

# AMERICA'S BEST CITIES

A Ranking of U.S. Place Equity

THE TOP 10  
LARGE CITIES  
P. 08

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CITY RANKINGS  
BY CATEGORY  
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Pc Pd Pg Po Ps Pm



# HI. WE'RE RESONANCE.

As leading advisors in real estate, tourism, and economic development for three decades, Resonance combines business strategy and marketing creativity to shape the future of communities, cities and countries.

Our services span development strategy, place marketing, placemaking and place branding.

Our team has completed more than 100 visioning, strategy, planning, policy and branding projects for destinations and developers in more than 70 countries. We work with developers, planners, architects, DMOs, economic development agencies and others to make places the best they can be.

To learn more about us and our services, please visit [ResonanceCo.com](http://ResonanceCo.com).



## Welcome to America's Best Cities

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

For more than a decade, we've been creating place branding strategies, tourism and economic development plans and trend reports for city, tourism and economic development organizations. Our goal? To empower them with new tools and perspectives on the key factors that shape a city's competitive identity, community well-being and future prosperity. Over the course of our work, we've come to understand that traditional performance indicators alone—economic output, investment and visitor numbers, for example—don't reveal the whole story for cities and their tourism and economic development agencies.

Visitors and citizens themselves are increasingly influencing the identity and perception of cities through the millions of evaluations of experiences they share online with family, friends and people around the world. Much more than traditional marketing, these opinions and attitudes influence the way people perceive places and where talent, tourism and investment flow. This social media data also provides a rich new source of information to benchmark the experiential quality of one city to the next.

We developed *America's Best Cities* to quantify and benchmark the relative quality of place, reputation and competitive identity for U.S. principal cities with metropolitan populations of 200,000 or more by analyzing and comparing 27 factors in six key categories using a combination of core statistics and online ratings and reviews. This helps cities understand their strengths and weaknesses through the lens of the people who matter most: their residents and visitors.

We hope you find this exclusive U.S. ranking informative and inspiring.

With deep data on hundreds of cities worldwide, Resonance can help your city—large or small—analyze and understand your key strengths and the differentiating characteristics that define your city's competitive identity. To learn more about our approach to place branding and building stronger cities and destinations, please visit [ResonanceCo.com](http://ResonanceCo.com).



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RESONANCE CONSULTANCY PRESIDENT & CEO CHRIS FAIR

“Much more than traditional marketing, these opinions and attitudes influence the way people perceive places and where talent, tourism and investment flow.”

CHRIS FAIR,  
RESONANCE CONSULTANCY

## The Rise of American Cities

Some context by National Geographic Travel.



**L**ike fidgety kids, American cities never sit still. They stay constantly in motion: growing, changing, reinventing themselves. Getting them to pose for their portrait in the pages of *National Geographic Traveler* is often hard work for the photographers and writers assigned to capture them, but the rewards are worth it. Especially now.

*Traveler* believes the rise of the American city is *the* story of the 21st century. In their polychrome diversity and thrusting ambition, our urban areas represent the best of us. Seattle, Denver or St. Paul may not be Rome or the capital of the world (hello, New York!), but like ancient Alexandria, they sparkle as destinations where millions of people can build and realize their dreams outside an imperial orbit.

Other American cities rise like phoenixes. Industrial Age powerhouses like Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati have been reborn. Downtowns gleam with sassy, glassy, LEED-certified skyscrapers. Heritage neighborhoods resonate with cafés and shops launched by local merchants and selling regional wares. Smaller is beautiful, too. Hubs like Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Bend, Oregon, are finding new ways to grow and showcase best practices for sustainable growth in urban areas.

College towns like Columbia, Missouri, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Charlottesville, Virginia, have emerged as full-fledged metros as they retain enterprising graduates and draw empty-nesting alumnae eager to return to places of intellectual and cultural stimulation.

This *America's Best Cities* report is a valuable tool that benchmarks powerful places based on a fixed methodology. The findings in the report contain old friends like Charleston, Philadelphia and Asheville and plenty of surprises. For travelers to American cities—we report to a world of them in our magazine, on social media @NatGeoTravel and online at NatGeoTravel.com—the list is an invaluable guide to authentic, surprising and engaging places well worth visiting. Some of these travelers may end up staying longer. That's the magic of travel: it gives us the chance to renew and reinvent ourselves, just like these spectacular cities.



“The list is an invaluable guide to authentic, surprising and engaging places well worth visiting.”

ANDREW NELSON,  
*NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Nelson".

Andrew Nelson, Editorial Projects Director  
*National Geographic Travel*



## Why cities—and their place equity—matter more than ever.

Or: Why Jane Jacobs was so right all along.

Places are powerful. Neighborhoods, cities and nations create energy and excitement. Places connect us to one another in ways that online worlds cannot. Today, the idea of place and its relative quality play growing roles in our prosperity as well. Indeed, famed urbanist Jane Jacobs once described the purpose of cities simply and succinctly as a means to create wealth.

Cities that fail to do this cannot sustain or improve their citizens' quality of life—nor can they attract the investment that makes them a magnet for talent or the tourism that can fuel awareness and jobs.

The wealth of cities and nations has historically been determined primarily by location: climate, access to resources, ports and proximity to other centers of trade.

For centuries, advantages in one or more of these areas attracted capital and investment, created jobs and sustained prosperity. But in the past few decades, developed economies have shifted from manufacturing to services and technology, lessening geography's impact on economic success.

Increasingly, reputation, identity and the perceived quality of place determine where talent, capital and tourism flow.

As research by Resonance Consultancy and others has shown, perception of place is influenced by a wide range of factors:

- *Quality of the natural and built environment*
- *Key institutions, attractions and infrastructure*
- *Diversity of people*
- *Promotion via stories, references and recommendations shared online*
- *Economic prosperity*
- *Quality of the arts, culture, restaurants and nightlife*

These assets and many others shape the perception and identity of places in the minds of people evaluating where to live, visit or invest.



MODERN PARK IN MIAMI'S SOUTH BEACH

The wealth of cities and nations has historically been determined primarily by location: climate, access to resources, ports and proximity to other centers of trade.

# THE RESONANCE SCORE AND METHODOLOGY

What really makes one city “better” than another? We all have opinions based on personal preferences and tastes. Our approach to benchmarking and measuring the quality of one city to the next is rooted in our analysis of the key factors that “Mobile Millennials”—Americans aged 20 to 36 who have traveled in the past year—consider to be most important in choosing a city to live or visit.

We surveyed more than 1,500 of these Mobile Millennials across the U.S. in both 2014 and 2017 to monitor and identify 27 factors, which include (among others):

- Affordability of housing and job opportunities
- Quality of the natural and built environment
- Quality of key institutions, attractions and infrastructure
- Diversity of people
- Promotion via stories, references and recommendations online
- Economic prosperity
- Quality of the arts, culture, restaurants and nightlife

We grouped these factors together into six categories: Place, Product, Programming, People, Prosperity and Promotion. In sum, a city's performance across these six categories reflects the relative “place equity” and competitive identity of one city to the next.

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

The rankings that follow are divided between America's large cities and America's small cities. America's large cities refer to principal cities of the metropolitan areas within the United States that have populations of more than one million. America's small cities refer to principal cities within a metropolitan area with populations from 200,000 to one million defined as the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area.



## Place

The perceived quality of a city's natural and built environment, including the sub-categories of Air Quality, Weather, Crime Rate, Neighborhoods & Landmarks, Parks & Outdoor Activities, and Commute Time.



## Product

A city's key institutions, attractions and infrastructure, including the sub-categories of University Rankings, Airport Connectivity, Convention Center, Entertainment, Museums, Sports Teams, and Housing Affordability.



## Programming

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



## People

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



## Prosperity

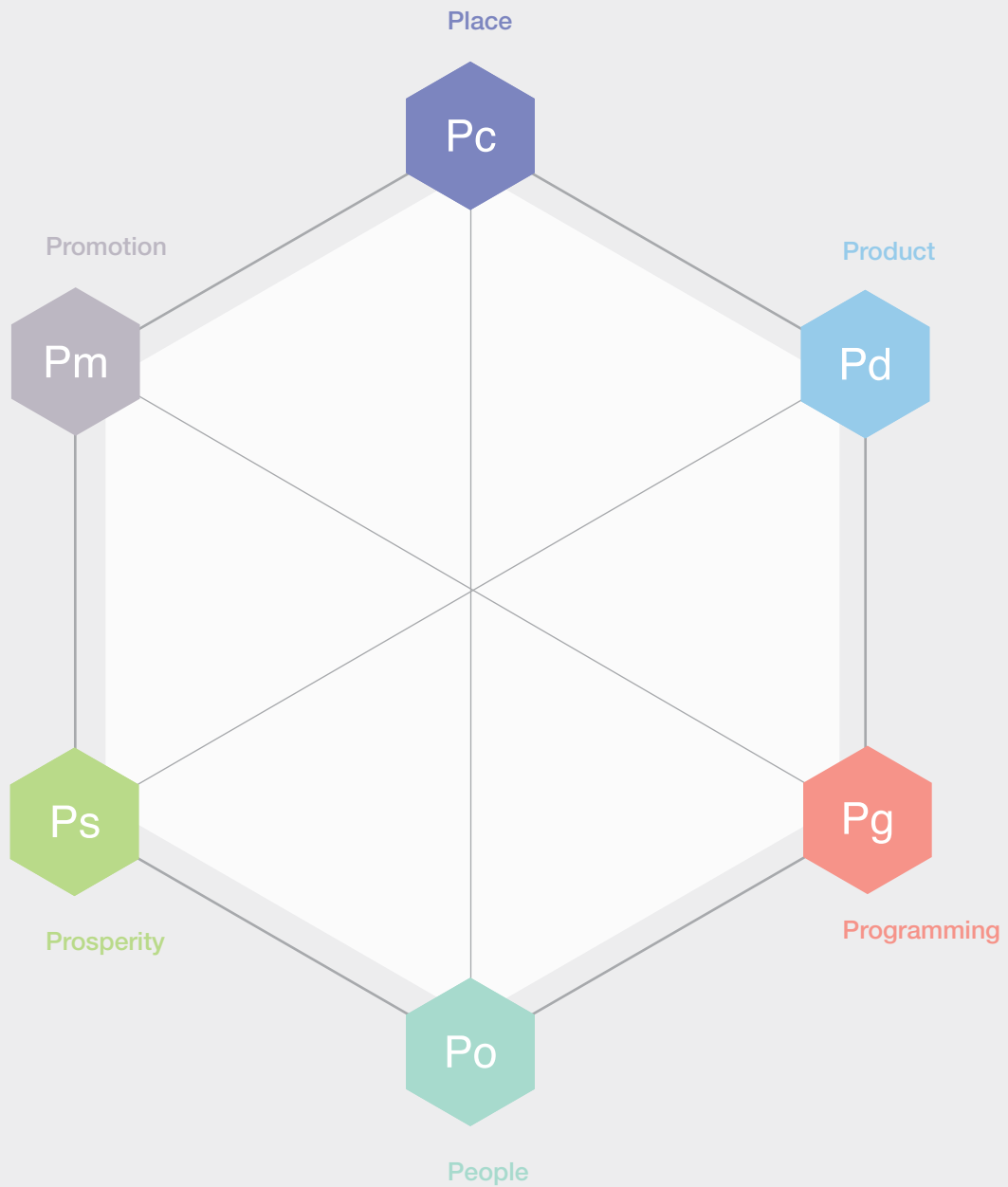
A city's employment and corporate head offices, including the sub-categories of Unemployment, Median Household Income, and Fortune 500 Companies.



## Promotion

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

How to understand the performance of  
America's best cities, at a glance.



# AMERICA'S 10 BEST LARGE CITIES

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



Page 10 | #1 New York, New York

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Page 12 | #2 Chicago, Illinois

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Page 14 | #3 Los Angeles, California

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Page 15 | #4 San Francisco, California

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Page 16 | #5 Las Vegas, Nevada

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Page 17 | #6 San Diego, California

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Page 18 | #7 Houston, Texas

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Page 19 | #8 Miami, Florida

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Page 20 | #9 Seattle, Washington

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Page 21 | #10 Washington, D.C.

# 1. NEW YORK CITY

America's best city will not be defined, tamed or—against all odds—contained.

