a sanctuary city before the construct was wielded politically and frothed up from opposite sides. It long welcomed sea- and road-weary travelers.

Then life-weary ones—the young, untethered and ambitious who immortalized the openness of like-minded community and the enlightenment that San Francisco’s fog- and mist-diffused light seems to coax. Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love.

But today’s world-changers know that the fastest way to making a mark (and your own freedom) is ambushing long-held assumptions with technology and a new perspective from one of the peninsula’s 49 hills.

The Golden Gate Bridge, radiating through the Pacific fog, is still the same welcoming beacon to new arrivals it’s always been.

But today, it’s joined as an icon for the world’s talented and ambitious by new monoliths on the horizon. Earlier this year, the 1,070-foot Salesforce Tower at First and Mission Streets became the city’s tallest structure, complete with local artist Jim Campbell’s rooftop art installation comprising 11,000 lights and video screens that project daily scenes from around the city. The nearby Salesforce Transit Center just opened a publicly accessible rooftop park with 60 species of trees, a 1,000-foot-long fountain, a picnic meadow and a playground. If that doesn’t hold one’s attention, the major transit hub below whisks locals, employees and tourists to the East Bay, north to the wine country of Sonoma and Napa, and (of course) south to Silicon Valley—and even further, to Monterey.

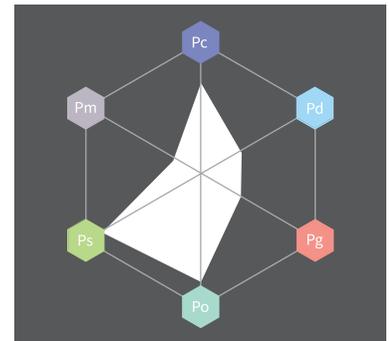


THE NEW SALESFORCE TOWER

The city’s public and (increasingly) private spending hints at the wealth in a city ranked #2 in Household Income in the country (second only to San Jose, an hour south) and its fifth-most Fortune 500 head offices. The city’s biggest hospital is now the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center after the founder of Facebook and his wife Priscilla Chan donated \$75 million three years ago.

The promise of high salaries (in U.S. currency) means a torrent of global workers fuelling the city’s ambition, with the fifth-most foreign-born residents and third-best educated workforce in America. The Bay Area’s entrepreneurialism is uniquely connected to the local world-renowned universities, with Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, able to accommodate local knowledge and skills gaps and broker funding for nascent start-ups. Education and capital are rarely an issue for the right idea.

The inflow of people into San Francisco is why SFO, the city’s airport, is a hive of renovation, build-out and innovation that will welcome new talent and their families. The all-time record of 55.8 million passengers in 2017 will continue to grow in the coming years, especially with new airlines and routes to China, Mexico



and Europe launching this year. Small demonstrations of openness and tolerance like last year’s first airport naturalization ceremony by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services San Francisco District send the message that the city is open for international business.

Much larger ones, like the \$550 million, 305,000 sq.-ft. expansion of San Francisco’s Moscone Center in December, are banking on the world’s sustained pipeline into this former rebel territory now defining the mainstream.

- Pc Place
- Pd Product
- Pg Programming
- Po People
- Ps Prosperity
- Pm Promotion



THE LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER

5. LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas has had a year from hell. But as so often happens, the scar tissue is making the city tougher and tighter as a community.

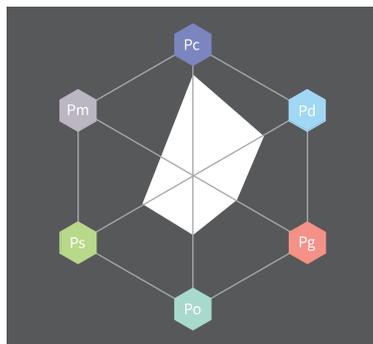
POPULATION
CITY: 613,295 | METRO: 2,070,153

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
1 ATTRACTIONS 2 CULTURE

The story of Las Vegas blossoming into a “real city” has usually been told of late with breathless praise for its economic success.

The city smashed visitor records for three years running, setting an all-time record in 2016 with almost 43 million visitors. It was a record-breaking convention visitation year too. And the cherry on top? Vegas was named the World’s Leading Meetings & Conference Destination for 2016 by the World Travel Awards.

But this tourist town also became more liveable. Downtown is now a destination for locals and increasingly cred-seeking visitors. Public spaces host art activations that would make Brooklyn proud.



Repurposed brick buildings serve as austere, unsigned restaurants, a bet by Chef Natalie Young that has paid off for dozens of other entrepreneurs and restaurateurs since 2015.

There are even fantastic vegan restaurants.

Sin City’s blossoming sense of place has moved the city into the Top 3 for our deep Place category, with the best weather in the country and an impressive #4 for its Parks & Outdoor Activities. For a city in a desert, that’s no small feat.

But in the past year, there have been big-city—big *humanity*—problems as well. The October 1, 2017 massacre of 58 people (with another 851 injured) in the mass shooting on the Las Vegas Strip darkened the city of neon like nothing before it.

For the first time in as long as anyone could remember, tourism dropped last year—only briefly and only by 725,000 visitors (not even 2%), but it was still a drop—at a time when the global economy had never been hotter. Even supposed sure things like a new Asian-themed hotel-casino called The Lucky Dragon, which was reverse-engineered to plug right into the dizzying spending power of the ballooning Chinese international traveler and wealthy recent immigrants, flamed out and shut down earlier this year. This despite non-stop China flights introduced last year.

Then came the sexual assault allegations against city father Steve Wynn—wrecking balls to both Wynn Resorts share prices and local pride in one of the city’s own.

But Vegas is doubling down on massive city building while being buoyed up by its place as a fascinating hometown.

In the next few years, it will be atop the nation in our Product category—its Convention Center space (currently ranked #3) will have an extra million square feet of functional space in 2020, likely surpassing Orlando and Chicago in the process. Sin City is also bulking up into a sports town—with its #35 rank approaching Top 10 with the unprecedented success of the first-year NHL Golden Knights, as well as the arrival of the NFL’s Raiders in 2020. The new T-Mobile “hockey” arena is already attracting the high-quality entertainment and concerts that usually avoided the area in the past. The Raiders’ \$1.9 billion, 65,000-seat stadium is going up walking distance from the Strip.

The city’s domination in the Attractions category seems safe, given the investment in music festivals—that’s right!—and six major hotel-and-entertainment projects totalling \$10 billion and reshaping the skyline like never before.

That’s a lot of jobs in a city that, along with Houston, boasts the most affordable housing in our Top 10. Vegas, it seems, is a place for residents to build wealth over the long term. Of course, hitting the jackpot is also an option.



6. SAN DIEGO

As a waterfront vision finally takes shape, Southern California's urban ideal thinks long term to keep a good thing going.

POPULATION

CITY: 1,374,812 | METRO: 3,253,356

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

2 PLACE **5** HOUSEHOLD INCOME

You have to admire the hubris of a place that blithely calls itself “America’s Finest City.” And even if our rankings place it #6 overall, San Diego is edging closer to being worthy of its self-appointed title.

Certainly, San Diego is as naturally endowed as any place has a right to be—its sublime 263 full and partly sunny days annually are #5 nationally, and the 23 beaches within city limits made it synonymous with SoCal surf culture. The many charms, events and attractions (the zoo!) of the 1,200-acre Balboa Park, the largest urban cultural park in North America, help keep the city on top for Parks & Outdoor Activities.

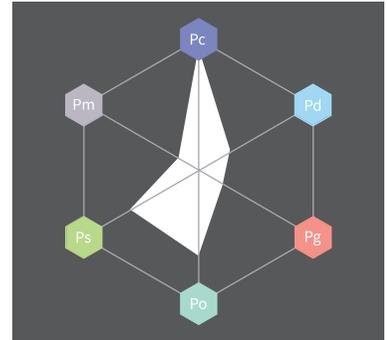
Then there’s the uniquely fluid cultural identity of the city: the Cross Border Xpress, which links San Diego with Tijuana, facilitated travel for 1.9 million and has boosted exploration of the sublime wines and dining in the Baja’s Valle de Guadalupe. The cultural blend can be tasted in San Diego’s

cuisine, with its restaurants powering an impressive #7 Culinary ranking nationally—Corazón de Tierra, George’s California Modern, TRUST, and Poki One N Half are a few of *San Diego Magazine’s* recent favorites. Now there’s cannabis culture, too: since the state-wide legalization of marijuana, farm-to-table dinners with edibles are a thing, craft beer and pot have become fast friends, and “cannabus” tours are bringing visitors to both dispensaries and breweries.

The 35 million people who visited in 2017 are finding San Diego’s 1.5 million residents hard at work. The city’s thriving innovation ecosystem means the fifth-highest Household Income in the country. Qualcomm, a major employer, alone has 13,000 local workers whose salaries average about \$105,000, according to *The New York Times*. (That the company spent much of 2017 and 2018 in an ownership battle with rival chip maker Broadcom is a matter of much local consternation.)

Given that innovation, tech and entrepreneurialism love centrality, downtown San Diego is flourishing as a place to live and learn. Construction began in mid 2017 on a UC San Diego downtown complex that will contain 426 residences and a 53,000-sq.-ft. office and classroom building that will groom the next wave of local startups. Accessibility to education for all is a cornerstone of the initiative.

But what will really make San Diego America’s Finest City is the realization of its urban waterfront. Disparate sections are being woven together and to downtown

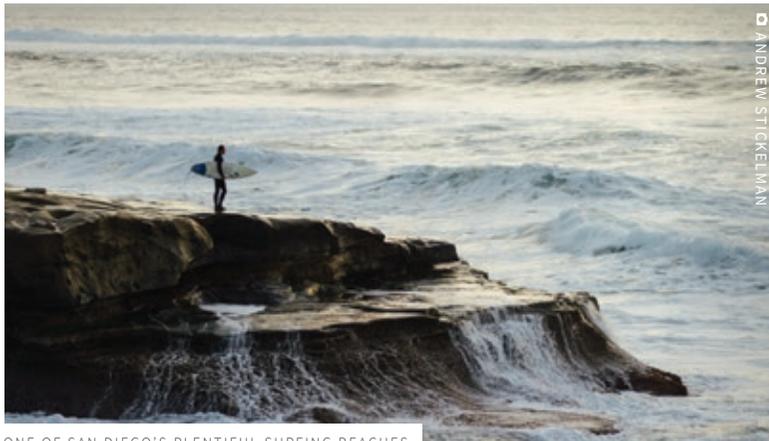


in a meaningful way—giving residents and visitors the “world-class waterfront” they’ve long been promised. This means some version of a two-mile seaside link from the convention center, past the enormous Midway aircraft carrier attraction to Waterfront Park.

