

AARP names Ann Arbor "healthiest city"

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Honolulu has nothing on Ann Arbor when it comes to the healthiest places to live and retire in, after Ann Arbor beat the Hawaiian city as the No. 1 spot by *AARP The Magazine*.



Business Review file photoAnn Arbor's Kerrytown market.

"The cities we chose are ahead of the healthy living curve with access to health care facilities, numerous options for exercise, activities, volunteerism, and a culture that supports vitality," said Nancy Graham, Acting Editor of *AARP The Magazine*, in a statement.

The magazine is a publication of the group originally known as the American Association of Retired Persons, a non-profit advocacy and service organization for people 50 and older. AARP has 38 million members and boasts one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the U.S.

AARP evaluated 20 measures of vitality and incorporated not only the physical aspects of a community such as clean air and water, but also the health and habits of people who live there, taking into special consideration the health needs of older people.

TOP 10 FOR HEALTH

1. Ann Arbor.
2. Honolulu, Hawaii.
3. Madison, Wis.
4. Santa Fe, N.M.
5. Fargo, N. Dakota.
6. Boulder, Colo.

7. Charlottesville, Va.
8. Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.
9. San Francisco Bay area, Calif.
10. Naples-Marco Island, Fla.

Source: AARP The Magazine

"We've been talking with a lot of state organizations, and a lot of cities are trying to aspire to what Ann Arbor offers," said Amanda Cyr, project manager for the University of Michigan Health Management Research Center.

"The community really surrounds the culture of health we've been talking about in trying to keep healthy people healthy," Cyr added. "And we have a city that offers these amenities and is the start of a grass roots wellness movement moving up, rather than the government coming down and mandating all these things for people."

Wellness, she explained, is looking at the whole person, and applying healthy lifestyle concepts, rather than the traditional models of treating each individual illness as separate from the person.

Communities were chosen based on criteria including opportunities for exercise, number of doctors in the area, availability of health care, diagnosis of health problems and healthy eating habits.

"(Wellness) is one of things we're focusing on, it's a big initiative here," said Hugh Delehanty, editor in chief of AARP publications. "And I think Ann Arbor is a model on that kind of perspective for living."

ANN ARBOR FACTS

Population: 113,206.

Median housing price: \$312,200.

Average sunny days: 178 per year.

Healthy bragging rights: 86 percent of residents get regular exercise; 580 physicians per 100,000 people compared to U.S. average of 223

Where the action is: Kerrytown, a downtown neighborhood with shops, coffeehouses and galleries.

Healthy bites: Zingerman's Delicatessen is famous for its all-natural fare.

Totally unexpected: Efficient and affordable bus system for a town its size.

The magazine also evaluated quality of life measures such as housing affordability, the local economy, educational resources, crime, climate, recreational amenities, and arts and culture.

"It's a broader look, it's a lot about healthy living really, that's why Ann Arbor did well. There are a huge percentage of people who exercise regularly," Delehanty said. "One thing that was interesting was healthy eating, particularly of fruits and vegetables.

"And one of the big ones was the number of physicians per person, Ann Arbor has more than double the national average."

Ann Arbor ranked 10th in "greenest commuters," those who ride a bike or walk to work, with 7.9 percent participation, compared to the U.S. average of 3.21 percent.

The city didn't rank in the top 10 for life expectancy, with Ames, Iowa, taking the No. 1 spot at 81.2 compared to 78.1 years for the national average.

"Ann Arbor's quality of life is rooted in respect: for all races, cultures, nationalities and religions; for lifelong learning; for our health and for our environment," Jesse Bernstein, president and CEO of the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement. "We are all proud to receive this recognition from AARP because it testifies our commitment to achieve the measures that define this award every day."

The magazine noted Ann Arbor was chosen for many different reasons, but chief among them was that the city is a center of medical innovation.

The University of Michigan Health Center is one of the largest university medical centers in the world, and it created the first human genetics program in the United States in 1940.

AARP also pointed out that that innovation attracts economic growth, citing the decision of Google to open a sales office in Ann Arbor.

"There is a strong link between the health and vibrancy of a community and the health of its economy," Michigan Economic Development Corp. President and CEO James C. Epolito said in a statement.

"We're showing that efforts toward a healthy culture need to come not only from the employees themselves but also from the CEO and management -- from both levels," Cyr said. "And to have a community promoting that really makes it easier for businesses in the area to support that and create that culture of health."

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