



Surprise ranked among 100 best places to relocate

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Besides being a hot investment prospect, Surprise is ranked among the nation's best places to move to, according to a national real estate Web site, Relocate-America.com.

The site's editorial team made its choices from more than 2,000 nominated cities and towns. Winning criteria included neighborhoods, beauty of the area, schools, economic development, crime rates, employment and home construction.

The site has selected the best places to relocate since 1998, but this is the first time Surprise was selected, said Steve Nickerson, president and chief executive of HomeRoute.

Based in Howell, Mich., the company owns Relocate-America.com and provides real estate services for people looking to move. More than 250,000 real estate consumers a year use HomeRoute, the company reports.

"With the list, we're able to educate people about places they've never heard of," Nickerson said.

Surprise was one of four Arizona cities to make the top 100, released April 19. Kingman, Lake Havasu City and Sierra Vista also were recognized.

Only the top 10 cities were assigned a number. Asheville, N.C., ranked first. Those out of the top 10, Surprise included, were placed in alphabetical order.

Anyone can make a nomination for the 2008 top places to relocate by visiting www.relocate-america.com and completing the questionnaire.

While Surprise was once a square-mile community, it has grown rapidly in recent years to more than 100,000 residents.

Nominations of Surprise included comments such as "good property values," "good place to raise young children," and "an up-and-coming area outside metro Phoenix," Nickerson said.

John Hagen, the city's economic development director, said it reflected a growing recognition of the city outside Arizona.

"It seems like there's a list for everything nowadays. But the fact we appear on more and more lists is a sign we're doing things right in the community," Hagen said.

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