A rejuvenated Embarcadero is a cruise ship and maritime history hub; a controversial new plan for Seaport Village is beginning to advance; the beloved 50-year-old Anthony’s is making way for the Portside Pier, four venues for modern dining and drinking. Meantime, a massive new heart of the waterfront is already under construction: the eight-block waterfront Navy Broadway Complex is a \$1.3 billion project on 12 acres that will house a new 17-story headquarters for the U.S. Navy as well as the Manchester Pacific Gateway, a development of four office buildings, two hotels, a museum, a retail promenade and a 1.9-acre park.

As important to the waterfront—and to the Gaslamp tourism area—is a long-awaited convention center expansion. A proposal goes on the ballot in November 2018 to raise the city’s hotel room tax with a view to raising \$6.4 billion over the next 40 years. Along with the expansion, some \$2 billion would be used for homeless services and permanent housing and would help San Diego stay ahead of a livability challenge that will only intensify for West Coast cities in the coming decade.

Hotel developers are bullish on tourism’s future: the Pendry Hotel—an approachable luxury offspring of Montage—opened in 2016; and as of this year, San Diego has almost 3,000 rooms under construction, second only to Los Angeles in the booming state of California.



ANDREW STICKELMAN

ONE OF SAN DIEGO’S PLENTIFUL SURFING BEACHES

7. HOUSTON

Smart, skilled and soulful, Houston is the American city of the future.

POPULATION

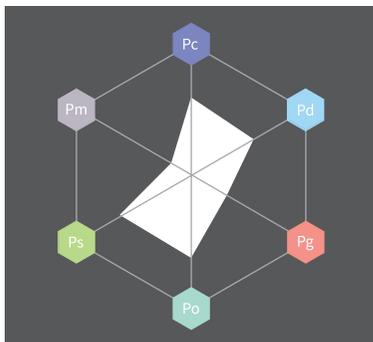
CITY: 2,240,582 | METRO: 6,482,592

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

4 RESTAURANTS 4 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

Mutt City. Space City. Bayou City. The Big Heart. Houston is true to all of these sobriquets and more. International immigration in the past decade has contributed to explosive population growth and made Houston the most ethnically diverse big city in the country, with more than 145 different languages spoken at home, according to the latest census—more than even New York. Combine that get-go with affordable housing—the average selling price of a home is \$140,300 compared to \$222,300 in Atlanta and \$257,800 in Austin—favorable zoning and no state income tax, and what do you get? Among many other things, a food scene to rival any in the country. Houston's 10,000-plus restaurants make it “the next global food Mecca,” according to chef, innovator and *Ugly Delicious* host David Chang.

Where to start? *Houstonia Magazine* recommends Killen's STQ, its restaurant of the year, along with barbecue at the Pit Room and dessert at the Oaxacan-inspired Xochi. Perhaps not in that order, or all on the same day.



THE HOUSTON SKYLINE

Houston, fourth largest city in the U.S., is also home to the fourth largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the country (20) behind New York, Chicago, and Dallas—and to five Fortune Global 500s. Not only does the city dominate in energy, it's a leader in health care, manufacturing, engineering, finance and outer space—home to the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, which houses NASA, the site of Mission Control, and the training base and home for the nation's astronauts. The recent development of the Houston Spaceport, a hub for innovation, education and commercial spaceflight, is the future of the region's space industry—and brings us all a step closer to space tourism. For now, Houston's 20 million annual visitors (2016)—of which 3.2 million were international travelers—arrive and depart by more conventional means.

Change comes fast and Houston embraces it. The Houston-Dallas high-speed rail project marks a new paradigm for a car-centric state: a privately funded rail line that would zip passengers between Dallas and Houston in about 90 minutes at up to 200 mph. The Texas Bullet Train will drive the development of a new economic corridor combining the fiscal might of two of the most important metropolitan areas in the country.

Post-Harvey, Houston has a new plan for its downtown. Hurricane Harvey was a Category 4 storm that hit Texas on August 25, 2017. It caused \$125 billion in damage, according to the National Hurricane Center.

“You’ve heard me say it before: Ours is the most diverse and welcoming city in the country, one a growing number of people want to visit to experience our food, our culture and our people.”

MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER

City government is at the forefront of the resilience movement of the 21st century and is redefining how cities deal with these severe storm events. In late 2017, the Houston Downtown Management District unveiled “Plan Downtown,” a 20-year plan to redevelop the city's downtown and improve visitor appeal, business climate, livability and connectivity. It features a five-mile Green Loop transit circuit, enhancing walkability and accessibility to the city's six cultural districts. Events, concerts and festivals make art accessible and often free of charge to communities, attracting visitors and providing a platform for local and international talent. In the Houston Museum District, galleries galore are cheek by jowl with a performing arts theater, ballet, the symphony and more. A new Innovation District will act as the city center for tech and entrepreneurship, drawing innovative and entrepreneurial Millennial bees downtown.

8. MIAMI

On the Amazon shortlist and enjoying unprecedented arts investment, Miami is open for business and pleasure for everyone.

POPULATION

CITY: 432,622 | METRO: 5,926,955

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

1 DIVERSITY 5 PLACE

Few cities in Amazon's Top 20 HQ2 shortlist scored more of a moral victory than Miami.

Local media and economic development offices hailed the decision as evidence to the world that (in the words of Alyce Robertson, executive director of Miami's Downtown Development Authority) "We're not just a fun-in-the-sun city. We move from our 'vacation spot' designation and into 'international business capital.'"

Others used it to highlight the brainpower produced by the South Florida region, citing the fact that Jeff Bezos graduated from Miami Palmetto High in 1982.

Michael Finney, president of the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade's economic-

development agency, articulated the opportunity for the city to *The Miami Herald* earlier this year: "Miami should be a target for consideration as other businesses are considering expansion locations. So we will take that messaging and build that into our marketing narrative."

So now Miami—long a draw for frozen and curious Americans seeking exoticism without a passport or currency exchange—officially has brains and beauty, right?

Actually, it always has.

The natural attributes—turquoise Biscayne Bay lapping white-powder sand while sun-kissed bodies frolic everywhere—always captured the world's imagination and crystallized the city's hedonistic brand. But it's Miami's openness to immigrants (and, more recently, the LGBTQ community) that ranks it #1 in the country in our People category—the proportion of population that is foreign-born, that speaks other languages at home and that has attained a certain level of education.

No other U.S. city has more residents born in another country. Miami also ranks high for households that speak a language other than English (more than 100 languages according to the latest census).

This ethnic mix is heavy on a Latin American and Caribbean flavor, with a third of the population of Cuban descent, followed by Haitian, Nicaraguan,

Honduran, Dominican and Colombian in perpetually shifting order.

But Miami's historic embrace of a crossroads of the Americas has also meant a business advantage few cities claim.

The city is home to one of the largest concentrations of international banks in the U.S. as well as the largest hub, outside of Mexico City, New York and L.A., of Spanish-language media.

Its decades-long embrace of art and design as a common language is also paying off.

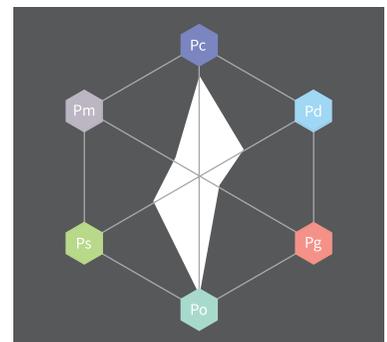
In addition to the Frank Gehry-designed New World Symphony Center, adjacent Soundscape park and The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, a torrent of arts-related infrastructure continues that, per capita, is unrivalled in the country.

The Miami Design District, with its art-filled plaza and new luxury retail, opened recently, followed by the new Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. Just a few months ago, the Museum of Art and Design emerged from its reno at the Freedom Tower at 600 Biscayne Blvd.

The city's arts energy is also fueling other infrastructure projects like the highly anticipated convention center's \$615-million expansion this year. In a massive commitment to the arts, the city has invested approximately \$7 million in public art throughout the convention center site, one of the largest public art commissions in U.S. history.



ART AND DESIGN ABOUND IN MIAMI



- Pc Place
- Pd Product
- Pg Programming
- Po People
- Ps Prosperity
- Pm Promotion

9. SEATTLE

By most metrics, Seattle is America's boomtown. But Emerald City is playing the long game to keep the (supervised) party going.

POPULATION

CITY: 668,849 | METRO: 3,671,095

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

1 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT **3** HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Seattle's self-reliance and focus on taking care of its own, forged by 150 years of city building on the far-flung northwest coast of the nation, has steered the city for its current "it" status.

In many ways, Emerald City reverse-engineered its success. With a focus on education and an optimized workforce, the very environment that launched and held on to Boeing (still the biggest local employer despite moving its headquarters to Chicago)—as well as Microsoft and Weyerhaeuser—has attracted more recent captains of industry like Amazon, Costco and Starbucks.

"The City of Seattle puts race first in every policy decision we make," says Joe Mirabella, Director of Communications for Seattle's Office of Economic Development & Office of Film and Music. "That's also how we approach workforce development—closing the economic opportunity gap for people of color through [training] for today's higher-paying tech jobs. We also invest in youth employment and internships to help young people get the early job experience necessary for early career growth."

Keeping the talent pipeline well-stocked has always been Seattle's secret sauce and it's paid off, big time. Today, Seattle is the smartest city in America, topping the nation in Educational Attainment (a percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher).

The city's enviable lead isn't that surprising when you consider that local philanthropy always prioritized education and local

ROI, supported by a profound sense of stewardship by the city's captains of industry. Case in point: Paul Allen, the elder of American tech and co-founder of Microsoft, bankrolling a local version of Austin's SXSW two years back, called The Upstream Music Festival and Summit. A few months later, he gave the University of Washington, already one of the nation's top public universities, \$50 million for its new computer science and engineering school.

