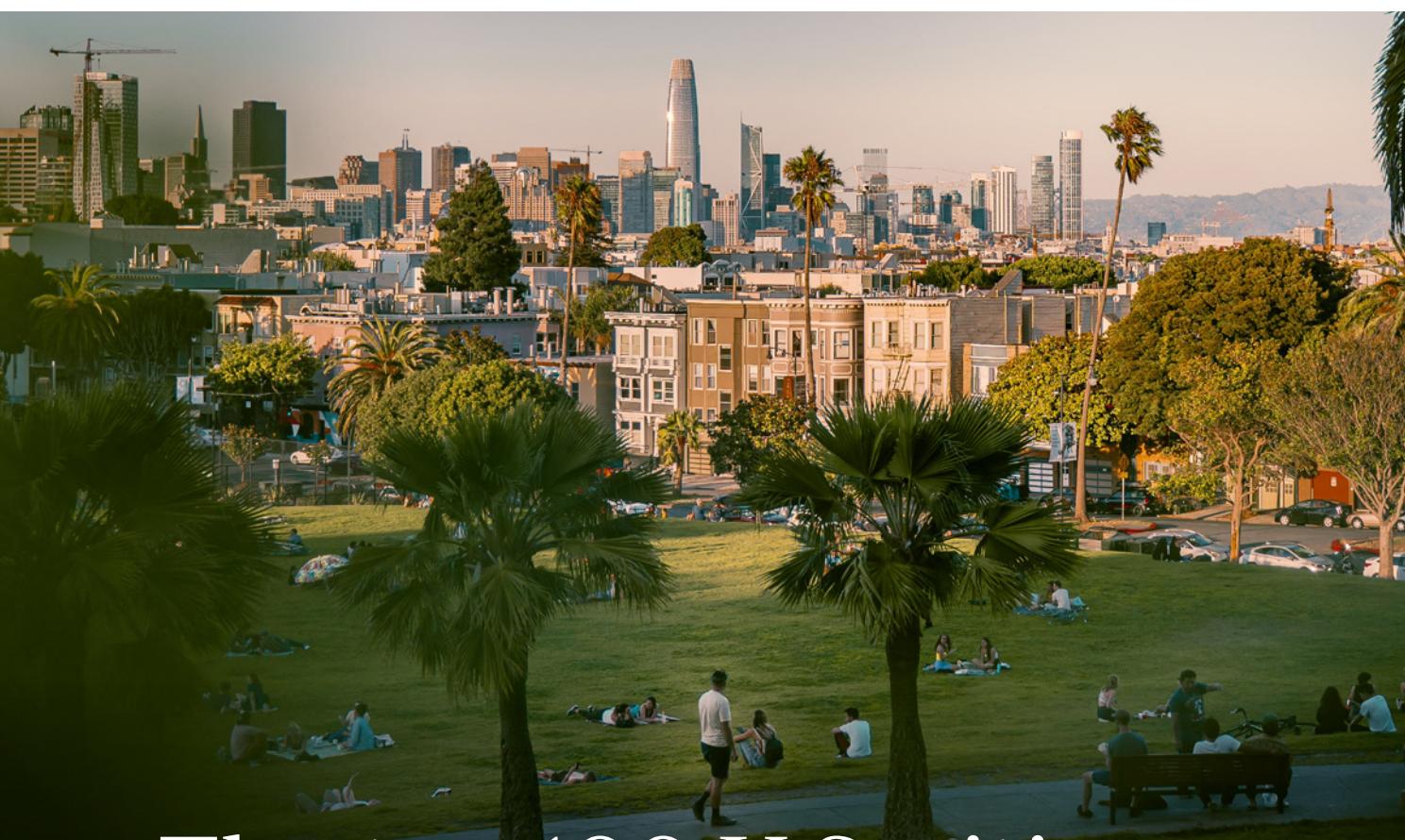


America's

BEST CITIES

A RANKING OF U.S. PLACE EQUITY

2020



The top 100 U.S. cities to live, work and visit

The Performance of America's Best Cities: The Methodology – 06

America's Top 100 Cities Profiles – 08

America's Best Cities Performance by Category – 52



BESTCITIES.ORG

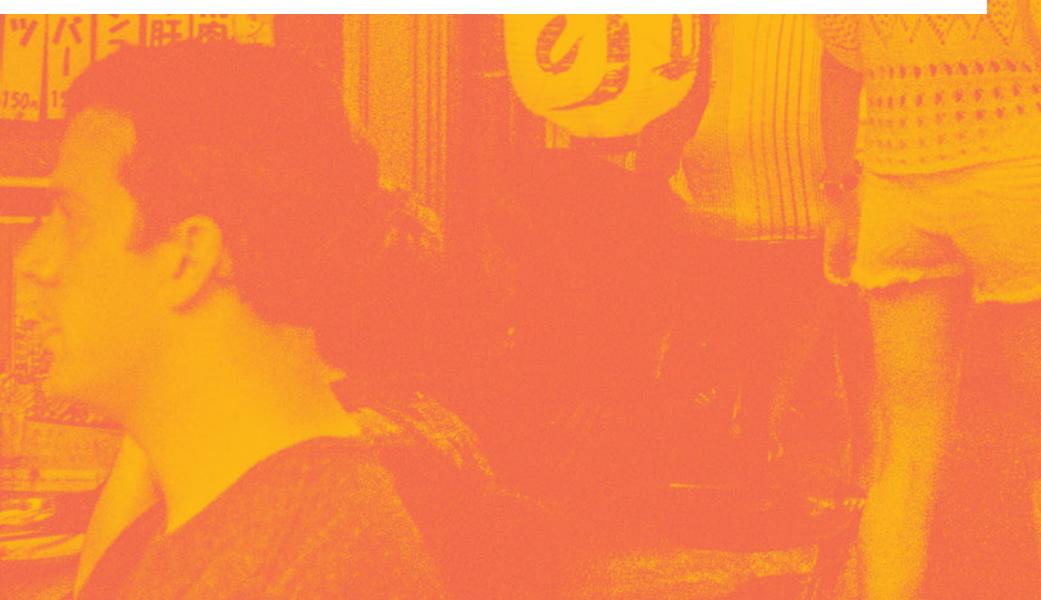
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20**

A BestCities Festival

WELCOME TO THE 2020 RANKING OF AMERICA'S BEST CITIES

Resonance Consultancy is building the most comprehensive city rankings on the planet. Here's why this matters now more than ever.



As leading advisors in tourism, real estate and economic development for more than a decade, our team has conducted extensive research on the rise of cities, the key trends propelling this growth and the factors that shape our perception of urban centers as desirable places to live, visit and invest.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us and our cities in ways none of us have ever experienced before. It's caused us to reexamine and rethink the way we'll want to live, work and play in the future. If there is one thing that social distancing has taught us, it's that the shared spaces we were asked to close and avoid, from parks and restaurants to sporting venues, museums and galleries, are what we cherish most about the cities we live in or love to visit.

The nation's large cities—with MSA populations of more than half a million people—face imminent and myriad challenges that will define their next decade and beyond.

Just take two obvious and looming but diametrically opposed inevitabilities: flight from the perceived density danger of pandemic-stricken cities by those with the means, and the rising homeless population due to unprecedented unemployment and inability to afford housing.

American cities would be flattened by just one of those tsunamis, never mind three or four barreling down simultaneously. To say a reinvention is upon us is an understatement.

To capture this reality in our rankings—now in their fifth year—we have also expanded and evolved. We have added three new factors to our ranking. For our Prosperity category, we have added the unemployment rate of a city (as of May 2020, the latest numbers available at press time) and the Gini Index of Income Equality. In our Place category, we added the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 (as of July 8, 2020) for each city.

While this Best Cities ranking incorporates standard metrics for factors such as the three new ones above, as well as our standards like weather, crime and household incomes, what distinguishes our methodology from all others is that we also

incorporate user-generated data to quantify the number of quality restaurants, shops, nightlife, and other experiences that make urban living so alluring.

Based on the data we have collected over the past five years, we know that a city's performance for factors such as Facebook check-ins, Instagram hashtags, recommended culinary experiences, museums, nightlife, culture and shopping have some of the highest correlations with not only the number of visitors a city receives, but investment and economic growth as well. Rebooting this software of urban experiences will be as important as improvements to the hardware in terms of investments in infrastructure when it comes to a city's recovery from this crisis.

The rankings for these experiential factors reflect the performance of cities for each of these metrics prior to the crisis. No doubt some restaurants, shops and other unique local experiences will not survive the loss in clientele and revenue that the COVID-19 lockdown has wrought and the results a year from now may vary significantly from one city to the next. Our data will continue providing a unique perspective to quantify the impact the crisis has had on cities from an experiential point of view.

But survive they will, and some will even thrive—the most likely candidates being those that sit atop these rankings. We hope this report will inspire you to celebrate and rediscover these American urban centers in the months to come.

To discuss how Resonance can help enhance the prosperity of your city or community, please get in touch.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Fair".

Chris Fair, President & CEO
Resonance Consultancy
cfair@resonanceco.com

THE AMERICAN CITY IS OUR BLUEPRINT FOR REBIRTH

Our recovery will be local and starts with our cities. Resonance and AFAR are proud to bring you the stories of urban recovery—and discovery.



AFAR

What will a post-COVID-19 world look like? Will we still shake hands, kiss cheeks and hug strangers? Will we be quick to board planes—or wary, with masks on and hand sanitizer at the ready? Coronavirus has upended our collective days, and our futures, in ways we can't even fathom yet. At the time this letter is published, I may feel differently than I do as I write it. But at AFAR Media, where I serve as digital content director, we're committed to staying home as long as required, and continue to cover the pandemic as avid travelers are inclined to do: with empathy, a desire to support our neighbors, and a willingness to see the big picture. We are, truly, all in this together, in an unprecedented way.

Once we finally leave our front yards for something more than a grocery run, I expect we'll tiptoe into the world: We'll check out the neighborhood first—the local parks and beaches, our beloved shops and cafés—but also that Ethiopian restaurant we'd eyed but never tried, or the awning with the bad font that we previously ignored. We'll be travelers in our own towns.

As our orbit expands to include much-missed family and friends, we'll wander the region, driving to places like overlooked local wine regions in lieu of our canceled trip to Tuscany. We'll tentatively plan road trips, weekend getaways—and we'll crave inspiration, feeling like a shop sign that once said "The World Is Closed" now reads "Open for Business!" Where should we go? Better still: How can we help with the dollars we spend?

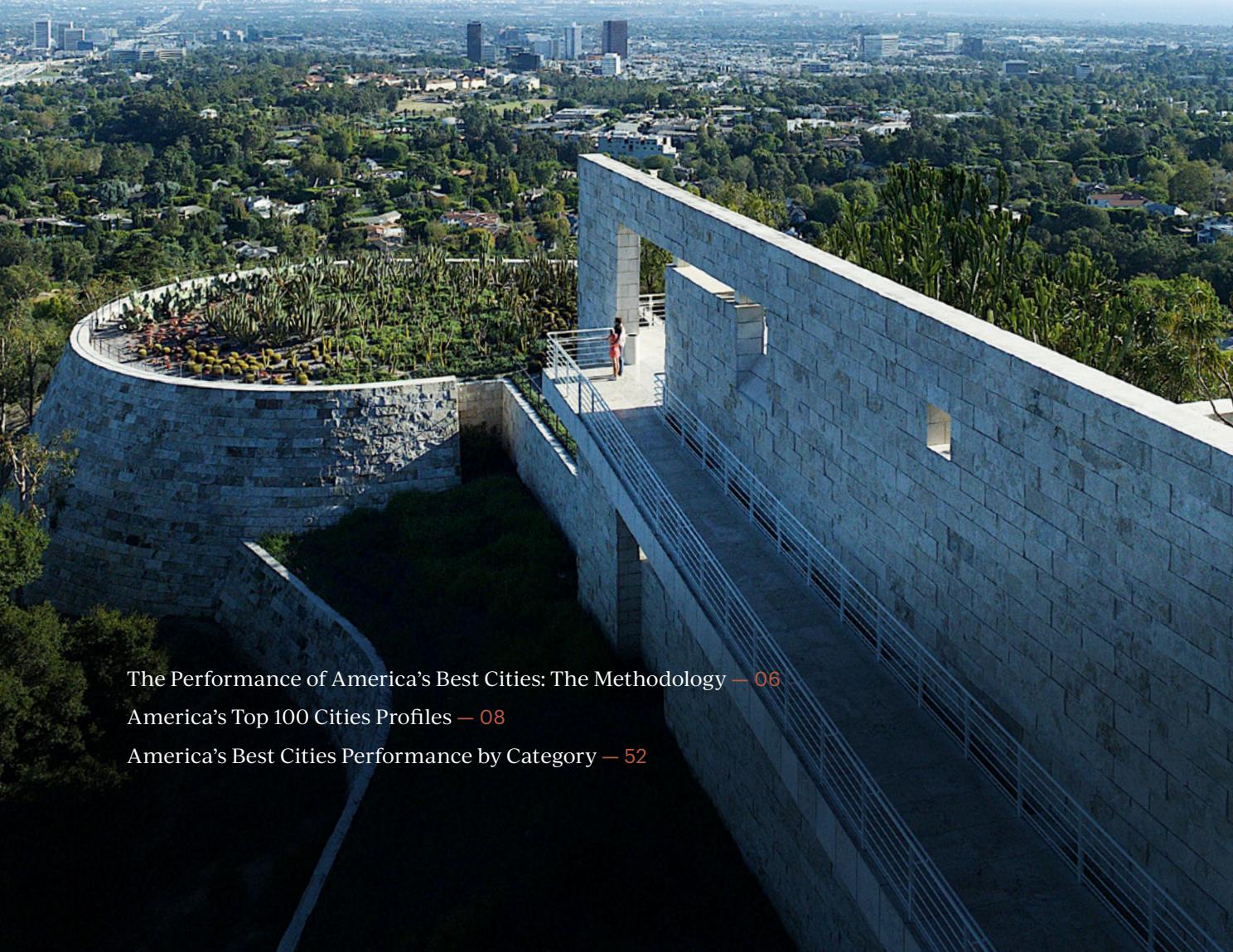
This isn't just a time for small businesses to shine; it's also a moment for American cities. But where are those cities? And how do they excel and stand out? Resonance Consultancy's list of America's Best Cities is your primer. The 2020 report showcases the best cities across the country with metropolitan populations of 500,000 or greater—where a high quality of life extends beyond incomes and infrastructure to include a dynamic culture fueled by a diverse, creative community. Once you discover these cities, you'll want to return again and again—and some may never want to leave.

Where can you find this list? Check out AFAR.com, which is proud to be the exclusive editorial partner of Resonance Consultancy for America's Best Cities and the World's Best Cities, released this October. Let's rediscover what's in our own backyard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LDR".

Laura Dannen Redman
Digital Content Director, AFAR Media

CONTENTS



The Performance of America's Best Cities: The Methodology — 06

America's Top 100 Cities Profiles — 08

America's Best Cities Performance by Category — 52

THE PERFORMANCE OF AMERICA'S BEST CITIES: THE METHODOLOGY

Resonance Consultancy ranks American cities (principal cities of metropolitan areas with populations of more than 500,000) by using a combination of statistical performance and qualitative evaluations by locals and visitors in 26 areas grouped into six core categories. Principal cities are defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.

THE SIX CORE CATEGORIES

Pc PLACE

Po PEOPLE

Pg PROGRAMMING

Pd PRODUCT

Ps PROSPERITY

Pm PROMOTION



Pc PLACE

Our most layered category quantifies a city's physical sense of place. To score a city within our Place category, we evaluate the perceived quality of its natural and built environments. From how often the sun shines to the safety of the streets, several readily measurable, oft-cited factors influence our perceptions.

Weather Average number of sunny days (National Climatic Data Center; Weatherbase)

Safety Violent crime rate (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation)

Sights & Landmarks Number of quality points of interest, neighborhoods and landmarks recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Parks & Outdoors Number of quality parks and outdoor activities recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

COVID-19 Infections Number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 (county level data, retrieved July 8, 2020) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Pd PRODUCT

This is 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. A city's infrastructure and institutions shape its identity via the quantity, quality and reputation of these "products." Expensive and difficult to develop and maintain, exceptional, recognizable products are often found only in large, cosmopolitan cities.

Airport Connectivity Number of direct destinations served by the city's airports (Google Flights)

Attractions Number of quality attractions recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Museums Number of quality museums and arts institutions recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

University Ranking Score of the top local university (U.S. News & World Report, Best National Universities)

Convention Center Size of the largest convention center (official convention center website)

Professional Sports Teams Number of major league sports teams (multiple sources)



Po PEOPLE

The more diverse a city's population, the more it produces global ideas... on a local scale. Human capital is often 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—something of proven importance when it comes to attracting talent.

Foreign-Born Residents Percentage of foreign-born residents (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)

Educational Attainment Percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)



Ps PROSPERITY

A well-paid, economically secure citizenry facilitates stewardship and innovation. In general, beliefs about the wealth and prosperity of a city are shaped by statistics such as the income of citizens, the standard of living and the presence or absence of large, recognizable corporations—despite the fact that start-ups and innovation increasingly drive a city's development and economic growth.

Fortune 500 Companies Number of Fortune 500 corporate headquarters (Fortune.com)

Household Income Median household income (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)

Employment Unemployment rate following the COVID-19 lockdowns (May 2020; Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Income Equality The city's Gini Index, a simple measure of the distribution of income across income percentiles in a population (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)



Pg PROGRAMMING

This category measures the experiential pillars of a great visit: food, shows, shopping and nightlife. If our Product category 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, Dining and Nightlife. While such programming initiatives are individually insignificant, their sum fosters a community’s connection to place.

Culture Number of quality performing arts and cultural experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Nightlife Number of quality nightlife experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Dining Number of quality restaurants and culinary experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)

Shopping Number of quality shopping experiences recommended by locals and visitors (TripAdvisor.com)



Pm PROMOTION

A city's ability to tell its story (and help others do the same) depends on how it incentivizes and rewards sharing of experiences by locals and visitors. The number and frequency of media coverage, online articles, references and place-based recommendations influence our perception of cities, whether the news is good or bad. Today, residents, businesses and visitors promote a city to the world more than city marketers or chambers of commerce. Resonance ranks a city's Promotion performance based on the number of stories, references and recommendations shared online about that city.

Facebook Check-ins Number of Facebook check-ins (Facebook.com)

Google Search Number of Google search results (Google.com)

TripAdvisor Reviews Number of TripAdvisor reviews (TripAdvisor.com)

Instagram Hashtags Most Instagrammed city (Instagram.com)

Google Trends Popularity on Google Trends in the past 12 months (Trends.Google.com)

America's

TOP 100 CITIES PROFILES

American cities are the engines of the nation and the badges of American ingenuity. Yes, they've stalled, exposing nationwide institutional problems manifesting on their streets and in their hospitals and senior homes. But they're also leading—like they always have—the recovery and future-defining next stage of human innovation. Their citizens will gather again, colliding and creating the global culture, wealth and American energy that defines the global zeitgeist.





VESSEL IN HUDSON YARDS PUBLIC SQUARE

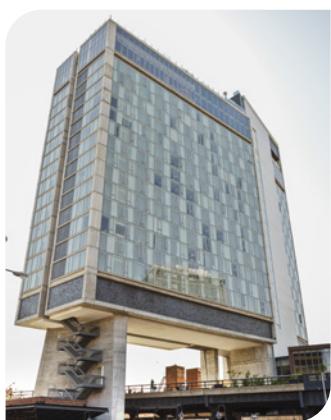
POPULATION

METRO 19,979,477

HIGHLIGHTS

1 PLACE

1 PROMOTION



THE STANDARD HIGH LINE HOTEL

1 NEW YORK NY

America's urban heart was broken by the pandemic and has a long way back.

Here we are, on July 8, writing a story about America's Best City. Number one. For the fourth year in a row.

