

Best Cities: It's All About Jobs

Stable employment and new career opportunities give these cities an edge.

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What a difference a year makes. Last summer, the energy and finance sectors of the economy seemed to be thriving, and manufacturing was going strong.

Today, many cities are relying on government programs, universities and stalwart industries, such as health care, to bolster employment in a weak economy. Those factors appeared frequently when we assembled candidates for our 2009 Best Cities list, which focuses on places that have stable employment plus the talent to create new, well-paying positions. A robust job market makes these cities safe havens during the recession and will give them a head start toward growth when the recovery takes off.

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- [TOOL: Find Your Best City](#)
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When our numbers guru, Kevin Stolarick, evaluated U.S. cities for their growth potential, he looked not just at the overall number of jobs, but also at the quality of those positions and the ability of cities to hold on to them when the economy softens. ([See our Methodology](#)) Says Stolarick, who is research director at the Martin Prosperity Institute, a think tank that studies economic prosperity: "Although downturns are felt by everyone, our research has shown that the impact is less severe for those in the creative class -- people who are paid to think."

One key indicator of such heartiness is the presence of people who work in professional occupations, such as science, engineering, architecture and education. And given that many of you, our readers, work in such professions, these are places where you may find not only a job but also the company of people like yourselves.

We included the cities' greater metro areas because the suburbs and surrounding communities contribute to job stability. And big cities don't have a monopoly on vitality; this year we considered smaller metro areas as well.

Take a spin through our **2009 Best Cities** to see which places have the right stuff in these tough times.

[No. 1: Huntsville, Alabama](#)

[No. 2: Albuquerque, New Mexico](#)

[No. 3: Washington D.C.](#)

[No. 4: Charlottesville, Virginia](#)

[No. 5: Athens, Georgia](#)

[No. 6: Olympia, Washington](#)

[No. 7: Madison, Wisconsin](#)

[No. 8: Austin, Texas](#)

[No. 9: Flagstaff, Arizona](#)

[No. 10: Raleigh, North Carolina](#)

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