But while U-Dub and its 40,000-plus undergrads fill football stadiums and make headlines, Seattle boasts a dozen other universities and colleges within city limits.

Research and education is a mantra in the city—from the globally renowned Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (itself the recipient of more than \$50 million from Allen's co-founder Bill Gates over the years) to the Bainbridge Graduate Institute, one

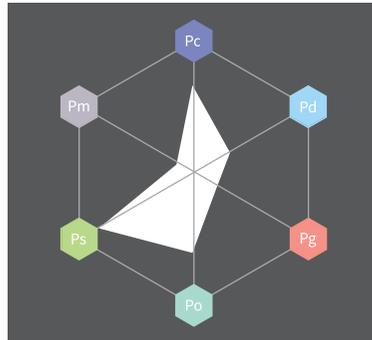
of the world's leading master's programs dedicated to sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship.

Today this ingrained devotion to ambition and learning is able to scale like never before.

In late 2017, the Urban Land Institute's annual *Emerging Trends Report* named Seattle "the city with the most promising real estate investment prospects" in 2018 in the U.S. for the first time ever. The educated workforce was front and center: Emerald City has "twice the U.S. percentage (12%) of employees in STEM occupations, with 4.5% of the workforce employed in computer programming-related occupations," the report noted.

It's why the city erected the most construction cranes in the U.S. for three years running, according to consultancy Rider Levett Bucknall North America. And why head-office vanguards of the new economy are at once hiring more than ever while leaving legacies in the city that launched them—museums, hospital wings and foundations. And, amazingly, affordable housing.

As the population continues to swell (Seattle led all large cities in 2017 according to Moody's Analytics), attracted by the second-lowest unemployment in the country (after Austin) and the third-highest household income, rents are actually declining. This boom is making room.





BOSTON HARBOR

10. BOSTON

America's oldest big city is ready to own the future.

POPULATION
CITY: 658,279 | METRO: 4,728,844

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
6 PEOPLE 6 SAFETY

With a rich history laid into its cobblestone, a thriving economy, diverse neighborhoods and a legacy of arts, culture and education, Boston has something for both locals and visitors. Indeed, each year the city welcomes more than 18 million business travelers, convention delegates and tourists.

In Resonance's ranking, Boston nabs the #6 spot for People, which looks at the subcategories of Education, Foreign-born Residents, and Languages Spoken at Home. An innovative city with a strong and growing economy, Boston offers access to parks and open space, walkability, commercial fiber connectivity, energy efficiency and, with 28% of the population being foreign born and representing over 100 countries, a vibrant

global community. Boston, which is home to the highest concentration of young adults of any of the 25 largest cities in the country, produces a highly educated workforce and steady stream of new talent. The higher education capital of the world, the Boston region is home to 75 institutions of higher learning (including Harvard University, Boston University and MIT) with a collective enrollment of 300,000 students.

An annual event called Hubweek, sponsored by *The Boston Globe*, Harvard, MIT and Hubspot, brings together more than 100 companies from around the area to discuss new technological breakthroughs. According to Linda Pizzuti Henry, managing editor of *The Globe*, Boston is now the nucleus of innovations in art, science and technology. Projects like Hubweek, which Henry helps run, are helping draw top national talent to the area.

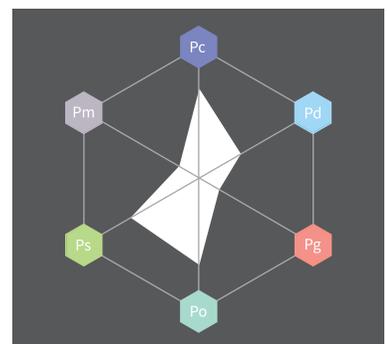
Unsurprisingly, Boston was one of 20 cities that made the cut for Amazon's HQ2. In the city's proposal to the tech giant, Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust was quoted as saying, "Our universities provide the intellectual infrastructure—the ideas, solutions, technologies, and talent that fuel growth, and attract startups and established companies—that makes our region a competitive place for Amazon's next

venture, and for the future generations of thinkers and creators who will live, study, and work here."

And those thinkers—and their entourages—are pouring into town.

Boston is experiencing an economic and population boom, with approximately 50,000 more residents projected to live in the City of Boston by 2030. "Moving to Boston means moving to a city with unique neighborhoods and a passionate, innovative and active community," says Matt O'Toole, brand president for Reebok. "Boston is a city that moves, and that movement brings the city to life." Reebok moved their headquarters to Boston in 2017. In the last four years, the city added more than 60,000 new jobs, and the annual metropolitan area unemployment rate fell from 6.1% in 2012 to 3.4% in 2017. Last year, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation ranked Boston as the best city for fostering entrepreneurial growth.

In July 2017, the Mayor's office released *Imagine Boston 2030*—the first citywide plan in more than 50 years. Shaped by more than 15,000 voices, the plan lays the framework and vision for the city's future. "Boston is in a unique point in our history," Mayor Martin Walsh writes in the plan's opening letter. The responsibilities of the city are expanding as it strengthens its role as a safe harbor for immigrants and a national leader in preparing for climate change. Boston is well on its way to becoming a thriving waterfront city for generations to come.



Pc Place Po People
Pd Product Ps Prosperity
Pg Programming Pm Promotion

An aerial photograph of a coastal city. In the background, a dense skyline of skyscrapers is visible against a hazy sky. In the middle ground, a large body of water stretches across the frame. In the foreground, a marina is filled with hundreds of sailboats, their masts creating a complex pattern of vertical lines. The overall scene is captured in a monochromatic, slightly desaturated style.

AMERICA'S 50 BEST LARGE CITIES



Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
1	New York	New York	1	2	1	5	1	1	
2	Chicago	Illinois	15	1	2	13	11	3	
3	Los Angeles	California	7	3	3	4	20	2	
4	San Francisco	California	9	17	5	2	2	5	
5	Las Vegas	Nevada	3	4	4	28	36	4	
6	San Diego	California	2	29	9	7	18	9	
7	Houston	Texas	40	5	6	9	12	10	
8	Miami	Florida	5	14	16	1	41	6	
9	Seattle	Washington	16	22	7	10	3	13	
10	Boston	Massachusetts	13	16	17	6	17	11	
11	Washington	District of Columbia	31	11	15	15	8	8	
12	Dallas	Texas	29	8	18	12	9	15	
13	San Jose	California	14	47	38	3	4	30	
14	Austin	Texas	8	35	12	11	5	17	
15	Orlando	Florida	17	6	14	18	31	7	
16	Denver	Colorado	36	12	20	16	6	19	
17	Minneapolis	Minnesota	39	13	26	19	10	36	
18	Atlanta	Georgia	44	10	19	31	25	12	
19	Portland	Oregon	10	33	10	22	19	21	
20	San Antonio	Texas	20	24	13	25	22	18	
21	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	41	7	8	35	38	16	
22	Phoenix	Arizona	32	15	23	21	24	22	
23	Nashville	Tennessee	26	26	22	30	16	20	
24	Salt Lake City	Utah	37	30	45	14	15	39	
25	Charlotte	North Carolina	42	18	29	24	23	25	

Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
26	Tampa	Florida	6	27	28	27	33	24	↘
27	New Orleans	Louisiana	11	20	11	40	43	14	↘
28	Raleigh	North Carolina	21	44	40	23	14	46	↘
29	Virginia Beach	Virginia	4	50	48	37	7	47	↘
30	Columbus	Ohio	22	31	27	32	21	33	↘
31	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	46	23	30	33	26	27	↘
32	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma	25	42	43	34	13	44	↘
33	Sacramento	California	33	49	33	17	37	35	↘
34	Providence	Rhode Island	27	48	50	8	46	52	↘
35	Kansas City	Missouri	34	25	35	38	30	32	↘
36	Tucson	Arizona	19	41	24	29	45	38	↘
37	St. Louis	Missouri	48	21	21	46	39	23	↘
38	Jacksonville	Florida	18	43	39	43	28	37	↘
39	Baltimore	Maryland	49	19	25	47	44	29	↘
40	Indianapolis	Indiana	47	32	31	42	34	28	↘
41	Grand Rapids	Michigan	12	46	51	36	35	51	↘
42	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	28	37	32	41	40	41	↘
43	Louisville	Kentucky	35	45	36	49	27	40	↘
44	Richmond	Virginia	23	51	46	39	29	42	↘
45	Riverside	California	53	53	52	20	32	50	↘
46	Buffalo	New York	30	34	47	45	48	43	↘
47	Cincinnati	Ohio	45	36	34	48	42	45	↘
48	Detroit	Michigan	50	9	42	53	52	26	↘
49	Rochester	New York	24	40	44	44	50	49	↘
50	Memphis	Tennessee	38	39	41	50	47	34	↘

AMERICA'S TOP 10 SMALL CITIES

The best-performing principal cities of the metropolitan areas within the United States with populations between 200,000 and one million. Principal cities are defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.