It's a grim time to be first. As cases spiked in March and April, Gotham became the nation's coronavirus nightmarish epicenter. Statewide, more than 18,000 COVID-19 patients were in hospitals at one point in April. Daily deaths peaked at 799 in April, and have totaled over 24,000. As of July 8, the city ranked last—#100—in our Number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000.

A few short months ago, all the data made sense. While New York ranks just 11th for the size of its convention center, the Jacob K. Javits Center was in the process of being renovated to twice

its enormity. Today, its square footage has been transformed into a 1,200-bed field hospital, with room, if necessary, for 2,900.

A year ago, we went on gaily about how New York was reinventing shopping, with the mall of the future at Hudson Yards and Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus vying for supremacy in the chic city. This year, in the #1 shopping city in America, there is no breakfast at Tiffany's.

New York, to the surprise of no one, ranks first for Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. And that is part of the enduring allure of the city—the magical thinking that if you hustled hard enough, anyone could be persuaded to meet with you, that the entrepreneur sitting next to you at WeWork might just be the next big thing, and you might be part of it—and you, you of all people, can make it here, just like the song promises.

MANHATTAN BRIDGE



In New York, you shake hands (shake hands!), two humans pressing flesh in the mutual interest of apprising the potential of one to advance the other.

Right now, in the storied Financial District, only the stock market moves, sometimes wildly.

In America's top-ranked city for culture, the MOMA is helping parents teach art from home with "family art-making activities in English and Español," and the Metropolitan Opera is streaming performances nightly. Streaming is the new being there, and takes the edge off our hunger for sports and our craving for the soul-opening power of art. We watch the screen and can still hear the roar of a goal—any goal—at the buzzer, still feel the frisson of walking into the red velvet-lined jewel box that is the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center, gazing up at the vast Chagalls, watching the dazzling crowd.

With Broadway still officially shut down, the district where the show must go on is shuttered, a drama. In the city that never sleeps, #1 for nightlife, night owls order delivery and dream fitfully at home, pivoting to an abnormal new normal.

New York restaurants, #2 in the country, pivoted faster than most businesses, almost instantly becoming take-out and delivery operations wherever it was humanly possible. Food world icon Dave Chang, chef of Momofuku Noodle Bar

and a dozen other restaurants around the world, creator of the *Ugly Delicious* show, said he thought delivery would come to dominate slowly, over a decade or more, and now it is upon us. Speaking with the *New York Times*, he surveyed the eclipsed scene in despair. "I'm not being hyperbolic in any way," he said. "We have ingredients that if you don't sell, they literally deteriorate. It's the most exposed business. There's a lot of successful chefs I know who have five to nine days left of money. And then what do you do? I don't know."

Nobody knows, of course, which is the terrible crux of the matter. New York is, above all, a gathering place where brains and bodies in indecent proximity to one another create the sparks of genius, invention, progress. Now, at 7 p.m., pots and pans clang in unison as New Yorkers stand alone on their stoops and balconies.

New York is #3 in our Attractions subcategory, those places that irresistibly draw humanity from around the world. In the past decade, New York has enjoyed dizzying increases in tourism arrivals, and 64.2 million visitors jostled with locals last year, a record. Now, as New York curmudgeon Fran Lebowitz moaned to Michael Schulman in the *New Yorker*, "For at least 20 years, I have been dreaming of the time there were no tourists in Times Square. Now there are no tourists in Times Square, but, of course, there's no one in Times Square."

Nobody knows when any of this ends, but New York knows a thing or two about coming back from terrible brinks. 9/11 is more than a vague memory. SARS came and went. However the world emerges, evolves or pivots out of our collective force majeure, it will happen here first. New York is, after all, #1.



THE NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM



VIEW OF DOWNTOWN FROM THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN

POPULATION

METRO 13,291,486

HIGHLIGHTS

2 PROGRAMMING

2 PROMOTION

2 LOS ANGELES CA

Los Angeles keeps breaking tourism records as it unveils one multi-billion-dollar infrastructure project after another.

Los Angeles has always had “star” power, but when Michelin announced in June 2019 that 24 Greater Los Angeles area restaurants had been awarded with its most prestigious accolade in its inaugural Michelin Guide California selection, it suddenly meant more than just A-listers and cinema cachet. Indeed, of the seven new two-star distinctions in the Guide, six are in L.A., further cementing its standing as “the Most Exciting Food City in America.”

Of course all that means little when sheltering in place has shuttered hundreds of the city’s exciting dining

spots. The COVID-19 outbreak has launched L.A.—and Mayor Eric Garcetti—into the spotlight. The city was the first metropolis in the country to demand almost full closure, “and the biggest city to go to full closure of all nonessential businesses,” the mayor pointed out recently. Combine that foresight with California’s fast action on lockdowns, and L.A. is positioned to come back brighter.

Its cultural and culinary leaders—so willing to step up and declare the city open for business after a series of natural disasters, helping the city rank #2 in our Promotion category—will be called upon again soon. They’ll do their best to keep their city’s #2 ranking in the subcategory of Facebook Check-ins and #3 for Instagram Hashtags and Google Trends. Anything to get the City of Angels off the ground.

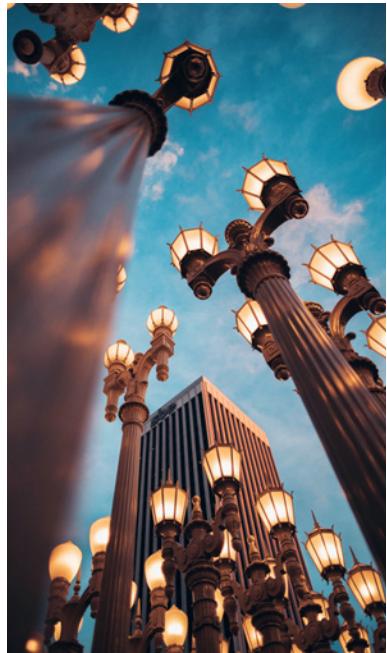


VENICE BEACH

"Los Angeles is a literal melting pot of talent with chefs hailing from a mosaic of cultures who are open to experimentation and innovation. Mix in access to the country's best produce and an audience of Angelenos who celebrate creativity and you've got L.A.'s formula for being the most exciting food city," said Stacey Sun, executive director of the city's dineL.A. program, which celebrates L.A.'s thriving global culinary scene through two annual restaurant week programs, Winter dineL.A. and Summer dineL.A. Unsurprisingly, L.A. nabs the top spot in our Restaurants category for 2020.

Speaking of food, when it opens—eventually—on Olvera Street at LA Plaza Village, LA Plaza Cocina will be the first museum and teaching kitchen dedicated to Mexican food. Through an array of exhibitions, cooking classes, lectures, workshops and culinary festivals, the multidisciplinary venue aims to educate visitors and celebrate Mexico's culinary heritage.

Los Angeles ranks #2 in the nation in our Museums category, which is exemplified by a blossoming of cultural institutions under development or opening soon. For example, a public art project called Destination Crenshaw is being built by and for the African American community along the newest Metro rail line, which runs the iconic Crenshaw Boulevard. The 1.3-mile-long outdoor art and culture experience will display works of Black artists centered on the themes of activism and history. And construction was scheduled to begin this year in Koreatown for the first permanent location of the Korean American National Museum, where the mission is to preserve and interpret the history, experiences, culture and achievements of Americans from Korean ancestry. Designed by local architecture firm Morphosis, the venue's interior will feature a fluid, interconnected ring of galleries, meeting rooms and offices styled to echo the classic courtyard plan of a traditional Korean hanok.



ROOFTOP POOL AT THE HOXTON

Sports fans in the city will finally get to experience the 70,000-seat SoFi Stadium at Hollywood Park when the complex opens in... the coming months. Billed as the future of sports and entertainment, the venue will house the Los Angeles Chargers and the 2019 NFC Conference champion Los Angeles Rams. The state-of-the-art, open-air stadium will also host Super Bowl LVI in 2022, the College Football National Championship game in 2023 and the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2028 Olympics. Los Angeles ranks second only to New York for Professional Sports Teams in the nation.

Breathing new life into neighborhoods from DTLA to Hollywood is a slew of new boutique hotels, most with chef-led dining programs. There's the freshly minted Hoxton LA, for example, set in a transformed 1925 building that was once the headquarters of the L.A. Railway Authority. Another 13 new hotels were set to open in the next two years, before the COVID-19 outbreak, including a new project from Grupo Habita—the hotel group has developed some of the hippest hotels in Mexico, Chicago and New York—that takes over a 109-year-old brick warehouse in the Arts District and transforms it with modern accommodations, a rooftop lounge, garden and pool.



TRANSAMERICA PYRAMID SEEN FROM THE BENCH OF PIER 7

POPULATION

METRO 4,729,484

HIGHLIGHTS

2 PEOPLE

5 PROGRAMMING



LOMBARD STREET

3 SAN FRANCISCO CA

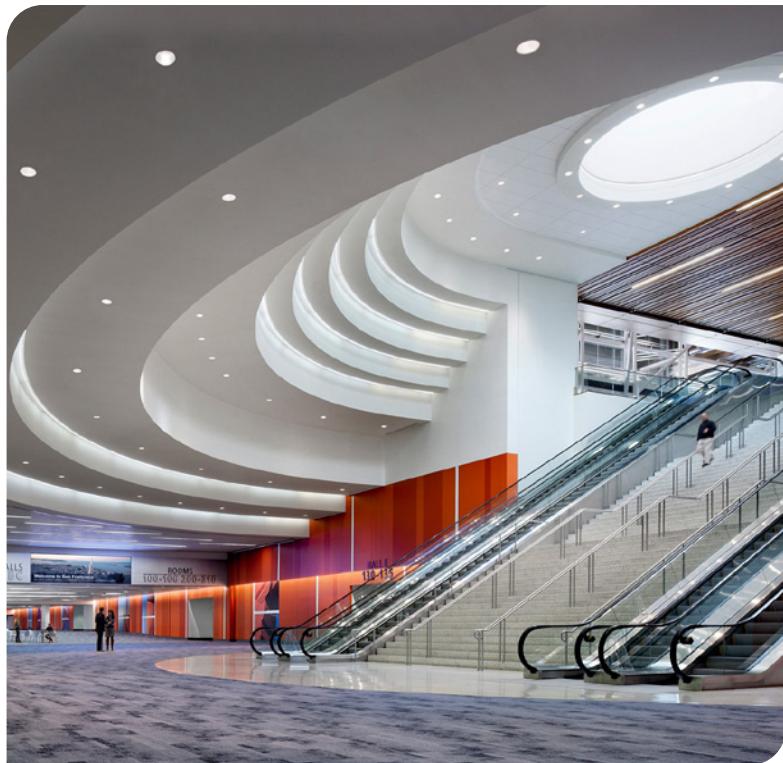
Job opportunities and infrastructure buildout pave the way in San Francisco. It's just that the world that so readily rushed in for work, study and tourism must wait to do so for now.

San Francisco has embraced seekers since the Gold Rush days, when, seemingly overnight, people came from Asia and Europe, from across the continent and from the other side of the world for their shot at the California Dream. Along the way, these immigrants have sowed the seeds for the city's open-minded attitude toward, well, everything. The result is a place that doesn't just welcome differences, but actually encourages and celebrates them.

No wonder it ranks #2 nationally in our People category, including #3 for post-secondary educated residents and #4 for foreign-born residents.

The promise of high salaries means a torrent of global workers fuel the city's ambition and ideas, ranking it #7 in the nation in our Prosperity category, including #2 for Household Income and #4 for Fortune 500 Companies. Where it does slip is in its #57-ranked unemployment rate and poor finish (#98) in the Gini Index of Income Equality.

The Bay Area's entrepreneurialism is uniquely connected to its 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 and innovation. The all-time record of 57.8 million passengers in 2018 was almost reached again in 2019 (with 57.6 million) and will continue to be bested in the coming years, particularly with the opening of the new Grand Hyatt, SFO's first on-airport hotel.

The city has also had a strong showing for conventions and meetings at the newly expanded Moscone Center, which is walking distance to hotels, restaurants, museums, attractions and public transit and now features more than 170,000 gross square feet of meeting space, as well as an enclosed pedestrian bridge above Howard Street.

"This state-of-the-art facility exemplifies our commitment to sustainability, creates new flexible-use convention and tourism spaces and supports the neighborhood with a host of new design and open-space improvements," said Mayor London Breed.

Indeed, budgets for new public buildings and civic improvements here must set aside 2% of gross construction

costs for the procurement and installation of public art in their spaces. At the Moscone Center, this has resulted in four new art installations, including PointCloud, a light installation by Bay Bridge light designer Leo Villareal. His installation has been incorporated into the new East Bridge, which connects Moscone North and South. Not surprisingly, San Francisco ranks #4 in our Convention Center subcategory.

The City by the Bay continued to be coveted by tourists in 2019, with 26.2 million visiting, 1.4% more compared to 2018 and a new record, topping off a decade of year-over-year growth. But not all is golden. Despite massive plans for 2020, including monumental anniversaries like Golden Gate Park's 150th and San Francisco Pride turning 50, the COVID-19 outbreak has shredded the festivities. Even the powerhouse Golden State Warriors were wounded when their inaugural season at the spectacular Chase Center was cut short.

The Asian Art Museum's impressive expansion, in which 13,000 square feet of additional exhibition space and a 7,500-square-foot rooftop art terrace

were added, will have to wait. The iconic space, along with SFMOMA and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, was closed in March.

But the city's precautions are not surprising, given its well-documented attempt at inclusivity and taking care of its own. It's worth noting that the city ranks #18 in our Number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 nationally subcategory, one of the lowest totals in our Top 10.

Even before COVID-19 descended on the city, the challenge of homeless residents was being taken up not only by the governor and city officials, but by the city's destination marketing organization as well.

"We're the city of St. Francis, and if we don't lead on this, then shame on us," said Joe D'Alessandro, CEO of San Francisco Travel. "As a DMO we're taking a leading role on this. We are asking for more security on the street, for mental health housing and safety for our LGBTQ population. In our city, 50% of homeless youth are LGBTQ who left home because of the abuse they endured. We are lobbying and talking to elected officials, to private companies and chambers—looking for small fixes until we can figure it out federally."

With that kind of local support, the city won't be down for long.



CHINATOWN

POPULATION

METRO 9,497,790

HIGHLIGHTS**2** FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES**3** PROGRAMMING

America's great Midwest metropolis has an abundance of programming and culture, with the deep infrastructure and affordability that eludes many cities.

Few American cities fell harder in visitor numbers in recent months than Chicago. Whether for business or pleasure, the city had been attracting tourism at record-breaking levels year after year. Indeed, when Mayor Rahm Emanuel took the city's top job in 2011, an estimated 39 million people had visited Chicago. By the time he wrapped up his final term in 2019, that number had ballooned to nearly 58 million visitors—an impressive tourism feat and perhaps the biggest success story of Emanuel's mayoral tenure. "We didn't just ride the national wave; we're ahead of it," Emanuel said last year. "No city has seen that kind of exponential growth."

Shortly after taking office, Emanuel had his team do a "top to bottom scrub" of the tourism industry, which led to fixing problems that had been plaguing the city's premier convention center, an "under-performing McCormick Place," and streamlined various entities responsible for marketing the city into one office, Choose Chicago. Recently redesigned, the tourism website generated more than 6.3 million visits in the first eight months of 2019, a 10.7% year-over-year increase. Not bad. By the time Emanuel left office, the city reported that more than 22,000 tourism-related jobs had been added. Not bad at all.

The city's digital resonance—which finished #3 in our Promotion category

4 CHICAGO IL

VIEW OF DOWNTOWN FROM OHIO STREET BEACH



for large cities in the country, including Top 3 in the subcategories of Google Trends, Google Search and Facebook Check-ins—is not enough to draw tourists on its own. In the last few years, the Windy City pursued and acquired some big-ticket draws, including the NFL Draft, the James Beard Foundation Awards and the Laver Cup. It also bolstered tourist-friendly attractions like the Riverwalk and events that showcase Chicago's craft beer scene. Its #3 ranking in our Programming category—including #2 in the subcategories of Culture and Nightlife, behind only NYC—speaks to the plentiful buzz that Chicago was perfecting before everything ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, seven hotels debuted in the past year—in the city's central business district alone. Among them was the 21c Museum Hotel Chicago, which combines a 297-room boutique hotel and multi-venue contemporary art museum with an independently branded, chef-driven restaurant.

The much-anticipated Japanese-inspired Nobu Hotel Chicago, originally scheduled to open in mid 2020 with its rooftop lounge perch and view of America's most spectacular

architectural bounty, may or may not open on time amidst the outbreak.

Another cultural success story for the city is Art on theMART, which bills itself as the largest permanent digital art projection in the world and features contemporary artwork across the 2.5-acre river-facing facade of theMART. Some 32,000 people attended the launch event in September 2018. "We are already becoming an integral part of the cultural fabric of the city and an iconic public art platform that amplifies what is important to Chicagoans and the world," noted Cynthia Noble, executive director of Art on theMART. It's no wonder Chicago ranks in the Top 10 in our deep Place category, which includes #3 for Sights and Landmarks and #11 for Parks & Outdoors.

In the not-too-distant future, the Obama Presidential Center—to be set in Jackson Park—will become a marquee attraction on Chicago's South Side. "I think President Obama's library can do for tourism what McCormick Place has done for business travel in the city," Emanuel noted during his time as mayor. The city's #5 ranking for Museums among the country's large cities will surely improve as a result.

POPULATION

METRO 6,251,240

HIGHLIGHTS

3 PEOPLE

3 PROSPERITY

Power meets play in America's intriguing capital city.

The ubiquity of the U.S. capital in dramas on screens small and large (to say nothing of the real-life stuff) has escalated its resonance in the zeitgeist and helped propel it to the cusp of the Top 5 large cities in the nation. The winning of Amazon's coveted HQ2 in nearby Arlington, Virginia, dominated local chatter last year—the 25,000 jobs created will be located in what Amazon calls National Landing, a newly minted place brand for the neighborhood

5 WASHINGTON DC

near Reagan National Airport known as Crystal City. The jobs will improve D.C.'s already impressive #3 ranking in our Prosperity category, powered by its #3 spot for Household Income in the country and #6 for Fortune 500 Companies. It also boasted impressive unemployment numbers, ranking #11 nationally and best in our Top 10. Ditto for its impressive #15 ranking for Gini Index of Income Equality.

In explaining its decision for its HQ2 location, Amazon sources cited being able to "recruit more top talent." Indeed, Washington, D.C., ranks #2 for residents with a post-secondary education—a pipeline of future Amazon talent for years.

The city also scores well (#4 in the country) for its free museums—from the two Smithsonians (Natural History and the National Air and Space Museum) to the sprawling National Gallery of Art. But D.C. is stepping

up its museum game further, with plenty of new cultural heavyweights just opened or on the horizon.

The Kennedy Center's \$175-million expansion project, the REACH, opened to the public in late 2019, boasting 72,000 square feet of performance and events space, 130,000 square feet of landscaping and gardens, terrace seating for up to 1,600 people and a scenic walkway leading to nearby monuments and memorials.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, 2020 was going to be one of the busiest ever for D.C. development, with Capitol Hill's the Roost, a 12,500-square-foot community-based food hall, kicking things off. Another culinary mixed-use hub, the West Half, near Yards Park, is also planned to open later this year and will feature views of Major League Baseball's Nationals Park and include a brewery, cafés and local grocery store.

An incredible third community food hub is scheduled for Ward 7, two blocks away from the Minnesota Avenue metro station, and will be home to Market 7, powered by a variety of Black-owned businesses including a grocer and retail installations by local makers.

The jewel in the city's culinary crown in 2020 is the \$250-million River Point, two blocks from Audi Field, between Capitol Riverfront and the Wharf, with piers, waterfront activity and new restaurants that include a veggie-friendly eatery by James Beard-winning chef Spike Gjerde.

