



► Find Your Happy Place

In his new book, Richard Florida says choosing where to live is the most important decision you'll ever make.

In 2002, Richard Florida created buzz with his best-selling book charting the rise of the "creative class." Now he's tackling another topic: the importance of place. In "Who's Your City? How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life," Florida argues that where you live affects everything from how much money you make to how happy you are. He examines the personalities of cities across the country and lists the top locales for each stage of life. An excerpt:

The place we choose to live affects every aspect of our being. It can determine the income we earn, the people we meet, the friends we make, the partners we choose, and the options available to our children and families. People are not equally happy everywhere, and some places do a better job of providing a high quality of life than others. Some places offer us more vibrant labor markets, better career prospects, higher real estate appreciation, and strong investment and earnings opportunities. Some places offer more promising mating markets. Others are better environments for raising children. ...

The stakes are high, and yet, when faced with the decision of where to call home, most of us are not prepared to make the right choice. If you ask most people how they got to the place they live now, they'll say they just ended up there. They stayed close to family or friends, they got a job there, or more commonly, they followed an old flame. Some don't even see that there's a choice to be made at all.

Still, the miracle of our modern age is that we do have a choice. For the first time ever, a huge number of us have the freedom and economic means to choose our place. That means we have an

incredible opportunity to find the place that fits us best. But this remarkable freedom forces us to decide among a large number of options. Today there are many types of communities out there, all with something different to offer.

The key is to find a place that fits you—one that makes you happy and enables you to achieve your life goals. For some people, career and wealth are big components of their happiness, but that is far from everybody. Many of us know people who left good jobs and prosperous careers in law or engineering to do something they truly love. Others move back to their hometown after college to help run the family business or to be closer to family and friends. These people usually know very well what

they are giving up, and they make their choices knowingly. They prefer family and community to wealth. And many people are very happy where they are. These people may well know the real value of community better than others. ▼

Excerpted from "Who's Your City?" by Richard Florida. Published by Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group. Copyright © 2008.

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Overall Best Places for Mid-Career Professionals (single or married, without children, ages 30–44)

Large regions:	Medium-size regions:	Small regions:
San Jose, CA	Stamford, CT	Durham, NC
Minneapolis	Portland, ME	Provo, UT
Austin	Madison, WI	Reno, NV
San Diego	Omaha, NE	Fayetteville, AR
Denver	Des Moines, IA	Boulder, CO

Overall Best Places for Empty-Nesters (ages 45–64)

Large regions:	Medium-size regions:	Small regions:
San Francisco	Stamford, CT	Boulder, CO
Seattle	Portland, ME	Trenton, NJ
Boston	Madison, WI	Fort Collins, CO
Minneapolis	Honolulu, HI	Santa Rosa, CA
Hartford, CT	Rochester, NY	Norwich, CT