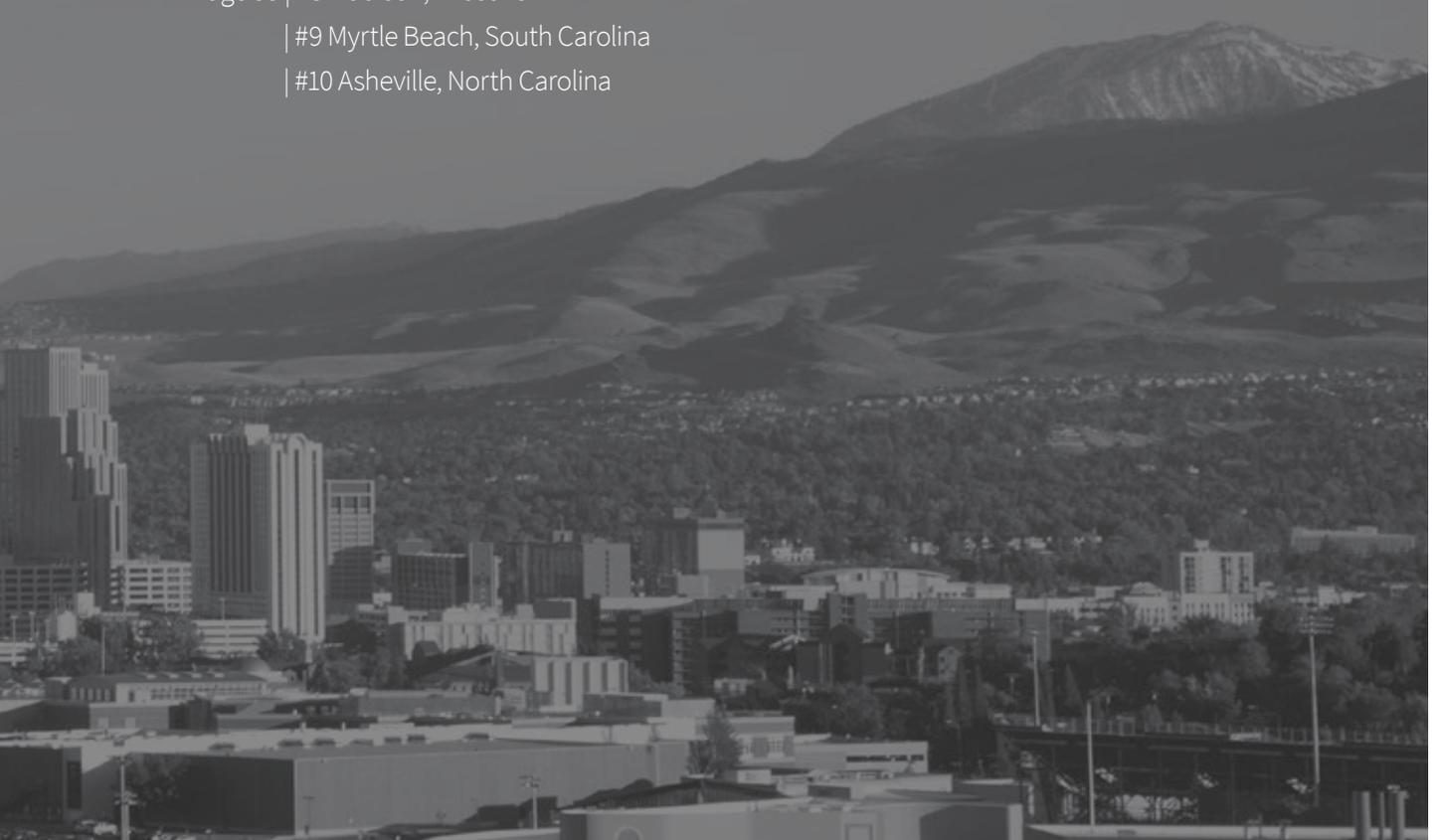
Page 28 | #1 Honolulu, Hawaii

Page 30 | #2 Omaha, Nebraska

Page 31 | #3 Albuquerque, New Mexico
| #4 Charleston, South Carolina

Page 32 | #5 El Paso, Texas
| #6 Reno, Nevada
| #7 Tulsa, Oklahoma

Page 33 | #8 Madison, Wisconsin
| #9 Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
| #10 Asheville, North Carolina



1. HONOLULU

There's the unparalleled natural beauty, of course, but innovative shopping and dining are diversifying America's Best Small City like never before.

POPULATION

CITY: 349,597 | METRO: 986,999

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

1 INSTAGRAM MENTIONS **1** PARKS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

America's Best Small City simply dominated our ranking in 2018.

It's hardly surprising, given that the city is just a few planeloads shy of one million inhabitants (and therefore qualifying as a "large city"). It's also a global vacation destination, visited by almost six million tourists last year.

It ranked first in the nation in our layered Place category, with its verdant knife-edge topography exploding into the blue sky from rolling hills every few miles, creating microclimates and hypnotic scenery. The city rules our Parks & Outdoor Activities subcategory, led by its powdery beaches, some of the best and safest ocean swimming

in the state (often with sea turtles and dolphins!) and the option to head for the emerald Koolau Range before or after work. The parks, trails and beaches—almost all open to the public and accessible year round—rival most cities on the planet. Combine this with the climate, fragrant trade winds and surreal geography (not to mention an ancient history slowly emerging from the stacked lava walls) and you have a city that succumbed to playing by Mother Nature's rules a long time ago.

Given its eye candy, the city also ruled our Promotions category, powered by epic sunset 'grams, braggy Facebook check-ins and breathless TripAdvisor reviews. To say nothing



CHASE O.

HONOLULU'S DIAMOND HEAD VOLCANIC CRATER



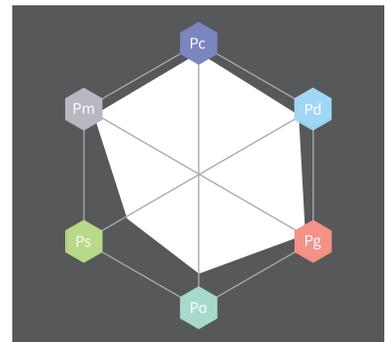
FOUR SEASONS

FOUR SEASONS O'AHU AT KO OLINA



CASEY HORNER

AMERICA'S BEST SMALL CITY, FROM ABOVE



The parks, trails and beaches—almost all open to the public and accessible year round—rival most cities on the planet.

of a committed tourism marketing budget to keep the city's top industry humming.

But the city's third—and strongest—#1 ranking is particularly notable: the Programming category composed of Shopping, Culture, Culinary and Nightlife.

With the best shopping between Orange County and Tokyo, Honolulu is doubling down on the retail experience. The accessible and perpetually innovating Ala Moana—the world's largest open-air shopping center (now with daily hula lessons!)—has been joined by the newly opened Ka Makana Ali'i, making for some healthy competition.

Of course no trip to the city is complete without strolling the refreshed and expanded International Market Place in Waikiki.

Long the shopping high street of paradise, the recently renovated epicenter of high-end retail and reimagined luxury heritage properties just keeps upping the ante, with Michelin-starred chefs and new culinary and nightlife concepts like James Beard award-winning chef Michael Mina's new THE STREET. Or Honolulu-born chef Ed Kenney's Mahina & Sun's.

Closer to downtown, perpetually packed Senia was opened by the crew behind New York's Per Se last year and is a must-stop for the latest riffs on traditional Hawaiian cuisine.

But it's not just hundred-dollar meals and fusion cocktails elevating the culinary scene in Honolulu. There are now more than a half-dozen breweries in town, with Maui Brewing moving in for a piece of the Oahu action. In Chinatown, two of the city's buzziest restaurants, Livestock Tavern and

Lucky Belly, are satisfying locals and coaxing tourists off the Waikiki strip.

The new Lanai @ Ala Moana Center lets curious tourists sample Polynesian exotica while staying air conditioned.

Authenticity and locavorism are table stakes in Honolulu these days, and the city is better for prioritizing sustainability and food security, strengthening the local supply chain, creating thousands of new jobs and—more important to visiting palates—delivering intense, fresh flavours only made possible by farm-to-table that doesn't involve a side trip in a cargo airliner.





THE OMAHA SKYLINE

2. OMAHA

The midwestern business capital lives large while keeping it small.

POPULATION

CITY: 443,072 | METRO: 904,834

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS

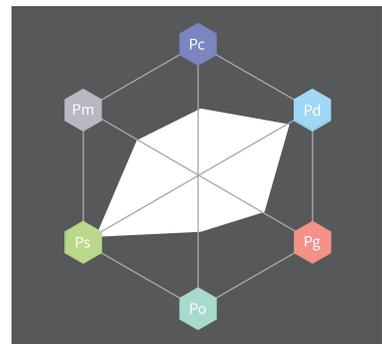
1 NIGHTLIFE **5** RESTAURANTS

Nebraska's largest city has always worked overtime to carve out its place on the banks of the Missouri River in pretty much the middle of the (contiguous) country. Forged by its millennia of human habitation—from its aboriginal crossroads inhabited by people known as “Those Against the Current” to its more recent cattle ranching industry, the area has always nurtured resiliency and independence.

That sense of community-building has slowly, over decades, built Omaha into an economic powerhouse that tops our Prosperity category and is the envy of

small cities everywhere, despite its relative isolation and lack of a coastline.

It boasts the most Fortune 500 companies in the nation—four—among cities with less than a million people. Berkshire Hathaway, Union Pacific Railroad, Peter Kiewit Son's Inc. and (of course) The Mutual of Omaha Companies all call Omaha home. And since economic success of the past paves the way for the future, new companies steadily trickling into the city over the past decade have inspired the moniker of “Silicon Prairie.”



It boasts the most Fortune 500 companies in the nation—four—among cities with less than a million people.

But Omahans work to live, too, as evidenced by the #1 Nightlife and Top 5 Culinary rankings in the country. The fact that most of the city's legendary steaks and midwestern hospitality-fueled bars are all tucked into the Old Market District makes indulging convenient.

Omaha prides itself on its outdoors, as well, and visionary placemaking initiatives in recent years are testament to its design swagger. Its riverfront now boasts the architecturally striking, S-curving Bob Kerrey Bridge. Costing \$22 million and linking Nebraska with Iowa across the river, it is—at 3,000 feet—one of the longest pedestrian bridge projects ever constructed.

Perhaps most important, it is a place to stand, not just cross, and admire the ambition of a city in the heart of the country—and the big skies that have inspired people here for as long as anyone can remember.

3. ALBUQUERQUE

A TV show keeps the tourists coming, while new transit and economic initiatives complement a city that brunches above its weight.

POPULATION
CITY: 556,859 | METRO: 904,486

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
2 MUSEUMS 2 RESTAURANTS

It's been a decade since *Breaking Bad* premiered and five years since its final bow, but the TV show still has a hold on the Southwest metropolis of 550,000 people. But Albuquerque doesn't really need the help.

Fortunately, the city has always prioritized the creation of resources and programming for residents and visitors, and it scores Top 5 in two of our six categories.

It rules our Product ranking—indicative of deep infrastructure and local investment

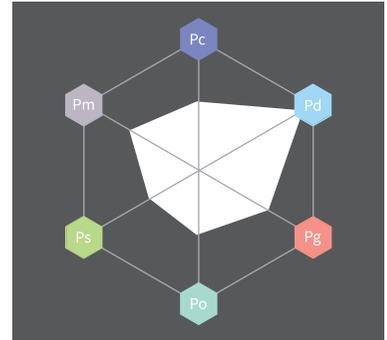
led by a #2 ranking in Museums. More than 20 span indigenous roots, Hispanic culture and even hot air balloons.