Meanwhile, the massive Wharf, a \$2.5-billion mixed-use development, inches closer to its 2022 opening date, giving the U.S. capital fresh office, residential, marina and retail space, as well as parks and public spaces, across an approximate half mile of the Potomac riverfront. Given that the area is already home to more than 20 restaurants—paired with the culinary accolades given of late to D.C.'s already-burgeoning food scene, its middling #17 ranking for Restaurants (and #16 for overall Programming) will be sure to hit Top 10 in the coming years.



THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

POPULATION

METRO 3,343,364

HIGHLIGHTS

2 PLACE

5 RESTAURANTS

Southern California's urban ideal offers free sunshine and keeps a good thing going—across two borders.

You could say that San Diego is where California began. It was here that Spanish settlers established the region's very first mission in 1769—251 years ago, on a hillside overlooking what is now known as Old Town San Diego.

Two and a half centuries later, this city of 1.4 million (with an MSA population approaching 3.5 million) is one of the fastest-growing in the U.S. Its #2

6 SAN DIEGO CA

ranking in our deep Place category—with Top 10 finishes for safety, quality of neighborhoods and outdoors. And, of course, there's its weather. San Diego is as naturally endowed as any place has a right to be—it's sublime 263 full and partly sunny days annually help place it at #7 in the nation, while the 23 beaches—70 miles of them—within the city limits make it synonymous with SoCal surf culture.

After a festive 2019 celebrating its 250th, the city is now pausing somewhat to reap the fruits of a torrid few years of development. Of course, with the COVID-19 outbreak and California's stringent shelter-in-place orders, San Diegans don't really have a choice.

When they do get back out of the house and into their beloved city, they'll beeline for the famous eponymous zoo—which is one year closer to the opening of its \$69-million children's zoo, to be named after Denny Sanford, a San Diego philanthropist who donated

\$30 million to this endeavor, the largest single gift the San Diego Zoo has ever received. Designed in ways to help children develop empathy and better understand and identify with wildlife, this reimagined 2.3-acre space will feature four ecosystems and more than 100 species, giving kids greater opportunities to discover the natural world through play. Unsurprisingly, San Diego trails only Miami in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory.

Then there's the uniquely fluid cultural identity of the city: the Cross Border Xpress (CBX) links San Diego with Tijuana and services more than 6,000 ticketed airline passengers daily. CBX was designed to streamline international travel as the first-ever U.S. facility to connect directly into a foreign airport terminal. Designed in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Customs and Border Protection, the 390-foot-long enclosed pedestrian skybridge connects a state-of-the-art passenger building in San Diego directly to the Tijuana International Airport (TIJ). This December, CBX will celebrate its fifth year of service.

The kinetic symbiosis of the U.S. and Mexico pulses here like in no other American city. Just look to Border X Brewery in the Barrio Logan neighborhood, and its year-long quest to create new flavors of beers reflecting seven regions in Mexico. The city also just marked 50 years since the founding of Chicano Park, a site of protests and community activism that is now home to the world's largest collection of Chicano murals.

The polycultural immersion is palpable—especially at Liberty Station, home to El Jardín, the two-year-old home of Top Chef contestant Claudette Zepeda-Wilkins and her regional Mexican fare, refined and reinterpreted with both indigenous Mexican ingredients and local produce alongside an extensive selection of tequila and mezcal. The city's impressive Top 5 finish for Restaurants will only improve in such good hands.



OCEAN FRONT WALK AT MISSION BEACH

POPULATION

METRO 2,231,647

HIGHLIGHTS

1 WEATHER

1 ATTRACTIONS

This pulsing destination has never been quieter in a COVID-19 reality. Its resilience and response will define it for decades.

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

Tourism—the number one economic driver for Southern Nevada—has long paid for Las Vegas’ roads, parks, school construction and teachers’ salaries. According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), more than 41% of Southern Nevadans are employed directly or indirectly because of tourism.

Indeed, this tourist town is increasingly more livable every year, and even downtown has become a destination for locals and cred-seeking visitors, with public spaces hosting art activations and events. 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.

But this single reliance on the visitor economy also means that the COVID-19 outbreak has decimated Las Vegas like few other American cities. When Governor Steve Sisolak took the unprecedented step of ordering every casino and gaming operation—the lifeblood of the state’s economy—to shut down by midnight, March 17, citizens were thrust into an unimaginable financial crisis. Overnight, hundreds of thousands were furloughed or lost their jobs outright. Lucrative events like the 2020 NFL draft were cancelled.

7 LAS VEGAS NV

MURAL IN THE ARTS DISTRICT ON FREMONT STREET



Two decades of no fewer than 35 million annual visitors, including the two most recent record-setting years of 42 million-plus, were over. #VegasStrong was dealt another blow, not from the barrel of an automatic weapon but by an invisible killer.

Not surprisingly, Vegas finished last among all Top 100 cities in our Employment Rate subcategory.

Perhaps the city’s pursuit of transforming into a hometown will accelerate its rebound as the lockdown begins to lift. If there is a silver lining for locals, it’s that they’ll have the nation’s #4-ranked Programming, including #3 in Culture, #4 in Nightlife and #8 in Restaurants, all to themselves for a few months, all while helping fellow citizens put in the reps to once again host the world.

Certainly the best weather in the country and an impressive #6 for its Parks & Outdoors will help Sin City seed local activity and regional travel, the vital baby steps to restarting after the screeching halt that the tourism industry was dealt by the outbreak.

With mind-boggling infrastructure on the books and needing to be completed this year—from the Allegiant Stadium, the 65,000-seat home of the relocated Raiders franchise, to Elon Musk’s the Boring Company and its ongoing construction on subterranean transit underneath the new Las Vegas Convention Center (itself scheduled to open by the end of 2020, pre-crisis)—the city won’t be down for long.

POPULATION

METRO 1,999,107

HIGHLIGHTS

1 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

1 PEOPLE

Talent, smarts and money are a potent mix that's given San Jose—the largest city in Northern California in terms of area and population—the highest household income in America.

It's fascinating what a well-educated, well-paid and diverse population can do for a city's rankings. In the case of San Jose, the economic, cultural and political capital of Silicon Valley, it's everything, and it's given the city its highest-ever finish in our ranking.

The city boasts the highest household income in the country. All that capital lures the best talent on the planet, meaning San Jose also tops our People category, with the smartest residents in the nation and the second-most diverse.

The bounty of universities in the area is a performance driver all its own, creating symbiotic integrations with the tech companies in the city that have access to funding and innovation like few others. Given the optimal conditions of a lauded, coveted school and the on-ramp it provides to jobs in the same city, San Jose will continue to stock its talent pipeline for years to come.

The region, home to Google, Facebook, Cisco Systems, eBay and PayPal, is #6 for Fortune 500 HQs eager for graduates.

There are a massive number of corporate offices in the city—with rumored plans for a new Google campus that could house up to 25,000 employees—but given the plentiful prosperity, San Jose is an incredibly livable and worthwhile destination. As California's oldest civilian Spanish

8 SAN JOSE CA

PALM TREES IN DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE



settlement, the city has many museums spanning its fascinating history.

Start at History Park, an open-air museum featuring local architecture saved from city streets over two centuries, like a 140-year-old Chinese temple, an entire hotel and a working trolley line. The 1881 electrical light tower is particularly iconic, given it was built to supply the entire city with electrical street lights, years before the idea took hold in larger centers. San Jose was seeing around corners, even almost a century and a half ago.

The newly opened San Jose Armory refreshes another historic building

for event use. Completed in 1934, the Spanish Revival-style building was originally owned by the California Army National Guard, and today its 15,000 square feet add much-needed meeting space.

Fast-forward to the city's engineering present at the San Jose Tech Museum of Innovation, recently rebranded as the Tech Interactive to better capture its hands-on learning. Or befriend a local techie and have them tour you around one of the high-flyer offices—from Airbnb to Apple. It may not be a museum, per se, but it's almost as revered.

POPULATION

METRO 1,999,107

9 MIAMI FL**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** PARKS & OUTDOORS
- 4** PEOPLE

Miami's creativity is fueled by its arms-wide-open acceptance of new immigrants.

Miami's natural attributes—turquoise Biscayne Bay lapping gleaming sand while sun-kissed bodies frolic everywhere—have always captured the world's imagination and crystallized

the city's hedonistic brand. But it's the city's openness to immigrants (and, more recently, the LGBTQ+ community) that ranks it #4 in the country in our People category, including being the city with the most foreign-born residents. Indeed, the city boasts more than 100 languages spoken at home, according to the latest census.

Miami's historic embrace of a crossroads of the Americas has also meant a business advantage few other cities claim. It's 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. Set at the crossroads of Latin America both in geography and in culture, Miami

intends to promote its connectivity and globalism, and the region's selection as a host city candidate for the 2026 World Cup will go a long way in showcasing these qualities. The city is also continuing its aggressive pursuit of events and conferences, and last year it approved the hotel design for the new Miami Beach Convention Center—a 185-foot, 17-story structure to be completed by 2022.

But the clear and present danger for the city is Florida's runaway COVID-19 infection rates, which have swept up Miami along with them. COVID-19 rates, as of July 8, 2020, had surpassed those of New York City, painting a grim picture for the rest of 2020.



ONE OF THE CITY'S MANY IDYLLIC BEACHES

POPULATION

METRO 4,875,390

HIGHLIGHTS

1

UNIVERSITY RANKING

7

PEOPLE

America's oldest big city has never been more current.

A hub of higher education and home to the fourth-best-educated workforce in the nation, Beantown produces a steady stream of new talent to help attract start-ups and established companies alike. Future talent gravitates to Harvard, of course—the country's top school (and a big reason why the city is #1 in our University subcategory and scored Top 5 in our Product category, which measures expensive, hard-to-build infrastructure like airport connectivity and convention centers)—as well as to Boston's density of other world-class universities and colleges. The city is bursting with lecture halls, labs and classrooms of the more than 75 institutions of higher learning, and is energized by the estimated 200,000 post-secondary students creating stories, ideas, solutions and technologies that will help drive the economy and incubate innovation districts nationally and globally in the coming decades.

New students flock here, to arguably the planet's largest university town, by the tens of thousands every year and become smitten with the crooked narrow streets and storied pubs, blended with American optimism and East Coast connectivity. This is the birthplace of America, after all. And Facebook. No wonder Boston ranks #7 in our People category, including #4 for percentage of the population with postsecondary education and #20 for Foreign-Born Residents.

But students were just a drop in the bucket compared to the record-setting tourism numbers over the past year.

10 BOSTON MA

In 2019, the enchanting port city with iconic waterways welcomed 22.5 million visitors, many of whom explored the Freedom Trail, where every step along this collection of museums, burial grounds, historic markers and even a ship helps tell the story of the American Revolution.

Given the projected demand for accommodations in the city—sideswiped by some of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the country,

surpassing, as of July 8, 2020, even New York City—Boston has 5,000 new hotel rooms in the pipeline over the next five years, led by the ambitious Newbury Boston at One Newbury Street property, located in the coveted shopping and dining neighborhood of Boston's Back Bay. Originally opened in 1927 as one of the first Ritz-Carlton hotels in the U.S., it will be reborn as a 286-room luxury hotel with massive event capacity.



VIEW OF DOWNTOWN AND FENWAY PARK



11 HOUSTON

TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 6,997,384

HIGHLIGHTS

4 GOOGLE TRENDS

4 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

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

International immigration in the past decade has contributed to explosive population growth and has made Houston one of the most ethnically diverse big cities in America, with more than 145 different languages spoken at home, according to the latest census—about even with New York. No wonder its restaurants are ranked #4 in the nation, trailing just the big three of L.A., NYC and Chicago. The fourth-largest city in the U.S. is also home to the fourth-largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the country. Despite this, the city ranks a middling #47 for Prosperity, including #74 in our Employment ranking and #99 for Income Equality. 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 22.3 million annual visitors (2018)—of which 3.28 million were international travelers—arrive and depart by more conventional means—at least they did before the city was devastated by the pandemic. The city ranks #7 for Airport Connectivity.

12 ATLANTA

GEORGIA

POPULATION METRO 5,950,828

HIGHLIGHTS

4 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY

4 CONVENTION CENTER

Affluent, charming and dripping with history, this giant of the American South is creating the future on its own terms.

Atlanta has always been a crossroads—open to new ideas, and to the new arrivals who came to this lush, hot, rolling land when the city rose as a railroad terminus. Today, it is a transportation hub still, with Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport one of the busiest airports in the world, with 80% of the U.S. population residing within a two-hour flight. It's why the city ranks #4 for Airport Connectivity among all U.S. cities, as well as #4 for its Convention Center, resulting in an overall #6 ranking in our Product category. Atlanta, like most optimized hubs, also boasts efficient, inexpensive, direct public transit links to the city from its airport. It is also a long-time business titan and ranks #9 in the nation for most Fortune 500 companies based in town.

13 PHOENIX

ARIZONA

POPULATION METRO 4,857,962

HIGHLIGHTS

5 ATTRACTIONS

6 WEATHER

Latin soul, daring architecture and a reverence for the outdoors blends a heady mix in the heart of the American Southwest.

A thriving desert metropolis, Phoenix offers some of the best Mexican food this side of the border, a number of fine museums, a vibrant artist community and 300 days of sunshine. Start your visit with a stroll through Roosevelt Row Arts District, or RoRo as locals have taken to calling it. Art galleries, studios, restaurants and bars sit side by side in this walkable creative district in the downtown core—helping the city to a #12 ranking in the country in our Sights and Landmarks category. Don't miss the Desert Botanical Garden, which with more than 50,000 plants has one of the world's largest collections of desert flora. Want to see some cacti and succulents in their natural element? Take a close-up look at Camelback Mountain. Summit trails are not for the faint of heart, especially in 100-degree heat, but the base of the mountain offers easier and equally beautiful trails for beginners. Phoenix ranks #13 in the nation for its Parks & Outdoors. If you're looking for a respite from the heat, visit the Phoenix Art Museum to see Carlos Amorales' *Black Cloud*, a site-specific installation consisting of 25,000 life-sized moths and butterflies swarming the walls.



14 DALLAS TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 7,540,371

HIGHLIGHTS

1 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY

3 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

Dallas-boosterz like to say that “Big Things Happen Here,” and as the city climbs up our ranking, we’d have to agree.

It’s not only city branding that’s big in Dallas, which is home to more than 10,000 corporate headquarters—the largest corporate head office concentration in the U.S. and ranked third nationally for Fortune 500 Companies. Of course, a city with lots of corporate headquarters is a city that’s easy to get to; Dallas ranks first in the nation for Connectivity, a measure of direct flight access into a city’s principal airport. But the city isn’t just big money; it’s big on fun and culture, too. Dallas is also home to America’s sixth-largest LGBTQ+ community, with bars and restaurants concentrated in Oak Lawn, and to the Dallas Arts District, the largest contiguous urban arts district in the nation. On 20 square blocks of mixed-use space, museums like the Dallas Museum of Art, the Crow Museum of Asian Art, the renowned Nasher Sculpture Center and theatre, symphony and opera venues, along with restaurants and bars, all contribute to a #20 ranking in Culture.

15 SEATTLE WASHINGTON

POPULATION METRO 3,939,363

HIGHLIGHTS

6 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

6 SHOPPING

America’s boomtown is playing the long game to keep the (supervised) party going.

Seattle’s self-reliance and dedication to taking care of its own has fostered over 150 years of city-building on the far-flung northwest coast of the U.S., setting the stage for its current “it” status. In many ways, Sea Town 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 the relocation of its headquarters to Chicago) as well as Microsoft and Weyerhaeuser has also attracted more recent captains of industry, like Amazon, Costco and Starbucks. Keeping the talent pipeline stocked has always been Seattle’s secret—and it has paid off. Today, it ranks #11 in the nation for educated citizenry and #6 in our vital Household Income subcategory. The city’s boom has slowed significantly, with rising COVID-19 cases—despite being 22nd-lowest in the nation as of early July, and its highest-ever unemployment rate (ranked #86 nationally as of May 2020). At the same time, residents, workers, and businesses have been hobbled by the closure of the West Seattle Bridge, the city’s busiest.

16 DENVER COLORADO

POPULATION METRO 2,932,415

HIGHLIGHTS

10 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

11 PROSPERITY

Light rail, legal pot and buzzing ‘hoods put Denver on the fast track.

Since its Wild West beginnings, Denver has attracted people from a variety of cultures who’ve created a rich tapestry and a diverse cultural heritage. These days, an increasing number of companies are locating in Downtown Denver, which points to its reputation as one of the best places in the country to start and grow a business. The city ranks an impressive #11 nationally for Prosperity, including #30 for Employment as of May 2020 and #28 for tackling income inequality. But it’s not just an abundance of jobs and a lower cost of living that’s attracting a highly educated and in-demand workforce to the city. Blessed with 300 days of sunshine a year, surrounded by mountains, hiking paths and numerous indoor/outdoor spaces, the city is in the vanguard of the growing trend toward office wellness. Lest we forget, cannabis is legal in the Mile High City and the entire state of Colorado.



17 AUSTIN TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 2,168,316

HIGHLIGHTS

⑧ EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

⑨ NIGHTLIFE

The home of SXSW and the purported best live music scene on the planet fights hard to keep it weird.

The rebellious Texas city—forged with the Longhorn State's can-do persistence cut with a university town's political activism and social diversity—has long attracted the misfits that didn't quite fit into the south's expectations. The city ranks Top 10 in our People category, including #8 for Educational Attainment. That foundation of thinking differently drew dreamers for decades, manifesting in one of the nation's top music scenes. The city's marketing organization, Visit Austin, trademarked the city as "Live Music Capital of the World." On any given night, the city's various entertainment districts serve up performance experiences like nowhere else on earth. South By Southwest, the annual summit of film, interactive media, and music festivals and conferences (plus a fair share of historic product launches like Airbnb), has seeded the area's magnetism for new ventures. As such, monikers like "Silicon Hills" have followed campus openings by Apple, Facebook, Google, Oracle, Dell, Cisco, and Hewlett-Packard. A skills shortage—tempered by the pandemic—is being mitigated somewhat by a steady flow of graduates pouring out from the University of Texas and new residents.

18 ORLANDO FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 2,572,962

HIGHLIGHTS

④ ATTRACTIONS

③ TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

Yes, there are theme parks. But Orlando is also a thriving food destination with plenty to enjoy without kids in tow.

Being the largest city in a region that generates more than \$60 billion in tourism-related revenue every year (2020 being the notable exception) gets you plenty of lift from a rising tide. That's a lot of visitors with a story to tell if you give them the means. Orlando knows how to get people talking. Its Top 10 ranking in our Promotion category drove its strong ranking among larger U.S. cities, including the third-most TripAdvisor reviews of any metropolis. Orlando plans buzzy product releases with military precision—and has suffered deeply when confronted with an invisible enemy it couldn't defeat quickly, its many high-budget tourism-reliant initiatives cut short, from SeaWorld's new Sesame Street, rolled out for the show's 50th anniversary, to LEGOLAND Resort's debuted Lego Movie World. Orlando's Restaurants ranking is also an impressive #12 in the country. As the world's chefs focus on the post-pandemic opportunity in a place with so many diners on vacation, they'll open outposts here. The NBA making its pandemic season hub in the city will help a little, but Orlando faces massive challenges in a state where infection rates are setting daily records.

19 HONOLULU HAWAII

POPULATION METRO 980,080

HIGHLIGHTS

② PARKS & OUTDOORS

④ INCOME EQUALITY

There's the unparalleled natural beauty, of course, but there's innovative shopping and dining, too.

As a global vacation destination, visited by more than six million tourists last year—up 16.2% in five years, according to local numbers, Honolulu is facing an economy that's been devastated by the pandemic. It has among the highest rates of unemployment in the country and a long struggle back to rebuilding its visitor-focused workforce. Things were going in the right direction for the state at the beginning of 2020, with visitation and spending up 5% year-over-year as late as February. But with the pall of COVID-19 falling swiftly and mercilessly, local estimates are now warning of a 40% drop in tourism for this year, with 6,000 jobs lost as a result. But Honolulu will be back—it has the lowest COVID-19 infection rates among the nation's cities with MSA populations of 500,000 or higher. Despite the economic devastation, it still simultaneously ranks Top 10 for household income (#8) and in tackling income inequality (#4). It's also simply too coveted as both a destination and a hometown not to be. It ranked #3 in the nation in our layered Place category, trailing only the much larger centers of New York and San Diego, with its verdant, knife-edge topography exploding into the blue sky from rolling hills every few miles.



