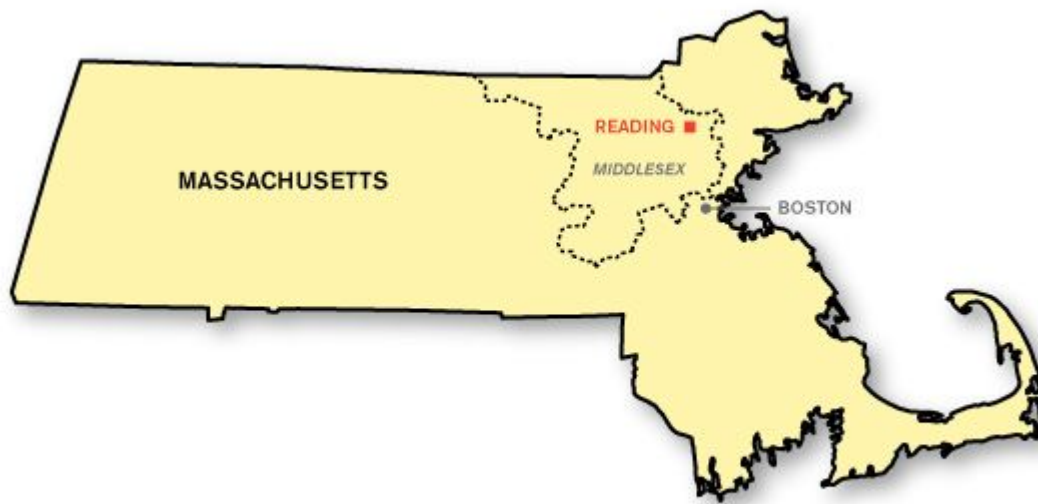


***BusinessWeek* ranked the best affordable suburbs in the U.S. state by state. The overall winner? Pewaukee, Wis. Which is the winner for your state?**

By Prashant Gopal

Best Affordable Suburbs 2009



Massachusetts:

Best affordable suburb: Reading

Nearest major city: Boston

Population: 23,046

Median household income: \$95,512

Median home price: \$362,500

Unemployment rate: 3.6%

Violent crime index: 16

Reading, incorporated in 1655, is about 12 miles from downtown Boston, to which it is connected by commuter rail. The Reading Farm Stand at the train depot is a popular place to find seasonal fruits, vegetables, baked goods, and flowers. About 46% of residents are married with children. The average commute is 23 minutes.

Best Affordable Suburbs in the U.S. 2009

If you're not a Wisconsin native, you've probably never heard of it.

But the city of Pewaukee, Wis., a small Milwaukee suburb overlooking a picturesque sailing and fishing lake of the same name, has award-winning schools, low crime, natural beauty, and homes for every budget. It topped the list of BusinessWeek.com's 2009 rankings of the "Best Affordable Suburbs." Pewaukee was selected for Wisconsin in our state-by-state rankings, and scored No. 1 on our nationwide list.

The city of Pewaukee should not be confused with the village of Pewaukee, which the city surrounds. (Pewaukee village, which has a beach on the eastern tip of the lake and serves as the downtown for the area, fell just short of Pewaukee city in our scoring for Wisconsin.)

Close to Milwaukee

Pewaukee, which has about 12,800 residents, has managed to keep its rural character despite its growing population and location on a major highway just 20 minutes from Milwaukee and 70 minutes from the college town of Madison. Among the region's largest employers are large health-care providers such as Aurora Health Care, Covenant Healthcare, and GE Healthcare, a subsidiary of General Electric (GE), as well as Kohl's Department Stores and Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance.

Pewaukee continues to grow, in part because of its proximity to Milwaukee, and its setting on the eastern end of the four-mile-long Pewaukee Lake. The lake is popular for skating, and ice fishing during the winter and sailing, water skiing, swimming, and canoeing in the summer. "You can be near a metro area where you can go to a world-class museum, a zoo, and things like that but you're out in the suburbs...where you can go out and see cows and picnic in the park," said Harlan Clinkenbeard, who has been Pewaukee's city planner for three decades.

BusinessWeek used data from Manhattan-based OnBoard Informatics to select one suburb within 25 miles of the most populated city in each state. The recession has flattened home prices across the country, but the idea behind the list is to help readers find the most for their money within some of America's largest metro areas.

Affordability is No. 1

We evaluated suburbs on a variety of factors but weighted affordability most heavily. We also considered lifestyle (short commutes, clean air, low crime, good weather, and green space), the quality of schools, and the strength of the local economy. None of the places had populations of more than 60,000 or less than 5,000.

We found places like Pewaukee that weren't too far from the attractions of a big city, but also retained their small-town charm. The recession has brought down costs in just about all of these communities. But some of these places have even managed to draw in large businesses and new residents even in these difficult times.

Companies have recently invested \$22 million in new industrial development in the small suburb of Brandon, S.D., east of Sioux Falls, said Dennis E. Olson, the city's administrator and finance officer. Brandon is still growing by about 100 homes a year, compared to the 350-home annual pace during the housing boom, Olson said.

Good Schools a Draw

He said residents like the fact that Brandon has a small school district where students get a great education without getting lost in the crowd. They also like the variety of homes, which range from about \$225,000 to \$440,000, he said.

And by the way, it's safe. "We have our own police department, but I can't remember the last time we had a murder," Olson said. "We had a guy who was growing marijuana in his basement for a few years but that was no big deal."

Pewaukee parent Sandy Wysocki said she loves the fact that all the district's K-12 schools are situated on a single campus because it creates a greater sense of community. And the campus setting allows for high school students to volunteer in elementary school classrooms and for elementary school students to attend high school sports events.

Proximity Breeds Closeness

Sandy and her husband, Paul Wysocki, moved to Pewaukee two decades ago and have three children. One is in college and two attend the Pewaukee High School. "It's a town where a lot of people grow up together," Sandy Wysocki said. "A lot of kids have been going to school together since kindergarten."