

Durham Named as one of the State's Most Exciting Places

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By Morgan Palmer

DURHAM — Those who love Durham will not be surprised to learn the town has topped a recent list of the “top ten most exciting places in New Hampshire.”

Movoto, a real estate brokerage based in California, started out with a list of the most populated places in the state that had more than 10,000 people. Due to the state's smaller size, that only left 15 cities. Next, Movoto used the 2010 U.S. Census and business listings to evaluate eight categories — nightlife, live music venues, active life options, arts and entertainment, fast food restaurants, percentage of restaurants that are not fast food (the higher the better), percentage of young residents aged 13-34 (the higher the better), and population density.

All categories were ranked from one to 15, with one being the best score. Next, the scores were averaged together to create the final list. Durham was ranked as fifth in the state, with nearby cities Dover and Portsmouth coming in at third and first place, respectively.

The summary congratulates Durham for being a notably fun town despite its low population.

“Home to only 10,345 people, this little place still managed to pack a punch in the numbers department. For starters, this is by far the youngest town anywhere on our list,” the summary reads.

The lists credits Durham's exciting atmosphere to the young population, with more than 80 percent of the population between 18 and 34.

“That makes sense seeing as Durham is home to the University of New Hampshire, which has just about as many undergrads as the town has people,” the summary continues.

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Movoto's summary states the town had the highest population density on the list. It had the ninth best arts ranking, and the sixth best in the non-fast food category. The latter was due to town favorites, such as Pauly's Pockets.

Durham is no stranger to topping the charts. Last September, the town was ranked as a top place to live for 20-somethings by CNN Money. The town was recently featured in "The Boston Globe," which cited the town as a great place for the young at heart.

According to the town's administrator, Todd Selig, the town's notoriety is no surprise.

"You could say that over the last few years, Durham has been on a roll," he said. "And that is not by accident. We've worked hard to to broaden Durham's tax base, hold down local property taxes, expand downtown business opportunities and partner with the University of New Hampshire in new and creative ways for the benefit of the entire community."

In addition, Durham has a tremendous natural environment with access to the Great Bay, Little Bay, Oyster River, Lamprey River, and more. We're connected via the Amtrak Downeaster to Boston and Portland, well within driving distance to widespread employment opportunities in the Boston Metro Area, Pease, and throughout Strafford and Rockingham Counties, and we have social opportunities in our downtown."

Selig believes the completion of the Newington bridge project will increase traffic to the town. Additionally, he said Strafford and Rockingham counties are experiencing higher employment growth than the rest of the state, which should also spur an increase in population. The housing market in Durham is strong, with more and more people looking to buy two- and three-bedroom homes, which make up a large portion of the town's properties.

"Put plainly, Durham is a great place to live, work, recreate, and raise a family," he said.

Other towns that made the cut were Laconia, Manchester, Keene, Concord, Londonderry, Lebanon, and Nashua.