

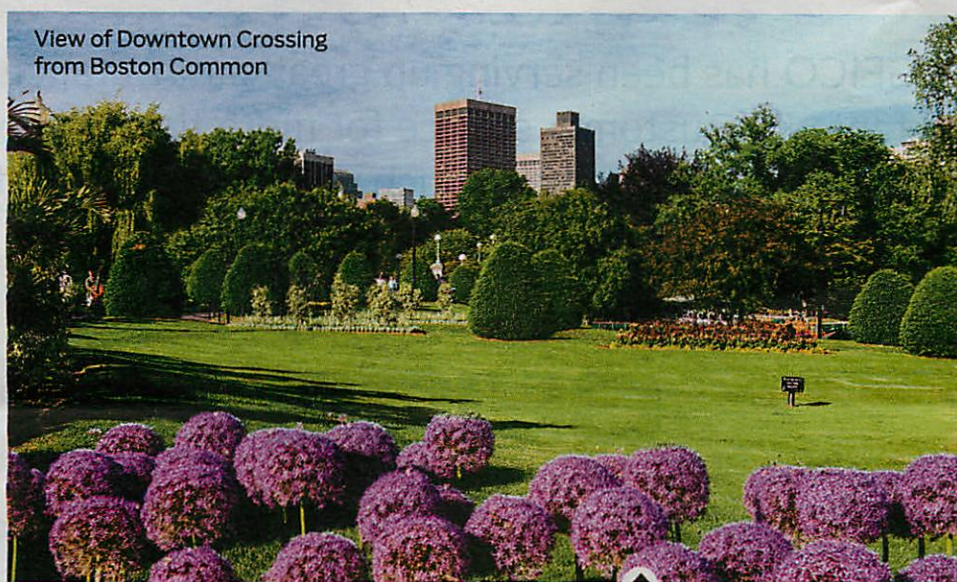
THE MOST Livable Places AT 50+

The top cities and towns to stay healthy, get around and enjoy life

To compile AARP's new lists of the most livable places in the U.S., it wasn't only our research that counted—it was also your opinions. The top-10 lists that follow are based on the AARP Livability Index, a new online tool designed to help communities better serve the nation's aging population.

To create the index, the AARP Public Policy Institute surveyed 4,500 Americans 50 and older to determine the aspects of community most important to them. We then developed seven categories around those results—housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement and opportunity, taking into account 60 different factors to rate communities in those categories.

The *Bulletin* crunched the numbers some more to find which cities and neighborhoods come out on top. We weren't looking for the trendy or glitzy. We wanted the most livable. You might be in for some surprises.



View of Downtown Crossing from Boston Common

Most Livable Neighborhoods



What does it take to be a top-10 neighborhood? Proximity to jobs helps. Plenty of housing, especially apartments and condos. Amenities of all kinds that are easy to reach. Healthy lifestyles are a big plus. All factors built into the Livability Index come into play. Not every top neighborhood scores well in every category: Crime is a problem in some, traffic in others. But these neighborhoods have special qualities that help them rise to the top of our list.

1. Mifflin West, Madison, Wis. Condos and apartments blend with single-family houses in this eclectic neighborhood within walking distance of parks, lakes, shopping, a performing arts center, the state Capitol and all the university amenities. Min-

imal congestion, frequent buses. High voting rate.
2. Upper West Side, Manhattan Great restaurants, world-class culture, easy access to gyms and Central Park jogging paths. Expensive housing, but a

walkable neighborhood with cheap and convenient mass transit. Multigenerational community.

3. Downtown Crossing, Boston A shopping district in transition to more mixed use with high-rise residences. Adjacent to Boston Common (and all of its recreational amenities), the theater district and the financial district. Stations for three main rail lines are nearby. Some streets are for pedestrians only.
4. South of Market, San Francisco Residents of this health-conscious neighborhood have low obesity and smoking rates and abundant options for nutritious food. It's close to downtown

and has a burgeoning arts scene. LGBT-friendly.

5. Washburn, La Crosse, Wis. Low-density mix of apartments and single-family homes close to a number of universities and a retail district. Midwest-nice neighborhood with low crime, excellent air quality, low speed limits and above-average high school graduation rates.

6. Downtown Sioux Falls, S.D. The hub of this fast-growing midsize city features a mix of small-town and big city characteristics: affordable multifamily housing, high-quality health care, low levels of income inequality.

7. Southside, Virginia, Minn. Traffic-free living in a small-town community in the Iron Range with affordable single-family homes and hockey-crazy residents. The area is known for community engagement, voluntarism and an emphasis on education.

8. Downtown Bismarck, N.D. Low unemployment, high civic involvement, good prospects for upward mobility in state capital energized by fracking boom. Mix of multifamily and single-family housing with monthly costs well below the national average.

