

America's Best Places to Live 2008

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From: www.normanoklahomarealestate.us

No. 6: Norman, Okla.

Population: 102,800

Miles from Oklahoma City: 17

Typical single-family home: \$163,600

People at the typical OU game: 84,860

Pros: Affordable housing, football mania

Cons: Severe weather, football mania

Sit down for lunch at Café Plaid in Norman and you'll see a little of everything: mothers with babies, students with laptops, and out-of-towners visiting the University of Oklahoma across the street. The café is a perfect microcosm of Norman itself. People flock here from around the world to study and teach—and then to stay and raise a family.

Carlos Lamarche, 36, a professor at OU who is originally from Argentina, had several job offers around the country after completing his Ph.D. in the spring. But he and his wife Barbara liked Norman because, he says, "We felt this would be a great place to raise a family."

The university not only helps draw educated workers here but also serves as a major source of entertainment for residents. When the OU Sooners play football against their longtime rival, the University of Texas, Norman schools are almost always closed on Friday (you read that right) and the town packs the stadium. That's terrific if you love all things gridiron. If you don't, then not so much. Console yourself with the campus' world-class art museum, which houses works by Degas, Monet and Renoir.

Affordability is another plus: Starter homes go for about \$135,000. While Norman hasn't had huge run-ups in housing prices, the city has also been spared the devastating downside.