20 PHILADELPHIA

PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION METRO 6,096,372

HIGHLIGHTS

4 UNIVERSITY RANKING

7 MUSEUMS

The City of Brotherly Love gives locals and visitors plenty of Americana: in splendid museums, live shows and, of course, life-affirming cheesesteaks.

Given its deep foundation in the creation of the Union almost 250 years ago, Philadelphia is a dense, catalogued embodiment of American values and traditions, easily accessible and eagerly shared. Small wonder, then, that it ranks an impressive #13 for Programming, including Top 10 in the nation for Restaurants (#9) and Culture (#8). It's home to places like the Liberty Bell Center, of course. And various must-see cultural centers with the term "Independence" in their names. It might be America's birthplace, but the City of Brotherly Love only keeps one foot firmly rooted in its rich history. The other is stepping into the future, with the 11th-most Fortune 500 companies located here, a growing population and glittering skyline heading ever upward. Philadelphia is also a city rich in hometown pride, with locals reliably turning out to celebrate everything from Super Bowl victories to National Cheesesteak Day. Strong employment prior to the pandemic, driven by a diverse economy, meant population growth, a resilient real estate market and a boom in new construction.

21 MINNEAPOLIS

MINNESOTA

POPULATION METRO 3,629,190

HIGHLIGHTS

6 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

8 PROSPERITY

A low unemployment rate prior to the pandemic, a wealth of cultural offerings and lower cost of living make Minneapolis a talent magnet.

As the site of the George Floyd murder at the hands of local police officers that inspired a global movement against systemic racism, Minneapolis became a household name. In addition to their vital role in a fight for justice, residents have long advocated for their city, the results of which can be seen in numerous parks, bike trails and placemaking along a prime location on the mighty Mississippi. With 18 Fortune 500 companies—the most per capita of any American metro area—Minneapolis scores an impressive #8 for Prosperity. The city is also maintaining job opportunities amidst the outbreak, with a #30 ranking for Employment nationally as of May 2020. It also ranks #22 in our ranking of the Gini Index of Income Equality. The highly educated workforce (ranked #12 nationally for Educational Attainment) earns a comfortable living and enjoys easy access to the rest of the world via Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport. Locals are eager to show off the Walker Art Center—which features contemporary works like the giant spoon sculpture—which has become a city trademark, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

22 PORTLAND

OREGON

POPULATION METRO 2,478,996

HIGHLIGHTS

11 SIGHTS AND LANDMARKS

10 PROGRAMMING

America's Left Coast runs deep in this ambitious city on the edge of the wilderness.

Portland's Left-coast isolation, ambivalence toward established norms and legacy of cooperation and neighborliness—to hew trees and carve out one's place among the encroaching wilderness—makes this one of the most earnest cities in America. It's also one of most beautiful, ranking #11 for Sights and Landmarks and #15 for Parks & Outdoors. One of the zingers in the popular TV show *Portlandia* identified its lampooned target as a "place young people go to retire." But it's more like reinventing themselves, taking what was there all along, finding its best parts and doubling down on what works. The proof of its people is in Portland's performance: its citizenry ranks #18 for both the Educational Attainment and Household Income subcategories. Portlanders get things done—including, as of July 8, 2020, ranking #7 in the nation for low COVID-19 infections per 100,000. As the eyes of the world focus on the city's battle against shadowy federal military deployed there to quell Black Lives Matter protest, Portlanders are once again forging their reputation as an uncompromising citizenry.



23 BALTIMORE MARYLAND

POPULATION METRO 2,802,789

HIGHLIGHTS

6 UNIVERSITY RANKING

17 SIGHTS AND LANDMARKS

Baltimore is way more than what you know about it from television. And that's a very good thing.

Less than an hour's commute from Washington, D.C., Baltimore offers a slower pace of life and significantly cheaper housing than its hyper-charged neighbor to the south. But the time to buy in one of Baltimore's diverse, historic communities (the city ranks #17 for Sights and Landmarks) may just be right now—home prices have jumped nearly 10% since 2018. Baltimore is also home to world-class institutions like Johns Hopkins University and the National Aquarium, as well as a quirky culture that makes Charm City a place like no other. Johns Hopkins is Baltimore's largest employer, and while this may be the biggest city without a single Fortune 500 company, Maryland boasts a \$35-billion aerospace industry, and the defense contractor Northrop Grumman is a Top 5 employer of Baltimore residents. It ranks an impressive #12 in the nation in our Prosperity category, including Top 10 for Household Income. Meanwhile, unemployment has been dropping steadily since 2010 and, as of May 2020, the city boasted the 19th-lowest numbers in the country. Baltimore earns a #14 ranking for Museums, and many are clustered around the revitalized Inner Harbor, now a post-industrial waterfront.

24 PROVO UTAH

POPULATION METRO 632,705

HIGHLIGHTS

2 INCOME EQUALITY

5 SAFETY

An outdoor paradise prepares for take-off.

With Wasatch peaks to the east and Utah Lake to the west, Provo is an outdoor enthusiast's playground. It's home to Brigham Young University and forms part of Silicon Slopes, Utah's start-up and tech community. Its easy access to hiking, river rafting, mountain biking, skiing, snowboarding and more, plus the city's own 53 green spaces (totalling 2,000 acres, plus 33 miles of trails), earned Provo #74 for Parks & Outdoors—an impressive feat among the nation's larger cities. That ranking, plus its #5 spot for Safety and #24 for Weather, earned Provo an impressive #7 overall ranking in our Place category. But the real driver of its performance among America's Top 25 cities was its #2 ranking for low COVID-19 infections among 100,000. Technology, healthcare, and education are among the city's major industries, with an economy that's propelled by a highly educated population: Provo ranked #14 for Educational Attainment (with nearly 43% having earned a bachelor's degree or higher). Coupled with its #78 ranking for Foreign-Born Residents (nearly 11%), Provo ranked #30 in our People category. A Google Fiber community, Provo is poised for growth, led by its recently launched \$40-million airport terminal, adding more daily flights.

25 RALEIGH NORTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 1,362,540

HIGHLIGHTS

7 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

20 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

A booming economy and global intellect poise the Carolina powerhouse for the future.

The City of Oaks checks all the boxes for a bright, ambitious city of the new south: Raleigh is part of North Carolina's Research Triangle, one of the country's largest and most successful research parks—think high-tech and biotech research and advanced textile development. Ranked #26 for Prosperity among larger U.S. cities, including #20 for highest median Household Income, Raleigh is also a magnet for immigrants. It ranks #13 in our People category, comprising the subcategories of Educational Attainment and Foreign-Born Residents. And it's in education where Raleighites truly shine bright—ranking #7 in the U.S. for educated big-city citizenry. So what do all these smart people do for fun? They're indoors and out: the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences attracts more than a million people annually; there's a Contemporary Art Museum, bluegrass festivals and craft brews. While our rankings don't tell the food story yet (the city comes in at #46 for Restaurants), the culinary scene is vividly imaginative: *Bon Appétit* granted one of its coveted Top 10 America's Best New Restaurants for 2017 to a quirky and beautiful mash-up called Brewery Bhavana.



26 SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 2,345,210

HIGHLIGHTS

20 PLACE

22 PEOPLE

Green, bountiful and affluent, California's capital is big on local stewardship and keeping a good thing going.

California's state capital is peaceful and wealthy, ranking well in our Household Income subcategory and even better nationally in the Safety subcategory. Its natural attributes also drive its livability, including epic weather, courtesy of its Mediterranean temperatures. The City of Trees—residents claim more trees per capita than anywhere besides Paris—isn't a stranger to cataclysmic fires: the Great Conflagration of 1852 burned 40 square blocks of the fledgling city, leaving what is today called Old Sacramento, with its cobblestone streets, historic buildings, steam-hauled historic trains, horse-drawn carriages and the western terminus of the Pony Express. Hokey? Maybe, but it undoubtedly contributes to the city's #20 rank for Place, a measure of neighborhoods, parks and outdoor activities. Some help from Mother Nature has stewarded the city toward declaring itself America's "Farm to Fork Capital," surrounded by fertile farms that feed a robust fresh-and-local ethos. Sacramento's restaurants are only happy to tap the localism. Taste it for yourself at La Cosecha in Cesar Chavez Plaza, in the heart of the city.

27 NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

POPULATION METRO 1,932,099

HIGHLIGHTS

18 PROGRAMMING

22 PROMOTION

Music City lets you worship your idols and toast them frequently.

The city and its citizens spend their money wisely, including for the preservation of historic buildings and to revitalize neighborhoods like Germantown, which was established in the 1850s by European immigrants. Small wonder, then, that the city ranks #22 in our vital Sights and Landmarks subcategory. The music scene continues to thrive as well, particularly as a younger generation of musicians—Jack White and the Black Keys come to mind—have chosen to live and set up recording studios in town. You can start your visit at the Country Music Hall of Fame, which traces the history of the genre. If you want to delve deeper into the personal stories of Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and George Jones, well, they've got their own museums, too—at least they will when they fully reopen after the pandemic. With a #13 ranking for Culture, the city is finally getting the recognition it deserves for its long but subtle influence on the American fabric. Should you need a respite from culture and the #14-ranked Nightlife, the city offers a sprawling park system with more than 12,000 acres to explore by bike (B-Cycle bike-rental stations are located at greenway trailheads), or by kayak and canoe on the Harpeth River. Social distancing is (relatively) enjoyable here.

28 SAN ANTONIO TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 2,518,036

HIGHLIGHTS

7 ATTRACTIONS

10 GOOGLE SEARCH

Rich in distinctly Texan attractions, San Antonio is a place for all seasons (and reasons).

The genius of San Antonio is that, ever since 1941, it has sagely leveraged, grown and enhanced its greatest asset and attraction: the River Walk. The idyllic pedestrian promenade along the San Antonio River, extended from three to 15 miles in 2013, is a scenic urban lifeline that connects visitors to everywhere they want to be and anchors the city's #7 ranking for Attractions among America's large cities. On one end of the River Walk, there's the five colonial missions, a UNESCO heritage site and key players in a #24 finish for Culture. On the other, the San Antonio Zoo, and in between, the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Texas Golf Hall of Fame and dozens of other curiosities, eclectic stops and riverside cafés. Increasingly, Pearl is a destination within the destination: a mixed-use space in a former brewery, it's a beguiling blend of retail, dining, offices, a riverside amphitheater, events and a campus of the Culinary Institute of America. Around the esteemed school, a host of grads and chefs have clustered, creating a smorgasbord of choices from Italian to 'cue to bakery to vegetarian cuisine.



29 SALT LAKE CITY UTAH

POPULATION METRO 1,222,540

HIGHLIGHTS

5 INCOME EQUALITY

20 CONVENTION CENTER

The Great Outdoors are calling and Salt Lake is doing its best to keep you in town.

Combining spectacular natural and built environments, Salt Lake is no longer just a gateway to the great outdoors but also a welcoming destination with a high cool quotient. The transformation began with the arrival of the XIX Olympic Winter Games in 2002, as the city thawed its reputation as an über-conservative cowboy town with Mormon family values and instead presented a slew of quaint cafés and stylish restaurants. SLC continues to pour millions into development projects and the beautification of its downtown. The town has matured into an urban experience as much as an outdoor one. Of course, the proximity of the Wasatch Range's stunning canyons and 11,000-foot peaks is the reason many adrenaline junkies travel and move here. The city ranks #27 for Parks & Outdoors and #28 for Culture. The city's #9 Prosperity ranking is also notable, driven by its Top 5 finish in our Gini Index of Income Equality.

30 TAMPA FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 3,142,663

HIGHLIGHTS

7 SAFETY

14 ATTRACTIONS

Florida's outdoor wonderland has a taste for the finer things.

In Tampa, the natural and built environments are in sync. The city has low crime (an impressive #7 in the nation), pleasant weather in its 361 days of sunshine per year, and sprawling, diverse outdoor attractions, including, of course, nearby beaches like Desoto Park and Clearwater Beach that helped the city rank #16 in our Parks & Outdoors category. Chief among the parklands is the Tampa Riverwalk, a 2.6-mile continuous waterfront corridor along the banks of the Hillsborough River and the Garrison Channel. It's bookended by the Florida Aquarium and the popular Ulele restaurant; in between, there's the Tampa Bay History Center, the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts, the convention center, and other stops of interest that contribute to Tampa's #14 ranking in Attractions. In early 2018, another park was added to the mosaic of green spaces along the Riverwalk: The Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park's 23 acres invite visitors to get onto the water, rather than simply admiring it, via row boats, canoes, kayaks and paddleboards. The shoreline, meanwhile, provides plenty of waterfront entertainment spaces for landlubbers.

31 NEW ORLEANS LOUISIANA

POPULATION METRO 1,270,399

HIGHLIGHTS

2 SHOPPING

3 MUSEUMS

Few cities of its size radiate the lore that New Orleans does.

In the face of poverty, injustice, and environmental catastrophes compounded by both, NoLa has created a culture of presence, music and festivals that may pale in size to others in the world, but never in intensity. It's why the city ranks #6 for Programming, our category spanning shopping, food scene, nightlife and cultural attractions. Given the need to celebrate, to seize the day, to revel in all that fusion of humanity and culture and sweaty new people and ideas, the city ranks #6 in our Nightlife category. After all, the party only begins in the French Quarter. It grows more refined and local as it weaves into Marigny, Bywater or the timeless jazz seduction of Frenchmen Street. NoLa also rules our Shopping category, scoring a #2 ranking, helped by the intoxicating treasures of Magazine Street convincing visitors that their finds are only available here and now. And they often are. In the last few years, the city has been renovating and expediting projects languishing since the Hurricane Katrina rebuild. Today, with one of the highest rates of COVID-19 infections among cities in the country, New Orleans is getting ready to rebuild again.



32 SANTA ROSA CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 499,942

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 SAFETY
- 9 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Prosperous, safe and well-educated, Santa Rosa is as resilient as it is beautiful.

After suffering untold tragedy during the Tubbs wildfire in 2017, Santa Rosa is back stronger than ever, taking the top spot of all midsize cities in California. As the largest city in Northern California's Wine Country, Santa Rosa enjoys excellent amenities both human and natural. It's the kind of place that blends wine tasting and hiking with distinct museums, none more so than the Charles M. Schulz Museum, dedicated to the author of the Peanuts comic strip. The city ranks #9 for Safety and #18 for Weather. Its high household income (#9) draws educated citizens (#34), contributing to a safe place to live and work. As Santa Rosa rebuilds the neighborhoods destroyed by fire, it is focusing on new development downtown near the SMART train station that connects the city to Marin County and ferries to San Francisco.

33 MADISON WISCONSIN

POPULATION METRO 660,422

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- 10 INCOME EQUALITY

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

Madison's enviable position as both capital of Wisconsin and the site of the state's largest university certainly fuels its #13 ranking in Prosperity among American cities, including #29 for Household Income and the 19th-lowest unemployment rate as of May 2020 (more on that in a bit). And Madison's prosperity is mostly evenly dispersed, evidenced by the city's impressive #10 spot on the Gini Index of Income Equality. A hive of healthcare, 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. Indeed, Madison boasts the ninth-best educated citizens among the nation. With a Millennial population approaching 30% (according to a recent Brookings study), Madison is set to welcome even more with its still-affordable housing, one of the lowest historical unemployment rates in the country, and one of the nation's lowest urban infection rates (#20 as of July 8, 2020). Distinct and emerging neighborhoods and venues are adding to the urban fabric.

34 CHARLOTTE NORTH CAROLINA

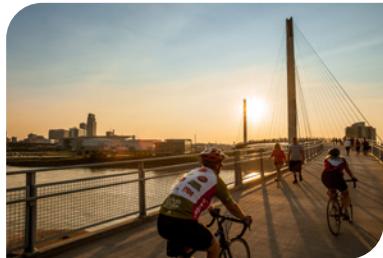
POPULATION METRO 2,569,213

HIGHLIGHTS

- 10 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY
- 20 GOOGLE SEARCH

Affluent and easy to love for its southern charm, North Carolina's biggest city is open for business and pleasure.

The Old South is up to new tricks in Charlotte, a global banking powerhouse (the second-most important in the U.S. after New York) and holder of the #23 spot in our ranking for Fortune 500 companies in town. Locals in the Queen City are smart, too: Charlotte ranks #33 in our Educational Attainment subcategory. The prosperity is easily accessed and distributed, powered by Charlotte's #10 ranking for Airport Connectivity. People call their downtown Uptown, but the good news is that it's all walkable. Beneath its bankerly surface, Charlotte offers unexpected attractions: the NASCAR Hall of Fame, for instance, where you can trace the sport from its moonshine-running roots to today's multi-billion-dollar powerhouse. Glory Road is a banked ramp featuring historic cars and tracks, and racing simulators let you become a pitstop crew member, and see the world from the driver's point of view.



35 BRIDGEPORT CONNECTICUT

POPULATION METRO 943,823

HIGHLIGHTS

4 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The leafy riverfront city breezes into a renewable future.

Known as Park City because of its bounty of green space, Bridgeport is a deep-sea port that sits at the mouth of the Pequonnock River as it pours into Long Island Sound. It stands out for its Top 5 spot in our vital People category. Its residents are among the most educated in the entire nation, with a #5 ranking for Educational Attainment. (More than 18% of its population has a bachelor's degree or higher.) It boasts a diverse demographic, standing at #13 for Foreign-Born Residents (nearly 30%) residents. Connecticut's largest city is also a wealthy one, #4 for our Household Income subcategory (with a 2019 median income of \$45,441) and, even amidst the pandemic, the #19th-lowest unemployment rate in the country. It is the poor performance in Income Equality (#107 nationally) that sinks the city's overall Prosperity ranking to the mid-50s (#54). There's plenty of innovation, too, led by Vineyard Wind, the top U.S. offshore wind supplier. The company is beginning construction on Bridgeport's Park City Wind as early as 2021. The electricity-generating hub will power 600,000 homes, create close to \$1.6 billion in economic benefits and create as many as 12,000 jobs statewide while saving residents up to \$1.1 billion in energy costs.

36 OMAHA NEBRASKA

POPULATION METRO 941,924

HIGHLIGHTS

16 INCOME EQUALITY

26 WEATHER

The discreet economic powerhouse of the Midwest lives large while keeping it small.

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. Billionaire Warren Buffett's decision to stay in Omaha—where he lives in a modest home he bought for \$31,500 more than 60 years ago—has always been a source of curiosity. But the Berkshire Hathaway CEO's hometown loyalty doesn't surprise Omaha locals, who know that their city is one of the best spots in the country to start a business, raise a family and let your hair down on a Saturday night. Thanks in no small part to Buffett, Omaha earns our #5 ranking for Prosperity, with the most Fortune 500s (eight) of any city with less than a million people. It also boasts the second-lowest unemployment rate as of May 2020, and an impressive #16 ranking on the Gini Index of Income Equality. But it's not just stalwarts like Mutual of Omaha that keep this city bustling: a growing tech sector has earned Omaha the nickname "Silicon Prairie." It's important to note that Omahans work to live, too, as evidenced by its #31 ranking for Nightlife and #40 for Shopping in the country (pre-COVID-19, anyway).

37 COLORADO SPRINGS COLORADO

POPULATION METRO 738,939

HIGHLIGHTS

6 INCOME EQUALITY

18 ATTRACTIONS

A haven that fuels the appetites of both adventure seekers and culinary hounds.

