

Best Places to Live 2010

3. Newton, MA



WINNER

Top 100 rank: 3

Population: 82,000

Unemployment: 6.0%

Less than 45 minutes from downtown Boston via train, subway, or express bus, Newton is divided into 13 "villages" loaded with classic New England charm. Most have pedestrian-friendly shopping districts, parks, and playgrounds.

The town weathered the economic downturn fairly well, thanks to such stable local employers as Boston College and Newton-Wellesley Hospital. And Greater Boston, of course, offers a wealth of health care, education, and government jobs.

Residents rave about the top-ranked schools, and parents are excited for the new high school opening this fall. "It's absolutely beautiful," says Claudia Wu, 51, an attorney with three school-age kids who has lived in Newton for 20 years. It should be: The school cost \$197 million, an amount that sparked plenty of local outrage.

After all, living in this community is expensive enough: a three-bedroom house runs nearly \$600,000. If it weren't for those hefty price tags, this town would be pretty close to perfect. --*Beth Braverman*