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## If you want to succeed, live where the brightest in your field do

Presented by



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We assume in an age of globalization that it doesn't matter where you live: Technology allows us to do our jobs from home, be it on a tropical beach or in a rural community. Best-selling author and urbanologist Richard Florida disagrees. Where you live is more important than ever and his book, *Who's Your City?*, sets out to prove it.

Mr. Florida is professor of business and creativity at the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, as well as the academic director of the Lloyd & Delphine Martin Prosperity Institute.

He is best known for his ideas on the "creative class." These are the knowledge workers who shape today's cities and drive economic development, as manufacturing did in the last century.

Why doesn't technology trump all factors? Why not run your creative empire from Portland, Ore., or be a software genius in Chester, N.S.? Being creative needs the support of a real community. You can extend your community online but you don't get synergy that way. A virtual community doesn't give you the same kind of chance social encounters that lead to commercial relationships, or nurture business relationships into friendships. Limiting your exposure to the lifestyle perfection of a small town may mean you're quickly out of touch with business opportunities or simply out of style. As Mr. Florida writes in *Who's Your City?*, "Today's key economic factors - talent, innovation and creativity - are not distributed evenly across the global economy. They concentrate in specific locations ... In today's creative economy, the real source of economic growth comes from the clustering and concentration of talented and productive people." In other words, if you want to succeed, live where the best and brightest in your field do.

In a conversation with Mr. Florida, he says, "The standard wisdom is that who you marry, what you do for work and where you live are the three most important decisions you make in life. The first two get most of the attention but, increasingly, it's where you choose to live that may have the greatest impact on your life." In fact, location may be the factor that has the most significant influence on the "mating markets" you're in (hence who you marry) and the careers to which you have access.

In *Who's Your City?*, Mr. Florida explains, "Still, the miracle of our modern age is that we do have a choice. For the first time ever, a huge number of us have the freedom and economic means to choose our place. That means we have an incredible opportunity to find the place that fits us best." However, making choices isn't without its challenges. "The thing to remember is that when it comes to place, like most other important things in life, we can't have it all. There are real trade-offs to be made. Many, if not most, people move for their careers and will give up the joy of being near family and lifelong

friends. Those of us who choose to stay close to family and friends may give up economic opportunity."

Should you be considering a move, Who's Your City? conveniently provides lists of cities ranked by what you're looking for. For instance, for singles aged 20 to 29, the top three locations in what are called large regions are San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Boston. For mid-size regions, it's Madison, Wis., Worcester, Md., and Bridgeport, Conn. In the small region division, it's Boulder, Colo., Santa Barbara, Calif., and Trenton, N.J. - who would have guessed New Jersey would appear on a best list of anything? For best cities for mid-career professionals, San Jose, Calif., tops the list; for families with children, it's Washington, D.C.; and for gays and lesbians, San Diego, Calif., is best.

Scan the best large regions, San Francisco is a big winner as is New York. In the small regions, Boulder and Santa Barbara are often the most desirable. California seems to do better than most other states. I didn't notice a category for "want to be warmer in the winter but still have to work in Canada" - and this is a serious oversight. Also missing is, "want to move to San Francisco but can't afford to live there." The category most noticeably absent is, "should have been more calculating in my 20s and moved then as I'm too timid to start again in my 50s." I know I'm not alone in this category. I take comfort, however, in that Mr. Florida has consciously chosen to live in Toronto even though I sort of just ended up here.

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