Situated at the base of Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs is a wonderland for those who love adventure, unsurprisingly ranking #26 in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory nationally. But after you've burned off calories hiking the Garden of the Gods or biking Cheyenne Mountain State Park, there are plenty of opportunities to refuel. Today, the fare is increasingly raised and grown locally, and the long-standing brewing tradition adopted by start-ups is thriving. Even the springs in Colorado Springs are being marketed for their terroir. It all comes together—or will come back together, fully, once the effects of social distancing have passed—during mornings at Ivywild School, a local community marketplace for groceries or coffee to go, and during evenings at new spots that seem to open monthly. The city is also getting the word out about its rise, including piquing plenty of interest with its #37 ranking for TripAdvisor Reviews and #39 ranking for Facebook Check-ins. While the city's size keeps its economic performance middle-of-the-pack, it ranks an incredible #6 on the Gini Index of Income Equality. It's also had, as of July 8, 2020, the 12th-lowest COVID-19 infection rates in the country.



38 ST. LOUIS

MISSOURI

POPULATION METRO 2,804,724

HIGHLIGHTS

11 UNIVERSITY RANKING

15 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

One of the world's top music cities is an energetic crossroads of the American dream.

America's gateway to the West has always been an understated city of neighborhoods (ranking #15 among American large cities for Sights and Landmarks) and cultural elegance. It performs well (#20) for Nightlife action in bars and clubs, and ranks #24 for Culture, our measure of concerts, shows and major cultural events (not surprisingly, Miles Davis is a native son). There's often a correlation in the rankings between good nightlife and prosperity, and St. Louis is no exception—it ranks #15 for Fortune 500 companies that call it home. But humankind can't live by nightlife alone, especially if children are involved, so there's always the zoo, and there must be a visit to the mind-blowing (for any age) City Museum. Not surprisingly, the city ranks #17 in our Museums subcategory.

39 OXNARD

CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 850,967

HIGHLIGHTS

3 WEATHER

7 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Rich, rugged and sunny, Oxnard's future as a coveted hometown is looking bright.

Oxnard, sandwiched between more famous Malibu and Santa Barbara, is an increasingly poorly kept secret. This California city has too much going for it to stay under the radar. Its gorgeous weather ranks #3 among large U.S. cities, and its direct access to beaches and the coastal mountains give it a #44 ranking for Parks & Outdoors. The city's diversified economy, including agriculture, oil, shipping, and business and financial services, makes Oxnard a magnet for both high-income households (#7) and foreign-born residents (#16), giving the city a #24 rank overall in our vital People category. Also notable is the fact that the city is in the Top 20 for low COVID-19 infections (as of July 8, 2020), ranking #19 nationally. Port Hueneme, right next door, is the only major navigable port in California between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay. For the few people who don't like boating or beaches, Oxnard boasts not one but two automotive museums (this is California, after all), as well as the Heritage Square historic district, a unique collection of century-old Craftsman and Victorian homes.

40 COLUMBUS

OHIO

POPULATION METRO 2,106,541

HIGHLIGHTS

24 ATTRACTIONS

27 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

A business heart beats strong, which means plenty of money to support innovative city design and local commerce.

Setting it apart from many Midwest metros, Ohio's capital and largest city is one of America's fastest-growing, a forward-thinking economic powerhouse that's also home to one of the largest college campuses, Ohio State University. And Buckeye football isn't the university's only contribution to local culture: with more OSU graduates deciding to stay in town, Columbus is an emerging tech mecca with a thriving arts scene. The city earned a decent #37 ranking for Prosperity, thanks to historically low unemployment (although only ranking #36 amidst the pandemic, according to May 2020 data) and a well-rounded economy buoyed by a growing number of start-ups, as well as top employer Ohio State and Fortune 500s like Nationwide Insurance and L Brands. So what do locals do when they're not working? The first Saturday of the month means Gallery Hop, when galleries are open late and performers and artists hit the streets of Columbus' Short North Arts District. And there's Otherworld—a 32,000-square-foot warehouse packed with immersive installations. All of it adds up to a respectable #39 ranking for Culture and an overall #30 ranking for Programming.



41 TUCSON ARIZONA

POPULATION METRO 1,039,073

HIGHLIGHTS

10 WEATHER

16 SHOPPING

Arizona's second city is ascending fast, with bold city leadership and placemaking.

Fast-growing Tucson is buoyed by its sense of place, ranking #10 for Weather and #18 for Parks & Outdoors. The city is poised to ascend up future national rankings, due to a torrent of new investment in all manner of green and common space. Its new Sun Link LRT is sure to improve quality of life, creating a focus on fewer cars and more walkability that's designed to pull the sprawling population together, closer to downtown. Urban innovation that taps its outdoor bounty by increasing access to it is not a hard sell for a town where almost 25% are aged between 20 and 34. You can thank the University of Arizona (ranked #45 nationally in our University subcategory) for the city's youthful bounce. The city is also hanging in economically, with the sixth-lowest unemployment rate in the nation, as of May 2020. It must be all that great shopping in town, for which Tucson ranks #16 in the country.

42 VIRGINIA BEACH VIRGINIA

POPULATION METRO 1,729,114

HIGHLIGHTS

2 SAFETY

8 INCOME EQUALITY

Big-city amenities lap the golden sand in Virginia's largest city.

Few East Coast American cities blend the urban with the natural as beautifully as Virginia Beach. With 38 miles of coastline at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia Beach has long been a vacation destination for folks looking to escape Washington, D.C.'s sweltering summers. But Virginia's largest city is coming into its own, with a growing Millennial population drawn by a strong economy, affordable housing and thriving local food scene. Tourism remains a top industry, netting the city more than \$850 million annually, but corporate employers like Amerigroup and GEICO round out the local economy. The Hampton Roads metropolitan area is also home to major U.S. military installations, and—an unusual and welcome asset in an era when local food reigns—the city's 23,000-acre Pungo neighborhood is devoted to agriculture, which remains a \$120-million industry. The pristine, endless sandy beach, charmingly framed by a three-mile, 140-year-old boardwalk, is the city's top draw, earning Virginia Beach a #10 ranking in our Place category, powered by its second-lowest crime rate in the country's large cities (#2) and its eighth-lowest rate of COVID-19 infections as of July 8, 2020.

43 KANSAS CITY MISSOURI

POPULATION METRO 2,142,419

HIGHLIGHTS

15 GOOGLE SEARCH

23 CULTURE

The Paris of the Plains is growing into an affordable, artsy tech hub with a taste for barbecue.

Affordable yet packed with culture, sports and plenty of delectable food (if you haven't had KC barbecue, you haven't quite lived), Kansas City offers a perfect balance of big city amenities like great jobs and a healthy economy combined with an easygoing Midwestern vibe that locals and visitors love. If you absolutely must work, then Kansas City isn't a bad place to do it. Routinely ranked as one of the best cities for working women, KC's top industries are healthcare and government, but it also has a burgeoning tech scene, which is in large part thanks to it being the first home of the Google Fiber network. It's likely you won't be bored in Kansas City—whether you love cheering on the NFL champion Chiefs or the Royals or you prefer perusing the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art or the American Jazz Museum. And if you don't feel like doing any of those, you could always visit any or all of the 48 publicly operated fountains throughout the city. Besides the good weather (which ranks at #33), Kansas City makes a perfect nesting spot for young professionals and families of all shapes and sizes due to its affordability, its increasingly diverse population and world-class universities like Kansas City Art Institute and UMKC.



44 DURHAM NORTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 575,412

HIGHLIGHTS

6 UNIVERSITY RANKING

6 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

One of America's top college towns is growing from within while welcoming the world.

Durham is one of America's top college towns and at the heart of it is Duke, a private research university that has a global academic reach and counts among its game-changing alumni Melinda Gates and Apple Inc. CEO Tim Cook. Duke ranks #6 in our University category. In a city that ranks #6 for Educational Attainment and #35 for Weather, it's not surprising that the 55-acre Sarah P. Duke Gardens and lively neighborhoods like Rockwood and South Square are mere steps away from the campus. And just as Duke University connects Durham to the world, Raleigh-Durham International Airport, a 20-minute drive from campus, puts this small North Carolina city on the flight paths of nine carriers. With 400-plus nonstop flights per day to more than 50 destinations (before the pandemic), and its Refresh campus improvement program in full effect, this facility earns Durham the #23 spot among American cities in our Connectivity subcategory.

45 CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 787,643

HIGHLIGHTS

7 PARKS & OUTDOORS

10 MUSEUMS

In the Holy City, find European elegance and macaron-colored antebellum mansions by day and all kinds of revelry after sunset.

A beguiling fusion of built environment and coastal transition landscapes—golden islands, channels and marshes—Charleston is one of North America's most architecturally significant destinations. This easy yet kinetic seaside American treasure draws pilgrims from all over the world, propelled by global travel media and the promise of legendary Southern hospitality from an ideal, forgotten epoch. The city comes in at #15 for Place, including a #7 ranking in the country for Parks & Outdoors. A city rich in cultural, natural and military heritage, Charleston nabs a Top 10 spot in our Museums category. Set to open next year, the International African American Museum will illuminate the influential, under-reported histories of Africans and their descendants in South Carolina, highlighting their diasporic connections throughout the nation and the world. The museum's defining feature will be its location at the historic site of Gadsden's Wharf. Nearly half of captive Africans forced to North America in the slavery era arrived through Charleston, and today millions of Americans can trace their ancestors here.

46 CAPE CORAL FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 754,610

HIGHLIGHTS

1 SAFETY

8 PARKS & OUTDOORS

America's safest city is no longer overlooked in favor of glowing neighbors Sanibel Island and Fort Myers.

Sure, there's Southwest Florida's first Westin property. But people are coming here to live. It's not only the safest city in the nation, it's also one of the most beautiful, ranked #8 in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory. What Cape Coral lacks in the soft, sandy beaches of its neighboring islands it more than makes up for in waterfront vistas and outdoor pursuits galore. It's also one of the most accessible, with Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW)—ranked #30 for Connectivity—a mere 30-minute drive after baggage claim. The city is attractive to students, too, who are drawn to the easy lifestyle and a dozen colleges and community colleges within 50 miles of the city center. Increasingly, graduates are putting down roots. According to Yahoo Finance, more than 50% of Millennials in the region own homes—the third highest rate in the nation. The booming Pine Island Road and Pine Island Village development will go a long way to satiate residential demand in the area.



47 PORTLAND MAINE

POPULATION METRO 535,420

HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- 17 SAFETY

Envious streetscapes and plentiful arts and culture help this Maine gem punch above its weight for talent attraction.

In 2014, Portland, Maine, decided to officially declare what pretty much everyone knew. "Yes. Life's good here," is a patented city brand that some might interpret as a little smug, if it weren't for the fact that Portland keeps working to make life even better. The city ranks #37 for Place, our measure of the natural and built environment, but that's hardly a contest: there are six unfairly picturesque lighthouses in the area, and the city's weathered wharfs, cobblestone passageways and historic buildings thrive in the fresh salt air, so much so that the city's waterfront Commercial Street was declared one of the 10 best streets in the country by the American Planning Association. The Old Port holds equal charms, particularly at night, when live music, waterfront pubs and Maine's justly famous microbreweries unleash merriment. A #41 ranking for Neighborhoods is notable for Portland's size. The city is also an impressive economic performer, ranking #25 in our Prosperity category, including #30 for Household Income and #18 in Income Equality, despite a lack of Fortune 500 companies locally.



48 NEW HAVEN CONNECTICUT

POPULATION METRO 857,620

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 UNIVERSITY RANKING
- 33 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

With its top-ranking Yale University, New Haven has long exuded a quiet influence on the union.

New Haven prides itself on its tree-lined streets and charming historic homes, with a #67 rank for Sights and Landmarks among America's cities. Cost of living is higher than elsewhere, as is crime, but most residents say they wouldn't trade the bustle of students, workers and tourists for the diversity and vibrancy it brings. The town also boasts Yale University, which has educated many of the country's best and brightest; it's also the cultural and economic center of this leafy city, whose residents take full advantage of all the resources on offer in a capital of power and prestige. Yale earns New Haven a #2 ranking for University, and about 35% of adult residents have at least a bachelor's degree, earning New Haven a solid #42 rank for Educational Attainment. Yale (including its medical center) is also the city's largest employer and largest taxpayer, making this effectively a company town. New Haven has stood firm in the face of the economic crisis, boasting the nation's sixth-lowest unemployment as of May 2020. Yale's world-class museums and picturesque gothic campus might be enough of a draw for visitors, but the rest of historic New Haven is also beguiling to visitors and new residents.



49 EL PASO TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 844,723

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 SAFETY
- 7 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

A border town taps into its strategic attributes to create a prosperous sanctuary.

Safe (the "Safest City in America!" if you listen to loud and proud Mayor Dee Margo, even though we have it at #3 in the category), 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 in the literal sense, ranking #43 for its culinary scene. But the boom is tapping the city's history, too. "The city mothballed its streetcar system in the 1970s," said Destination El Paso CEO Bryan Crowe. "We brought back the perfectly preserved streetcars to service our newly expanded medical schools." Today the streetcar travels a 4.8-mile route in two loops through El Paso's uptown and downtown areas. Fortified by its roots as a cowboy town, El Paso is leveraging its regional pride by enticing scattered locals back home, while embracing its border-city advantage. A #7 ranking in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory points to the city's population mostly of Hispanic origin (80%). It doesn't get more Tex-Mex than here, where many residents speak a foreign language—in this case, overwhelmingly Spanish—at home.



50 RICHMOND

VIRGINIA

POPULATION METRO 1,303,621

HIGHLIGHTS

18 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

26 SIGHTS AND LANDMARKS

Mellow and understated by design, Richmond's is a quiet influence on the union.

Richmond may radiate a "genteel and understated nature" as the *New York Times* observed, but things happen here. It's a wealthy city, ranking #19 in Prosperity, including #18 for the presence of Fortune 500 companies in town. The city is also faring well so far in mitigating job losses amidst the economic crisis, with the 23rd-lowest unemployment rate in the nation as of May 2020. Richmond also punches above its weight in our deep Place category—with a #26 ranking for its Sights and Landmarks, a subcategory that tracks neighborhoods. Experience modern Richmond in the neighborhood of Jackson Ward, once the epicenter of the city's Black culture; the restaurants and galleries of Broad Street reward exploration on foot or bike. The James River Park System sees more than a million visitors a year clamber over rocks in the river, launch paddleboards and kayaks, swim and inner tube. But it is the artistic face of Richmond that surprises the most: there are more than 100 murals painted in the city by artists from around the world and, every September, the RVA Street Art Festival invigorates neglected areas, benefits Richmond arts charities and puts on a great local party.

51 HARTFORD

CONNECTICUT

POPULATION METRO 1,206,300

HIGHLIGHTS

15 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

17 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Connecticut's capital is prosperous, safe and delightfully bookish.

With deep roots as an original American town, first as a Connecticut River trading post in 1633 and today one of the country's most prosperous and well-educated cities, Hartford's investment in city building is paying off. It's home to America's oldest public park, and respects visionaries with things like a sculpture park dedicated to Lincoln and Katharine Hepburn's gravesite. It revels in its role nurturing Mark Twain's childhood imagination, which would fuel the celebrated author for decades. But Hartford doesn't dwell in the past. Ranking #10 in our Prosperity category (including #15 for Household Income, #23 for Fortune 500 Companies and the eighth-lowest unemployment rate in the nation among large cities as of May 2020), this "insurance capital of the world" is investing in its thriving arts and entertainment scene, a revitalized waterfront and even more parks and public gardens. With a #17 ranking for Educational Attainment by its citizenry, it seems like the smart thing to do.

52 INDIANAPOLIS

INDIANA

POPULATION METRO 2,048,428

HIGHLIGHTS

15 ATTRACTIONS

18 CONVENTION CENTER

Indy is rich in experiences and events, but its housing affordability is the real reason to fall for this Midwest gem.

It's difficult to overestimate the powerful influence a strong sports brand can have on the perception and profile of a city. Indianapolis might owe its fame to the century-old auto race known as the Indianapolis 500 but this Midwest metropolis has plenty to offer, even if you don't have a need for speed. Come for the sparkling airport, world class cultural institutions and bustling nightlife, stay for affordable neighborhoods and family-friendly entertainment. True to its reputation as the capital of speed, Indianapolis is home to workers who fuel a diverse economy anchored by three Fortune 500s—ranking it #31 nationally—and some of the shortest commutes of any metro area. Indy has plenty of attractions to call its own. Destinations like the picturesque Canal Walk promenade, the Indianapolis Museum of Art and the Children's Museum of Indianapolis (the largest institution of its kind in the world) helped earn Indy an impressive #15 rank in the Attractions subcategory.



53 PITTSBURGH PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION METRO 2,324,743

HIGHLIGHTS

15 UNIVERSITY RANKING

20 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

America's city of industry is gearing up to supply the global economy all over again.

It's Steel City, City of (440!) Bridges, Andy Warhol's hometown and birthplace of the NFL's "Steelers." In fact, sports tourism is huge in Pittsburgh, home of the Penguins, Steelers and Pirates. According to a study done by the three sports franchises, over the last five years sports tourism led to numerous jobs, \$6 billion in direct/indirect spending and \$73 million in state and local tax revenue. The city knows how to kick back, too: it ranks #29 for great nightlife and #31 for its culinary scene, making it a place of work and play. Even when the teams are traveling, sports venues generate direct spending. In 2019, Heinz Field hosted Garth Brooks and the largest crowd ever in that venue. The city lands at #16 for Professional Sports Teams, a subcategory under the larger Product category. It's also home to Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, which helps explain its #15 University ranking and an overall sense of practicality and stewardship (and why urbanist and author Richard Florida launched his career here). Case in point: the city had the ninth-lowest COVID-19 infection rate as of July 8, 2020 among the nation's large cities.

54 ALBUQUERQUE NEW MEXICO

POPULATION METRO 916,791

HIGHLIGHTS

14 WEATHER

18 SHOPPING

Where transcendent natural beauty and a lifetime of outdoor pursuits meet.

Diverse cultures, authentic art and dynamic traditions have helped shape a centuries-old story in Albuquerque. There's the vintage neon glow of Route 66, the pink hues of the Sandia Mountains at sunset and the cottonwood bosque of the Rio Grande. ABQ ranks #47 in our Product category—indicative of deep infrastructure and local investment—including a #19 ranking in the Museums subcategory. In a city rich in cultural heritage from Spain, Mexico and, of course, its Indigenous peoples, the architecture is also diverse. The cuisine is also influenced and inspired by a colorful (and spicy) palate: green and red chiles are staples—even in desserts. Despite this daring gastronomy, people still won't believe you when you tell them that Albuquerque ranks #34 for Restaurants in America. 'Burque, in local parlance, is also a cultural hot spot, stacked with more than 100 galleries, a symphony orchestra, theaters and even an opera scene that's getting national attention. It also seems to be resilient in the face of the health and economic crisis, with the 13th-lowest rate of COVID-19 infections in the nation as of July 8, 2020, and the 13th-lowest unemployment rate as of May 2020.

55 DETROIT MICHIGAN

POPULATION METRO 4,326,442

HIGHLIGHTS

12 CONVENTION CENTER

13 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

The world seems to be rooting for Comeback City. It's got a new arena, culture, streetcar...and its unshakeable local pride.

Detroit is a city on a long, long roller-coaster ride: it's been on top of the world, it's been as low as you can go, and tomorrow will undoubtedly bring both new hills and new thrills. Call it Motor City, the D, Comeback City...they all apply and more. Certainly, Comeback City was appropriate in spring 2018, when Detroit emerged from bankruptcy, where it had struggled since 2013. And there were encouraging words for the tourism industry—which, before the pandemic, welcomed 19 million visitors annually who spent more than \$6 billion. The city even ranks #15 for Instagram Hashtags. The 6.6-mile QLine streetcar—named after Quicken Loans, which bought naming rights—has been operational on the Woodward Corridor for a few years. Yet more than \$7 billion in investment has poured into the corridor route since 2013. More than 200 development projects have been completed, are under construction or planned throughout Downtown, Midtown, New Center and the North End. The city's #13 ranking for Fortune 500 Companies should improve with all the new infrastructure.



