

Up-and-Coming Cities

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Rays of Sunshine

In a lump of coal you sometimes find a diamond. In an oil slick, you find patches of clear water. And in a recession, there are success stories that can change how we think about our country in the modern era. The United States is a vast country whose different regions vary so much in terms of climate, population, and business environment that it can be hard to determine exactly what one city is doing to achieve success that another is not.

But while conditions are difficult in every part of the country, there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of some of our large and medium-sized cities. With a population as diverse and dynamic as we have in the U.S., innovations in striking the right balance between quality of life and economic opportunity will ensure that at the very least, Americans will always experiment with making their cities the most desirable as they can.

3rd Fastest-Growing City: Austin, Texas

Change in Population, 2000-2008: 32.2%

The capital of Texas, also known as the "live music capital of the world" for events such as the Austin City Limits annual music festival, Austin ranks as the third fastest growing city in the nation by population. Increasing in population by almost a third from 2000-2008, the city is home to a number of major corporations such as Dell (NasdaqGS: [DELL](#) -News) and Whole Foods (NasdaqGS: [WFMI](#) -News), and a recent deal inked with Facebook promises to bring even more attention to this up-and-coming city.

2nd Fastest-Growing City: Las Vegas

Change in Population, 2000-2008: 35.6%

We've all heard the expression "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," but it would appear that some are taking it literally, as more and more people decided to stay and live in the city of sin. Its population increased by more than 35% in the first eight years of this decade. While they may have been feeling lucky then, only time will tell if Las Vegas can continue to build on that momentum and build even more, bigger casinos to keep the crowds coming. Right now, the situation doesn't look very promising.

Fastest-Growing City: Raleigh, N.C.

Change in Population, 2000-2008: 36.6%

Courtesy of JB Goodwin