



Bettendorf Among Best Towns in Iowa for Young Families *NerdWallet considers cost of living, education, and economic growth*

NerdWallet, a consumer advocacy website, conducted a study on the best towns in Iowa for young families, and Bettendorf is in the top ten.

To find the best places for future parents and young families to settle down, NerdWallet analyzed data from 38 towns in the Hawkeye State according to five criteria:

1. Public school ratings
2. Median home value
3. Cost of homeownership
4. Median income
5. Economic growth

NerdWallet ranked Bettendorf sixth after assessing the town's cost of living, education system, and economic growth. The town's school district received an eight-out-of-ten rating from the nonprofit, GreatSchools. Bettendorf also has the third-lowest monthly homeowner costs of the top ten towns at \$1,382.

"Bettendorf belongs to the Quad Cities, a group of four cities in Iowa and Illinois with a labor force of over half a million people," said NerdWallet analyst Mike Anderson. "Bettendorf contributes to the region's \$16.5 billion economy, which includes the headquarters of several Fortune 500 corporations."

For more information about NerdWallet, visit www.nerdwallet.com.

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About NerdWallet

NerdWallet is a consumer-friendly financial literacy website that helps individuals make better financial decisions and set effective financial goals. NerdWallet has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Reuters*.

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The Best Towns in Iowa for Young Families



by Mike Anderson on November 11, 2013

When young families in Iowa buy a home, they consider more than property taxes. They look at what a community has to offer in its job market and its schools. With that in mind, we asked the following questions as we analyzed cities and towns across the state to identify the best for young families:

Does the town have good public schools? We measured schools' academic performance with ratings from GreatSchools. This non-profit compares a given school's standardized test scores to the state average to obtain a rating on a 1 to 10 scale (10 representing the highest score). Higher ratings led to a higher overall score.

Can you afford to live there? We looked at both median home values in each town and ongoing monthly home costs, including mortgage payments, real estate taxes, insurance costs, utilities, fuel and other bills. Lower costs led to a higher overall score.

Is the town growing and prospering? We assessed a town's economy by looking at average household income and income growth over the last decade. Higher income and greater growth led to a higher overall score.

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The Best Towns for Young Families

1. Ankeny

Ankeny is a suburb of Des Moines, and it is growing quickly. The unemployment rate is exceedingly low, at 3.4 percent as of July 2013 – lower than the state rate of 4.9 percent and less than half that of the nation's unemployment rate. The schools here are excellent, too, with a graduation rate of 92.8 percent – nearly three points higher than the state average.

2. Waukee

Waukee, just outside Des Moines, is blowing up. The long-awaited Alice's Road Corridor has begun construction, and, when the road is finished, 1,300 acres of land will be available for development, both for business and recreation. According to city officials, the road could bring in over 25,000 jobs. Beyond industry, too, things are looking up, with the Waukee Community School District graduating 98 percent of its high school seniors in 2012.

3. Pella

Pella is about 40 miles from Des Moines, and it has a beautiful downtown district with restaurants and fantastic bakeries like Jaarsma, which bakes delicious Dutch treats – true to the heritage of many folks who live here. The schools are great too, with students averaging in the 90th percentile on standardized tests.

4. Urbandale

Urbandale is a suburb of Des Moines in Polk and Dallas Counties. The unemployment rate is low here, at just 3.6 percent – less than half that of the nation overall. Also in town are 900 acres of parkland, including 48 parks and 38 miles of trails. A teacher at Urbandale Middle School, Jon Parrott, was recently named a finalist for the 2014 Iowa Teacher of the Year.

5. Johnston

Johnston is a suburb of Des Moines in Polk County, and it has seen tremendous growth in recent years. The city population doubled in size from 2000 to 2010, making it one of the fastest-growing communities in the state. The school district is also excellent. It is a strong supporter of both the community and its students – the Johnston Community School District is the fourth-largest employer in town and includes a National Blue Ribbon School in its ranks.