56 BOISE IDAHO

POPULATION METRO 732,257

HIGHLIGHTS

11 SAFETY

37 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES (TIE)

One of the fastest-growing cities in the country entices with the promise of plentiful jobs and after-work outdoor adventure.

Boise, with an almost 20% population spike in the past decade, is an American West boomtown where access to the outdoors, a strong economy thanks to its booming tech sector, and a lower cost of living than many other cities similar in size is drawing people in from all over the country. Despite ranking outside of the Top 50, Boise finished #19 in both our deep Place category, including #11 for Safety. It's also a place where things get done and local business hustles, ranking #31 in our Prosperity category, led by 13th-lowest unemployment rate in the nation amidst the pandemic, as of May 2020. Known as the "Austin of the North," Boise's tech scene is becoming well known at a rapid pace. It's anchored by the tech giant Micron Technology and blossoming in all sorts of interesting start-ups. Also adding to its allure are mountains, a desert and a river all within striking distance. Floating the Boise River, hiking around the foothills or fishing at the Swan Falls Dam all make it possible for Boise to perform so well in our Place category, which ranks Weather (#27) and Parks & Outdoors (#41), among other factors.

57 OGDEN UTAH

POPULATION METRO 676,948

HIGHLIGHTS

1 INCOME EQUALITY

17 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

A city prospers off the outdoors.

Sitting nearly 4,300 feet above sea level along the northern end of the Wasatch Mountain range just 35 miles from Salt Lake City, Ogden appeals mightily to the avid outdoor set. But it has an urban wild side too, with events like the annual Witchstock fest (complete with a Zombie Crawl) and the family-friendly Harvest Moon Celebration. Outdoor products form one of the city's key industries, along with IT and life sciences (specializing in biopharmaceuticals and medical devices). Another is aerospace and advanced manufacturing, the city being situated in the heart of the sector's cluster two miles from Hill Air Force Base. Combine these powerful industries and you get one of the most well-off—and overlooked—cities in the nation. Ogden ranks #2 among American cities in our coveted Prosperity category, including tops in the Gini Index of Income Equality and #17 for Household Income. Ogden not only creates wealth for citizens, it distributes it, too. Given the city's #104 ranking in our Promotion category, don't feel too bad about never having heard about this gem. The state is investing in the city's future, with a new 5.3-mile bus rapid transit line from downtown to Weber State University and McKay-Dee Hospital. The \$91.9-million project calls for bus lanes and a transit center on campus.

58 CINCINNATI OHIO

POPULATION METRO 2,189,442

HIGHLIGHTS

20 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

26 ATTRACTIONS

From The Banks on the Ohio River to Over the Rhine, from baseball to music to beer, Cincinnati is most entertaining.

Cincinnati has been simmering just under the surface of national tourism awareness for a few years now, but in 2018 it leapt into the Top 10 of the list every place wants to be on. At #8 on the *New York Times* 52 Places to Visit in 2018, Cincinnati earned some enviable and well-deserved awareness, particularly for its programming strengths. It ranked high in our report as well: the city is #32 for Culture, #28 for Restaurants and #26 for Nightlife. The architecturally glorious 140-year-old Music Hall is recently reopened and is home to the symphony, ballet and opera; it joins an expanded Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati and a new home for the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company to give the Over the Rhine neighborhood real cultural chops. The huge interactive fountain facing the Music Hall in Washington Park is an all-ages frolic and a pure pleasure for families day and night. The city ranks #26 for Attractions.



59 MILWAUKEE WISCONSIN

POPULATION METRO 1,576,113

HIGHLIGHTS

18 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

27 NIGHTLIFE

A sudden destination city, one in which tourists outnumbered residents 10 to one during peak times throughout the year. Really.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, some 23 million tourists visited the Milwaukee area in 2016—and it's been climbing ever since (pandemic excepted), which resulted in an economic impact of more than \$3.7 billion for the city in 2018 alone. So what's luring these millions of tourists to this urban center in the American Heartland? On America's third coast, Wisconsin's largest city combines cherished traditions and modern attitude. It celebrates its beer brewing heritage and offers a vibrant farm-to-table culinary scene—an obvious asset to a city with a century of feeding and brewing for a continent. A jack of all trades but master of none in our categories, the city will improve based on its ascent as a cruise ship destination. In 2019, 10 passenger ships docked here, more than double from 2018. In 2022 plans are for Viking to launch new Great Lakes cruises, with 20 that start or end in Milwaukee. Plans to expand the downtown Milwaukee convention center (the Wisconsin Center) are also moving forward, with construction expected to begin next year and sure to improve the city's #44 ranking for its convention center.

60 DES MOINES IOWA

POPULATION METRO 655,409

HIGHLIGHTS

20 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

24 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The affordability brings the soul while entrepreneurs and head offices serve up plenty of jobs. As young talent reconsiders big cities, Des Moines checks a lot of boxes.

Set on the Des Moines River among the state's famous rolling cornfields, Iowa's state capital is a business mecca with an artsy side, bustling late into the evening with a blend of daring culture and heartland hospitality. Add in the low, low cost of living, and is it any wonder prairie-cool Des Moines, which earns our #17 ranking for Prosperity, is one of the fastest-growing cities in the Midwest? Des Moines earns an impressive #24 ranking in our Household Income subcategory. Also impressive is the city's Top 10 performance (#9) in the Gini Index of Income Equality. Major corporate outposts of Nationwide and Wells Fargo round out the thriving finance and insurance sector, which boasts a \$3-billion annual payroll. And in the golden-domed State Capitol, lawmakers are working to ensure a friendly business climate with temptingly low corporate taxes. Business might be booming, but that doesn't mean cost of living is: Des Moines remains affordable, with housing costs at about two-thirds the national average. With that, the burgeoning cultural scene and friendly Midwest attitude, Des Moines is a city to watch.

61 ALBANY NEW YORK

POPULATION METRO 883,169

HIGHLIGHTS

22 UNIVERSITY RANKING

25 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Central, prosperous and sophisticated, New York State's capital knows its worth.

Anchored on the shore of the Hudson River, Albany holds the political power despite being overshadowed by that other New York city downriver. Incredibly connected by road, rail and the #58-ranked airport in America, Albany offers a prosperous place to put down roots, resulting in Top 25 household income and educated citizenry (#27 in our Educational Attainment subcategory). New York's Capital Region is not all politics, though—Albany's also a capital of culture, and it boasts an enviable central location, with the Berkshires, Adirondacks and burgeoning Finger Lakes Wine Region—and, yes, the Big Apple—all just a few hours away. Running the Empire State may be big business, but Albany's also a college town, home to a State University of New York campus that helps the city earn a #22 ranking in our University subcategory. Albany prides itself on its history, and its 18th-and 19th-century homes and compact, walkable core let visitors and locals take to the streets, enjoying an emergent dining scene that's poised for big things post-pandemic.



62 JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 1,534,701

HIGHLIGHTS

21 PARKS & OUTDOORS

25 FACEBOOK CHECK-INS

Florida's fastest growing city is the next destination for talent and tourists.

Young professionals are lured to Jax for jobs as well as its low cost of living. With just a short drive to beaches and the country's largest urban parks system (giving it a #21 ranking on our Parks & Outdoors subcategory), Jacksonville isn't a bad place to hang your beach hat. With top jobs in aerospace, financial services and IT, Jacksonville is home to companies like Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Mayo Clinic, JP Morgan Chase, Citi, Johnson & Johnson and Aetna, giving the city high marks in our Fortune 500 Companies subcategory (tied at #37). Jax also has bragging rights to a diverse workforce, making it a more inclusive and welcoming city for all types of workers. With 22 miles of beaches and access to the winding St. Johns River, Jacksonville is filled with natural amenities to enjoy nearly all year round in the Florida sunshine. And if outdoorsy activities aren't your idea of a good time, you could always indulge in the local sports scene—whether you're cheering for the Jaguars or their quirkily named minor league baseball team, the Jumbo Shrimp.

63 RIVERSIDE CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 4,622,361

HIGHLIGHTS

3 WEATHER

15 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

Prosperity, great weather and multiculturalism make Riverside a city of opportunity like few others.

They call it the City of Arts and Innovation, but Riverside, on the outskirts of Los Angeles, also lays claim to being the birthplace of the California citrus industry, a fact honored at the 248-acre California Citrus State Historic Park. Living up to its name, Riverside is also home to the Riverside Metropolitan Museum and Fox Performing Arts Center, a 1929 theater built in Spanish Colonial Revival style in the heart of downtown. The city boasts one of the nation's most ethnically diverse populations, ranking #15 in the Foreign-Born Residents subcategory. Hispanic citizens make up 53% of the city's population, while nearly 44% of citizens speak a non-English language. Like a reflection of the community around it, University of California, Riverside (ranked #36 in our University subcategory), is one of the nation's most ethnically varied post secondary institutions. Riverside also performs well in our Place category (#23), which includes Safety (#34) and the third-best weather in the country—that is, only if you enjoy 277 days of sunshine annually.

64 OKLAHOMA CITY OKLAHOMA

POPULATION METRO 1,396,445

HIGHLIGHTS

20 WEATHER

36 MUSEUMS

Oklahoma City is building on a good thing and shoring up its future.

As a long-time business center for the energy, biosciences and aerospace sectors, this is a city where linear thinking just doesn't cut it. Yes, there is a new \$288-million convention center opening downtown in late 2020, boasting 200,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 35,000-square-foot ballroom and 50,000 square feet of additional space paired with a prime location near the Myriad Botanical Gardens. But there is also the opening of the only urban whitewater rafting facility in the world. Already designated as an official Olympic and Paralympic training site, Oklahoma City is creating the finest rowing racecourse in the world while investing \$25 million in a public whitewater kayaking facility for all skill levels. This builds on the 2016 opening of the city's whitewater rafting facility, Riversport OKC, one of only six man-made white water courses in the country. The city was also chosen as one of four communities to receive a multi-year grant from the Outdoor Foundation, which aims to make getting outside part of the fabric of peoples' lives by providing repeat experiences of fun, joy and learning in the outdoors for kids and families of all backgrounds.



65 NORTH PORT FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 821,573

HIGHLIGHTS

- ④ SAFETY
- ⑨ GOOGLE SEARCH

New homes and opportunities are springing up in abundance in the naturally stunning Florida city.

Sarasota County's North Port has the distinction of being the only metro in Florida to have an entire state forest within city limits. When they're not hiking, biking or horseback riding in the 8,600-acre Myakka State Forest or on the city's other 400 acres of parkland, residents are canoeing or kayaking along the Myakka River or North Port's 80 miles of freshwater canals. Then there's Warm Mineral Springs Park, a peaceful pond with up to 51 minerals and a year-round temperature of 85 degrees. Combine North Port's natural attributes with a balmy clime (ranking #45 for Weather), plus one of the lowest crime rates in the nation, at #4, and the Sunshine State city lands in our Top 25 for the important Place category (#22). The city has targeted five key industries for growth: healthcare, education, light manufacturing, hospitality and retail trade. Its finances are healthy: the 2019 opening of CoolToday Park, the Atlanta Braves' spring training facility, is expected to pump \$34 million into the economy over the next 30 years, while the West Villages community is an economic mainstay: construction is expected to continue for at least another 50 years, with 10,600 new homes being built, pandemic-willing.

66 LEXINGTON KENTUCKY

POPULATION METRO 516,697

HIGHLIGHTS

- ② EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
- ③1 SAFETY

The energetic metro races to expand.

The Paso Fino, Friesian and Lipizzaner: these are among the 50 breeds at Kentucky Horse Park, a major draw in the city known as the Horse Capital of the World. However, there's far more to this Bluegrass Region metro than thoroughbreds and ponies. The birthplace of bourbon made our Top 50 for Nightlife, at #48, with everything from party-bike bar hopping to the Bluegrass Trail for craft beer lovers. With Kentucky's largest mall, the city ranked #57 for Shopping. Those two subcategories contributed to the city's overall #66 spot for Programming. "Lex" is also relatively big on TripAdvisor, ranking #53 for total reviews, which helped its #71 Promotion ranking. Lex can toot its own horn for the \$220-million, 800,000-square-foot mixed-use City Center downtown, in the final stages of opening with two hotels, luxury condos and more. Then there's the \$275-million expansion to Lexington Convention Center's Rupp Arena at Central Bank Center, originally slated to be fully open by 2022, although the COVID-19 outbreak will inevitably delay the project.

67 WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

POPULATION METRO 947,866

HIGHLIGHTS

- ⑩ SAFETY
- ⑯ HOUSEHOLD INCOME

A city characterized by deep thinkers and bold designers.

Higher education thrives in the Heart of the Commonwealth. Worcester is home to 10 colleges and universities and more than 35,000 students. New England's second-largest city ranks an impressive #32 for People, including #36 for Educational Attainment (more than 30% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher) and #41 for Foreign-Born Residents (more than 21%). With manufacturing, education and healthcare driving economic performance, the city also has a growing professional, scientific and technical sector and a Prosperity ranking of #51 among American cities. The city is investing in its future with multiple major projects in the works. One CitySquare is a part of a multiphase \$565-million redevelopment downtown, with housing, hotels, parking, a hospital expansion and more. Main Street Reimagined is an \$11-million overhaul in collaboration with the Urban Culture Institute to increase walkability, incorporate public art and instill a sense of place on the city's main strip.



68 ROCHESTER NEW YORK

POPULATION METRO 1,071,082

HIGHLIGHTS

17 UNIVERSITY RANKING

29 ATTRACTIONS

The faded industrial Great Lakes titan still has a lot working for it.

Look back through its history far enough and you'll discover that Rochester, just a shade above a million in population today, was one of the country's first boomtowns. The fertile Genesee River Valley fueled a boom in flour mills, then manufacturing, then again with world-rattling innovation, from Kodak to Western Union to Xerox. Today, the third-largest city in New York State may no longer boast the head offices it once did, but the redbrick, old-world charm, stately homes (now so affordable) and legacy of research and development remain entrenched. Several of the region's universities (including the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology, ranked #17 nationally in our University subcategory) have renowned research programs. The city's ranking of #32 in Educational Attainment by citizens and Top 50 in Safety speak volumes about the good hands that steer this former industrial titan.

69 LOUISVILLE KENTUCKY

POPULATION METRO 1,296,815

HIGHLIGHTS

22 SHOPPING

29 CULTURE

A bourbon boom, a culinary hotspot, a horse race for the ages and the heart of The Greatest. There's nothing this city doesn't have.

It's easy to love Louisville; the city checks lots of boxes as a tourism destination to visit and a place to live: it's prosperous (tied at #37 for Fortune 500 companies located here). Then there's its uncountable varieties of craft bourbon and some 2,500 restaurants, several manned by James Beard honorees—giving Louisville a #39 ranking for Restaurants. The city is also the birthplace of the Louisville Slugger, baseball bat of legend Babe Ruth—you can visit the factory and museum, and watch the manufacture of one of the 1.8 million bats that are made every year. If your idea of a home run is The Greatest, there's the three-level Muhammad Ali Center. And, of course, the most famous horse race in the world. If you miss Derby Day, you can bet on Churchill Downs' on-site museum to deliver the flavor. No surprise that Louisville is #31 in our ranking for Attractions; those are only a few of myriad offerings that run the gamut. This is a city with a Museum Row—and a #35 ranking in our Museums category.

70 CLEVELAND OHIO

POPULATION METRO 2,057,009

HIGHLIGHTS

8 CONVENTION CENTER

28 INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS

Cleveland's ascent is undeniable, powered by its embrace of second-tier city cool and affordability.

There are few American cities with a rebirth story like Cleveland's. More than 50 years after the Cuyahoga River (in)famously caught fire in 1969, Cleveland today is poised like it hasn't been since the town was known as "The City of Champions" for its sports domination. Consider that, since 2000, the city has been the recipient of an 80% increase in reported Millennial residents. A huge attribute of this rise is the increasingly diversified university and college landscape and the welcoming environment catering to student life. So is a still-healthy number of Fortune 500 companies in town (#23 in the nation) and relatively affordable, plentiful housing stock. Tourists, too, continue to flood in, with 19.2 million—a new record—arriving in 2018. They're drawn by Cleveland's compact and revitalized downtown—with its impressive cache of underrated 19th-century architecture and stately industrial streetscapes—all walkable and dotted with daring restaurants tucked next to old favorites. The city, keen to keep its ascent going, is already positioning for a new COVID-19 reality, lauding access by car and less-crowded streets.



71 PROVIDENCE

RHODE ISLAND

POPULATION METRO 1,621,337

HIGHLIGHTS

8 UNIVERSITY RANKING

34 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

Fresh air and fresh faces rule in America's smallest state.

The smallest state in America has a capital city with plenty of big ideas, a lot of very smart and creative people and a happening nightlife. Home to an Ivy League college, one of the best design schools in the country and a major culinary institute, Providence sure packs a big punch for such a small city. The city boasts Brown University, ranking #8 in the University subcategory among all large U.S. cities. It also boasts plenty of fresh air to go along with the fresh perspectives of academia. Start your ramble at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, which offers a collection featuring some 84,000 artifacts from ancient Rome, Egypt and Greece, as well as modern Eames furniture and Frank Lloyd Wright stained-glass windows. Brown University's historic campus on 18th-century College Hill is not far, and you can wander the tree-lined streets, where an impressive collection of beautiful Georgian-style homes sit side by side.

72 PALM BAY

FLORIDA

POPULATION METRO 596,849

HIGHLIGHTS

8 SAFETY

31 INCOME EQUALITY

Open natural spaces inspire entrepreneurs ready for take-off on Florida's Space Coast.

From the fishing pier and sandy beach at Castaways Point Park to the fully handicapped and special needs accessible playground at Inspiration Park, Palm Bay values its 29 green spaces. Along with the 200-acre Fred Poppe Regional Park, golf courses, Turkey Creek Sanctuary and beaches, so much park space earned the coastal city #35 spot for Parks & Outdoors. Combine the natural endowment with one of the country's lowest crime rates (#8) and the result is a #28 ranking overall for Place, a category that also includes Sights and Landmarks and Weather. Manufacturing thrives here, led by defense and semiconductor firms. Being four miles to the Florida Institute of Technology and 48 miles to the John F. Kennedy Space Center, the Space Coast city also has a growing technology industry. Looking ahead, Palm Bay seeks to revitalize its Bayfront district adjacent to Indian River Lagoon, a plan that would include an accessible public waterfront, with a recommended budget of \$29 million, by 2024.

73 FRESNO

CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 994,400

HIGHLIGHTS

8 WEATHER

14 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

The urban heart of central California is also the state's breadbasket—with an impressive restaurant scene big on the local bounty.

While often overshadowed by its coastal peers, Fresno, the largest inland city in California at almost one million people, is much more than a farming town. The city is also a hub for manufacturing, education and healthcare. Its central location, about halfway between Los Angeles and Silicon Valley, propel its convention center to #54 in the country. Of course, farming is important too. Fresno County's economic output from agriculture adds up to \$8.3 billion annually, providing ample opportunity for its large foreign-born population (#14). The city's revitalizing downtown is poised to transform even more within the next decade with the arrival of California's high-speed rail system. For now, it's the center of a vibrant farm-to-table restaurant scene (#50). Near-perfect weather (#8) and easy access to Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks also make Fresno popular with the outdoors set, increasingly looking for solitary pursuits in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



74 FAYETTEVILLE ARKANSAS

POPULATION METRO 553,795

HIGHLIGHTS

#24 PROSPERITY

#54 UNIVERSITY RANKING

An outdoor gem in the Ozarks is powered by its university and the diversity of its citizens.

Situated in the Ozark Mountains with more than 200 days of sunshine a year, Fayetteville has plenty of outdoor play to offer. Home to the University of Arkansas and its nearly 28,000 students, the Natural State municipality is also considered the entertainment capital of northwest Arkansas, with everything from live music to street performances. The city is financially solid, with a Top 25 overall ranking for Prosperity in America (#24), including #50 for Fortune 500 Companies, and seemingly pandemic-proof employment numbers. The city boasted the third-lowest unemployment in the nation as of May 2020. It also ranks well in our People category, with plenty of diversity (#46). Key industries include education and technology, with civil engineering about to get a major boost: the U of A's new \$13.8-million, 37,4000-square-foot Civil Engineering Research and Education Center at the Arkansas Research and Technology Park, due for completion next year, will enable testing of large-scale structural systems and will be a hub for research, academic, government and industrial partners throughout the state.