It's the second-most cultural small city, stacked with more than 100 galleries, a symphony orchestra, theaters and even an opera scene that's getting national attention.

But "The Land of Enchantment"—a moniker long associated with the elemental beauty of the desert mountains and their mineral deposits—is not content with its good vibes and second-best Culinary scene in the country for small cities (amazingly, only behind Honolulu).

The city is aggressively recruiting entrepreneurs and young families to improve on its middling #68 ranking in our Prosperity category, recently launching a downtown innovation and research hub called Innovate ABQ. And since every business hub needs tenants, six individual business accelerators, each designed for a specific industry, were also launched.

The rubber has also finally hit the road on the city's extensive investments in growing its downtown economy by way of an electric bus rapid transit system called the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (appropriately, ART for short).



YES, ALBUQUERQUE HAS A BALLOONING MUSEUM

4. CHARLESTON

The Holy City continues to draw pilgrims from all over the world, propelled by global travel media and the promise of legendary Southern hospitality from another time.

POPULATION
CITY: 129,888 | METRO: 728,271

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
1 MUSEUMS 3 PARKS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Charleston, South Carolina, is at once an easy yet kinetic seaside American treasure, punctuated by European elegance and macaroon-colored antebellum mansions by day and all kinds of revelry after sunset. It's the kind of place where a strong connection

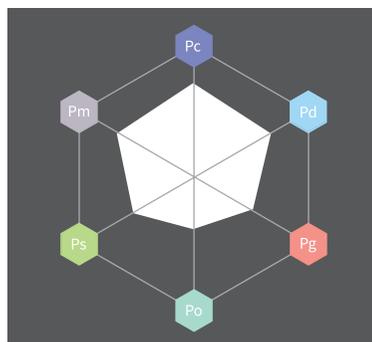
to the past lives in the hearts of locals—it graces the facades of homes, it is apparent in regional traditions, it punctuates the vernacular and seasons the food. Here is a city that remains defiantly indifferent to fashions, fads or trends—confident that the rest of the world will eventually catch up.

The city owes its reputation as an icon of Southern architecture and general intoxicating sense of place partly to the centuries-old virtue that buildings don't have to be tall

to make a bold statement. They can be grandiose or candy colored or oddly shaped and still add to the area's charm—neatly beneath the church steeples. For the past 80 years, Charleston's zoning rules and its Board of Architectural Review have helped formalize and preserve the principle of holding new buildings to the standards set by their historic predecessors.

Unsurprisingly, the Holy City ranks #2 in our Place category, which tracks a city's Crime Rate, Air Quality, Weather, Neighborhoods & Landmarks, and Parks & Outdoor Activities.

A beguiling fusion of the built environment and coastal transition landscapes—golden islands, channels and swamps—Charleston is one of North America's most architecturally significant destinations. Wander the streets and you'll catch glimpses of another time: flickering copper gas carriage lanterns, ornate hand-wrought ironwork, and hitching posts used by horse-drawn carriages.



5. EL PASO

A border town creates a prosperous sanctuary.

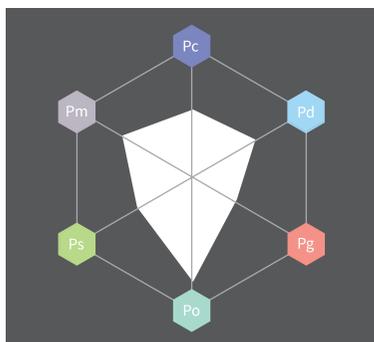
POPULATION
CITY: 678,058 | METRO: 837,073

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
3 GOOGLE TRENDS 3 RESTAURANTS

We're all going to start hearing a lot more about El Paso very soon. Fortified by its cowboy roots, it's tapping into local pride by enticing scattered ex-residents back home while embracing its border-city advantage. With 80% of its citizens Latino and a #7 ranking in our People category, with the fourth-most U.S. residents who speak a foreign language—overwhelmingly Spanish—at home, it doesn't get more Tex-Mex than here.

Safe (the "Safest City in America!" according to Mayor Dee Margo), progressive and increasingly basking in the fruits of its 2012 \$500-million bond initiative that funded a Children's Museum, new arena, cultural center and more—all downtown—the city is also cooking literally. It ranks #3 in our Culinary subcategory, trailing only Honolulu and Albuquerque.

The city is tapping history, too. "The city mothballed its streetcar system in the 1970s," says Destination El Paso CEO Bryan Crowe. "We're bringing back the perfectly preserved streetcars to service our newly expanded medical schools." Good thing that this future hot spot is tripling its hotel-room capacity in the coming months.



6. RENO

A casino town goes all in on art, culture and innovation.

POPULATION
CITY: 237,121 | METRO: 443,855

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
3 CONVENTIONS 4 ATTRACTIONS

That buzz you hear in Reno? It's no longer just the neon on the city's iconic "Biggest Little City in the World" sign, but the sound of Tesla's gigafactory battery plant drawing tech companies from all over. As part of the deal with Nevada, the company received 980 acres of free land and more than \$1 billion in tax breaks. Apple, Amazon and Alphabet have moved to the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center (TRI), one of the largest industrial parks in the world. Others are beating a path to Reno's wide-open door.

The investment has the most sought-after talent on the planet right now—diverse, highly educated creative/knowledge workers—close behind. Most can't believe their luck: the city on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada is located 30 minutes from crystal-clear Lake Tahoe to the west, with Yosemite close, too. Housing is also affordable (for now). Not content with just advanced manufacturing, Reno is also becoming a living lab for public transit. The University of Nevada and electric bus company Proterra are reinventing mobility tech. And Hyperloop is apparently being considered for cargo. Big Little City indeed.



7. TULSA

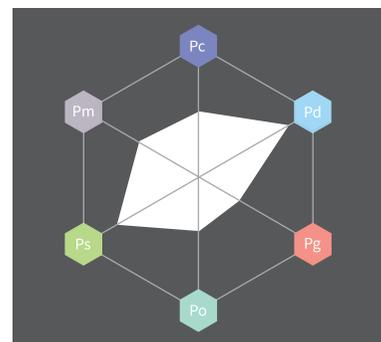
An energy legacy today powers art, music and innovation.

POPULATION
CITY: 399,906 | METRO: 970,603

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
2 GOOGLE TRENDS 2 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

Tulsa was the Oil Capital of the World. Today, the city on the Arkansas River is becoming what *The Washington Post* calls "a musical Mecca"—one that's contributed to the city's #4 ranking in our Product category, which tracks institutions (in this case, Museums). By 2019, the \$20-million, 6,000-object Bob Dylan Archive—with memorabilia like guitars, costumes, studio sessions and notebooks (so many notebooks)—opens near the Guthrie Center, itself devoted to Dylan hero and folk singer Woody Guthrie. The latest buzz has the Johnny Cash archive locating here, too.

The city's relative housing affordability, small business density and #2 ranking for Prosperity among small U.S. cities has also drawn Millennials looking to make their mark and have a backyard. The city is consistently mentioned as one of the largest draws of young talent in the nation. The old money is helping invest in engaging the new. The George Kaiser Family Foundation—long a regional benefactor—just helped christen The Gathering Place, a 100-acre, \$450-million riverside park designed, like the best Dylan tune, to undo urban divisions of geography, race and class.



8. MADISON

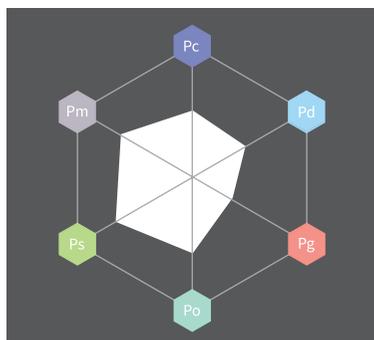
Some cities win the lottery. This oft-cited example of livability, job creation and Millennial magnetism is no exception.

POPULATION
CITY: 246,034 | METRO: 634,269

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 5 GOOGLE TRENDS

The city's enviable position as both capital of Wisconsin and the site of the state's largest university certainly fuels its #6 ranking in Prosperity among small cities in the nation, including Top 10 for lowest unemployment rate and #11 for Fortune 500 companies. A hive of health care, IT and manufacturing powered by pipelines of talent out of the University of Wisconsin creates a symbiotic, sustainable relationship between academic infrastructure and economic performance.

Tucked between two large lakes, surrounded by 260 parks, lakes, rivers, beaches and trails everywhere, the city boasts triple the national average for parkland per resident. Locals and visitors may be out enjoying all that natural beauty, but that's not keeping them from checking in on Facebook, sharing and tagging on Instagram, and writing reviews of their experiences. All that online and social media activity has propelled Madison to #4 in our Promotion category, which looks at the quantity of stories, references and recommendations shared about a city online.



9. MYRTLE BEACH

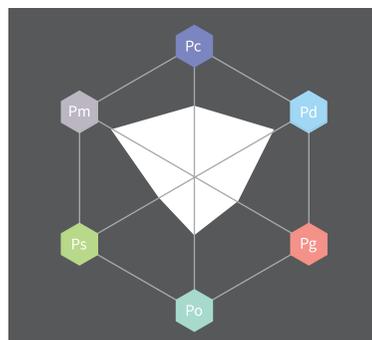
Come on in! The water in Myrtle Beach is fine—and so is the FDI.

POPULATION
CITY: 30,106 | METRO: 419,585

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
2 PROMOTION 2 ATTRACTIONS

Myrtle Beach has been a playground, sanctuary and resource since the Waccamaw and Winyah Indians called the area's 60 miles of shore home. When the Intracoastal Waterway was established in 1936 and the town was incorporated, an all-American getaway was born. Today, 17 million visitors climb aboard 54 direct daily flights from around the country to frolic in calm waters, experience Ripley's Odditorium and feast on a medieval dinner. The new 1.2-mile-long Oceanfront Boardwalk and Promenade facilitates walking off the excess. Myrtle Beach is a funhouse—in the water and out. All of which explains its #8 ranking for Product among small U.S. cities, which measures attractions, connectivity and other infrastructure.