## POPULATION

CITY: 8,426,743 | METRO: 19,979,950

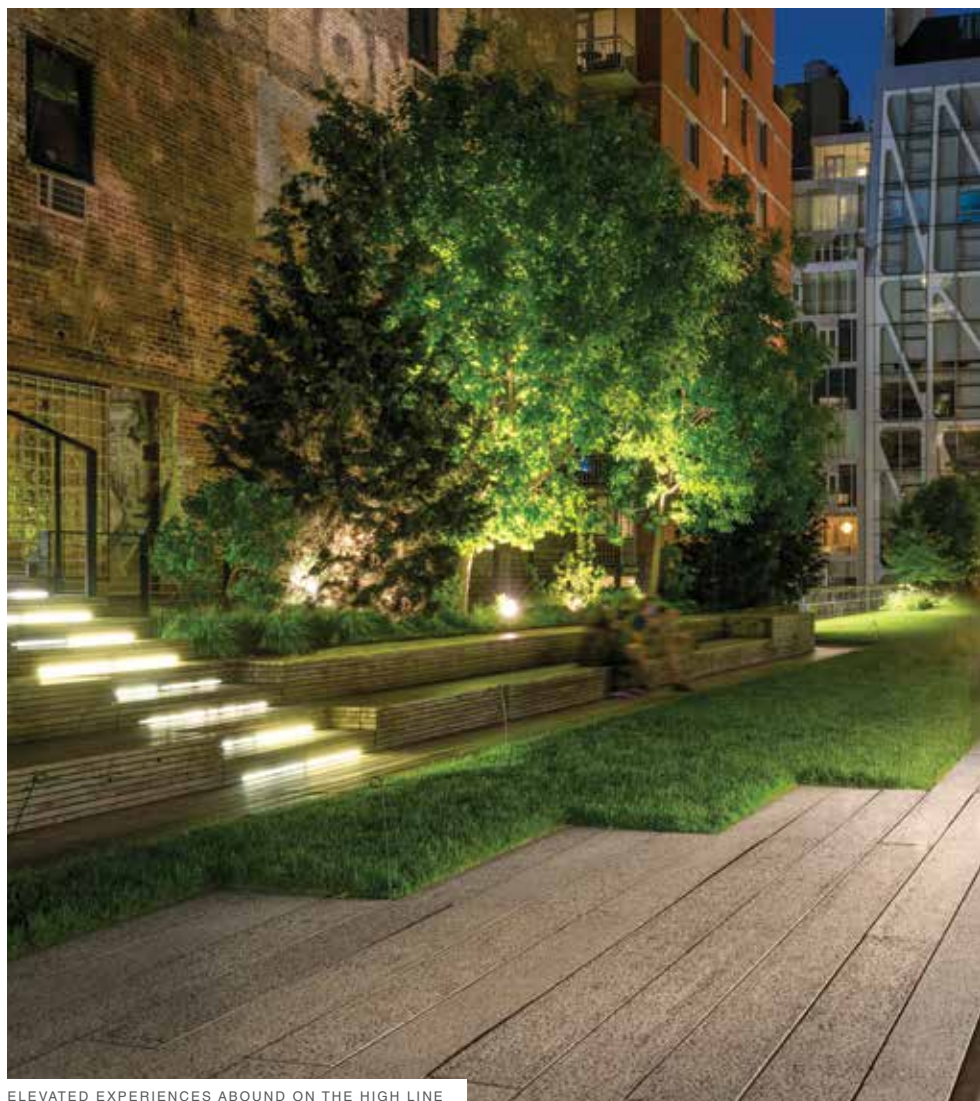
The designation as “The City That Never Sleeps” has long referred to this kingdom of human ingenuity's nocturnal pursuits. Today, it encapsulates the unshackled ambition of pushing the limits of what's possible in an urban context while stewarding a place for future generations.

It's in this openness, human friction, density and contrast that the potential of urbanism—and the human spirit—is unleashed. Not surprisingly, then, New York finished first in our Prosperity category, ahead of the tech titans in San Jose, led by its #1 ranking for Fortune 500 Companies.

But as befits this city's century-old friction between capitalism and creativity, New York the financial wealth magnet also swept the top spots in our Programming category. Chalk one up for Fearless Girl. This year, 40 new Broadway shows are launching—the most in three decades. New York storytellers Billy Joel and Jerry Seinfeld are doing residencies all year, the former at Madison Square Garden, the latter at the Beacon Theater, just because they can.

While the city trailed Chicago in our Product category, it topped the Museum sub-category. Helping its cause this year is the Whitney Museum of American Art's first Biennial in its dramatic new location. The iconic venue doubled its exhibition space two years ago when it relocated to Chelsea, ballooning its visitation numbers as well.

New York's #1 Culinary ranking speaks to how the city has always been a food town, as indicated by the fact that 77 of its restaurants boast one, two or three Michelin stars. Earlier this year, Eleven Madison Park was named best



ELEVATED EXPERIENCES AROUND ON THE HIGH LINE

“New York City has ducked out from under the American flag before and we may have to do it again.”

FRED DIXON,  
NYC & COMPANY

restaurant in the world by the global authority on such matters, becoming the first U.S. room to grab the honor since 2004. The difference between culinary lineage of old and today? Starred restaurants are tucked relatively off the map, in Bushwick (Faro), Harlem (Sushi Inoue) and Williamsburg (Aska).

This sprawling, crammed theater of big money and big dreams is why this place keeps smashing visitor numbers—a record 60.3 million arrived in 2016, including 12.7 million from outside the U.S.—and why smitten visitors keep feeding the legend of New York in their



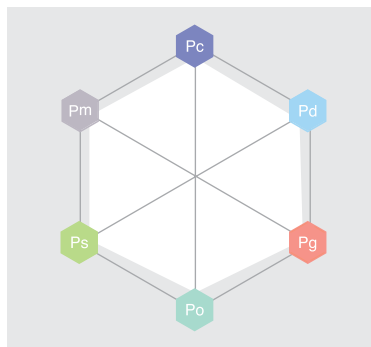
own words. As such, the city also swept our Promotions category, powered by the most TripAdvisor Reviews, Google Searches and Facebook Check-ins of anywhere in the country. Not surprisingly, the city also surfaced the most Google results in the nation.

Despite a political environment that seems to challenge its open-for-business pitch and adherence to a heritage as a place of sanctuary, New York is going all in on welcoming the world, reciprocating the love it has received globally since that dark September day in 2001.



HUDSON YARDS WILL BE A MINI-CITY ON THE WEST SIDE

FORBES MASSIE STUDIO



EDIBLE ART AT 'RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR' ELEVEN MADISON PARK

PAUL WAGTOUNZ

"New York City has ducked out from under the American flag before and we may have to do it again," Fred Dixon, CEO of tourism and marketing organization NYC & Company, told Resonance recently. "But this isn't entirely tied to the recent U.S. election. With the rise of cities, we are reverting to ancient times with the organization of the city-state."

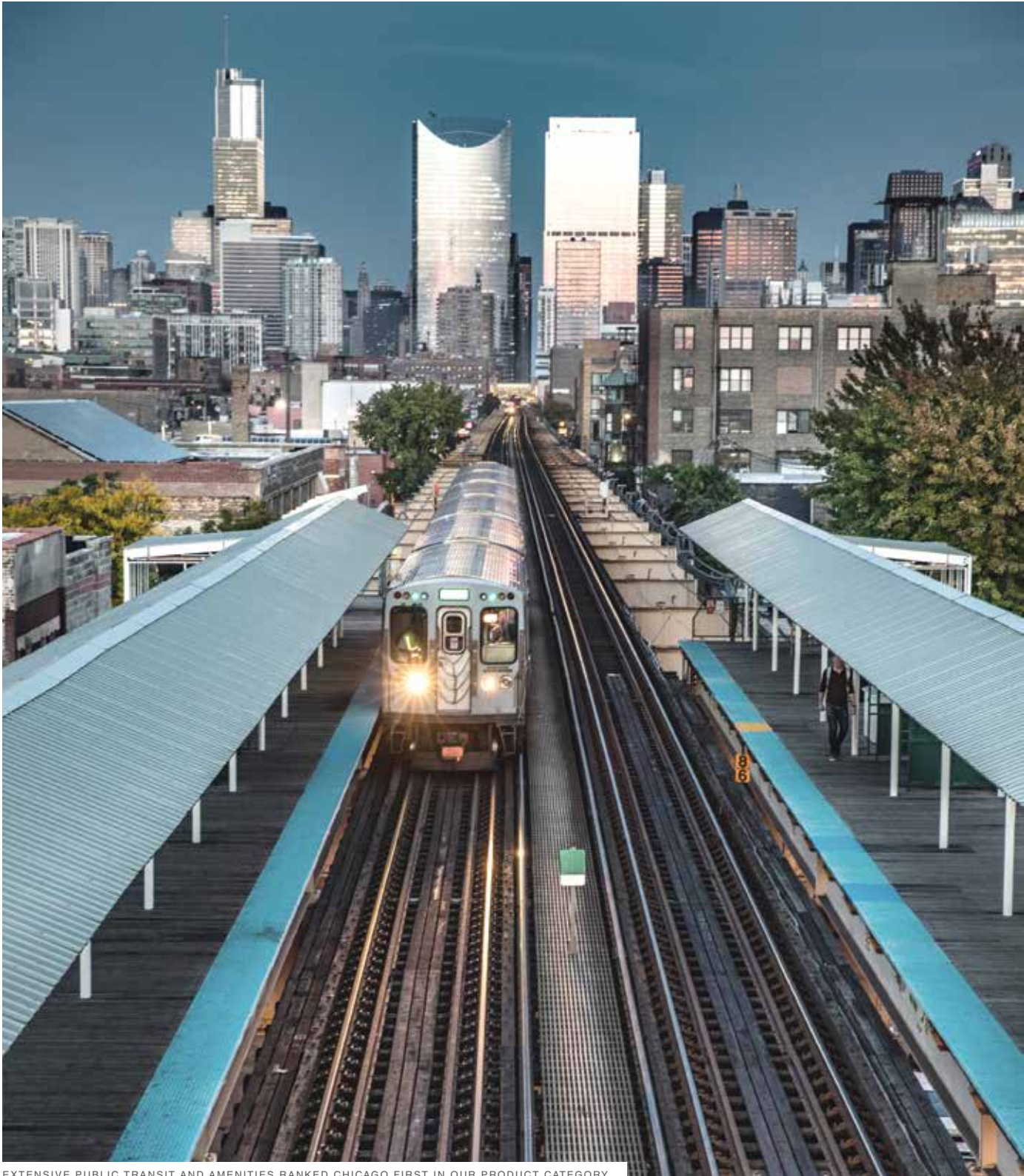
The city certainly offers more to do than most *countries*, mostly reachable by its expanding public transit system—an attraction unto itself. This summer, the cost of a subway ride also gets you above ground and on the East River courtesy of the new 18-ferry NYC fleet, complete with bike racks and free Wi-Fi, with service to Red Hook and the emerging Rockaways.

And. It. Just. Keeps. Building.

If you haven't heard of Hudson Yards, you soon will. The mini-city on the West Side along the Hudson River is Manhattan's largest development since the 1930s construction of the Rockefeller Center. Built on a 28-acre platform over 30 active train tracks, it is by far the largest private real estate development in the country's history, at \$25 billion upon build-out in 2025. More important, it will yield 4,000 residences, 100 shops, parks, a playground and new gallery space—much needed breathing room in a city that has visitors and residents taking deep breaths just to keep up.

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





EXTENSIVE PUBLIC TRANSIT AND AMENITIES RANKED CHICAGO FIRST IN OUR PRODUCT CATEGORY

## 2. CHICAGO

An abundance of programming and experiential options—museums, dining and nightlife—keeps residents and tourists hopping, while robust infrastructure keeps them moving seamlessly.

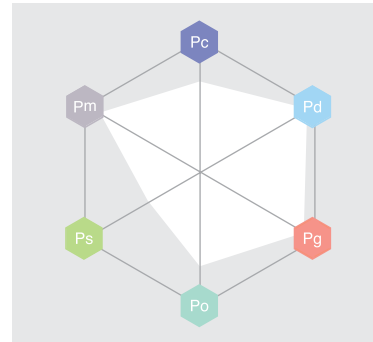
### POPULATION

CITY: 2,717,534 | METRO: 9,534,008

Chicago may have missed out on first overall, but the City of Neighborhoods (or is it Big Shoulders?—either way, local pride and looking out for others rule here) was Top 3 in the key categories.