75 GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

POPULATION METRO 1,069,405

HIGHLIGHTS

#13 SAFETY

#14 INCOME EQUALITY

A cool urbanism runs through this Michigan city's deep sense of place.

Sure, it gets cold in Grand Rapids, which ranks a dismal #98 for Weather, but that doesn't keep residents of Michigan's laid-back second city from living all four seasons outdoors. That might mean paddling along the state's longest river, taking in ArtPrize (the annual international art competition), sampling brews at the Michigan Brewers Guild Winter Beer Festival—or simply enjoying life in the growing city that retains its small-town feel. Locals insist that you can't miss the stunning Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, a sprawling complex of botanical treasures accented by the work of international artists. But that's not the only celebration of creativity in this cultured city. Architecture buffs will want to schedule a tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Meyer May House, and the enormous Alexander Calder statue outside City Hall can also be found on the city's official logo. Grand Rapids is clean, friendly and safe (with a stellar #13 ranking in Safety), making it a prime spot to raise a family. Kids can romp through some 1,200 acres of parks, as their parents enjoy the option of cycling to work along one of the city's many trails, even if it's just for Active Commute Week, which sees residents ditching their cars for bikes, kayaks and other human-powered modes.

76 HARRISBURG PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION METRO 574,659

HIGHLIGHTS

#7 INCOME EQUALITY

#46 CONVENTION CENTER

This Pennsylvania powerhouse has economic horsepower to spare.

The state capital on the banks of Susquehanna River with views of the Appalachians' Blue Ridge is the economic heart of about 400 surrounding communities, including Hershey. With the government as the main employer, other key sectors include health services and technology. Home to City Island, a mile-long 63-acre oasis accessible by car or walking bridge that was used as a resting spot for soldiers during the Civil War, historic Harrisburg ranked well for Prosperity (#28), including an impressive group of Fortune 500 companies (tied at #37). Truly impressive is the city's #7 ranking for its performance in the Gini Income Equality Index. The city also landed at #73 for Product, a category that includes Convention Center size. The Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center boasts more than a million square feet of exhibition, meeting and banquet space. Harrisburg University is getting a major lift: a new \$130-million, 386,208-square-foot building set to open in fall 2021 will house its Health and Science Education Center, as well as a hotel and restaurant.



77 ALLENTOWN PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION METRO 842,913

HIGHLIGHTS

13 INCOME EQUALITY

16 SAFETY

Good fortune (and balance) fuels the city's growth.

With storied Dutch roots, the state's third-largest city boasts four major hospitals, 12 post-secondary institutions, and (of course) the Lehigh Valley IronPigs Minor League Baseball team. Healthcare, technology, energy, manufacturing, professional services and transportation dominate the city's robust economic scene. With major employers such as Fortune 500 companies Air Products & Chemicals (an international industrial gases company with \$8.9 billion in sales in 2019 alone) and PPL Corporation (one of the largest regulated utility companies in the country), Allentown ranks strong for Prosperity among American large cities (#40), including #38 in the country for Household Income and an impressive #13 for performance on the Gini Income Equality Index. It's also safe, ranking #16 in our Safety subcategory. The local sense of place will only increase with Allentown's Neighborhood Improvement Zone's recent approval of \$21 million in financing for New York developers to upgrade downtown's outdoor Grand Plaza (formerly PPL Plaza) with a food hall, outdoor area and new retail and office space.

78 LANCASTER PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION METRO 543,557

HIGHLIGHTS

3 INCOME EQUALITY

27 SAFETY

From the Amish to protons, a borough diversifies.

The country's oldest Amish settlement is here, its members getting around by horse and buggy and living without electricity. Pennsylvania Dutch Country, or Red Rose City, as Lancaster is also known, is further distinguished for having been the state capital for a single day, by its 29 covered (or "kissing") bridges and the country's first theater (the 1852 Fulton Opera House), and its central location along the New York-Washington distribution corridor. From architectural styles dating back to the 1700s to modern art galleries, Lancaster ranked #58 in our Culture category. With a #33 ranking for Shopping (vintage clothes, country quilts, antiques, contemporary jewelry, and more), it landed at #69 overall in our Programming category. It's also safe, ranking #27 in the country in the subcategory. Manufacturing, food processing (Kellogg Company operates here), finance and insurance are major employers. So is healthcare, a sector that's growing: the Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health Ann B. Barshinger Cancer Institute is building a new \$48-million Proton Center, scheduled to open in late 2021. The economic activity has propelled Lancaster into the Top 20 among America's most prosperous cities.

79 WICHITA KANSAS

POPULATION METRO 645,031

HIGHLIGHTS

20 INCOME EQUALITY

28 WEATHER

Development takes off in the cultural hub of Kansas.

The Air Capital of the World (so named because of the manufacturing of aircraft, its pro-aviation business environment and the largest concentration of aerospace manufacturing employees in the nation) performs consistently across all our categories, with Product (#69) and Programming (#70) being notable. The former includes Attractions (#59) and Museums (#56) and Wichita has draws such as Sedgwick County Zoo, the Mid-America All-Indian Center, Ulrich Museum of Art and the Kansas Aviation Museum. The city scores well for Programming, too, with Restaurants ranked #58 in the country, with more than 1,200 establishments and 30 food trucks, as well as #63 for Culture (check out Wichita Grand Opera and Ballet Wichita). Development is occurring all over: in the Historic Delano District (where cowboys caroused in the 1870s and '80s) with a new extended-stay hotel; and downtown, where the new \$75-million Riverfront Stadium for Minor League Baseball opens this year (even though the season was at risk) and where developers are investing at least another \$75 million to turn four vacant buildings into a hotel, health school, culinary college and student housing.



80 BUFFALO NEW YORK

POPULATION METRO 1,130,152

HIGHLIGHTS

- 22 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 25 SIGHTS AND LANDMARKS

Understated urban revival amidst one of America's architectural bounties.

Long and erroneously viewed as a faded Rust Belt afterthought overshadowed by Toronto's global ascent and the tourist magnetism of Niagara Falls, Buffalo has quietly gone about its work of reinvention. The second most populated city in the state behind New York City just had invested too much capital—intellectual, economic and especially architectural—over the past two centuries to not strive for its former prosperity as home of the Erie Canal and one of America's largest steel, grain and banking centers. It is still the only city in America where the country's three most iconic architects still have buildings standing: Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House, plus the recently restored Frank Lloyd Wright houses of Graycliff; Louis Sullivan's Guaranty Building (today an office building and bank); and, perhaps most impressive, the Henry Hobson Richardson-designed "Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane," with grounds by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. The complex's 13 buildings are slowly being repurposed—into a luxury hotel and co-working spaces to start. Buffalo already ranks Top 25 in our Sights and Landmarks subcategory and will only improve.

81 COLUMBIA SOUTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 833,165

HIGHLIGHTS

- 19 GOOGLE SEARCH
- 40 UNIVERSITY RANKING

South Carolina's capital city is building buzz online and demand for its Southern hospitality and understated urban tapestry IRL.

Nobody needs to coach this South Carolinian city on how to leverage the internet to tell its story. Columbia ranks high across a wide range of metrics including #19 in Google Search, confirming that over the past year people have been interested in this ascendant southern city. Columbia also ranked #57 in TripAdvisor Reviews, meaning that people are regularly talking about this city. So what's the buzz? Well, Columbia is the capital of South Carolina and the State House is a splendid tribute to Greek Revival architecture situated in a sprawling garden filled with monuments. The Riverbanks Zoo & Garden extends for 170 acres along the Saluda River and features an aquarium, zoo with more than 2,000 animals, and an inspiring botanical garden. The local economy is driven mostly by healthcare, education and defense, with two active military installations in the vicinity.

82 STOCKTON CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 752,660

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS
- 12 WEATHER

From agricultural center to bedroom community to downtown hot spot, Stockton is a city to watch in the Golden State.

A once-sleepy agricultural town, Stockton has recently gained kudos as a more affordable bedroom community for Silicon Valley. But there's plenty going on within its city limits. Healthcare and education are the city's largest sectors, thanks in large part to the University of the Pacific, which helps give the city its #47 ranking in Universities and #48 ranking in Household Income. Manufacturing and logistics are also major parts of the economy, providing opportunity for Stockton's large foreign-born population (#8). Despite being an inland city in California's Central Valley, Stockton has the unique advantage of being home to a deep water port connected to the San Francisco Bay. Its revitalizing downtown just welcomed its tallest building, a California Superior Courthouse, and, until social distancing went into effect, played host to numerous outdoor festivals and concerts that take advantage of the excellent weather (#12).



83 MCALLEN TEXAS

POPULATION METRO 865,939

HIGHLIGHTS

6 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

16 WEATHER

The border city is an economic dynamo, fueled by Mexican-American talent and culture.

A border city with a strong automotive industry, McAllen has seen a recent economic bump with the ratification of the USMCA trade deal. The metro area hosts 42 automotive suppliers employing 40,000 people, mostly high-skill workers. McAllen has recently focused on attracting companies from across the border, and saw a major success with the opening of a new facility for the Mexican manufacturing company Tetakawi. This diverse city ranks #6 in foreign-born population, attracting residents from near and far due to its strong manufacturing economy. Others come for the quality of life. McAllen ranks #25 in our Place category, with its excellent weather (#16) and low crime rate (#18). The city has a vibrant theater scene, including local troupes and touring Broadway productions, which are sure to thrive again once social distancing is lifted.

84 KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE

POPULATION METRO 882,598

HIGHLIGHTS

33 ATTRACTIONS

50 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

Knoxville's tradition of collaboration is now creating a food and drink scene to watch.

A walker's paradise, downtown Knoxville is a treasure trove to explore and discover, from vibrant murals to local music venues, historic sites and museums. Instead of playing second fiddle to nearby Asheville and Chattanooga, Knoxville is finding its own groove and becoming an increasingly prominent destination for food lovers of all tastes—the state's first James Beard Award-winning chef, Joseph Lenn, operates J.C. Holdway right downtown. What makes the food scene so spectacular is the collaboration of local chefs with other chefs, brewers, distillers and wine makers. Group efforts, like a longtable dinner along the middle of a downtown street in 2017, have resulted in a number of unique culinary experiences. Knoxville's scintillating fusion of small-town charm and big-city amenities inspires locals and visitors alike to share their findings across social media platforms. In doing so, they've helped the city rank #67 in our Promotion category, which looks at the quantity of stories, references and recommendations shared online about a city. The city appears to be controlling the pandemic, too, ranking #3 for COVID-19 infections per 100,000 residents as of July 8, 2020.

85 MEMPHIS TENNESSEE

POPULATION METRO 1,350,064

HIGHLIGHTS

27 TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

30 MUSEUMS

Two centuries of creativity and civil rights poise Memphis for a bright future.

Tennessee's second-largest city is an American icon that's been quietly adding to the national lore from the bluffs and floodplains that line the eastern bank of the Mississippi River for more than two centuries. The heart of the Delta Blues and famously home to Graceland, the "spiritual birthplace" of Elvis, it is the lesser known Music City, USA, when compared to Austin and Nashville. But those two can't hold a guitar to Memphis' contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. Or its barbecue. With so many stories to tell, the city ranks an impressive #30 nationally in our Museums subcategory—home to the aforementioned Graceland and the National Civil Rights Museum, and #39 for Culture. It's not surprising others are telling the city's stories these days: Memphis ranks a notable #27 in the nation for TripAdvisor Reviews. But the city is also an ascendant business center, with legacies like the country's first Black millionaire, J.E. Walker, and ranks #31 for Fortune 500 Companies with corporate titans including FedEx and AutoZone headquartered here. Affordable housing—and new downtown investment—make Memphis a city to watch.



86 TULSA OKLAHOMA

POPULATION METRO 993,928

HIGHLIGHTS

22 WEATHER

27 CONVENTION CENTER

The industrious company town doubles down on livability with a public space for the ages.

Can a park bring a city into the 21st century? When Tulsa philanthropist George Kaiser decided to create the Gathering Place, he made no small plan, aiming for a space that would "bring together people throughout the Tulsa area to rediscover that we are all bound together by commonalities, especially the hopes and dreams we have for our families." In short, Kaiser, one of the 100 wealthiest people in the world, wanted a park that would do nothing less than break down inequalities and attract and retain talent. So he invested \$465 million into 66.5 acres. The result rocketed the former Oil Capital of the World into international headlines, and earned it every possible award, including a spot on *Time* magazine's World's Greatest Places list. Kaiser takes the long view. "A single new community commons cannot dramatically change the trajectory of a city by itself, of course. But so much else is also happening in Tulsa at the same time that we feel the Gathering Place can help serve as the catalyst for a more vibrant and dynamic city."

87 GREENSBORO NORTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 767,711

HIGHLIGHTS

24 SAFETY

50 SHOPPING

History and the land's bounty run deep in this North Carolina gem.

A quest for diversity is part of Greensboro's past, and events that transpired in the city helped shape African American legacy. Today, Greensboro is a city that draws history buffs, antique furniture shoppers and foodies. In North Carolina, fertile farmland is a great source of pride, and Greensboro residents have a strong connection to the land and the food they put on the table. Locals and visitors come together around food—at markets like Greensboro Farmers Curb Market, which has been around since 1874, and at unique experiences like The Barn Dinner Theatre. While the town may be steeped in historical significance, it continues to look forward, especially as it tends to its #65 Restaurant ranking. Greensboro's downtown nightlife (ranked #57) offers a special kind of American sensibility and charm, thanks to street corners humming with buskers and bands, and cafés vibrating with acoustic performances.

88 GREENVILLE SOUTH CAROLINA

POPULATION METRO 906,626

HIGHLIGHTS

31 CONVENTION CENTER

48 MUSEUMS

With a location as beautiful as it is central, Greenville is open for business. And it's investing in the infrastructure to keep its momentum.

This compact city nestled up against the Blue Ridge Mountains is doing a lot of things right and its #58 ranking in our Product category proves it has invested well in its institutions and attractions. From the Museum and Gallery at Bob Jones University, one of America's finest collections of paintings from Italian masters like Giotto di Bondone, to the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library that allows visitors into the home where the baseball legend lived and died, Greenville's cultural credentials earn it a #48 ranking in our Museums subcategory. The Greenville Convention Center, with 280,000 square feet of exhibit space and 60,000 square feet of meeting space, is minutes from the Greenville Downtown Airport and historic downtown Greenville, earning the city a #31 ranking in the Convention Center subcategory. While Falls Park on the Reedy is a lovely natural oasis in the center of the city, the artfully cantilevered Liberty Bridge next door is an equally impressive destination—a pedestrian walkway above the falls. The city is peppered with such gems, ranking an impressive #50 in our Attractions subcategory.



89 SPOKANE

WASHINGTON

POPULATION METRO 573,527

HIGHLIGHTS

29 WEATHER

30 INCOME EQUALITY

Impressive in nightlife, culture and shopping, Spokane (and its \$250,000 houses) is pulling priced-out West Coasters (slightly) east.

Seattle's real estate gold rush has as many losers as winners and those who missed out are headed to the beacon across the Cascade Mountains, sparkling with big-city amenities and ambition, from breweries to city planning. The thumping nightlife (#48 in the country) matches a feisty and growing culture and arts scene (Programming ranks #63 nationally), and, prior to the pandemic, seemingly weekly restaurant openings. The city's #79 Restaurants ranking is only going to improve, given the presence of three James Beard nominated chefs and their seeming competition to open as many restaurants as possible between them. Growing coverage in the national media—from the *Wall Street Journal* to the *L.A. Times*—will only help Spokane's culinary star rise. And so will the wineries. The city is the urban heart of Washington's Walla Walla, Yakima and Columbia wine regions and the bounty of the land can be tasted not only in restaurant wine lists but also at tasting rooms throughout the city. Speaking of Yakima, it produces 75% of the country's hops—more than enough to justify Spokane's craft beer boom that should be approaching 25 breweries by the time you read this.

90 SPRINGFIELD

MASSACHUSETTS

POPULATION METRO 631,761

HIGHLIGHTS

36 SAFETY

45 AIRPORT CONNECTIVITY

A history of basketball, a future in biotech.

If the fact that Theodor Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss, hailed from here doesn't grab your attention (and you're not intrigued by The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum), perhaps the fact that the city is within New England's Knowledge Corridor (the region surrounding Springfield and Hartford, CT, with 29 colleges/universities educating more than 170,000 students) will. The economic engine of Western Massachusetts, which forms part of the biotech industry's Super Cluster, tied at #37 for Fortune 500 companies and reaching #70 in our Household Income category. The birthplace of basketball—don't let Canadians tell you otherwise—also ranked well for its size for People, at #64, with a #55 ranking for Educational Attainment (with nearly 19% of the population having a bachelor's degree or higher) and #57 for Foreign Born (nearly 10%). Manufacturing, healthcare, education, and life sciences keep the economy robust. Since 2018, more than \$400 million in new projects have been announced, including the forthcoming \$37-million hotel complex at the old York Street Jail site, a \$14-million Educare school and an orthopedic surgery center at Baystate Health.

91 BIRMINGHAM

ALABAMA

POPULATION METRO 1,151,801

HIGHLIGHTS

36 CONVENTION CENTER

43 NIGHTLIFE

Magic City has many new tricks.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, few American cities were as ascendant as Alabama's largest. With a confluence of culinary talent (awards), downtown revitalization and impressive economic projections, Magic City was on its way. But despite the crisis, the city's economy—the one Forbes predicted as a Top 10 most promising job market based on net employment outlook for the first quarter of 2020—is holding resilient. According to May 2020 numbers, Birmingham had the nation's eighth-lowest unemployment rate. When people do return to its streets, the city will work hard to resume its culinary trajectory, with long-time favorites like Nikki's West and John's Diner hopefully reopening quickly, along with Frank Stitt's trio of award-winning restaurants: Highlands Bar & Grill (winner of James Beard Foundation Outstanding Restaurant), Bottega and Chez Fonfon. Clearly, the city's #61 Restaurant ranking is only temporary. Also poised to welcome back eager residents and in-the-know tourists are the handful of restored historic theaters—from The Lyric, which reopened in 2016, to the Alabama Theatre. On the horizon is reopening of the art-deco Carver Theatre, which served the African-American community during the apex of the civil rights movement.



92 AKRON OHIO

POPULATION METRO 704,845

HIGHLIGHTS

37 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES (TIE)

50 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Water and wealth distinguish the Ohio metropolis.

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens was once the family home of F.A. Seiberling, cofounder of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. With five buildings dating back to 1912, including the Tudor Revival Manor House, and 10 gardens on 70 acres, it's the city's first National Historic Landmark and the nation's 6th largest historic home open to the public. The estate is symbolic of the wealth that persists here today. One of the world's leading polymer centers, Akron is home to more than eight Fortune 500 companies, tied at #37 in that subcategory and hitting #63 for Household Income. Not surprisingly, Akron's strongest category performance is in Prosperity, at #68. The city is making the single largest infrastructure investment in its 189-year history. Akron Waterways Renewed is a \$300-million project that includes the nearly \$200 million, 6,000-foot-long Ohio Canal Interceptor Tunnel, an integrated plan that could be in the works all the way to 2040. In other development news, downtown's Bowery Project, a \$42-million renovation of six historic buildings, is projected to create 2,000 jobs and \$245 million in revenue over 20 years.

93 MODESTO CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 549,815

HIGHLIGHTS

11 WEATHER

23 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

Already sunny and diverse, Modesto's strategic location to Silicon Valley has the city ready for take-off.

