

Durham Named Best-In-State for Population Growth and Jobs

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DURHAM — The town has topped the charts as the top growing community in the state for jobs and population, even coming in higher than the bustling city of Portsmouth.

NerdWallet, a California-based finance website, rated the top 27 communities, with a population over 4,000, on the rise in the state. The results were based on growth in the working-age population, employment, and income from 2010 through 2012, according to data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. NerdWallet equally weighted these three components to calculate an overall growth score.

Durham, which has a working-age population of 8,398, came in the top spot. Despite losing almost 1 percent of the working-age population from 2010-2012, Durham saw a 13 percent growth of employment in the same time period.

The town also had more than 51 percent of the working-age population in the labor force. The median income in Durham is also significantly higher than others in the state, at \$56,436 in 2012. Durham saw an almost 9 percent increase in income growth from 2010 to 2012. This data provided Durham with an overall growth score of 77.04.

According to Durham Town Administrator Todd Selig, these results not surprising.

“NerdWallet recognizes what long-term residents have known all along, that Durham is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family,” he said. “Home sales are strong, property values are on the rise, construction activity is booming, the Oyster River School District is one of the top school systems in all of New Hampshire, we are rich in natural resources ... and the we’re home to the University of New Hampshire, itself a significant economic driver for the entire region.” [emphasis added]

Portsmouth has a working age population of 18,088, and saw more than a 0.5 percent increase in the working-age population from 2010 to 2012. Portsmouth, however, did see a loss of more than 1 percent in employment from 2010 to 2012.

Despite this loss of employment, Portsmouth still has more than 68 percent of the working-age population in the workforce, and a median income of \$52,995 in 2012. There was an increase of more than 12 percent in median income growth in the two-year time period.

According to Economic Development Program Manager City of Portsmouth Nancy Carmer, the employment and population growth has remained steady over the last few years even despite the recession.

“We have a great quality of life, we have access to universities here, we actually have a fairly low tax rate and we have a great arts and culture community,” she said. “That’s important to companies that are trying to bring in employees here.”

Somersworth also made the list, ranking ninth, with an overall growth score of 57. The city, which has a working age population of 9,254, had almost a 1 percent loss of that working age population from 2010 to 2012. Somersworth also has 66.5 percent of the working-age population in the workforce in 2012.

The town suffered almost a 1 percent loss of employment in the same two-year period, but maintained a median income of \$43,015. The income grew almost 8 percent from 2010 to 2012.

Somersworth Director of Planning and Development Services David Sharples, said despite the slight loss, he still believes Somersworth is growing every year.

“It doesn’t surprise me with the investment and commitment from the residents and the community that we would be cited as one of the top 10 growing communities,” he said. “There was a little bit of a drop off during the recession, but it seems like it’s picked back up again. It doesn’t seem like we’re losing. It seems like we’re keeping all of core businesses that have been here and they’ve been expanding.”

According to NerdWallet, the New Hampshire job market as a whole has been improving, with an unemployment rate of 4.4 percent, the eighth lowest in the nation. The state has also seen a 5.4 percent increase in private sector jobs due to a growth in professional and business services.