According to Resonance research, Chicago offers visitors and residents the same diversity of experience as traditionally larger tourism centers like New York and Paris. The city ranks #1 in the nation in the Product category, comprising such sub-categories as Museums (#5 in the U.S.), Sports Teams (#3) and Airport Connectivity (#2).

The Product category—an index that evaluates the “hardware” of a city—is one of the most difficult metrics to get



right. Museums, airports and public transit take years to build and are expensive to maintain, but they are vital for urban exploration and empowering a city's visitors.

Chicago finished second only to New York for Programming, one of the largest indicators of a city's magnetism and appeal to both residents and visitors. Chicago performs exceptionally well in this experiential category, which measures positive traveler and resident social media sentiment across the sub-categories of Culinary, Entertainment, Shopping, Culture and Nightlife. The relentless and distinctive restaurant scene in this vibrant, fearless city is catching up to its celebrated nightlife and music scene. Chicago ranked #3 in the Culinary category overall and second-



EVERYONE LOVES THE CUBBIES

The relentless and distinctive restaurant scene in this vibrant, fearless city is catching up to its celebrated nightlife and music scene.

best in Nightlife, behind New York. Daring new rooms like Kitsune Restaurant and Pub by Michelin-starred chef Iliana Regan mash up Japanese-inspired pub food with Midwestern ingredients, while the brilliantly named Bad Hunter has Midwestern appetites queuing for inventive vegetarian fare.

The city also performs well in its #4 overall ranking in Promotion, a vital “top of funnel” traveler consideration when choosing a place to visit. Chicago's destination marketers excel in ensuring that curious visitors searching for ideas are served with mobile-first guides, apps and maps—free, easy to access and updated frequently.



THE WINDY CITY'S NIGHTLIFE BLOWS AWAY THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

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



### 3. LOS ANGELES

The land of fantasy, sunbats and traffic is looking inward and finding its soul.

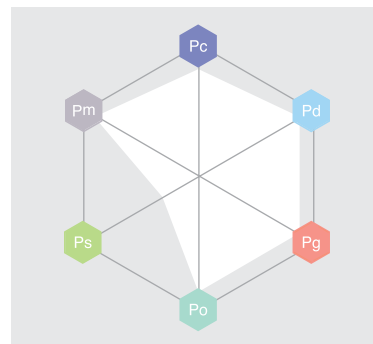
#### POPULATION

CITY: 3,900,794 | METRO: 13,154,457

How does a city composed of 88 municipalities resonate as one? If you're L.A., you start by taking care of your heart. Long a hollowed-out afterthought for visitors preferring sunscreen to street life, Downtown Los Angeles is doing the unthinkable: creating acres of culturally dense streetscapes meant for walking. The city is steadily climbing the ladder of our Product category as a result, coming in at #4 in the country, including an impressive #2 ranking in the nation in the Museums sub-category.

Powering the ascent is art—though not of the cinematic variety. The new Broad museum is the biggest cultural opening in decades, with its free admission, Instagrammable architecture and some of the highest profile post-war art collections on the continent. Also opening this year is the photography, painting and sculpture-rich (and also free) Marciano Art Foundation near Koreatown. This fall, the former Santa Monica Museum of Art reopens in the Downtown Arts District—across the street from The Broad—as the Institute of Contemporary Art Los Angeles. And with L.A. being a place where image is everything, no museum revolution would be complete without an ode to visual storytelling, which is exactly what George Lucas's Museum of Narrative Art, set to open in Downtown's Exposition Park in 2021, will deliver. Appropriately, early renderings look like a Star Destroyer touched down for a Trojans game.

All that cultural investment is being complemented by roaring development that's also fueled by art.



Downtown Los Angeles is doing the unthinkable: creating acres of culturally dense streetscapes meant for walking.

Taste-making pioneers Standard Hotel and the Ace Hotel have been joined by no less than \$3 billion of new hotel and residential projects, with the Arts District being the most coveted. Local developer SunCal is writing the likely script for L.A.'s transformation: aging nondescript distribution warehouses that sprawled over city blocks redeveloped as high-design public space bazaars, with street-level retail and office space anchored by 50-plus story residential and hotel towers.

Placemaking projects are no less impressive. Grand Park, opened in 2012 at the foot of iconic Bunker Hill, now draws as many people as the latest artist exhibition. Even the neglected Los Angeles River is being redeveloped in the next few years by none other than Frank Gehry.

- Pc Place
- Pd Product
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- Po People
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L.A.'S ARTS SCENE IN FULL BLOOM



THE NEWLY REOPENED SFMOMA

## 4. SAN FRANCISCO

Beautiful, witty and influential, San Francisco just keeps getting more sublime.

### POPULATION

CITY: 840,763 | METRO: 4,528,894

In California's dense urban heart, history repeats. The young, untethered and ambitious have always coveted the enlightenment that the city's fog- and mist-diffused light seems to bestow. They came here for gold, and then they came to change the world (2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love). Most recently, they came to reinvent it.

It's because San Francisco has always written down its dreams, penned an action plan, and gotten to work. The Golden Gate Bridge, glowing against the shifting Pacific fog, is a reminder that engineering makes even the formidable possible. Here, even the geography seems to have an algorithm, with 49 hills distilled in the city's seven-by-seven mile grid.

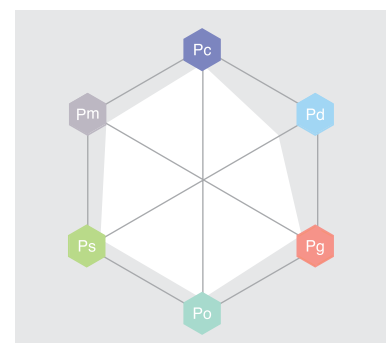
Long a vanguard of global counterculture, San Francisco is now defining the mainstream—often with the innovation dreamt up in Silicon Valley, 45 minutes south, first tested on its streets. Dreamers have long sought their fortunes here, and the city ranks #3 in the country in our Prosperity category with the second-highest Median Household Income in the country and the seventh-most Fortune 500 companies headquartered here.

Of course, cities with such mercurial growth are hobbled quickly after taking flight. It's why traffic has never been worse, with locals scheming around the nation's highest rent (at an average of \$3,700 per household according to local numbers), to say nothing of the million-dollar row houses in "up-and-coming" neighborhoods cut off from any form of transit. Sure, San Francisco *could* have bigger problems than the average local tech worker earning close to \$200,000 and competing for a piece of urban California perfection with a teacher making a third of that. But it's a displacement story unrivaled in America.

Happily, nature is still mostly free and resonates more than ever, with the

city ranking #5 nationally in our Place category, led by the fifth-best ranking for Parks & Outdoor Activities.

This perfectly balanced natural urbanism is not lost on curious visitors, who continue to stream into this urban bucket-list destination in record numbers with every passing year, eager to catch some of that old magic while being the first to sample new cultural beacons like the newly reopened (and partially free) SF Museum of Modern Art that the city's cultural curators continue to fashion, as if aware of their tenuous obligation to live up to the city's moniker as Manhattan of the West Coast.





THE NEON IS OPTIONAL IN BUZZING DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS

JON ESTRADA

## 5. LAS VEGAS

What happens in Vegas... is starting to resemble a great American city.

### POPULATION

CITY: 605,097 | METRO: 2,035,572

If you think about it, no other American city is as clichéd as Sin City. See!

Not that there's anything wrong with clichés if they're working. For the third year in a row, Las Vegas broke its previous year's number for visitors, setting a new all-time record in 2016. The city welcomed 42.9 million visitors last year, surpassing 2015's record-setting 42.3 million. It was a record-breaking convention visitation year, too, with 6.3 million business travelers rolling into town. Not surprisingly, for the fourth year running, Vegas was also named the World's Leading Meetings & Conference Destination for 2016 by the World Travel Awards. Its first non-stop flight from China launched a few months back.

But increasingly, the city's less-polished, more muted and organic edges have started encroaching on the

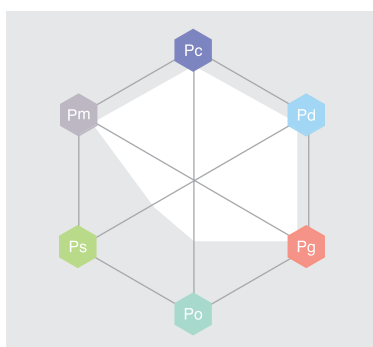
casino-sanctioned neon. And visitors are joining residents in discovering these layers that can often be missed while negotiating the visual overload. Downtown is now a destination, whether you live near or far. Chef Natalie Young's EAT, on the street level of a nondescript apartment building, became legendary for Mexican-French breakfast and lunch magic. And other concepts followed—from hot vegan spot VegeNation to Cajun mastery at Zydeco Po-Boys. Chef Young has kept up, with the Chinese-and-chicken lure of Chow, her latest initiative, drawing crowds and training the next generation of local chefs since late 2015.

Vegas has felt like a home town for a few years now, and visitors are finally starting to notice. Same with our

Downtown is now a destination, whether you live near or far.

rankings. It finished #3 overall in Promotion, of course—the result of frequent Google Searches, Facebook Check-ins and the second-most TripAdvisor Reviews in the nation. But the city was also #3 in Programming, powered by its #2 finish in the Culture sub-category as well as being the seventh-best Culinary city in the country. Nightlife, not surprisingly, was third-best in the U.S., behind only New York and Chicago.

Local pride—and visitor numbers—will grow further, of course, with the arrival of the NHL's Las Vegas Golden Knights—the city's first pro sports team—later this year, followed by the NFL Raiders in 2020.



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



## 6. SAN DIEGO

The Southern California ideal now powers urban excellence and economic innovation.

### POPULATION

CITY: 1,359,791 | METRO: 3,223,096

If there was a surprise in our Best Cities ranking, it very well may be San Diego as one of America's best urban centers—holding its own across the Culinary, Nightlife and Foreign-born Residents sub-categories with larger cities. Although, given that it has referred to itself as “America's Finest City” for more than a decade now, it's pretty obvious locals knew something the rest of us didn't.

The city is a sublime blend of beauty, brains and brawn with which few American cities can compete. Its lauded perch on the extreme, sunny, Pacific-kissed bottom left of the country has long attracted surfers, adventurers and other residents who understand that making a living and cavorting with Mother Nature on school nights are not mutually exclusive. How can they be? Year-round sun and ocean sports, golf and the beguiling Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve are just the tip of a verdant, expansive public park system that's the envy of the country. Even the long-urbanized downtown is embracing a lifestyle that worships the Pacific, with new residential development—the first new towers in over a decade—adding new housing stock to an in-demand waterfront location.

As a result of these attributes, the city finished first in our Place category among large cities, ahead of New York—lofty company given NYC's domination in the category (see p.10).

Place is our most layered index, packed with five sub-metrics that quantify a city's elusive sense of place (see p. 40 for more). On its way to a #1 finish, San Diego ranked very low in Crime (third-lowest for all large cities), tops in Parks &

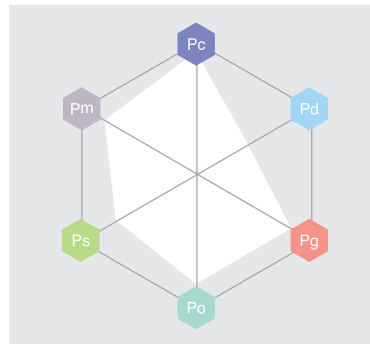
Outdoor Activities, #5 in Weather and #4 in Neighborhoods & Landmarks.

San Diego also scored high in our Programming category (#7 in the country)—testament to its favorable recommendations by locals and visitors in the Shopping, Culture, Culinary and Nightlife sub-categories. Particularly notable is the fact that San Diego ranked as the sixth-best culinary city in the U.S., just behind San Francisco and

ahead of Las Vegas. It's also lauded for its increasingly sophisticated nightlife, ranked #7 in the country, a spot behind L.A. and ahead of Austin.

Tourism has always ruled in San Diego, which has drawn more than 30 million visitors annually for the past few years. But it's the city's brawn—one of the largest concentration of military in any city on the planet—that also fuels its increasingly powerful economic engine. Perhaps it's this sense of security that has long allowed San Diego to embrace the cultural and economic bounty of Mexico, just a short drive away.

You need only to look at the symbiotic relationship with sister city Tijuana—one that continues to grow in today's protectionist froth, allowing local companies to tap into cross-border innovation. This is a living business and trade lab watched closely by entrepreneurs—and prospective residents—across the country.



