

Area ranked 38th most desirable place to live in America

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The Cincinnati-Middletown area improved its rank from 92 to 38 in the second edition of *Cities Ranked & Rated*.

Columbus rose from 110 to 36, while the ranking for Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor area stayed dismal, dropping from 264 to 285.

In the first edition of *Cities Ranked & Rated* that came out in 2004, the Dayton-Springfield metropolitan area ranked 41st in America and first in Ohio as a desirable place to live. In the latest edition of the book, which went on sale last month, Dayton has slipped to 84th nationally and third in the state.

The authors, Bert Sperling and Peter Sander, couldn't be reached to explain what changed so radically in the past three years, but Dayton wasn't the only community that moved up or down significantly in the rankings.

Ranking studies, such as the one that created *Cities Ranked & Rated*, are often accused of being arbitrary, subjective and unscientific, and such profound changes in a period of only three years implies the study may not be reliable enough for making major decisions such as where to live.

The rankings of 373 metropolitan areas in the United States were based on measures in 10 categories covering economics, climate, crime, education, arts and leisure. In a section describing reasons for some of the changes, the authors said one factor was that the boundaries of some metropolitan areas changed. Dayton and Springfield were studied as one area in 2004 when the region was ranked 41st. Now part of separate reporting areas, Dayton and Springfield ranked 84 and 87 respectively.

The Dayton score that changed the most between 2004 and 2007 was "economy & jobs." Dayton-Springfield's economy ranked better than 32 percent of metropolitan areas studied in 2004, but Dayton beat out only about 14 percent in the latest study.

The Dayton area unemployment rate listed in the 2004 study was 5.7 percent in 2004 compared to 6.1 percent for the rest of the country. In the 2007 study Dayton's unemployment rate had increased to 6.0 percent while the rest of the country dipped to 4.7 percent, indicating Dayton hasn't benefitted as much as other areas in an overall improvement in the national economy over the past few years.

On other criteria, Dayton's scores in 2007 were similar to those the area received in 2004.

The cost of living in the area continues to be attractive. For example, the median house price in the Dayton metropolitan area is \$120,600 in the latest study compared with \$220,000 nationally.

Dayton's most outstanding showing in the 2007 ratings was in the "arts & culture" area. The region ranked above the national average in the number of public libraries and in the ratings for its classical music, dance and museum offerings. The area's professional theater rating was the only arts measure that was below average.

In terms of communities with dramatically changed rankings, the book said the biggest move was in Flagstaff, Arizona, which climbed from a ranking of 244 in 2004 to a ranking of 18 in the latest volume. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington was the biggest loser dropping from number 28 to 262.

<http://www.journal-news.com/hp/content/oh/story/news/local/2007/06/11/sw061107citiesinside.html>