6. Bettendorf

Bettendorf is one of the Quad Cities, a group of two cities in eastern Iowa and two in Illinois, including Moline, East Moline and Rock Island. The labor force of 530,000 people have built a \$16.5 billion economy that is home to several Fortune 500 companies. Included in its ranks are John Deere, Alcoa and 3M.

7. North Liberty

North Liberty is conveniently located between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, and it is the second-fastest growing city in the state. The community's population grew by nearly 150 percent last decade, thanks in part to the strong local economy. Big employers in the area include the University of Iowa and Procter & Gamble.

8. Clive

Clive is a 15,447-person city near Des Moines. One of its hallmarks is its Greenbelt Park, over 290 acres of green space and 11 miles of trails that stretch nearly as long as the community. Residents in Clive demand the highest median income on this list, at \$229,700. Top employers in the community include the American Cancer Society and Wells Fargo.

9. Coralville

Coralville is a suburb of Iowa City in Johnson County. Students here – and in Iowa in general – do exceedingly well. On the ACT, students in the Iowa City Community School District scored an average 25.5, and the state overall posted a 22.1. Meanwhile, students across the nation earned a mean score of 20.9.

10. Altoona

Altoona is just outside Des Moines in Polk County. Facebook recently announced that it would build a data center in the community, which is expected to add over 2,500 jobs and \$450 million in high-tech and construction salaries. Beyond industry, there is a lot to enjoy in Altoona. The city includes 18 miles of bike trails and a 68-acre athletic complex.

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Rank	City	Nearest big city	Great Schools rating	Median home value	Monthly owner costs	Median household income	Growth, '99-'11	Overall score for young families
1	Ankeny	Des Moines	10	\$173,500	\$1,511	\$72,703	31.8%	75.9
2	Waukee	Des Moines	9	\$191,200	\$1,634	\$80,863	39.4%	75.0
3	Pella	Des Moines	8	\$163,900	\$1,230	\$60,184	32.3%	68.1
4	Urbandale	Des Moines	7	\$193,100	\$1,611	\$83,401	39.6%	67.4
5	Johnston	Des Moines	9	\$237,600	\$1,839	\$93,042	22.3%	67.3
6	Bettendorf	Davenport	8	\$166,600	\$1,382	\$69,239	27.7%	66.4
7	North Liberty	Iowa City, Cedar Rapids	6	\$154,100	\$1,359	\$61,304	44.2%	64.3
8	Clive	Des Moines	6	\$229,700	\$1,752	\$101,875	37.4%	63.6
9	Coralville	Iowa City	7	\$186,100	\$1,523	\$53,273	39.9%	63.4
10	Altoona	Des Moines	7	\$162,900	\$1,390	\$65,781	31.1%	63.2
11	West Des Moines	Des Moines	8	\$183,000	\$1,534	\$67,179	24.1%	63.1
12	Marion	Cedar Rapids	8	\$143,100	\$1,305	\$58,551	20.5%	62.7
13	Spencer	–	6	\$105,300	\$931	\$43,208	31.1%	60.0
14	Carroll	–	8	\$119,000	\$1,122	\$45,316	13.7%	59.6
15	Indianola	Des Moines	7	\$144,900	\$1,300	\$53,162	21.6%	58.2

Methodology

The overall score for each city was derived from the following measures:

1. Great schools and city ratings are calculated by averaging the weighted overall rating for each school in the city (weighted by the number of students enrolled at the school)
2. Median home value from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP04, half-weighted)
3. Monthly homeowner costs from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP04, half-weighted)
4. Median household income from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP03, half-weighted)
5. Income change between 1999 and 2011 from the U.S. Census (data sets P053 and DP03, half-weighted)
6. 38 Iowa cities and towns designated as places by the U.S. Census were included in this analysis. Only places with a population greater than 10,000 were considered.

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