SAN DIEGO BLENDS THE BUILT WITH THE NATURAL LIKE FEW OTHER CITIES



HOUSTON BOASTS THE SECOND-MOST FORTUNE 500 OFFICES IN THE COUNTRY

## 7. HOUSTON

On the edge of Texas, well-paying jobs and an energized commitment to art, culture and livability.

### POPULATION

CITY: 2,217,706 | METRO: 6,346,653

For the fourth-largest city in the U.S. (soon to be third-largest once it overtakes Chicago), Houston runs relatively stealth. On the surface, the city appears to just keep its head down and put in an honest day's work at the head offices of the world's energy industry and the bounty of Fortune 500 companies that have gravitated here over the decades. And, you know, there's NASA—and the aerospace industry that's the gateway to extraterrestrial energy extraction in future decades. The sky, it seems, is literally the limit for the Bayou City.

Given its economic firepower, this giant of the American South ranked #7 in the country for Prosperity—a key driver in its Top 10 finish. Incredibly, it ranked #2 for Fortune 500 companies headquartered in a U.S. city, second only to New York.

Perhaps even more fascinating than its plentiful, well-paying jobs is Houston's cultural and culinary ingenuity that's sprouting from the blend of prosperity and international arrivals. The city ranked #9 in the nation for our People category, including #7 in the Foreign-born Residents sub-category.

Dining is a pastime here, never more so than today, with 11,000 restaurants ranging from local splurge Underbelly to true-to-the-Old-Country Ethiopian and Indian gems. It finished as the #4 food city in the U.S. in our Culinary sub-category, one ahead of San Francisco.

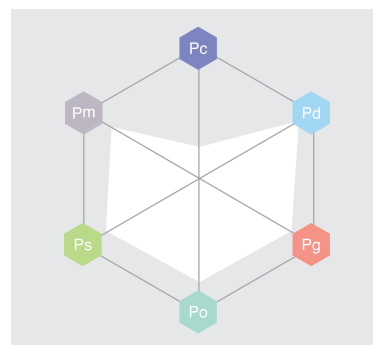
Houston is also rich in infrastructure, as indicated by its #5 ranking in our Product category, powered by the connectivity of its airports. Courtesy of a \$150-million investment by Southwest Airlines, the

There's NASA—and the aerospace industry that's the gateway to extraterrestrial energy extraction in future decades. The sky, it seems, is literally the limit for the Bayou City.

newly upgraded William P. Hobby Airport has given Houston a second international gateway.

The city is also poised to ascend in our Product ranking in the near future, especially in its #11 ranking in the Museums sub-category, due to the torrid pace of arts buildout.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is making good on its recent announcement of a \$450-million upgrade scheduled for completion in 2019. The Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University opened earlier this year and gives the city a Michael Maltzan-designed, 50,000-sq.-ft. exhibition, teaching and public meeting space. All this, of course, is in addition to the Menil Collection, Renzo Piano's first U.S. building, and its high-design public art all over town for—gaspl!—pedestrians to enjoy.





# 8. MIAMI

An alchemy of immigrant hustle and hedonism creates a creative buzz like nowhere else.

## POPULATION

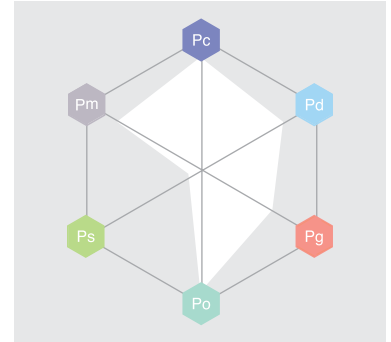
CITY: 424,632 | METRO: 5,861,000

For all its obvious physical natural bounty—turquoise Biscayne Bay lapping white-powder sand while sun-kissed bodies frolic everywhere—Miami is one complicated beauty. It ranks #6 in the country in our deep Place category, #7 for air quality and second only to San Diego for Parks & Outdoor Activities. But it also leads the U.S. in our People category, which includes Foreign-

born Residents and Languages Spoken at Home—more than 100 here.

With such a diverse cultural coexistence, it's no wonder the city is mentioned in the same breath as San Francisco for its LGBT appeal. Its "Gay Riviera" brand is one of the first developed by a U.S. city, elevating Miami to the forefront in drawing LGBT tourists and residents. There's even a new LGBT Visitor Center in South Beach.

Miami has always been a destination, both for its exoticism-without-a-passport that draws frozen northerners, as well as the profound, magnetic Latin American community that serves as the point of entry for so many from Central and South America and, of course, Cuba and the Caribbean. Miami's alchemy of immigrant hustle and hedonism is unrivalled in the U.S.



It's why locals, inspired by the visual bounty of the land and sea, have always tried to do one better—first with some of the most striking Art Deco architecture on the planet and, most recently, wrestling the crown away from several cities for the title of Art City. It's been 16 years since international art fair Art Basel landed, followed by the Frank Gehry-designed New World Symphony Center and the adjacent Soundscape—a 2.5-acre public park designed by Dutch architectural firm West 8. The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts is a tropical Lincoln Center in the city's downtown—one of only four centers in the country with *separate* performance facilities for ballet, opera, theater and symphonic live shows.

Amazingly, things seem only to be getting started. Shopping, rated #15 in the country, will move up in future rankings based on this year's expansion of the Miami Design District, with its art-filled plaza and new retail venues housing coveted luxury brands. The new Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (ICA), also opening this year, is sure to improve the city's Product ranking of #13 in the nation, including #15 for Museums (and galleries). So will the newly revamped Miami International Airport, which hit an all-time high for arrivals last year, 4.8% above the previous year.



THE MIAMI ART MUSEUM KEEPS IT FRESH

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

## 9. SEATTLE

A century of remote self-sufficiency has spawned an ecosystem of innovation, stewardship and nation-leading growth.

### POPULATION

CITY: 653,017 | METRO: 3,614,361

Seattle's growth is approaching late-19th-century velocity, when end-of-the-road settlers flattened hills and filled in tidal lands with a zeal rarely seen in American city building.

Emerald City has always had one speed, inspired by the soaring peaks, unencumbered by East Coast etiquette and bound by frontier-instilled community. Today this ambition is able to scale like never before.

It's why the city erected the most construction cranes in the U.S. for two years running (62 as of late 2016, according to consultancy Rider Levett Bucknall North America). And why head-office vanguards of the new economy like Amazon, Costco and Microsoft are at once hiring more than ever while leaving legacies in the city that launched them—museums, hospital wings and foundations. There's a profound sense

of stewardship by the city's captains of industry. Case in point: Paul Allen, the elder of American tech and co-founder of Microsoft, bankrolled Seattle's version of Austin's SxSW this year, called The Upstream Music Festival and Summit.

The city's low-key entrepreneurial success only powers more decentralized risk-taking. Entrepreneurs are rewarded and launch the next play, this time in their favorite neighborhood. Recently opened restaurants, shops and bars fueled by this disposable income have

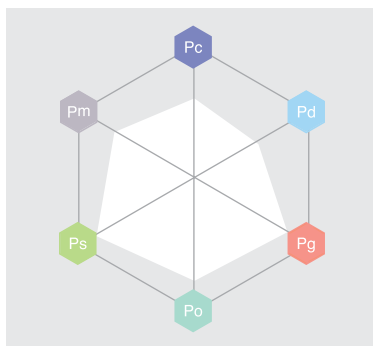
propelled the city to #8 in the nation in our Programming category, which measures Shopping, Culture, Culinary and Nightlife.

The city's rank as #5 in the country in our Prosperity category is coaxing America's best and brightest. Literally: Seattle ranked #1 in Education by residents. It's the smartest city in the country. Two more metrics in which the city likely leads the nation, and quite possibly the planet, tell volumes about its... *distinction*: 1) breweries, now at more than 80 in the city, and 2) asteroid-mining companies.

Not surprisingly, local transit and Sea-Tac Airport are expanding like never before, just to keep up. The return of the NBA and NHL expansion is a matter of when, not if. All three developments will move Seattle's ranking in our Product category up fast in future rankings.

Fortunately, Seattle is keeping a level head, aware that today's human frenzy, like that of more than a century ago, is relative. It's a perspective facilitated by quickly glancing at Mount Rainier, Puget Sound and the distant Olympic Mountains standing sentry timelessly at the stunning edge of the country.

There's a profound sense of stewardship by the city's captains of industry.



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



THE NEW AMAZON BIOSPHERE OFFICES IN SOUTH LAKE UNION

# 10. WASHINGTON

Power meets play in America's intriguing capital city.

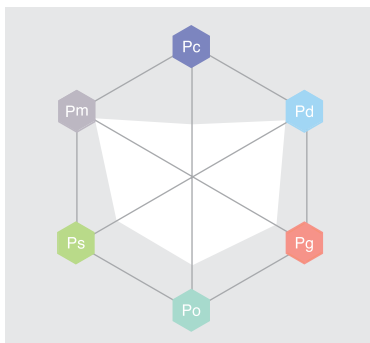
## POPULATION

CITY: 647,484 | METRO: 5,949,403

Although the capital city may surprise in its Top 10 ranking, its recent ubiquity in dramas on screens small and large (to say nothing of the real-life stuff) has escalated its resonance in the zeitgeist.

The city scores well in our Product category, including third-best 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—trailing only New York and L.A. Its number of sports teams ranks fourth, behind only New York, L.A. and Chicago.

The city also scored high in the Programming category, ranking #16 in the country for its Culinary scene and #13 for Nightlife. It's a crest that's been building for several years. Last year, Washington was named "Restaurant City of the Year" by *Bon Appétit* magazine, followed by the designation of "Hottest Food City" by Zagat. Then Michelin launched its first dedicated restaurant guide to the city. Today, visitors and locals have their choice of international arrivals like José Andrés and home-grown musts like ramen perfection at Erik Bruner-Yang's Toki Underground.



WASHINGTON IS ENJOYING ITS CITY-BUILDING SWAGGER

The \$2-billion, mile-long Wharf project, opening Phase 1 this fall, will eventually boast 3.2 million sq. ft. of residential, hotel, office, restaurant, retail and cultural space.


























The city's cultural and culinary ascent is manifesting at The Wharf development on the Southwest D.C. waterfront. The \$2-billion, mile-long project, opening Phase 1 this fall, will eventually boast 3.2 million sq. ft. of residential, hotel, office, restaurant, retail and cultural space. This destination neighborhood will further abet the city's culinary innovation with plans for a dozen independent restaurants. Culture will be served with two live music venues, and the city's already impressive public transit system will be supported by its first water taxi fleet, based in The Wharf.

This rapid development means the city is making an impact online, ranking a very impressive #5 in our Promotion category, including yielding the second-most Google search results, trailing only New York. Washington is also Top 10 in Google Searches, total TripAdvisor Reviews and Facebook Check-ins. Given the arc of cultural and political development in the city, the planet's curiosity about America's HQ will only grow in the years ahead.



