

The Hartford Courant

Simsbury Ranked 9th In Money Magazine's National 'Best Places to Live'

By [Kristin Stoller](#)

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Duncan Rowles, of Granby, removes dead flowers from flower pots on Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge on Aug. 5, 2014. (Brad Horrigan / Hartford Courant)

SIMSBURY — The town was ranked ninth on a list of the 50 best small cities in the country, put out by Money magazine.

Money magazine, which is published by Time Inc., ranked Simsbury between No. 8, Coppell, Texas and No. 10, Solon, Ohio.

Apex, N.C. took the top slot in the rankings, based on data and in-person visits.

"The people that live in Simsbury and work in Simsbury, we recognize what an amazing jewel we have," said Sarah Nielsen, executive director of the Simsbury Main Street Partnership Inc. "But it's nice to get that recognition from an outside source."

Money magazine has ranked the best places to live in America annually for the past 30 years, and Simsbury has been on the list three times: ranking No. 57 in 2009, No. 39 in 2011 and No. 50 in 2013, said Money magazine senior writer Donna Rosato.

Rosato said the rankings change based on multiple factors, including the town's economy and school and safety rankings.

"We are very proud that Simsbury made this list," First Selectman Lisa Heavner said. "It's a reflection of the hard work of the many volunteers and committees and town staff."

Heavner said the ranking will help the town's economic development.

Two other Connecticut towns ranked in the top 50: Tolland ranked No. 34 and Cheshire ranked No. 45.

The magazine mentioned Simsbury's "premier public schools" as the main draw to the town. According to the magazine, Simsbury students scored above average in every test category and 93 percent of graduates pursue higher education.

Simsbury is also a friend to the arts, according to the magazine, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation named the town one of the nation's best communities for music education. Residents are able to see national artists perform at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center.

Residents can also "bike on the 84-mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as it weaves through town along the Farmington River," the magazine noted.

Though residents "pay a premium" in property taxes, the town's unemployment rate is well below the national average, according to the magazine.

Simsbury tourism committee co-Chair Dominique Avery said the ranking will be good for the town's businesses and tourism.

"We don't do the kind of huge events that attract people from all over the world. We just quietly have these amazing things," Avery said. "Sometimes, I wish more people knew."

Rankings are derived from 39 data points in categories such as test scores, crime rates, commute times, weather patterns, health statistics and arts and leisure-based activities in the town and surrounding area. In some cases, representatives visited towns and interviewed residents, according to the magazine.

Rosato said the magazine started with the 3,625 towns in the U.S. with populations of 10,000 to 50,000. The magazine limited the results to three places per state and one per county to represent all regions evenly.

The magazine ranks small towns every other year, and towns with populations larger than 50,000 in the off-years, she said.

Nielsen said the town was contacted by the magazine in the past few months and asked them to submit photos or videos of the town. The town was not told where they were being ranked, she said.

With the Flower Bridge and Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation, Neilson said the town offers an excellent quality of life and quality of services.

"We are really becoming a wedding destination, which is amazing," she said. "You can't find a more picturesque town than Simsbury."

The magazine also asked readers to [vote for their favorite towns](#) from its top 10 list. As of 1 p.m. Tuesday, Simsbury held the top spot.