

# Best Affordable Suburbs 2009

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## State by state, the most affordable suburbs that offer the lowest crime rate, finest schools, and best quality of life for the dollar

Housing prices across the nation are being flattened by the worst economic crisis in decades. But it's still not necessarily easy to find affordable suburbs with good schools, low crime, reasonable commutes, strong economies and a good quality of life. That's where BusinessWeek can help. We've selected one affordable suburb near the biggest city in each state where residents can find the best quality of life for their money in 2009.

*Editor's Note: The selected suburbs were limited to towns within 25 miles of the most populated city, with populations of 5,000 to 60,000 people, median family incomes of \$51,000 to \$120,000, and lower-than average crime rates. We weighted a variety of factors including livability (short commutes, low pollution, green space), education (well-educated residents, high test scores), crime (low personal and property crime), economy (high job growth, low unemployment rate, high family income), and affordability (median household income, cost of expenditures). Affordability was most heavily weighted in our calculations. We penalized places with bad weather, a lack of racial diversity, high divorce rates, and few children. Household median income, which is derived from U.S. Census data, and the median home price are 2008 projections. The Unemployment rate comes from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and is for 2007. The Violent Crime index, which is based on FBI crime statistics, is a weighted index of the most recently available seven years ("100" is the national average for violent crime, so "100" would be twice the national average and "50" would be half the national average). The commute time is the median travel time for residents in the area, and is not necessarily the time it takes to reach the largest major city.*

### 1. Pewaukee, Wisconsin

**Nearest major city:** Milwaukee  
**Population:** 12,789  
**Median household income:** \$83,627  
**Median home price:** \$267,500  
**Unemployment rate:** 4%  
**Violent crime index:** 13

Pewaukee, where homes overlook the 2,493-acre spring-fed Pewaukee Lake, is about 20 minutes from Milwaukee. The lake is used for boating, fishing and other water activities. About 37% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 19 minutes.

### 2. Mill Creek, Washington

**Nearest major city:** Seattle  
**Population:** 13,626  
**Median household income:** \$83,818  
**Median home price:** \$398,000  
**Unemployment rate:** 4%  
**Violent crime index:** 24

Mill Creek, a Seattle suburb incorporated in 1983, has an 18-hole golf course, trails, parks, and a mall. About 36% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 29 minutes.

### 3. Brandon, South Dakota

**Nearest major city:** Sioux Falls  
**Population:** 6,793  
**Median household income:** \$71,405  
**Median home price:** N/A  
**Unemployment rate:** 2.5%  
**Violent crime index:** 21

Fast-growing Brandon is a suburb east of Sioux Falls, known for its good schools and has great access to nearby nature parks, such as the Beaver Creek Nature Area. About 48% of residents are married with children. The average commute is 19 minutes.

### 4. Munford, Tennessee

**Nearest major city:** Memphis  
**Population:** 5,476  
**Median household income:** \$53,931  
**Median home price:** \$142,500  
**Unemployment rate:** 5.2%  
**Violent crime index:** 3

Munford, 25 miles north of Memphis, is a small town in Tipton County, which was voted the third safest rural community in America by The Progressive Farmer, an agricultural and country living magazine. The Munford High School band won the state championship in 2007. About 40% of residents are married with children. The average commute is 32 minutes.

*A previous version incorrectly named Bartlett, also in Tipton County, as the best affordable suburb in Tennessee.*

### 5. East Norriton, Pennsylvania

**Nearest major city:** Philadelphia  
**Population:** 13,530  
**Median household income:** \$73,773  
**Median home price:** \$242,500  
**Unemployment rate:** 3.4%  
**Violent crime index:** 11

East Norriton, a former farming community 22 miles north of Philadelphia, has a mix of stores, offices, industrial areas, single-family homes, and apartments. The nearest large shopping mall is the Plymouth Meeting Mall four miles away. About 33% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 21 minutes.

### 6. South Weber, Utah

**Nearest major city:** Salt Lake City  
**Population:** 5,676  
**Median household income:** \$89,355  
**Median home price:** \$210,000  
**Unemployment rate:** 2.6%  
**Violent crime index:** 57

South Weber, known for its occasional Big Foot sightings, is a rural area in Davis County, known as “The Garden Spot of Utah” because of its rich agricultural land. About 58% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 17 minutes.

## 7. Cornelius, North Carolina

**Nearest major city:** Charlotte  
**Population:** 17,290  
**Median household income:** \$87,016  
**Median home price:** \$206,000  
**Unemployment rate:** 3.3%  
**Violent crime index:** 48

The fast-growing bedroom community, 30 miles north of Charlotte, has some beautiful homes on Lake Norman, North Carolina’s largest lake. About 31% of residents are married with children. The average commute is 31 minutes.

## 8. West Des Moines, Iowa

**Nearest major city:** Des Moines  
**Population:** 52,138  
**Median household income:** \$66,306  
**Median home price:** \$173,000  
**Unemployment rate:** 3%  
**Violent crime index:** 21

West Des Moines, the largest suburb of Des Moines, is covered with lakes, parks and trails. The highly-educated population is growing quickly and many of the residents work in the financial industry. About 38% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 16 minutes.

## 9. Pataskala, Ohio

**Nearest major city:** Columbus  
**Population:** 11,919  
**Median household income:** \$65,274  
**Median home price:** \$142,314  
**Unemployment rate:** 5.2%  
**Violent crime index:** 18

Pataskala, a suburb 20 miles east of Columbus, is one of a couple municipalities in the state that operates without an income tax. The city has three downtowns and a number of sites designated for new development. About 37% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 27 minutes.

## 10. Fort Mill, South Carolina

**Nearest major city:** Charlotte, N.C.  
**Population:** 9,943  
**Median household income:** \$57,648  
**Median home price:** N/A  
**Unemployment rate:** 5.6%  
**Violent crime index:** 93

Fort Mill, located just south of the North Carolina border and 18 miles from Charlotte, is home to the Charlotte Knights baseball stadium. About 36% of residents are married with children. Average commutes are 22 minutes.