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Ithaca, N.Y., is No. 1 'emerging' city

By Bob Minzesheimer, USA TODAY

Charlottesville, Va., is the best place to live in the USA, according to *Cities Ranked & Rated*. Another college town, Ithaca, N.Y. — home to Cornell University — is the best "emerging" area. **(Related story: 'Mr. Jefferson would be proud' — Charlottesville is No. 1)**



Cascadilla Creek Gorge in downtown Ithaca runs from the center of town to the Cornell University campus.

Ithaca Chamber Of Commerce

The book's main list is based on 331 metropolitan statistical areas designated by the federal government. The areas could extend beyond city, county and even state borders.

Their top 10:

•**No. 1, Ithaca.** "The town is attractive, activities are plentiful and education attainment is high," but "lots of snow and precipitation."

•**'Best' depends on measurement**

When *Money* magazine came out with its list of best places to live in December, Charlottesville, Va., didn't make the cut. But *Cities Ranked & Rated* has it at No. 1.

The differences are the result of varying methodologies and definitions.

Money uses only statistics to rate smaller places, such as Cary, N.C. (pop. 104,000), ranked as the best in the East among cities of more than 100,000.

Cities Ranked & Rated adds a subjective measurement of quality of life to rank what the federal government calls metropolitan statistical areas. Cary is a small part of the Raleigh metropolitan area (pop. 1.3 million), ranked No. 13.

Bert Sperling, a demographic researcher who created the first *Money* list in 1986 and is co-author of *Cities Ranked & Rated*, says, "Any area is made up of smaller places and neighborhoods, but usually they share something in common and identify with the larger metropolitan area."

His Web site (bestplaces.net) profiles thousands of cities and neighborhoods and allows for individual comparisons.

•**No. 2, Bend, Ore.** "Artsy resort community in the high Oregon desert" but high cost of living and difficult 160-mile drive (especially in winter) to Portland.

•**No. 3, Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Wash.** "Area of uncommon beauty" along Puget Sound but weak economy and high housing costs.

•**No. 4, Logan, Utah.** "Attractive college town" and center of Mormon culture and history, but a 75-mile drive to Salt Lake City.

•**No. 5, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.** "Beautiful mountain setting" only 20 miles east of Spokane, but "growth and crowding are having an impact."

•**No. 6, Prescott, Ariz.** "Clean, quiet city with an Old West feel."

•**No. 7, Vero Beach, Fla.** "Upscale beach community" but with a high cost of living by Florida standards.

•**No. 8, Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford, Va.** "Small-town feel and college-town amenities in mountain setting."

•**No. 9, Brunswick, Ga.** Historic port town, retirement favorite but expensive.

•**No. 10, Idaho Falls, Idaho.** Gateway to Yellowstone Park and Grand Tetons, but town is "nondescript" without "much to do."

At the bottom? Hinesville, Ga.; Madera, Calif.; Longview, Wash.; Hanford, Calif.; and El Centro, Calif.

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