# AMERICA'S 50 BEST LARGE CITIES



Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
1	New York	New York	2	2	1	5	1	1	
2	Chicago	Illinois	15	1	2	13	27	4	
3	Los Angeles	California	8	4	4	4	35	2	
4	San Francisco	California	5	17	5	2	3	6	
5	Las Vegas	Nevada	4	3	3	28	33	3	
6	San Diego	California	1	28	7	7	14	8	
7	Houston	Texas	40	5	9	9	7	9	
8	Miami	Florida	6	13	19	1	47	12	
9	Seattle	Washington	19	23	8	10	5	14	
10	Washington	District of Columbia	32	8	13	15	15	5	
11	Austin	Texas	9	37	11	11	4	17	
12	San Jose	California	13	47	39	3	2	26	
13	Boston	Massachusetts	10	15	15	6	24	10	
14	Orlando	Florida	17	7	14	19	29	7	
15	Dallas	Texas	27	11	21	12	21	15	
16	Denver	Colorado	30	12	18	14	13	19	
17	San Antonio	Texas	20	24	16	25	12	18	
18	Portland	Oregon	14	34	10	23	17	20	
19	Atlanta	Georgia	44	10	20	29	23	11	
20	Minneapolis	Minnesota	31	14	23	18	18	36	
21	Nashville	Tennessee	26	29	17	30	11	21	
22	Charlotte	North Carolina	37	19	29	26	16	24	
23	New Orleans	Louisiana	11	20	6	39	40	13	
24	Salt Lake City	Utah	34	31	45	17	10	38	
25	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	41	6	12	33	46	16	

Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
26	Phoenix	Arizona	25	22	28	21	31	22	🏠
27	Raleigh	North Carolina	18	42	37	22	9	43	🏠
28	Tampa	Florida	7	25	32	27	41	25	🏠
29	Virginia Beach	Virginia	3	50	48	36	8	44	🏠
30	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma	21	40	41	31	6	41	🏠
31	Columbus	Ohio	23	30	27	32	20	30	🏠
32	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	39	21	31	34	26	29	🏠
33	Sacramento	California	35	45	36	16	28	32	🏠
34	Kansas City	Missouri	48	26	24	38	19	28	🏠
35	Providence	Rhode Island	28	48	50	8	38	50	🏠
36	St. Louis	Missouri	45	18	22	45	44	23	🏠
37	Jacksonville	Florida	16	41	40	42	25	35	🏠
38	Grand Rapids	Michigan	12	46	49	35	30	48	🏠
39	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	29	38	30	41	36	40	🏠
40	Indianapolis	Indiana	47	32	26	43	34	31	🏠
41	Louisville	Kentucky	38	43	34	48	22	39	🏠
42	Baltimore	Maryland	49	16	25	47	45	27	🏠
43	Richmond	Virginia	24	49	44	37	32	42	🏠
44	Buffalo	New York	36	33	47	44	39	46	🏠
45	Riverside	California	51	52	51	20	37	51	🏠
46	Cincinnati	Ohio	43	35	33	46	42	45	🏠
47	Memphis	Tennessee	33	36	38	49	43	33	🏠
48	Rochester	New York	22	39	43	40	50	47	🏠
49	Detroit	Michigan	50	9	42	52	52	37	🏠
50	Hartford	Connecticut	42	51	52	24	49	52	🏠

# AMERICA'S 10 BEST SMALL CITIES

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

Page 28 | #1 Honolulu, Hawaii

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Page 30 | #2 Tucson, Arizona

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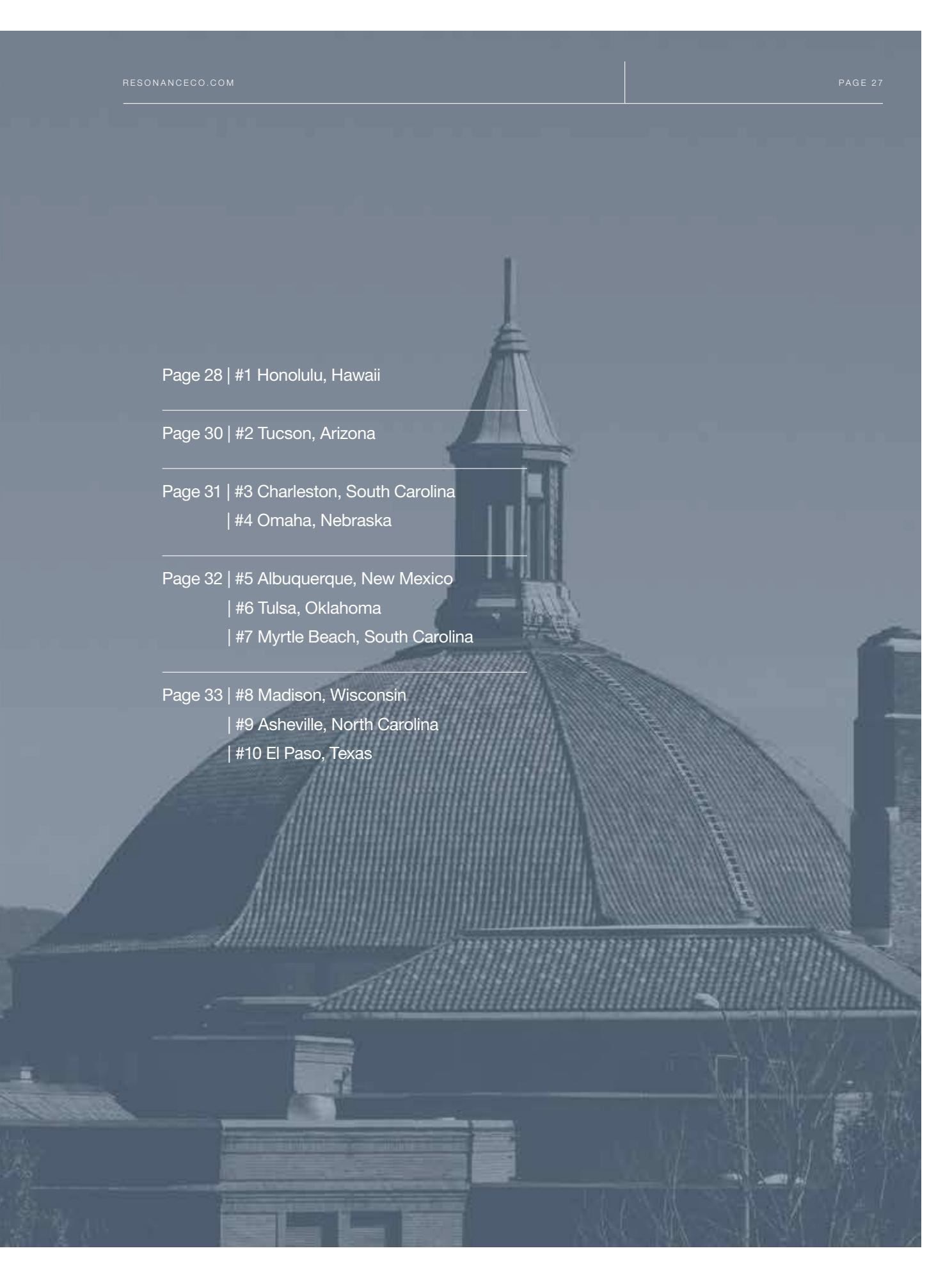
Page 31 | #3 Charleston, South Carolina  
| #4 Omaha, Nebraska

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Page 32 | #5 Albuquerque, New Mexico  
| #6 Tulsa, Oklahoma  
| #7 Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

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Page 33 | #8 Madison, Wisconsin  
| #9 Asheville, North Carolina  
| #10 El Paso, Texas



# 1. HONOLULU

Beautiful isolation and a profound sense of place meet kinetic hedonism and cultural bounty.

## POPULATION

CITY: 347,973 | METRO: 984,178

That Honolulu dominated our layered and deep Place category among the nation's small cities isn't that surprising. The reason? No other place on the planet houses so many people, so remote from another similarly sized city. Let that sink in for a moment. Honolulu's population of almost a million people is the most isolated on the planet. Its extreme topography, shaped by active seismic forces over millennia, has resulted in equally dramatic city planning.

Verdant knife edges explode into the blue sky from rolling hills every few miles, creating microclimates and hypnotic scenery. Small wonder, then, that Honolulu ranks #1 overall among Small Cities in Parks & Outdoor Activities, led by its powdery beaches, some of the best and safest ocean swimming in the state (often with sea turtles and dolphins!) and the option to head to the emerald Ko'olau Range before or after work. The parks, trails and beaches—almost all open to the public and accessible year round—rival most cities on the planet. Combine this with the climate, fragrant trade winds and surreal geography (not to mention a deep ancient history of the Islands) and you have a city that succumbed to playing by Mother Nature's rules a long time ago.

The city's top finish in the Neighborhoods & Landmarks sub-category may have been led by landmarks and attractions, but it's the neighborhoods that are creating a Honolulu for residents and increasingly demanding tourists seeking elusive authenticity in the Land of Aloha.

The result: ambitious destination spots like the Kaka'ako neighborhood—Williamsburg warehouses meet the



THE NEW SALT COMPLEX IN THE BUZZING KAKA'AKO NEIGHBORHOOD

INK ARCHITECTS

Mission's murals, with beers that rival Portland's.

Speaking of breweries, there are now half a dozen in town, with Maui Brewing moving in for a piece of the Oahu action. In Chinatown, two of the city's buzziest restaurants—Livestock Tavern and Lucky Belly—are satisfying locals and coaxing tourists from Waikiki.

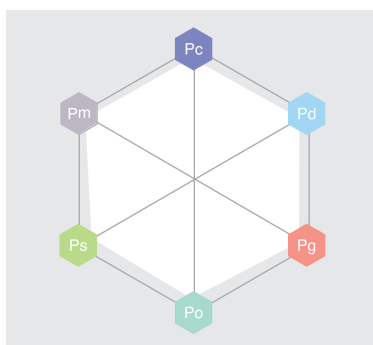
But Waikiki, the recently renovated epicenter of high-end retail and reimagined luxury heritage properties, just keeps upping the ante, with Michelin-starred chefs and new culinary and nightlife concepts like James Beard award-winning chef Michael Mina's new THE STREET. Or Honolulu-born chef Ed Kenney's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

This being the Islands, things will never get *too* precious. Case in point: the Waikiki SPAM Jam, an annual street festival where the town's best restaurants serve up SPAM-inspired creations, is entering its 16th year.

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

This innovation based in place—from restaurants to breweries to cultural festivals—means Honolulu swept the top spot in our Programming category, scoring #1 in the Culture, Culinary, Nightlife and Shopping sub-categories.

Its top ranking seems safe, especially with the recent re-opening and expansion



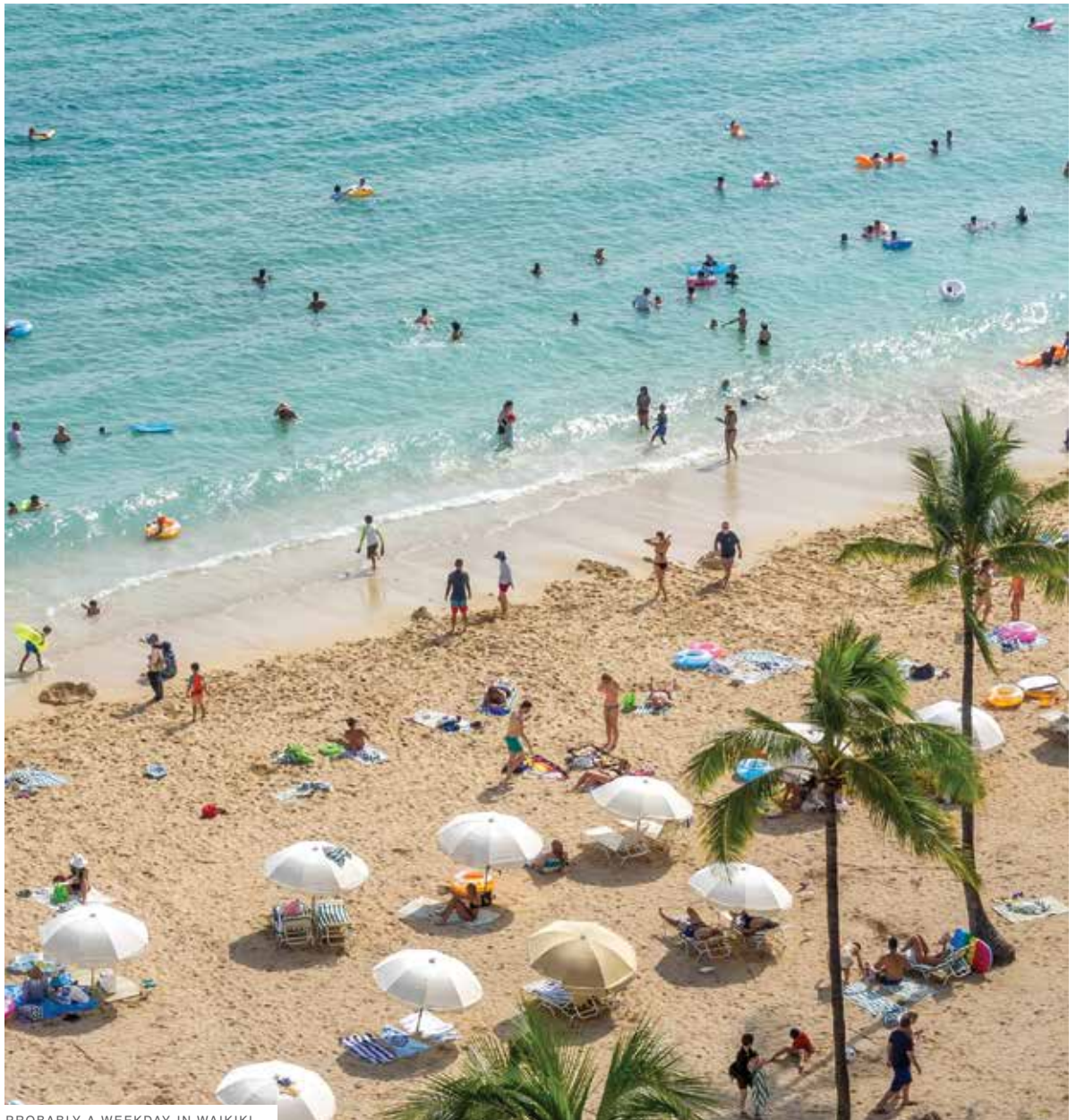
- Pc Place
- Pd Product
- Pg Programming
- Pp People
- Ps Prosperity
- Pm Promotion



of the International Market Place in Waikiki, the ever-expanding Ala Moana—the world's largest open-air shopping center—and the newly opened Ka Makana Ali'i.