If the weather is almost always pleasant, the business climate is even better. One of the fastest-growing small cities in the country and already home to 25 global companies, Myrtle Beach is also Top 10 for foreign direct investment. The Conway-Horry County Airport is working to further position the city as a global hub strategically located halfway between New York and Miami and between the port cities of Charleston, SC, and Wilmington, NC.



10. ASHEVILLE

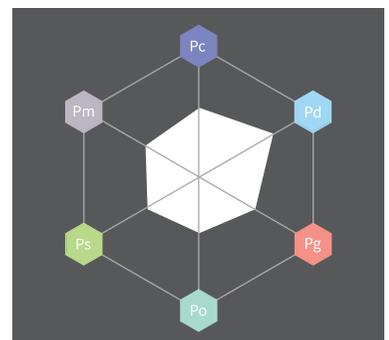
An arts and music city brings uncommon spirit and smarts.

POPULATION
CITY: 87,531 | METRO: 441,724

HIGHLIGHTED RANKINGS
2 MUSEUMS 5 SHOPPING

Nestled between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains, Asheville celebrates the boho and artsy with events, festivals and good times that rank it Top 5 for Programming. A new greenway network is part of the city's River Arts District revitalization. Asheville also nurtures musicians, offering what artists of all ages crave in a city—affordability, nightlife and local beer. Live music born of the region's bluegrass roots harmonizes with new talent to the tune of \$383 million in the region's tourism economy, according to the Economic Development Coalition.

With more breweries per capita (25 in town) than any other American city, "Beer City USA" has a food scene to match, with James Beard nominees Katie Button at Cúrate and Nightbell, John Fleer at Rhubarb, and Elliott Moss at Buxton Hall Barbecue. But Asheville works for its supper. Satellite campuses of the University of North Carolina at Asheville and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College support entrepreneurs. The county leads the national effort to pursue climate science: engineers and scientists at The Collider, Asheville's newly opened climate innovation center, are defining the future of urban resilience for cities.



AMERICA'S 50 BEST SMALL CITIES



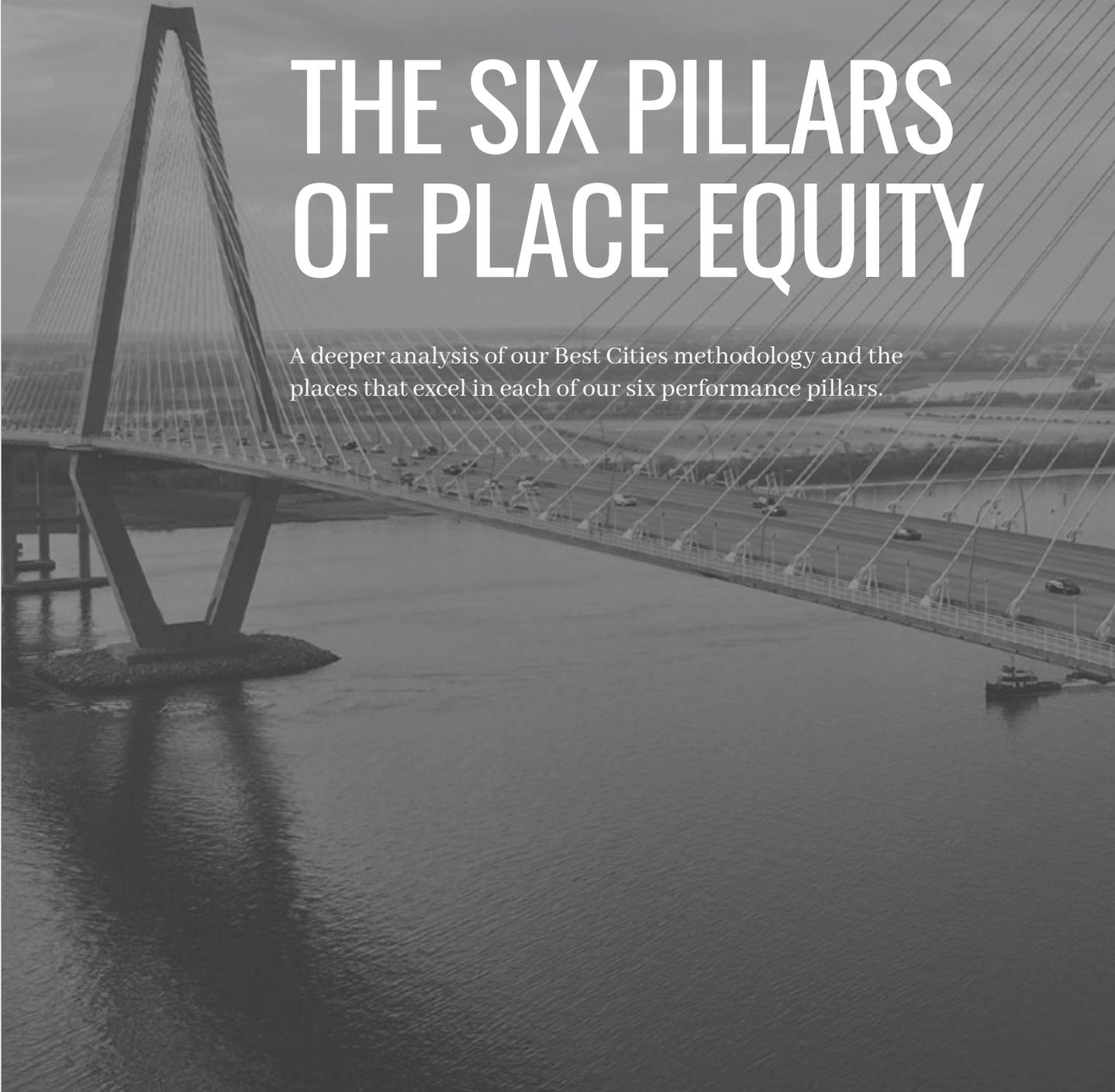


Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
1	Honolulu	Hawaii	1	2	1	9	12	1	
2	Omaha	Nebraska	37	5	3	61	1	9	
3	Albuquerque	New Mexico	32	1	2	43	68	6	
4	Charleston	South Carolina	2	11	4	82	26	3	
5	El Paso	Texas	52	24	10	7	35	5	
6	Reno	Nevada	31	3	8	34	75	8	
7	Tulsa	Oklahoma	55	4	12	71	2	10	
8	Madison	Wisconsin	38	33	13	27	6	4	
9	Myrtle Beach	South Carolina	14	8	9	51	134	2	
10	Asheville	North Carolina	28	14	5	62	57	12	
11	Colorado Springs	Colorado	45	12	7	76	53	11	
12	Anchorage	Alaska	7	9	21	58	13	30	
13	Naples	Florida	3	69	23	33	3	34	
14	Boise City	Idaho	19	25	19	78	4	17	
15	Savannah	Georgia	6	15	6	129	147	7	
16	Durham	North Carolina	125	13	53	24	19	38	
17	Knoxville	Tennessee	68	6	11	123	119	14	
18	Ann Arbor	Michigan	71	99	47	8	22	21	
19	Atlantic City	New Jersey	102	18	37	10	159	16	
20	Lincoln	Nebraska	42	17	32	80	20	37	
21	Boulder	Colorado	8	120	30	13	23	32	
22	Wichita	Kansas	69	21	24	81	21	36	
23	Little Rock	Arkansas	92	28	41	86	8	26	
24	Greenville	South Carolina	74	16	22	68	71	31	
25	Chattanooga	Tennessee	62	19	18	137	52	18	

Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
26	Des Moines	Iowa	73	27	28	83	10	52	◇
27	Corpus Christi	Texas	10	40	36	56	37	23	◇
28	Lexington	Kentucky	95	35	17	57	49	20	◇
29	Green Bay	Wisconsin	54	10	42	104	62	40	◇
30	Greensboro	North Carolina	108	38	16	60	34	28	◇
31	Portland	Maine	25	61	20	32	41	51	◇
32	Winston-Salem	North Carolina	122	44	35	65	9	48	◇
33	Fresno	California	123	67	39	20	138	13	◇
34	McAllen	Texas	53	94	105	2	86	90	◇
35	New Haven	Connecticut	133	23	62	23	142	41	◇
36	Sioux Falls	South Dakota	36	32	57	98	7	65	◇
37	Columbia	South Carolina	33	37	26	92	120	19	◇
38	Spokane	Washington	78	36	15	117	89	22	◇
39	Wilmington	North Carolina	18	50	14	91	102	39	◇
40	Charlottesville	Virginia	23	82	72	29	16	85	◇
41	Laredo	Texas	57	132	123	5	61	93	◇
42	Rochester	Minnesota	24	73	97	35	15	92	◇
43	Toledo	Ohio	120	39	25	158	17	27	◇
44	Fargo	North Dakota	16	64	87	88	11	76	◇
45	Lubbock	Texas	26	54	51	93	40	45	◇
46	Santa Maria	California	63	159	149	6	54	59	◇
47	Bakersfield	California	136	106	54	25	77	29	◇
48	Pensacola	Florida	27	43	31	124	106	33	◇
49	Fort Wayne	Indiana	109	29	49	111	33	47	◇
50	Amarillo	Texas	43	51	73	77	18	71	◇

THE SIX PILLARS OF PLACE EQUITY

A deeper analysis of our Best Cities methodology and the places that excel in each of our six performance pillars.



Page 40 | Place

The perceived quality of a city's natural and built environments

Page 42 | Product

A city's key institutions, attractions and infrastructure

Page 44 | Programming

The arts, culture, attractions and culinary scene in a city

Page 46 | People

The educational attainment and diversity of a city

Page 48 | Prosperity

A city's employment, median household income and corporate head offices

Page 50 | Promotion

The quantity of stories, references and recommendations shared online about a city

Place

Our most layered category quantifies a city's elusive sense of place.

To score a city within our Place category, we evaluate the perceived quality of its natural and built environment, specifically in the subcategories of Air Quality, Weather, Crime Rate, Neighborhoods & Landmarks, Parks & Outdoor Activities, and Commute Time to Work.

