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Richmond rates as a hot spot for young professionals



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

Among Richmond's downtown lunch crowd yesterday were (from left) Bryce Humphrey, Katie Prost, Stefanie Reiss and Kelly Rohring.

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When it comes to attractive places for young talent, Richmond is one of the "mighty micros."

That's how Next Generation Consulting, a Madison, Wis.-based market research firm, characterizes cities with populations of 100,000 to 200,000 that it deems attractive hot spots for young professionals.

The firm, which studies the residential and relocation patterns of 20 to 40-year-olds, recently ranked Richmond as the 19th-best mighty micro, based on seven different criteria including cost of living, job growth, transportation, education and social life.

The Richmond region was ranked between Salt Lake City, at No. 18, and Hampton, at No. 20, the only other Virginia city to make the list of cities with less than 200,000 people.

The top-ranked city in that category was Fort Collins, Colo.

Richmond scored particularly high for education opportunities and ease of getting into and around town, said Molly Foley, the firm's lead consultant.

The ranking helps cast more light on the Richmond area as a good place for college students seeking internships, said Julie Bondy, director of yRichmond, a group that provides social and networking opportunities for interns and first-year workers. The group also emphasizes the region's cost of living, social and outdoor opportunities, she said.

"It is also a great place for young professionals to make a name for themselves," she said. "It is easier to be a big fish here. I think young professionals are valued for their opinions and perspectives here."

Next Generation Consulting looked at 250 cities and ranked the top 60, including two categories of larger cities with populations of 200,000 to 500,000 and more than 500,000.

The consulting firm said the mighty micros "don't have all the fancy-schmancy amenities of the 'Super Cities,' but they more than make up for it in their accessibility and ease of getting around."

Kelly James, administrative director at Bon Secours Virginia and volunteer chair of the Greater Richmond Chamber's HYPE, or Helping Young Professionals Engage program said, "This recognition represents a great deal of progress for the Richmond region."

HYPE seeks to attract, develop and retain young, talented leaders in the area through social events, classes, seminars and community service projects.

"The efforts of the business community and young professional organizations to invest in the recruitment and development of young professionals are clearly paying dividends," she said.

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