The city's #1 Promotion ranking, fueled by wide-eyed visitors sharing their on-the-ground experiences on Facebook and then telling everyone about it on TripAdvisor afterward, seems equally safe.

No other place on the planet houses so many people, so remote from another similarly sized city. Let that sink in for a moment. Honolulu's population of almost a million people is the most isolated on the planet.



PROBABLY A WEEKDAY IN WAIKIKI

## 2. TUCSON

Youthful, delicious and ambitious, Arizona's second city has never been hotter.

### POPULATION

CITY: 528,374 | METRO: 998,537

At a shade under a million residents, Tucson just snuck into our Small Cities ranking. Not surprisingly, it dominates in our Product category, ranking second only to Charleston in our Museum sub-category and second to Myrtle Beach for Entertainment. The desert city boasts University of Arizona museums (including a biosphere), planetariums and casinos, in addition to only-out-here attractions like caving adventures and Old West tours.

Its Place ranking is also impressive (scoring #5 in Parks & Outdoor Activities and #7 in Neighborhoods & Landmarks), and it's set to ascend rapidly due to a torrent of new investment in parks, the new Sun Link LRT, and walkability 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 20 and 34. Emboldened city leaders have been swinging for the fences, first by telling the world that Tucson is "The Winter Training Capital of America," made possible by the area's five mountain ranges long used as Stairmasters by cyclists and triathletes in the know.



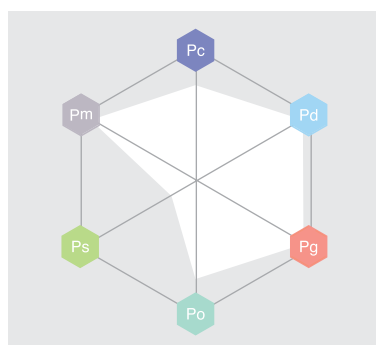
MEXICAN AND U.S. HISTORY DANCE IN THE DESERT IN TUCSON

More recently, Tucson wasn't satisfied with its 700 miles of bike lanes. The result? Even more incentives to cycle, facilitated by new mixed-use bike boulevards along less popular driving roads—more than 150 miles worth.

Despite its obsession with placemaking, this town knows how to kick back, too, as indicated by its #2 overall ranking among Small Cities for Programming, including finishing only second to Honolulu in our Culinary sub-category and third-best in the nation for Shopping and Culture. Nightlife ranked an impressive #4.

And you read that right: Tucson is a booming foodie Mecca, the oldest continually farmed city in North America (extending back more than 4,000 years) and the first recipient of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network designation for gastronomy, designed to prioritize food as part of cultural heritage worth protecting. And devouring.

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 20 and 34.



## 3. CHARLESTON

Natural beauty and easy Southern hospitality have made the Holy City one of the most coveted places in America.

### POPULATION

CITY: 127,694 | METRO: 712,232

If there's a city of the moment in our ranking—the kind of place that twinkles the eyes of those who've been and elicits excited enquiries from those who haven't—it's Charleston, South Carolina. It's been all over travel media the past two years. There are even warnings about too many people visiting and moving in.

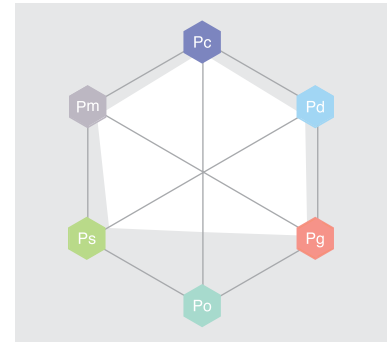
The city has always had a quiet, confident resonance, as if its deep, impactful history on a formative United States still lives in the ancient oak trees that line the stately streets, in the



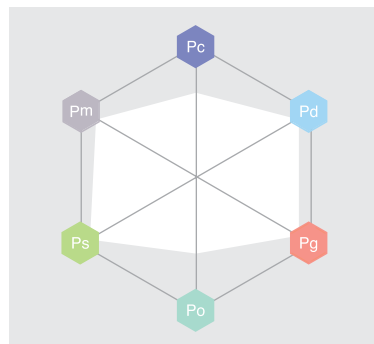
CHARLESTON SHOWS ITS TRUE COLORS

primeval sunlight, the verdant, dripping canopy and the historic, pastel Georgian row houses whose walls could rival a Faulkner tome if only they could talk.

Is it any wonder, then, that almost three centuries of tending to beautiful gardens and city icons that recall the women and men who defended its borders and immortalized its charm and hospitality in song and on page have landed Charleston at #2 in our Place category for Small Cities? Its impressive #2 finish in the Neighborhoods & Landmarks sub-category speaks to the walkability along



cobblestone streets, with the likelihood of discovering a secret alley terrazzo or a public pocket garden in which to laze and write an ode to the Holy City yourself. The #3 finish in Parks & Outdoor Activities is testament to this water world—perched at the tip of a peninsula yet protected from the open Atlantic by golden, deserted islands. Amazingly, surfing, fishing, paddling and wildlife safaris are less than 30 minutes from the second-best Nightlife and third-best Culture ranking among America's Small Cities. Yeah, we'll see you there.



## 4. OMAHA

Big money takes care of its own in the heart of the country.

### POPULATION

CITY: 440,034 | METRO: 895,919

Nebraska's largest city, on the banks of the Missouri River and a couple hundred miles removed from the geographic center of the contiguous United States, has always carved its own path in the heart of the country. That sense of nose-to-the-grindstone and local stewardship is immortalized in the name: "Against the current." It's why Omaha leads all Small Cities in our Prosperity category, led by the most Fortune 500 companies in the nation for cities under a million. Berkshire

Hathaway, Union Pacific Railroad, Peter Kiewit Sons' Inc. and (of course) the Mutual of Omaha Companies all call Omaha home. The result is a curated waterfront, robust public art and a resilient downtown boasting some of the Midwest's most impressive restaurants and nightlife, getting more diverse with every Old Market District opening. Omaha finished #8 among Small Cities for Programming, led by its #4 Culinary and #5 Nightlife sub-category rankings and funded and appreciated by prosperous residents and supported by the corporate headquarters that have called the city home for decades. The city's middle-of-the-pack Place ranking is also poised to rise in the future, with the evolution of its riverfront and planned urban projects inspired by the strikingly elegant \$22-million pedestrian bridge, which not only gets residents to and fro but is often a destination perch from which to admire the open spaces and those life-affirming Nebraska skies.



NEBRASKA'S ELECTRIC SKY



# 5. ALBUQUERQUE

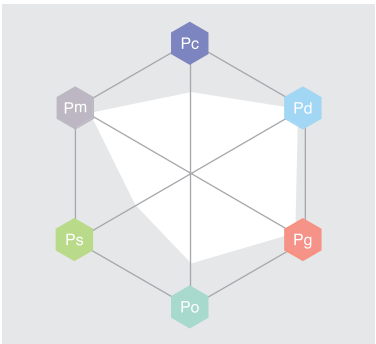
Food for the soul and the body is plentiful in this Southwest gem. Oh yeah—there are gems, too.

POPULATION	
CITY: 556,092	METRO: 902,731

Long a haven for artists and creative souls who followed Route 66 and found what they sought among the Pueblo Revival architecture and otherworldly Sandia Mountains, New Mexico's largest city is a special blend in every sense of the word. It's a college town with a healthy local economy.

But its impressive #2 Product ranking—indicative of deep infrastructure and local investment—is led by a #5 ranking for Albuquerque's museums. More than 20 span indigenous roots, Hispanic culture and even ballooning. The Land of Enchantment—a moniker long associated with the elemental beauty of the desert mountains and their mineral deposits—is now just as easily applied to the bountiful food, culture and arts options here.

The city ranks #4 in our Programming category, with an impressive third-best Culinary ranking in the nation among Small Cities. Its #3 ranking in our Culture sub-category is less surprising: residents have long been spoiled by more than 100 galleries, a symphony orchestra, vibrant theater companies and the city's burgeoning opera scene.



# 6. TULSA

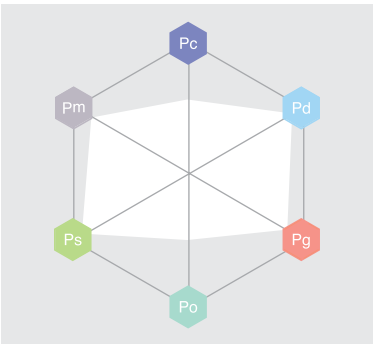
Once the “Oil Capital of the World,” Tulsa is now a cultural and entrepreneurial force punching above its weight.

POPULATION	
CITY: 398,082	METRO: 962,676

With one of the largest collections of Art Deco architecture in the country, the former “Oil Capital of the World” conducts business in style out of these monumental headquarters. Tulsa today swarms with creative entrepreneurs and young families looking to make their mark. They're attracted by the city's swagger cut with a small-town quality of life and fueled by inventive connections to nature, like the Gathering Place—a \$350-million, 100-acre park now under construction on the banks of the Arkansas River.

As Oklahoma's second-largest city with a metropolitan population approaching one million, Tulsa's #2 ranking in our Prosperity category is a reminder of the city's entrepreneurial roots in energy. Fortune 500 headquarters (the second-most among the nation's Small Cities) and the University of Tulsa now serve as anchors for high-tech startups and new-generation manufacturers.

The city's music scene is the star of the state. Cain's Ballroom is considered the birthplace of Western swing, and the Woody Guthrie Center recently landed the prized Bob Dylan archives. Then there's Tulsa's fifth-best Culinary ranking.



# 7. MYRTLE BEACH

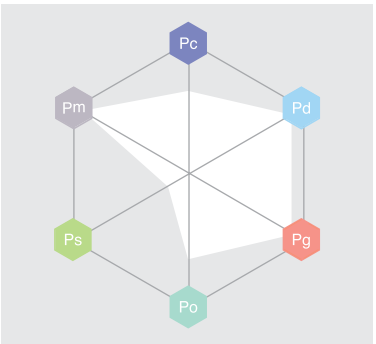
Amusement parks, festivals and sunsets: Myrtle Beach is Instagram gold... and it shows.

POPULATION	
CITY: 29,198	METRO: 406,656

As the smallest city in our Top 10, both in city and surrounding metropolitan population, Myrtle Beach's strong finish among Small Cities is driven by its #7 spots in both our Product and our Programming categories.

Sure, it's the 60 miles of golden beaches and a dozen seaside communities right out of a John Hughes film that draw residents and visitors here, but the city is a built environment that leads all of America's Small Cities in the Entertainment sub-category of our Product category, with its Airport Connectivity ranking fifth-best. No one, in other words, does theme parks and family attractions better than South Carolina's ocean playground, given it practically invented the co-existence of waterslides, golf courses, Ferris wheels and pedestrian access to it all. One of the nation's most Instagrammed boardwalks opened in 2010, and its 1.2 miles host the bars, nightlife and festivals that contributed to the city's seventh-best Programming finish.

Equally impressive is Myrtle Beach's second-best Promotion perch among Small Cities, driven by Facebook Check-ins (#2) and TripAdvisor Reviews (#3).





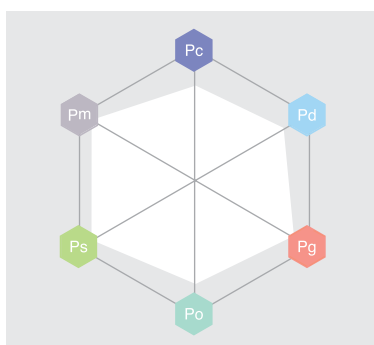
## 8. MADISON

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

### POPULATION

CITY: 243,122 | METRO: 627,618

The city's enviable position as both capital of Wisconsin and the site of the state's largest university certainly fuels its #4 ranking in Prosperity among Small Cities in the nation, including the eighth-lowest unemployment rate and eighth-highest number of Fortune 500 companies. A hive of health care, IT and manufacturing powered by pipelines of talent out of the University of Wisconsin creates a symbiotic, sustainable relationship between academic infrastructure and economic performance. The city also excels in our Programming category, replenished every year by new student energy that puts its Culture at #10 among Small Cities, its Culinary scene at #12 and its Nightlife at #14. Then there's the natural beauty, tucked between two large lakes, surrounded by 260 parks, with lakes, rivers, beaches and trails everywhere. It boasts triple the national average for parkland per resident. But the locals, third-most educated among Small Cities behind only Boulder and Ann Arbor, have probably already figured that out.



