

We're on a new list: Where to live in hard times

By Fanny S. Chirinos (Contact)
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CORPUS CHRISTI — A place where you can ride the waves year-round, it turns out, also is a good place to ride out a recession.

BusinessWeek.com includes Corpus Christi among its top U.S. cities in which to ride out a recession. The list of 20 communities was compiled using job data by PolicyMap.com, a demographics and data site run by Philadelphia's Reinvestment Fund, and the U.S.

Census Bureau.

A weak economy affects all sectors of industry, but the list is meant to highlight places buffered by relatively strong industries.

Topping the list is Arlington, Va., where thousands are employed in government jobs, keeping lobbyists, lawyers and accountants busy pumping money into the economy. Although Corpus Christi ranked 20th on the list, being on the list of strongest economies in the country is great news, said Roland Mower, president and CEO of the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp.

"It's the beauty of a diversified economy," Mower said. "If you look at our overall strength, you'll see that when one sector goes down, there are four or five that could be riding high."

Among the sectors faring well are agriculture, technical jobs, education, health care and government jobs. Government jobs as well as those in health care are needed, whether times are good or bad, stated the BusinessWeek.com article, published Tuesday.

Corpus Christi has 177,900 people employed in non-agriculture jobs, with the top sectors being trade and transportation, and government and education and health services, according to statistics compiled by the Texas Workforce Commission for August.

According to the online magazine, people employed in critical fields such as health care, education and energy likely enjoy greater job security than those who work in sectors such as construction and financial services. It doesn't mean the top 20 communities will be recession-proof, only that they may hurt less than others.

"Corpus Christi ... could do relatively well in a downturn as long as energy prices stay high and it isn't hit by Ike-like hurricanes," the article stated.

The data used to rank cities did not include the energy sector at a city level as it was not available, the article stated. Had it been included, Corpus Christi might have ranked higher, said Foster Edwards, president and CEO of the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce.

"A ranking like this shows the national news doesn't always apply to us," Edwards said. "We're better off than the rest of the nation and businesses are looking for stable communities with which to do business."

Mower said receiving this kind of attention helps attract businesses to the area.

"This information is something we can send to potential investors," Mower said. "It's a tool we use to reinforce the message that Corpus Christi is a good place to do business."

Best places to ride out recession

1. Arlington, Va.
2. Washington, D.C.
3. Durham, N.C.
4. Madison, Wis.
5. Boston
6. Pittsburgh
7. Baltimore
8. Baton Rouge, La.
9. New Orleans
10. Philadelphia
11. Lubbock
12. Anchorage, Alaska
13. Lexington-Fayette, Ky.
14. Buffalo, N.Y.
15. Lincoln, Neb.
16. Irvine, Calif.

17. Seattle

18. Chesapeake, Va.

19. Albuquerque, N.M.

20. Corpus Christi

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Contact Fanny S. Chirinos at 886-3759 or chirinosf@caller.com