9. Downtown Seattle Healthy foods, a walkable neighborhood, access to parks and low smoking rates help keep residents out of hospitals for preventable conditions. Strong mix of residential, retail, office and cultural uses.

10. Downtown Los Alamos, N.M. Main street atmosphere, fresh air, clean water and gorgeous scenery at 7,355 feet. Economic opportunity is high, crime is low and good-paying jobs are within a short commute by car. Good entertainment options.



The Manhattan skyline soars over the 230 Fifth rooftop bar.

Most Livable Cities



Livable cities are made, not born. In a variety of ways, these 30 places are showing how localities can serve citizens of all ages. We've grouped the cities by size—because if Bismarck, N.D., is your ideal, San Francisco probably isn't, and vice versa. Not every city is incorporated. But each has a strong blend of characteristics that make it stand out across all 60 of our livability indicators.

LARGE

Population 500K and above

- 1. San Francisco** The city is on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2017.
- 2. Boston** A city partnership with the navigation app Waze makes Beantown's real-time road conditions easy to check.
- 3. Seattle** The 27-mile Burke-Gilman Trail and Camp Long, with 10 rustic cabins, help make the city tops for parks in the big-city category.
- 4. Milwaukee** Older residents are eligible for low-interest loans from the city to make essential home repairs.

- 5. New York** The city lists 59 initiatives that are focused on improving living standards for older residents.
- 6. Philadelphia** Residents age 65 and older get free or reduced-fare transit rides.
- 7. Portland, Ore.** With top-notch parks and transportation systems within easy walking distance, the city is an inaugural member of AARP's Network of

- Age-Friendly Communities.
- 8. Denver** A \$10 million city initiative supports the development of affordable housing.
 - 9. Washington** Bike lanes on city streets in the nation's capital could extend to 76 miles by year's end.
 - 10. Baltimore** B-HIP (Baltimore Homeownership Incentive Program) offers a variety of financial sweeteners to encourage homebuyers.

MEDIUM

Population 100K-500K

- 1. Madison, Wis.** Top rankings for air quality and a great ratio of parks-to-people put Madison at the top of many green-city lists.
- 2. St. Paul, Minn.** The city helps developers rehabilitate structures left vacant by foreclosures.
- 3. Sioux Falls, S.D.** A 25-mile walking and biking trail loops the entire city, offering views of the historic core.
- 4. Rochester, Minn.** With the Mayo Clinic, it's not surprising the city has the highest hospital satisfaction rate among these most livable cities.
- 5. Minneapolis** A new 11-mile light-rail line is spurring economic development.
- 6. Arlington, Va.** The Bike-ometer installed at a busy intersection is averaging almost 4,500 clicks a day.
- 7. Cedar Rapids, Iowa** Empty lots in struggling neighborhoods are being turned into vegetable gardens.
- 8. Lincoln, Neb.** The city's jobless rate, now at 2.5 percent, has long ranked among the best in the nation.
- 9. Fargo, N.D.** The city's exceptional number of cultural institutions includes Theatre B downtown, the restored 1926 art deco Fargo Theatre and the Plains Art Museum.
- 10. Cambridge, Mass.** Some research by the MIT AgeLab, which aims to improve the quality of life for older Americans nationwide, begins here in the university's hometown.

SMALL

Population 25K-100K

- 1. La Crosse, Wis.** Grand River Station in downtown offers apartments customized for artists and entrepreneurs, retail space and a hub for the city's bus system.
- 2. Fitchburg, Wis.** A round-trip ride to the senior center costs only \$1, and the rider sets the cost for a trip to a medical appointment.
- 3. Bismarck, N.D.** Residents over 60 or with disabilities are eligible for door-to-door bus service.
- 4. Sun Prairie, Wis.** Liberty Square and Cannery Square show the city's commitment to communities with easy walking and mixed uses.
- 5. Duluth, Minn.** A recent report by the American Lung Association ranked the city among the top 10 in America for cleanest air.
- 6. Union City, N.J.** Cuban political émigrés earned the city the nickname "Havana on the Hudson."
- 7. Grand Island, Neb.** The OpenData initiative makes the city's budget process more transparent.
- 8. Kirkland, Wash.** The city's "complete streets"—safe for walkers, bikers and drivers of all ages—are models for many communities.
- 9. Marion, Iowa** The vibrant Uptown Marion neighborhood is experiencing a burst of mixed-use development.
- 10. West Bend, Wis.** Public works of art punctuate the Riverwalk, which snakes three miles through downtown along the Milwaukee River.

“It was important for me to live somewhere where I could walk to work, walk to downtown, walk to the food co-op. I had gone to college here and moved back to work.”

—Vickie Unferth, head of the Washburn Neighborhood Association, La Crosse, Wis.