## 9. ASHEVILLE

Industrial Age architectural opulence boogies down with indie shops, music and plenty of Southern charm.

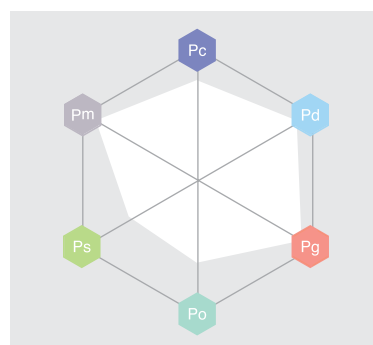
### POPULATION

CITY: 86,789 | METRO: 437,252

There's something happening between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina. It's not *discovery* per se. Asheville has long pulled Americans of means to its rivers and fresh mountain air.

It even boasts the largest private residence in the United States: the Biltmore Estate, built in 1895 by George Washington Vanderbilt, with *over four acres* of interior floor space. Such housing investments are reserved for truly inspiring places.

Asheville's ascent is more rebirth, fueled by its unwavering century-long embrace of literature and the arts that inspired one of the hottest music scenes in the country, with year-round festivals, venues and a #5 spot in our Programming category, including the second-best shopping and sixth-best nightlife among Small Cities. Helping future rankings will be the most craft breweries per capita in the U.S., today at more than 25. Appropriately, Asheville gets lots of love from visitors and tourists, ranking #9 nationally in Promotion, including a remarkable #2 for Google Search Results.



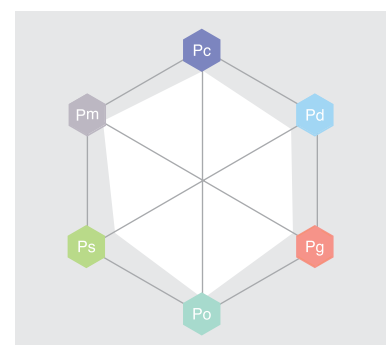
## 10. EL PASO

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

### POPULATION


























CITY: 676,325 | METRO: 834,425

With its reputation as a rough-and-tumble cowboy town fading, El Paso is doubling down on its roots while embracing its border-city location. With 80% of its population of Latino origin and a #7 ranking in our People category, with the fourth-most U.S. residents who speak a foreign language—in this case, overwhelmingly Spanish—at home, El Paso is not typical Texas. Its symbiotic relationship with the sister city of Juárez, one of the world's most violent, creates a surreal calm and sanctuary. El Paso ranked as the ninth-safest among our Small Cities, just behind Ann Arbor, Michigan. Left-leaning and increasingly basking in its *Latinidad*, the city ranked sixth-best among Small Cities in our Culinary category, fed by the steakhouses that have perfected their craft over decades, combined with increasingly daring Mexican riffs that you'll read about in the *New York Times* soon enough. The city is also excelling economically, with robust employment and training by the University of Texas campus and its #8 ranking in Fortune 500 companies headquartered here.






























# AMERICA'S 50 BEST SMALL CITIES

Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
1	Honolulu	Hawaii	1	3	1	9	11	1	
2	Tucson	Arizona	35	1	2	37	127	3	
3	Charleston	South Carolina	2	9	3	88	25	4	
4	Omaha	Nebraska	51	8	8	65	1	13	
5	Albuquerque	New Mexico	59	2	4	43	76	8	
6	Tulsa	Oklahoma	68	5	11	75	2	14	
7	Myrtle Beach	South Carolina	55	7	7	51	135	2	
8	Madison	Wisconsin	41	31	15	25	4	6	
9	Asheville	North Carolina	33	11	5	54	61	9	
10	El Paso	Texas	20	30	28	7	26	10	
11	Reno	Nevada	37	4	9	32	77	12	
12	Naples	Florida	4	59	18	29	3	16	
13	Savannah	Georgia	5	26	6	129	143	5	
14	Colorado Springs	Colorado	47	15	14	74	54	11	
15	Anchorage	Alaska	15	16	37	63	9	28	
16	Durham	North Carolina	119	13	44	24	14	24	
17	Ann Arbor	Michigan	29	94	39	8	23	25	
18	Boulder	Colorado	6	123	31	14	20	20	
19	Santa Cruz	California	45	154	64	16	21	7	
20	Atlantic City	New Jersey	118	14	36	10	161	34	
21	Boise	Idaho	11	32	29	79	15	35	
22	Wichita	Kansas	80	23	21	82	19	30	
23	Lexington	Kentucky	81	36	16	59	43	19	
24	Des Moines	Iowa	78	28	32	85	22	23	
25	Greenville	South Carolina	85	10	30	76	101	29	



Rank	City	State	Place	Product	Programming	People	Prosperity	Promotion	
26	Lincoln	Nebraska	34	17	34	83	18	57	
27	Little Rock	Arkansas	120	24	51	86	10	32	
28	Knoxville	Tennessee	117	18	10	128	110	15	
29	Greensboro	North Carolina	103	37	25	61	38	27	
30	Chattanooga	Tennessee	75	19	26	134	52	22	
31	Corpus Christi	Texas	28	41	52	57	33	26	
32	McAllen	Texas	52	91	114	1	81	79	
33	Green Bay	Wisconsin	36	12	46	103	70	45	
34	Portland	Maine	31	93	17	36	48	52	
35	Charlottesville	Virginia	18	80	76	30	12	74	
36	Columbia	South Carolina	50	43	27	95	122	18	
37	Springfield	Missouri	87	20	19	143	49	44	
38	Rochester	Minnesota	14	81	87	35	5	104	
39	Winston-Salem	North Carolina	142	39	42	60	17	47	
40	Laredo	Texas	62	129	147	4	46	84	
41	New Haven	Connecticut	130	22	59	21	144	50	
42	Fayetteville	Arkansas	65	25	22	53	60	107	
43	Wilmington	North Carolina	42	50	12	90	117	39	
44	Springfield	Massachusetts	100	34	19	55	37	110	
45	Fresno	California	129	78	66	22	140	17	
46	Fort Collins	Colorado	27	96	38	48	30	62	
47	Sioux Falls	South Dakota	40	57	61	106	13	59	
48	Santa Maria	California	56	160	146	6	66	49	
49	Spokane	Washington	110	49	13	119	103	33	
50	Amarillo	Texas	73	54	91	87	16	48	

# THE SIX PILLARS OF PLACE EQUITY



### Page 40 | Place

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

### Page 42 | Product

A city's key institutions, attractions and infrastructure

### Page 44 | Programming

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

### Page 46 | People

The educational attainment and diversity of a city

### Page 48 | Prosperity

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

### Page 50 | Promotion

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

## Place

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

**T**o score a city against our Place category, we evaluate its perceived quality of the natural and built environment, specifically the sub-categories of Air Quality, Weather, Crime Rate, Neighborhoods & Landmarks, Parks & Outdoor Activities, and Commute Time.

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

From how often the sun shines to the air quality to the safety of the streets, a

number of readily measurable, often-cited factors influence our perceptions of a city.

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

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

Placemaking is an approach to urban design that considers the built environment as a vehicle for creating a sense of place and fostering community within a destination. Whether through the beauty of their natural environments or urban designs, exceptional physical places exist in destinations ranging from metropolitan centers to suburbs and islands.

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



CHARLESTON'S HISTORIC BATTERY MANSIONS





THE OCEAN INSPIRES IN VIRGINIA BEACH

### Virginia Beach Knows Its Place

The Place category is our most complex, so we tend to surface cities that don't register high on the overall ranking yet excel in the Place category as outliers among the overall winners. That Virginia Beach ranked 29th overall among Large Cities yet third in the nation in Place is testament to its second-overall ranking in our Air Quality and Crime Rate sub-categories. Also helping its sense of place was Virginia Beach's 13th-overall Parks & Outdoor Activities finish, carried along by that epic three-mile boardwalk and the forever golden sand just beyond its weathered planks.



### Top 10 Large Cities for Place

- |     |                |  |
|-----|----------------|--|
| 1.  | SAN DIEGO      |  |
| 2.  | NEW YORK       |  |
| 3.  | VIRGINIA BEACH |  |
| 4.  | LAS VEGAS      |  |
| 5.  | SAN FRANCISCO  |  |
| 6.  | MIAMI          |  |
| 7.  | TAMPA          |  |
| 8.  | LOS ANGELES    |  |
| 9.  | AUSTIN         |  |
| 10. | BOSTON         |  |

### Top 10 Small Cities for Place

- |     |                  |  |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 1.  | HONOLULU         |  |
| 2.  | CHARLESTON       |  |
| 3.  | LAKE HAVASU CITY |  |
| 4.  | NAPLES           |  |
| 5.  | SAVANNAH         |  |
| 6.  | BOULDER          |  |
| 7.  | APPLETON         |  |
| 8.  | YUMA             |  |
| 9.  | LYNCHBURG        |  |
| 10. | CAPE CORAL       |  |

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

- Average air quality index<sup>1</sup>
- Average number of sunny days<sup>2</sup>
- Crime rate<sup>3</sup>
- Mean travel time to work<sup>4</sup>
- Number of quality neighborhoods and landmarks recommended by locals and visitors<sup>5</sup>
- Number of Very Good and Excellent parks and outdoor activities recommended by locals and visitors<sup>6</sup>

1. United States Environmental Protection Agency  
2. National Climatic Data Center  
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation  
4. American Community Survey 2011-15  
5. TripAdvisor.com  
6. TripAdvisor.com

## Product



PHILADELPHIA ELEVATES ITS HISTORY



THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS A CULTURAL PLAYGROUND FOR KIDS



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

Our product category studies a city’s key institutions, attractions and infrastructure, including the sub-categories of University Rankings, Airport Connectivity, Convention Center, Entertainment, Museums, Sports Teams, and Housing Affordability.

A city’s infrastructure and institutions shape its identity via the quantity, quality and reputation of “products” such as institutions of higher learning, museums, convention centers and airports. University rankings and the number of institutional buildings can have considerable impact on reputation and are often top of mind when it comes to what outsiders know of and understand about a city or destination. Expensive and difficult to develop and maintain, exceptional, recognizable “products” are often found only in large cosmopolitan cities.

A city’s infrastructure and institutions shape its identity via the quantity, quality and reputation of “products.”



Philadelphia is an Institution

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. 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. But it has also long been home to places like The Franklin Institute—the oldest science museum in the nation. If there is a better place in North America to be a school kid on a field trip, we can't think of it. Given its astounding collection of museums, artistic venues and historic attractions, Philly ranked a strong #6 overall in our Product category, despite an overall finish of 25th among Large Cities. Its University sub-category led the way—for third-best in the country, powered by the University of Pennsylvania—with #4 overall finishes in the Museums and Sports Teams sub-categories.

Top 10 Large Cities for Product

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

Top 10 Small Cities for Product

1.	TUCSON	
2.	ALBUQUERQUE	
3.	HONOLULU	
4.	RENO	
5.	TULSA	
6.	HARRISBURG	
7.	MYRTLE BEACH	
8.	OMAHA	
9.	CHARLESTON	
10.	GREENVILLE	

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

- Housing affordability<sup>1</sup>
- Number of direct destinations served by airport<sup>2</sup>
- Number of major league sports teams (MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, MLS)<sup>3</sup>
- Number of quality entertainment experiences recommended by locals and visitors<sup>4</sup>
- Number of quality museums and fine arts institutions recommended by locals and visitors<sup>5</sup>
- Ranking of top local university<sup>6</sup>
- Size of convention center<sup>7</sup>

1. American Community Survey 2011-15  
2. Openflights.org  
3. Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, Major League Soccer  
4. TripAdvisor.com  
5. TripAdvisor.com  
6. U.S. News & World Report  
7. Official Convention Center Website

## Programming

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

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

Resonance identifies the number of Very Good and Excellent recommendations of culinary and cultural experiences.



