

Prescott makes Top 10 for U.S. 'emerging cities'

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PRESCOTT - Among the rapidly growing “merging cities” of the U.S, Prescott ranks in the top 10.

A new book on newsstands – the 820 page Cities Ranked and Rated – evaluated more than 400 of the largest and best cities in the nation.

Although Prescott did not make the list of “principal U.S. metropolitan areas,” because of its population, it did make the list of emerging cities. Of the 45 cities from around the country that made the cut for emerging cities, Prescott was number six.

The book bases its ranking on a number of criteria, including economy, cost of living, climate, education, health care, crime, transportation, leisure, arts and culture, and quality of life. Prescott’s strong points, according to the book, are its attractive downtown and historic interest. On the other hand, the weak points were its high home prices and scarcity of entertainment opportunities.

Although the book notes that Prescott picks up some of the character from nearby Phoenix, Flagstaff, and Sedona, it maintains that the community “is primarily a clean, quiet city with an Old West feel.”

The five cities that outranked Prescott in the emerging city category were: Ithaca, N.Y.; Bend, Ore.; Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Wash.; Logan, Utah; and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

Rounding out the top 10 were Vero Beach, Fla.; Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford, Va.; Brunswick, Ga.; and Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Prescott is the only Arizona city to make it onto the emerging city list. And although no Arizona cities make it onto the list of top-50 principal cities, several did make the top 400, including Tucson (number 70), Yuma (number 204), Flagstaff (number 244) and Phoenix-Mesa (number 273).

For city officials, Prescott’s high ranking in the emerging cities category corroborates their views of the high local quality of life.

“Prescott is a dynamic community that offers something for everyone – young families, students, professionals and retirees,” said City Manager Steve Norwood.

Mayor Rowle Simmons agreed: “the climate, our great schools, low incidence of crime and robust local economy combine to make Prescott very livable,” he said.

Economic Development Coordinator Greg Fister pointed out that Prescott’s recent designation as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which earned the city a place in the emerging city category, is good from the economic development standpoint. There is a lot more data generated through MSAs,” he said. “It will generate a lot of statistic that we don’t normally have.”

The community’s high ranking in the new book “reconfirms that he area is a good place to locate or relocate a business, “ Fister added. But he doesn’t expect the book to have the same level of impact on growth that previous ranking have had.

“I don’t think it will have the impact that a Money Magazine article would have,” said Fister, referring to a 1990s article that labeled Prescott as the best place to retire in the nation – an article many in the community viewed as a catalyst for a growth spurt. But, Fister said, “it’s always better to be high on those lists when it’s a good thing” than to make the lists that pinpoint faults.