Both the natural and the built environment of a city are key factors in shaping our perception of a destination. From how

often the sun shines to the air quality to the safety of the streets, several readily measurable, often-cited factors influence our perceptions of a city.

Less easy to quantify are the relative natural beauty and the quality of the built environment in a city or destination.

That's why we consider placemaking, an approach to urban design that considers the built environment as a vehicle for creating a sense of place and fostering community within a destination. Whether through the beauty of their natural environments or urban designs, exceptional physical

Both the natural and the built environment of a city are key factors in shaping our perception of a destination.

places exist in destinations ranging from metropolitan centers to suburbs and islands.

To gauge the relative attractiveness of a city's placemaking, Resonance identifies the number of Very Good and Excellent local- and traveler-recommended neighborhoods, landmarks, parks and outdoor activities on TripAdvisor for each destination.



THE WALKABLE NAPLES WATERFRONT



Naples

The Place category is our deepest and most complex, so we tend to surface cities that don't register high on the overall ranking yet excel in the Place category as outliers among the overall winners. And Naples, which ranks #3 among small cities for Place, has much to offer, despite finishing out of the Top 10 overall.

Considerably sleepier than its Atlantic counterpart, the Gulf Coast is a place to slow down and relax. Cultured, chic and set at the edge of one of the most serene beaches in southwest Florida, Naples is welcoming and always up for packed itineraries. The city comes in at #2 for Outdoor Activities, with surfing, fishing and all kinds of on-the-water tours (mangrove and manatee eco-tours, anyone?).

Its solid Neighborhoods and Crime Rate rankings also powered its strong sense of place.



Top 10 Large Cities for Place

1. **NEW YORK**
2. **SAN DIEGO**
3. **LAS VEGAS**
4. **VIRGINIA BEACH**
5. **MIAMI**
6. **TAMPA**
7. **LOS ANGELES**
8. **AUSTIN**
9. **SAN FRANCISCO**
10. **PORTLAND, OR**

Top 10 Small Cities for Place

1. **HONOLULU**
2. **CHARLESTON, SC**
3. **NAPLES**
4. **TYLER, TX**
5. **LAKE HAVASU CITY, AZ**
6. **SAVANNAH, GA**
7. **ANCHORAGE, AK**
8. **BOULDER, CO**
9. **YUMA, AZ**
10. **CORPUS CHRISTI, TX**

Factors considered in each destination's overall Place ranking are...

- Average air quality index¹
- Average number of sunny days²
- Crime rate³
- Mean travel time to work⁴
- Number of quality neighborhoods and landmarks recommended by locals and visitors⁵
- Number of quality parks and outdoor activities recommended by locals and visitors⁵

1. United States Environmental Protection Agency
 2. National Climatic Data Center
 3. Federal Bureau of Investigation
 4. American Community Survey 2012-16
 5. TripAdvisor.com
 6. TripAdvisor.com

Product



THE KNOXVILLE SKYLINE



A ranking of the “hardware” of a city—often the most difficult metric for cities to get right.

Our Product category studies a city’s key institutions, attractions and infrastructure, including the subcategories of University Rankings, Airport Connectivity, Convention Center, Attractions, Museums, Sports Teams, and Housing Affordability.

A city’s infrastructure and institutions shape its identity via the quantity, quality

and reputation of “products” such as institutions of higher learning, museums, convention centers and airports. University rankings and the number of institutional buildings can have considerable impact on reputation and are often top of mind when it comes to what outsiders know of and understand about a city or destination.

Expensive and difficult to develop and maintain, exceptional, recognizable “products” are often found only in large cosmopolitan cities.



Instead of playing second fiddle to nearby Asheville and Chattanooga, Knoxville is finding its own groove to become an increasingly prominent destination for foodies, outdoor enthusiasts and craft-beer fans.

Knoxville

A scintillating fusion of small-town charm and big-city amenities has helped propel Knoxville to the #6 spot in our Product category, despite an overall finish of #17 among small cities.

Instead of playing second fiddle to nearby Asheville and Chattanooga, Knoxville is finding its own groove to become an increasingly prominent destination for foodies, outdoor enthusiasts and craft-beer fans. Its location on the banks of the Tennessee River, just north of the Smoky Mountains, also helps to capture the hearts of romantic souls drawn to riverfront dining and a lively nightlife.

Knoxville is also home to the University of Tennessee and its rabid college-football fan base, who paint the town orange on game nights when they pack Neyland Stadium. No surprise, then, that this small city lands at #1 for Attractions and #2 for Sports Teams—two subcategories that fuel its impressive Product ranking.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Top 10 Large Cities for Product

1. CHICAGO
2. NEW YORK
3. LOS ANGELES
4. LAS VEGAS
5. HOUSTON
6. ORLANDO
7. PHILADELPHIA
8. DALLAS
9. DETROIT
10. ATLANTA

Top 10 Small Cities for Product

1. ALBUQUERQUE
2. HONOLULU
3. RENO
4. TULSA
5. OMAHA
6. KNOXVILLE, TN
7. HARRISBURG, PA
8. MYRTLE BEACH
9. ANCHORAGE
10. GREEN BAY, WI

Factors considered in each destination's overall Product ranking are...

- Housing affordability¹
- Number of direct destinations served by airport²
- Number of major league sports teams (MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, MLS)³
- Number of quality attractions recommended by locals and visitors⁴
- Number of quality museums and fine arts institutions recommended by locals and visitors⁵
- Ranking of top local university⁶
- Size of convention center⁷

1. American Community Survey 2012-16
 2. Google Flights
 3. Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, Major League Soccer
 4. TripAdvisor.com
 5. TripAdvisor.com
 6. U.S. News & World Report
 7. Official Convention Center Website

Programming



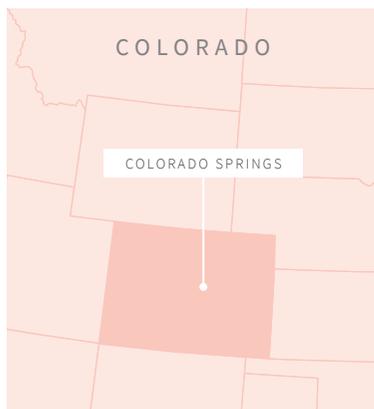
THE TOP OF THE WORLD RODEO

This category measures the experiential pillars of a great visit: food, shows, shopping and nightlife.

If product is the “hardware” of cities and destinations, the mosaic of cultural programming and lifestyle experiences they offer is the “software” that makes them run—including the subcategories of Shopping, Culture, Culinary and Nightlife. While individually insignificant, the sum of programming initiatives fosters a community’s connection to place. To gauge the relative attractiveness of a city’s programming, Resonance identifies the number of Very Good and Excellent recommendations of culinary and cultural experiences on TripAdvisor.



DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS



Colorado Springs

Although known best for outdoor bounty at the edge of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado Springs today is a Programming powerhouse, led by its food scene and culture. Ranking #7 among America’s small cities in the category, the city scored an even more impressive #4 in the subcategories of Culinary and Culture. Given the power of food in drawing visitors and residents, this is momentum that’s worth pushing. Fortunately, the city—or more accurately, its citizenry—is doing just that.

Over the past two years, chefs from Colorado Springs have been relative mainstays on the Food Network and shows like *Chopped*, *Cooks vs. Cons* and *Diners*.

Back on the ground, what used to be a chain-dominated restaurant-scape has pivoted dramatically with new arrivals and old networks. Today, the meat served at independent restaurants is, more often than not, raised locally and the long-standing brewing tradition is



being pushed by uppity startups. Even the *springs* in Colorado Springs are being revered and marketed for their terror.

It all comes together during mornings at Ivywild School, a local community marketplace for groceries or coffee to go, and during evenings at new ramen spots—or that new Jamaican place—that seem to open monthly. Not surprisingly, the hot Culinary scene has improved by six spots over last year, helping Colorado Springs improve to #11 overall for small American cities. Next year, we’re betting on a Top 10 finish.

Top 10 Large Cities for Programming

1. NEW YORK 
2. CHICAGO 
3. LOS ANGELES 
4. LAS VEGAS 
5. SAN FRANCISCO 
6. HOUSTON 
7. SEATTLE 
8. PHILADELPHIA 
9. SAN DIEGO 
10. PORTLAND, OR 

Top 10 Small Cities for Programming

1. HONOLULU 
2. ALBUQUERQUE 
3. OMAHA 
4. CHARLESTON, SC 
5. ASHEVILLE 
6. SAVANNAH, GA 
7. COLORADO SPRINGS 
8. RENO 
9. MYRTLE BEACH 
10. EL PASO 

Factors considered in each destination’s overall Programming ranking are...

- Number of quality culture and performing arts experiences recommended by locals and visitors¹
- Number of quality nightlife experiences recommended by locals and visitors²
- Number of quality restaurants and culinary experiences recommended by locals and visitors³
- Number of quality shopping experiences recommended by locals and visitors⁴

1. TripAdvisor.com
 2. TripAdvisor.com
 3. TripAdvisor.com
 4. TripAdvisor.com

People



HUMAN CAPITAL AND A GROWING SPACE INDUSTRY POWER BROWNSVILLE INTO THE FUTURE

The more diverse a city's population, the more it produces global ideas... on a local scale.

Human capital is a city's most valuable resource. To evaluate the relative strength of human capital from one city to the next, we consider the diversity of the city's population, which is of proven importance when it comes to attracting talent. To measure the relative diversity of a city's people, Resonance looks at data on the percentage of the population born in foreign countries, post-secondary education among residents, and languages spoken at home.

Brownsville

Few U.S. cities are integrated with another country as much as Brownsville is with Mexico. And as you'd expect, a century of passport-less border crossing (until recently) had paved the way for an interconnected, symbiotic movement of people and goods.

But, like most things, it all changed after 9/11. Today, verification, holding areas and delays—while no more complicated than other border crossings—are still a far cry from a few decades ago, when parades celebrating both U.S. and Mexican holidays would start in Brownsville, cross the international bridge that spans the

Rio Grande and end in the Mexican city of Matamoros (or vice versa).

Today, Brownsville's ranking of #1 for our People category—comprising a #2 ranking in the Languages Spoken at Home (see pg. 6) subcategory and #5 for Foreign-born Residents—has more ominous drivers.