ENERGY POPS WITH EVERY STEP IN NEW ORLEANS

### NOLA Land

Few cities of its size carry the lore that New Orleans does. The festivals, the music, the birthplace of jazz. All of it stews in the Bayou heat and humidity, drawing on the centuries of Spanish, African and French soul and inspiration. Its resilience in the face of poverty, injustice and the environmental catastrophes compounded by both has created a culture of presence, music and festivals that may pale in size to others in the country, but never in their intensity. It's why the city, despite finishing 23rd overall among Large Cities, ranked #6 in our Programming category, finishing

only behind culture and entertainment behemoths like New York, Chicago and Vegas. The city ranked #3 in the Shopping sub-category, with the intoxicating treasures of Magazine Street. Nightlife is fifth-best in the country, with the party only *starting* in the French Quarter and growing more refined and local as it weaves into Marigny, Bywater or the timeless jazz seduction of Frenchmen Street. Culture, not surprisingly, is sixth-best in the nation.







New Orleans ranked #6 in our Programming category, finishing only behind culture and entertainment behemoths like New York, Chicago and Vegas.

Top 10 Large Cities for Programming

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

Top 10 Small Cities for Programming

- |     |              |  |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1.  | HONOLULU     |  |
| 2.  | TUCSON       |  |
| 3.  | CHARLESTON   |  |
| 4.  | ALBUQUERQUE  |  |
| 5.  | ASHEVILLE    |  |
| 6.  | SAVANNAH     |  |
| 7.  | MYRTLE BEACH |  |
| 8.  | OMAHA        |  |
| 9.  | RENO         |  |
| 10. | KNOXVILLE    |  |

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

- Number of quality culture and performing arts experiences recommended by locals and visitors<sup>1</sup>
- Number of quality nightlife experiences recommended by locals and visitors<sup>2</sup>
- Number of quality restaurants and culinary experiences recommended by locals and visitors<sup>3</sup>
- Number of quality shopping experiences recommended by locals and visitors<sup>4</sup>

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

## People

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

**H**uman capital is a city's most valuable resource. To evaluate the relative strength of human capital from one city to the next, we consider the diversity of the city's population, which is of proven importance when it comes to attracting talent. To measure the relative diversity of a city's people, Resonance looks at data on the percentage of the population born in foreign countries.

New students flock to Boston by the tens of thousands every year and become smitten with the crooked, narrow streets and the storied pubs, blended with American optimism and East Coast connectivity.



MIT COAXES CREATIVITY WITH ARCHITECTURE AS MUCH AS WITH ITS CURRICULUM



BOSTON INSPIRES ITS RESIDENTS

## New England, New Opportunity

Boston's boundless character has always radiated as much from its residents as from its Old World cobblestone and redbrick. Fittingly, despite ranking 13th overall in our Large Cities index, Boston finished 6th in the People category, including boasting the eight-most foreign-born residents and the nation's ninth-most educated. Perhaps that shouldn't come as a surprise, given Boston's density of world-class universities and colleges—from Harvard to MIT. New students flock here by the tens of thousands every year and become smitten with the crooked, narrow streets and the storied pubs, blended with American optimism and East Coast connectivity. This is the birthplace of America, after all. And Facebook.

### Top 10 Large Cities for People

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

### Top 10 Small Cities for People

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

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

- Percentage of foreign-born residents<sup>1</sup>
- Percentage of population that speaks a language other than English<sup>2</sup>
- Population with a bachelor's degree or higher<sup>3</sup>

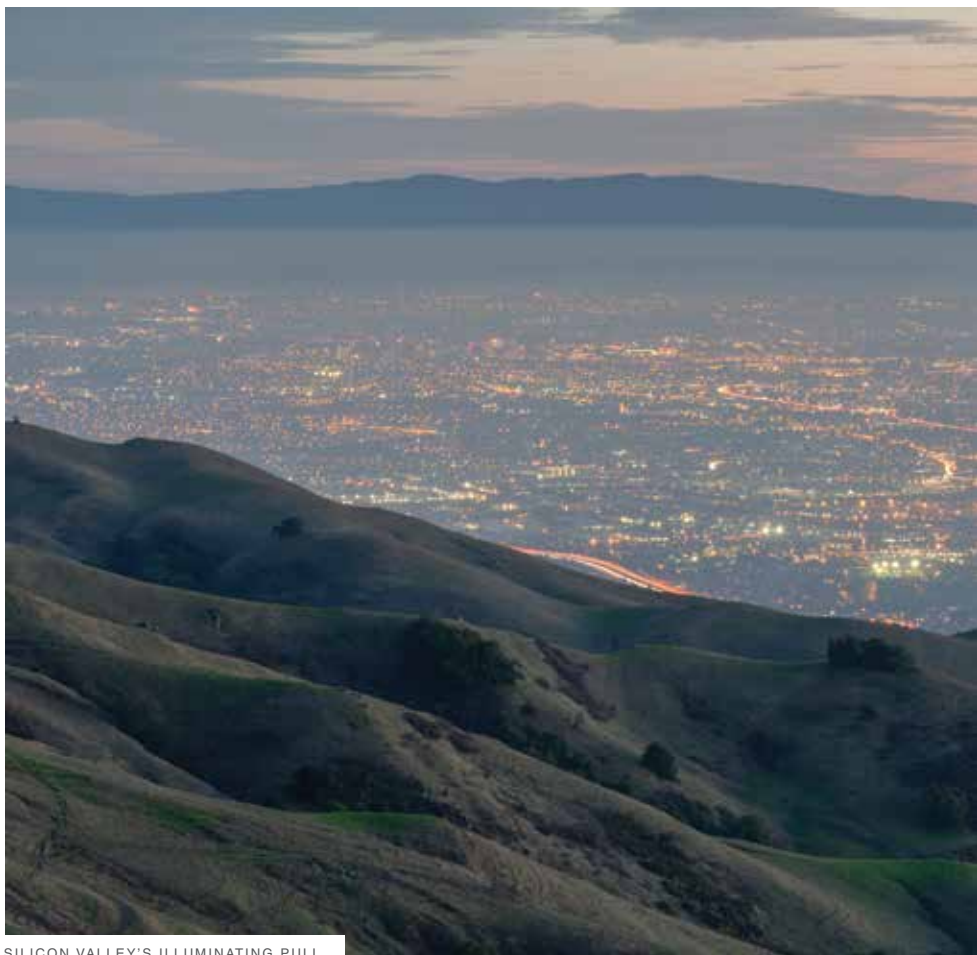
1. American Community Survey 2011-15  
2. American Community Survey 2011-15  
3. American Community Survey 2011-15

## Prosperity

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

As noted in our introduction, Jane Jacobs defined cities as places that produce wealth. If they cannot generate wealth, they cannot sustain the employment and quality of life needed to attract and retain people. In general, beliefs about the wealth and prosperity of a city are informed by statistics such as the income of citizens, and they are shaped by the presence or absence of large, recognizable corporations—this despite the fact that startups and innovation increasingly drive a city's development and economic growth. Yet these stats don't tell the whole story: unemployment and household income are of growing concern in measuring quality of place. Resonance ranks a city against our Prosperity category by its performance in the sub-categories of Household Income, Fortune 500 Companies and the Unemployment Rate.

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



SILICON VALLEY'S ILLUMINATING PULL



### Valley of the Dollars

San Francisco may get the tourists and headlines, but the money is in San Jose. Despite just missing out on a Top 10 Large City spot, finishing #12 overall, San Jose finished second overall, just behind New York, in our Prosperity category. It actually topped the nation in Median Household Income, ahead of San Francisco and Washington, D.C. The lack of Fortune 500 companies in San Jose (only 15th-most in the nation among Large Cities) speaks to the wealth to be made by disrupting the status quo.



Ps



THE VALLEY'S BRICKS-AND-MORTAR SPOILS

Top 10 Large Cities  
for Prosperity

1. NEW YORK
2. SAN JOSE
3. SAN FRANCISCO
4. AUSTIN
5. SEATTLE
6. OKLAHOMA CITY
7. HOUSTON
8. VIRGINIA BEACH
9. RALEIGH
10. SALT LAKE CITY

Top 10 Small Cities  
for Prosperity

1. OMAHA
2. TULSA
3. NAPLES
4. MADISON
5. ROCHESTER
6. CEDAR RAPIDS
7. APPLETON
8. FARGO
9. ANCHORAGE
10. LITTLE ROCK

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

- Median household income<sup>1</sup>
- Number of Fortune 500 corporate headquarters<sup>2</sup>
- Unemployment rate<sup>3</sup>

1. American Community Survey 2011-15  
2. Fortune Magazine  
3. American Community Survey 2011-15

## Promotion

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

**T**he amount and frequency of media coverage, online articles, references and place-based recommendations influence our perception of cities, whether the news is good or bad. While larger economic centers receive the most attention,

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

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



CITIES NEED TO FACILITATE STORYTELLING



ORLANDO PROMOTES SHARING BY LOCALS AND VISITORS ALIKE



Orlando’s Storytellers

Being the largest city in a region that generates more than \$60 billion in tourism-related revenue every year 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. Despite its 14th-overall finish in our Large Cities category, the city ranked an impressive #7 in our Promotions category, including the third-most TripAdvisor Reviews and 10th-most Facebook Check-ins. Long adept at coaxing testimonials out of visitors, Visit Orlando went all in two years ago with their social media-based Orlando Stories initiative, in which participants can win prizes for sharing their Orlando experiences via social media. The result? Incentivized place champions and a flood of long-tail authentic content. Walt couldn’t have spun the story better himself.



Top 10 Large Cities for Promotion

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

Top 10 Small Cities for Promotion

- |     |              |  |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1.  | HONOLULU     |  |
| 2.  | MYRTLE BEACH |  |
| 3.  | TUCSON       |  |
| 4.  | CHARLESTON   |  |
| 5.  | SAVANNAH     |  |
| 6.  | MADISON      |  |
| 7.  | SANTA CRUZ   |  |
| 8.  | ALBUQUERQUE  |  |
| 9.  | ASHEVILLE    |  |
| 10. | EL PASO      |  |

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

- Number of Facebook check-ins<sup>1</sup>
- Number of Google search results for each city<sup>2</sup>
- Number of TripAdvisor reviews for each city<sup>3</sup>
- Popularity on Google Trends in the past 12 months<sup>4</sup>

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

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

## HERE'S HOW RESONANCE CAN HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR COUNTRY, CITY OR COMMUNITY

### Development Strategy

For both developments and destinations, our Development Strategy & Storyline documents offer a roadmap to connect projects and places with current and future residents, visitors, talent and investors.

Smart and comprehensive, they identify key target audiences, competitive differentiators and strategic positioning, and articulate sense and personality of place, along with unique language designed to communicate future programming, products, amenities and experience.

The Development Strategy process and its result ensure internal buy-in, inform and direct marketing and sales, and create a competitive identity that helps move the needle.

### Place Branding

Our approach to place branding combines analytics with storytelling techniques in order to define and communicate a development's unique sense of place.

We benchmark against competitors, analyze consumer research, audit tourism assets, and forecast future trends. Then we engage stakeholders with story-seeking exercises that articulate the essence of place: What does a destination or development stand for? What are its differentiators and the unique stories it can tell? What are its aspirations for the future? The result is a brand proposition and brand story that positions a place so compellingly that all the audiences you seek to engage will tell your story with pride, clarity and consistency.



### Place Marketing

Resonance strategic and creative teams craft marketing plans that bring the story of place to life and engage audiences and stakeholders in communities, cities and countries all over the world.

Marketing strategies for destinations and developments are based on our Development Strategies & Storylines, which benchmark against the competitive set, decipher lifestyle trends and the aspirations of current and prospective consumers, and create market-leading positioning strategies. From there, our team of award-winning content creators, designers, filmmakers, photographers and digital specialists creates strategic, engaging and measurable imagery, advertising and content in every medium, along with communications and public relations that put the story into the right hands.

### Placemaking

Resonance placemaking strategies seek to leverage the power of art, culture and creativity to improve the quality of public places and the lives of the communities around them.

From the foundation of the Development Strategy, we develop and create placemaking recommendations that align with the ambitions of our clients and rally artists, designers, urban planners and community leaders to help bring communities to life, particularly in the early days of development or rejuvenation, and make meaningful contributions to the public realm.



We hope you enjoyed this *America's Best Cities* report.  
For detailed results and insights from this study,  
please contact us.

You can download a free copy of this report at  
[BestCities.org](http://BestCities.org).

## RESONANCE

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