The Central Valley city has plenty of sun (with a #11 ranking nationally) making it a unique hub for warm-weather agricultural products, including almonds, tomatoes and grapes. All of that agricultural labor has attracted a large foreign-born population, ranking #23 nationally, while the city's close proximity to Silicon Valley gives it a relatively high household income (#60). Also worth noting is the city's strong performance (#17 national) in the Gini Index of Income Equality, ensuring that the city's prosperity is relatively inclusive. In the coming years, the commute from Modesto to the world's largest tech companies will get a lot easier with a new rail service that takes advantage of the city's historic train station and will serve as a catalyst for downtown development. Modesto's already high Place ranking (#36) is set to ascend with a new downtown vision prioritizing pedestrian access. Given its focus on restaurants, shops and nightlife, the city's poor ranking in our Programming category (#105 nationally) will improve as well.

94 JACKSON MISSISSIPPI

POPULATION METRO 583,080

HIGHLIGHTS

32 GOOGLE SEARCH

40 WEATHER

A heritage of music and the arts draws events and new investment.

Southern hospitality, civil rights and the blues: some things are deeply embedded in Jackson's very character. The City with Soul also stands out for hosting both the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo (the largest such annual event east of the Mississippi River) and the USA International Ballet Competition. The Magnolia State capital is the sole North American city to stage the two-week long event that draws the world's top dancers every four years. The engaged, arts-and-literature-loving town, home to Jackson State University, ranked #58 nationally in our Museums category and #66 for Convention Center size; the 333,000-square-foot Jackson Convention Complex right downtown is LEED-certified. State and federal governments, along with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, are major employers, while the city has identified advanced manufacturing, IT and food processing among its targeted industries. Of several new developments is a 30,000-square-foot, \$13-million project in the arts district of Fondren, a neighborhood in revival, that will include a tiki bar, bowling alley, burger restaurant and more.



95 BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIA

POPULATION METRO 896,764

HIGHLIGHTS

2 WEATHER

17 FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS

Sunny, outdoorsy and affordable, Bakersfield's energy is everywhere.

Just across the Tehachapi Mountains, a two-hour drive from Greater Los Angeles, Bakersfield has a vibrant economy and culture all its own. Its economy is dominated by agriculture, energy and transportation and logistics, attracting its large foreign-born workforce (ranked #17 among large U.S. cities). Kern County, where Bakersfield is located, is the top oil-producing county in the U.S., accounting for 10% of the nation's production. Bakersfield's amazing weather (#2) has made it a hub for solar power generation, with numerous commercial and utility scale arrays constructed or proposed. As the home of the Bakersfield Sound, a unique country music genre made famous by Merle Haggard, the city is no cultural slouch. It ranks #60 in Restaurants and #27 in our important Place category. It's no wonder that with Bakersfield's easy proximity to California's natural wonders, combined with its affordable housing prices, it is one of the most popular cities for Millennials in the country, according to a recent National Association of Realtors report.

96 LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS

POPULATION METRO 741,357

HIGHLIGHTS

37 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES (TIE)

48 MUSEUMS

Big ambition and political capital are taking Little Rock to new heights.

The largest city in Arkansas coaxes talent and investment with aggressive tax breaks and some of the most affordable housing among state capitals. In fact, Little Rock ties at #37 nationally when it comes to attracting and retaining Fortune 500 companies. Chalk it up to southern hospitality, but a combination of business friendly taxes and competitive incentives helps as well. A powerful and diverse corporate presence distinguishes Arkansas' capital city, situated on the banks of the state's namesake river, that will likely surprise many people unfamiliar with this southern city—more proof that city officials have sharpened their pencils on the economic development front. Dillard's Department Stores, Windstream Communications and Axiom are just a few of the national and multinational corporations headquartered in a city that has in the past suffered from an undeserved reputation as the capital of an underdeveloped state known mostly for the Ozark Mountains and other wilderness, and also as the place where former president Bill Clinton cut his political teeth.

97 SYRACUSE NEW YORK

POPULATION METRO 650,502

HIGHLIGHTS

24 UNIVERSITY RANKING

39 SAFETY

A university town doubles down on sustainability and talent retention.

"The Cuse" is the economic hub of the central New York region. But after two centuries of industry, Syracuse is reinventing itself as—appropriately—the Green Apple. A decade after the founding of the Clean Tech Center, a clean energy business incubator program and one of the first of its kind in the country, the incubator today boasts 30 businesses—and growing. The commitment to cleaner industry and livability extends to daring city planning, with the city set to remove a 1.4-mile stretch of Interstate 81 that has sliced through its downtown since the 1950s. Replacing it will be a "community grid" focused on reconnecting neighborhoods, easier mobility and placemaking. It's all going to entice the thousands of University of Syracuse students (attending the #24-ranked university in the nation), as well as the legions of others attending the area's college and professional schools to put down roots. The city's 150 parks, two hospitals and two large summer jazz festivals that give the city a #68 ranking in our Culture subcategory will only help the retention cause.



98 AUGUSTA GEORGIA

POPULATION METRO 605,903

HIGHLIGHTS

#32 SAFETY

#39 WEATHER

There's more to life than golf in this poised hometown of the future.

Internationally famous for hosting The Masters golf tournament each spring, Augusta was rocked earlier this year when the city's largest event was cancelled for only the second time ever due to the COVID-19 outbreak. (The first time was World War II). Still, this layered and beautiful city of stately avenues that share the urban grid with the Savannah River and the Augusta Canal (and the iconic train tracks) seemed to be holding up well, with the 10th-lowest unemployment rate in the country as of May 2020. Once the pandemic passes, the city can continue its economic ascent—and not just from the return of the 200,000 golf fans, pros and media annually. The city is a military center and already houses Fort Gordon and its 20,000 employees. Things will really take off in the next few years with the announcement of a U.S. Army Cyber Command facility in the city. Combine the expected job growth with average housing prices around \$100,000 and a #32 ranking in our Safety subcategory (and #39 for Weather) and you have one compelling home town.

99 CHATTANOOGA TENNESSEE

POPULATION METRO 558,703

HIGHLIGHTS

#37 PARKS & OUTDOORS

#38 SHOPPING

Affordable living amidst an outdoor bounty.

Tucked at the base of Lookout Mountain, on the banks of the Tennessee River, Chattanooga's Scenic City moniker is well earned, as is its "Best Town Ever" accolades by *Outside Magazine* in 2015. The town certainly boasts the adrenal bona fides: from climbing the Tennessee Wall to all manner of self-propulsion on the river to trail running and mountain biking just outside of city limits. To say nothing of craft breweries like Heaven & Ale to speed recovery time. No wonder it ranks at #37 in our Parks & Outdoors subcategory. Despite the natural bounty and serenity, Gig City boasts internet speeds of up to 10 gigabits per second supplied by the publicly owned Electric Power Board (EPB). It's also possible to drive to Nashville and Atlanta in under two hours. Companies with deep talent needs in town include Volkswagen and Blue Shield of Tennessee. The city is also nurturing business start-ups with the biggest business incubator in Tennessee, as well as the biggest downtown innovation district of any U.S. city its size. Oh, and the median price for a single-family home is \$187,000 according to local realtors, and rising quickly.

100 DAYTON OHIO

POPULATION METRO 806,548

HIGHLIGHTS

#49 UNIVERSITY RANKING

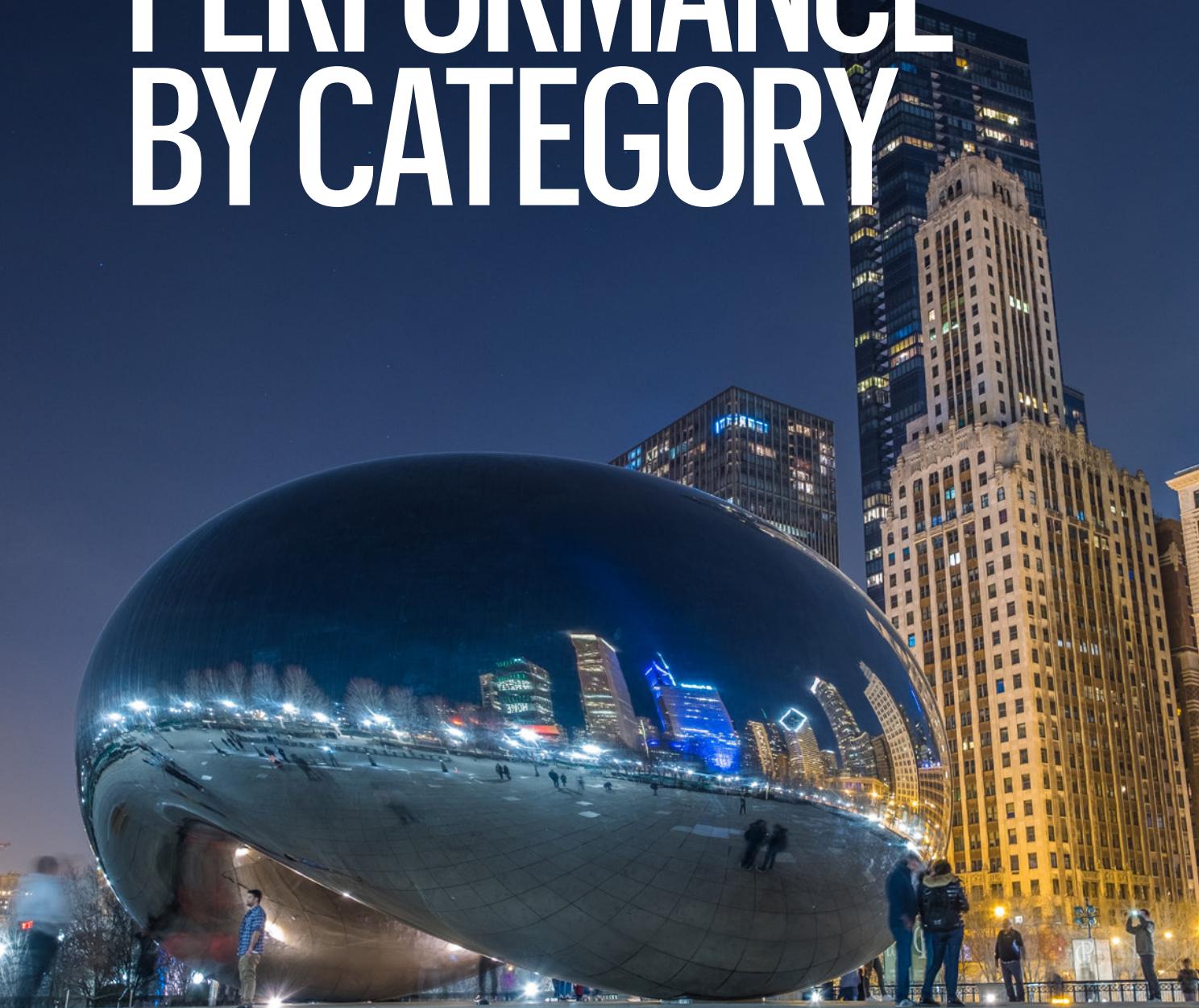
#53 CULTURE

The arts fly high in this aerospace hub.

The first thing Dayton might bring to mind is airplanes, being the place where the Wright brothers developed and manned the world's first flying machine. You can immerse yourself in all things aviation at spots such as Huffman Prairie Flying Field and the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. However, the Gem City is also the state's epicenter of the arts. The Bach Society, Dayton Opera, Dayton Ballet, Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and the Dayton Playhouse are just some of the organizations that thrive here. The Contemporary Dayton and Dayton Art Institute are but two of several galleries. Dayton performs well in our Culture subcategory, at #53. Along with a #70 ranking for Nightlife, the city hit #77 overall for Programming, a category that also includes Restaurants and Shopping. With strong manufacturing, healthcare, and IT sectors, Dayton is the state's aerospace hub today and in the future, with investments like the Air Force Life Cycle Management System's recently awarding the University of Dayton Research Institute a 10-year contract worth \$28.5-million to provide F-15 sustainment engineering studies.

America's

BEST CITIES PERFORMANCE BY CATEGORY



RANK	CITY	STATE	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
1	New York	New York	1	1	1	6	6	1
2	Los Angeles	California	4	3	2	8	85	2
3	San Francisco	California	5	11	5	2	7	5
4	Chicago	Illinois	18	2	3	16	30	3
5	Washington	District of Columbia	34	13	16	3	3	7
6	San Diego	California	2	22	7	11	49	8
7	Las Vegas	Nevada	6	4	4	42	104	4
8	San Jose	California	16	37	43	1	4	25
9	Miami	Florida	14	15	11	4	99	6
10	Boston	Massachusetts	24	5	17	7	35	12
11	Houston	Texas	48	8	8	15	47	9
12	Atlanta	Georgia	67	6	23	23	22	11
13	Phoenix	Arizona	11	9	15	43	16	20
14	Dallas	Texas	35	10	20	18	23	13
15	Seattle	Washington	52	18	9	9	18	14
16	Denver	Colorado	38	14	21	14	11	17
17	Austin	Texas	21	35	14	10	32	16
18	Orlando	Florida	40	7	12	27	105	10
19	Honolulu	Hawaii	3	41	22	17	34	37
20	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	32	12	13	29	55	19
21	Minneapolis	Minnesota	70	16	27	20	8	48
22	Portland	Oregon	49	29	10	25	36	21
23	Baltimore	Maryland	81	17	26	28	12	30
24	Provo	Utah	7	83	101	30	1	101
25	Raleigh	North Carolina	45	38	41	13	26	51

RANK	CITY	STATE	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
26	Sacramento	California	20	44	38	22	52	39
27	Nashville	Tennessee	72	25	18	51	41	22
28	San Antonio	Texas	31	30	19	72	71	15
29	Salt Lake City	Utah	62	27	49	31	9	52
30	Tampa	Florida	17	26	34	49	87	27
31	New Orleans	Louisiana	44	20	6	82	106	18
32	Santa Rosa	California	13	91	76	26	33	70
33	Madison	Wisconsin	39	63	59	19	13	55
34	Charlotte	North Carolina	74	21	33	40	74	23
35	Bridgeport	Connecticut	50	105	85	5	54	105
36	Omaha	Nebraska	51	48	42	53	5	60
37	Colorado Springs	Colorado	30	52	48	44	14	40
38	St. Louis	Missouri	76	23	24	68	39	24
39	Oxnard	California	12	100	98	24	29	102
40	Columbus	Ohio	54	34	30	37	37	35
41	Tucson	Arizona	26	42	25	50	42	49
42	Virginia Beach	Virginia	10	60	60	69	21	43
43	Kansas City	Missouri	68	32	37	52	38	26
44	Durham	North Carolina	69	40	82	12	76	76
45	Charleston	South Carolina	15	46	36	58	72	45
46	Cape Coral	Florida	8	50	47	38	94	97
47	Portland	Maine	37	78	51	36	25	46
48	New Haven	Connecticut	75	36	89	34	27	61
49	El Paso	Texas	9	76	62	35	98	36
50	Richmond	Virginia	77	56	52	39	19	44

RANK	CITY	STATE	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
51	Hartford	Connecticut	100	68	93	21	10	89
52	Indianapolis	Indiana	97	31	35	59	43	29
53	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	55	28	31	70	69	32
54	Albuquerque	New Mexico	33	47	29	63	56	56
55	Detroit	Michigan	99	19	45	61	96	28
56	Boise City	Idaho	19	65	58	73	31	74
57	Ogden	Utah	46	104	106	85	2	104
58	Cincinnati	Ohio	79	33	28	71	45	53
59	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	71	39	39	54	70	47
60	Des Moines	Iowa	90	71	79	33	17	82
61	Albany	New York	88	75	80	41	15	73
62	Jacksonville	Florida	47	53	46	62	60	42
63	Riverside	California	23	72	87	56	61	72
64	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma	41	45	50	79	75	33
65	North Port	Florida	22	87	107	46	88	59
66	Lexington	Kentucky	65	85	66	45	57	71
67	Worcester	Massachusetts	66	94	91	32	51	94
68	Rochester	New York	103	57	53	55	48	62
69	Louisville	Kentucky	73	49	32	86	64	50
70	Cleveland	Ohio	105	24	40	80	100	34
71	Providence	Rhode Island	80	54	65	48	83	75
72	Palm Bay	Florida	28	92	92	74	62	98
73	Fresno	California	29	67	73	57	103	64
74	Fayetteville	Arkansas	95	89	94	60	24	100
75	Grand Rapids	Michigan	63	62	71	67	66	65

RANK	CITY	STATE	PLACE	PRODUCT	PROGRAMMING	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PROMOTION
76	Harrisburg	Pennsylvania	85	73	88	76	28	95
77	Allentown	Pennsylvania	56	79	78	75	40	99
78	Lancaster	Pennsylvania	64	90	69	94	20	84
79	Wichita	Kansas	57	69	70	77	67	66
80	Buffalo	New York	104	51	57	65	86	31
81	Columbia	South Carolina	87	84	68	87	46	38
82	Stockton	California	42	106	103	66	78	91
83	McAllen	Texas	25	99	99	47	107	90
84	Knoxville	Tennessee	61	59	54	102	58	67
85	Memphis	Tennessee	96	43	44	97	90	41
86	Tulsa	Oklahoma	59	55	56	95	82	63
87	Greensboro	North Carolina	43	82	64	78	97	79
88	Greenville	South Carolina	89	58	67	84	79	77
89	Spokane	Washington	58	74	63	88	80	78
90	Springfield	Massachusetts	78	81	97	64	92	93
91	Birmingham	Alabama	102	64	55	93	50	58
92	Akron	Ohio	83	95	83	83	68	87
93	Modesto	California	36	107	105	92	73	96
94	Jackson	Mississippi	82	93	95	90	65	54
95	Bakersfield	California	27	101	86	89	101	81
96	Little Rock	Arkansas	91	70	75	96	63	57
97	Syracuse	New York	106	77	81	81	59	80
98	Augusta	Georgia	53	98	96	103	44	86
99	Chattanooga	Tennessee	94	61	61	104	53	69
100	Dayton	Ohio	98	80	77	91	77	83

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR CITY, COMMUNITY OR DEVELOPMENT.

As leading advisors in tourism, real estate and economic development, Resonance helps places realize their full economic potential. We take a uniquely future-focused approach to research, strategy, branding and marketing, and help our clients understand market trends, assess strengths and weaknesses, engage local communities, create strategies, envision the future and produce branding and communications that influence their audiences.



RESEARCH

Resonance tracks the sentiments of the most influential consumers and travelers today, and our original benchmarking and assessment methodology offers new ways to understand the way people truly perceive and “consume” communities, cities and destinations. This America’s Best Cities report is an example of our expertise in providing destinations and developers with new tools and perspectives on the key factors that shape a city’s competitive identity, community wellbeing and future prosperity. Our research is used by National Geographic, and Bloomberg has called our city rankings “the most comprehensive study of its kind.”

Consumer Research

Destination Assessments

Performance Benchmarking

Economic Analysis



DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Resonance has extensive experience creating strategies for destinations from cities to mixed-use urban developments and resort communities. Our destination development strategies are the product of custom benchmarking and consumer research, stakeholder engagement and the crafting of a clear vision for the future. The result is a strategic roadmap that prioritizes the actions required to realize the full economic potential of place.

Real Estate Development

Tourism Development

Economic Development



BRANDING & MARKETING

We approach the branding and marketing of places by thoroughly understanding market trends, uncovering the aspirations of consumers and vividly articulating sense of place in a manner that resonates with target audiences, be they prospective residents, visitors, tenants or investors. Brands are then propelled by marketing strategies that guide the journey of building audiences, credibility and meaningful connection. The goal isn't merely to bring more attention, awareness and people to the brand, but to elevate the quality, value and loyalty of specific audiences in order to achieve targeted objectives.

Brand Strategy

Brand Identity

Advertising

Digital

Activation

Environment



PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a way to design underused spaces to be more enjoyable and engaging for the communities around them. Resonance placemaking strategies leverage the power of art, culture and experiential retail to help animate public, private and under-utilized spaces, test alternative uses and create gathering places and unique points of interest that draw both locals and visitors.

Art

Culture

Experience



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