Mexico's War on Drugs and the escalation of competition for a drug-smuggling route that runs right through Matamoros have pushed Mexican nationals with the means to relocate to Brownsville. Safely away from the Zetas and Gulf Cartel in Brownsville (which, like other border cities, claims to



be the safest in the U.S. but ranks #42 in our research), new arrivals—like those for centuries before them—get about their business rebuilding the life they had across the Rio Grande. Given the proximity, the occasionally audible gunfight or graphic news story provides a grim reminder of the life they left behind.

Despite its #53 overall ranking for America's small cities, Brownsville's Mexican-ness is an opportunity to shape the often misguided North American immigration dialogue.

Few U.S. cities are integrated with another country as much as Brownsville is with Mexico.

And the city is pivotal for extra-terrestrial endeavours as well. Elon Musk's SpaceX is building the world's first commercial orbital launch site in Boca Chica Beach near the city. Twelve annual launches of Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy rockets are planned—and the site is also building an aerospace cluster in the Brownsville Borderplex, creating hundreds of jobs in the process—and likely thousands long term. Brownsville Economic Development reports that "local school districts are focusing on STEM programs, and technical colleges and university have developed aerospace, space and astronomy departments in order to develop a talent pipeline for companies in this industry."



Top 10 Large Cities for People

1. MIAMI
2. SAN FRANCISCO
3. SAN JOSE
4. LOS ANGELES
5. NEW YORK
6. BOSTON
7. SAN DIEGO
8. PROVIDENCE
9. HOUSTON
10. SEATTLE

Top 10 Small Cities for People

1. BROWNSVILLE, TX
2. MCALLEN, TX
3. OXNARD, CA
4. SALINAS, CA
5. LAREDO, TX
6. SANTA MARIA, CA
7. EL PASO
8. ANN ARBOR, MI
9. HONOLULU
10. ATLANTIC CITY

Factors considered in each destination's overall People ranking are...

- Percentage of foreign-born residents¹
- Cultural diversity; percentage of the population that speaks a language other than English²
- Population with a bachelor's degree or higher³

1. American Community Survey 2012-16
 2. American Community Survey 2012-16
 3. American Community Survey 2012-16

Prosperity



THE IDAHO STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

A well-paid, economically secure citizenry facilitates stewardship and innovation.

The great author and urbanist Jane Jacobs defined cities as places that produce wealth.

If they cannot generate wealth, they cannot sustain the employment and quality of life needed to attract and retain people. In general, beliefs about the wealth and prosperity of a city are informed by statistics such as the income of citizens, and they are

shaped by the presence or absence of large, recognizable corporations—despite the fact that startups and innovation increasingly drive a city's development and economic growth.

Yet these stats don't tell the whole story: unemployment and household income are of growing concern in measuring quality of place. Resonance ranks a city against our Prosperity category by its performance in the subcategories of Household Income, Fortune 500 Companies and Unemployment.



THE FAST-RISING BOISE DOWNTOWN CORE



In general, beliefs about the wealth and prosperity of a city are informed by statistics such as the income of citizens, and they are shaped by the presence or absence of large, recognizable corporations.



Boise

What's the fastest growing city in America? It's not Seattle, Austin or Dallas. According to Moody's Analytics, it's the sub-250,000 city of Boise, Idaho. The news has inspired articles and think-pieces calling Boise the next Portland, Oregon, and drawing comparisons of its tech investment, powered by the skyrocketing growth of Micron Technology, to Austin of the North. Our research reveals that, in addition to relative housing affordability and airport connectivity, Boise performs very well in our Prosperity category—ranking #4 among U.S. cities with populations under one million, behind only Omaha, Tulsa and Naples. While Median Household Income is rising, it's Boise's #5 ranking for Fortune 500 companies that makes it a talent-magnet for plentiful jobs at places like the Micron-fueled tech ecosystem, medical centers, Boise State University, HP Boise Cascade and Albertson's. Boise may have finished #14 overall, but it's an impressive six-spot improvement over last year. Even more notable is its 11-spot rise for Prosperity. Those kinds of numbers are no small potatoes.

Top 10 Large Cities for Prosperity

- 1. NEW YORK
- 2. SAN FRANCISCO
- 3. SEATTLE
- 4. SAN JOSE
- 5. AUSTIN
- 6. DENVER
- 7. VIRGINIA BEACH
- 8. WASHINGTON
- 9. DALLAS
- 10. MINNEAPOLIS

Top 10 Small Cities for Prosperity

- 1. OMAHA
- 2. TULSA
- 3. NAPLES
- 4. BOISE, ID
- 5. CEDAR RAPIDS, IA
- 6. MADISON, WI
- 7. SIOUX FALLS, SD
- 8. LITTLE ROCK, AR
- 9. WINSTON-SALEM, NC
- 10. DES MOINES, IA

Factors considered in each destination's overall Prosperity ranking are...

- Employment: unemployment rate¹
- Economy: number of Fortune 500 corporate headquarters²
- Standard of Living: median household income³

1. American Community Survey 2012-16
 2. Fortune Magazine
 3. American Community Survey 2012-16

Promotion

A city's ability to tell its story (and help visitors do the same) depends on how it incents and rewards sharing of experience by locals and visitors.

The amount and frequency of media coverage, online articles, references and place-based recommendations influence our perception of cities, whether the news is good or bad. While larger economic

centers receive the most attention, effective promotion and communication for cities can have an outsized impact on perception: medium cities like Savannah, Charleston and New Orleans command more attention than their size alone would merit. Today, residents, businesses and visitors promote a city to the world more than city marketers or chambers of commerce. But cities themselves still have an important role to play in developing and managing the ever-growing numbers of communication and media channels.

Successful management fosters an integrated omnichannel experience and creates consistent and aligned messaging that can encourage investment, development and visitation. Resonance ranks a city's Promotion performance against its quantity of stories, references and recommendations shared online about a city, including the subcategories of Google Search Results, Google Trends, Facebook Check-ins, Instagram Hashtags and TripAdvisor Reviews.



SAVANNAH'S HISTORIC STREETScape



Savannah

Despite finishing #15 among America’s small cities in 2018, Savannah landed at #7 in our Promotions subcategory. Impressive for a city of 136,286. So what’s it doing right—other than claiming the title of America’s Most Haunted City?

For starters, VisitSavannah.com, an interactive website that has only improved with time. It now offers maps, trip ideas and special offers, direct accommodations booking, and user-generated reviews of restaurants, attractions and special events.

The website, which incorporates the best of social media, makes visiting third-party sites such as Google, Travelocity and Priceline unnecessary. Facebook and Twitter feeds are also integrated on the site, as well as Yelp and TripAdvisor reviews.

“You can plan your whole itinerary without leaving the site,” says Joseph Marinelli, president of Visit Savannah. It’s working.

The city scores Top 10 in TripAdvisor Reviews (an impressive #2), Facebook Check-ins and Google Trends.

Almost 14 million visitors vacation in Savannah annually and, with an occupancy rate of about 75% in 2015, the hotel industry continues to expand, with cranes joining the historic steeples in a city discovered by international and domestic travelers looking for new stories.

Top 10 Large Cities for Promotion

- 1. NEW YORK
- 2. LOS ANGELES
- 3. CHICAGO
- 4. LAS VEGAS
- 5. SAN FRANCISCO
- 6. MIAMI
- 7. ORLANDO
- 8. WASHINGTON
- 9. SAN DIEGO
- 10. HOUSTON

Top 10 Small Cities for Promotion

- 1. HONOLULU
- 2. MYRTLE BEACH
- 3. CHARLESTON, SC
- 4. MADISON, WI
- 5. EL PASO
- 6. ALBUQUERQUE
- 7. SAVANNAH
- 8. RENO
- 9. OMAHA
- 10. TULSA

Factors considered in each destination’s overall Promotion ranking are...

- Number of Facebook check-ins¹
- Number of Google search results for each city²
- Number of TripAdvisor reviews for each city³
- Most Instagramed city⁴
- Popularity on Google Trends in the past 12 months⁵

1. Facebook
 2. Google
 3. TripAdvisor.com
 4. Instagram
 5. Google Trends

We hope you enjoyed this sample of our insight and expertise.

HERE'S HOW RESONANCE CAN HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR CITY



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Resonance helps countries, cities, communities and resorts understand market trends, assess strengths and weaknesses, engage local communities, plan for the future, and create branding in order to realize their full economic potential. We recognize that tourism, economic development and urban planning are intimately interconnected, and our strategies offer research and roadmaps that connect the three. By doing so, we help ensure that the growth of tourism not only brings economic benefits to a community, but enhances quality of life for residents as well.

Consumer Research

Destination Assessments

Scenario Planning & Forecasting

Destination Development Strategy

Tourism Master Plans

Marketing Strategy

Public Relations & Community Engagement



REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Resonance specializes in complex mixed-use developments in both urban and resort environments. Major mixed-use developments often redefine a neighborhood or destination and must, therefore, engage and communicate with a diverse range of stakeholders and audiences—be they prospective home buyers, renters or commercial tenants. Working with developers and their design teams, we help define and articulate a vision for developments, then communicate it through community engagement, branding, marketing and placemaking that resonates with all desired audiences.

Consumer Research

Development Strategy

Branding

Marketing Strategy

Placemaking

Public Relations & Community Engagement

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Effective economic development is a powerful blend of tourism, talent attraction, urban planning and far beyond. Our economic development strategies offer a roadmap that links myriad factors—and by doing so, connects neighborhoods, cities and regions with current and future talent, investors, visitors and residents. Our proprietary data and innovative research help economic development organizations understand and prioritize authentic opportunities, create competitive identities, meaningfully engage communities and plan for the future to realize their full economic potential.

Performance Benchmarking

Economic Development Strategy

Marketing Strategy

Public Relations & Communications

RESONANCE

Vancouver
801 - 602 W Hastings St
Vancouver, BC V6B 1P2
P +1.604.681.0804
E info@resonanceco.com

New York
110 East 25th
New York, NY 10010
P +1.646.233.1383
E info@resonanceco.com

California
120 Newport Center Dr
Newport Beach, CA 92660
P +1.949.887.4476
E info@resonanceco.com



@ResonanceCo
ResonanceCo.com