

# Hitting national lists

## *Leaders cite 'cool factor,' Hill Air Force Base*

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An emerging "cool factor" has made the Top of Utah one of the hottest communities in the nation in terms of affordability, quality of life and business climate, according to survey results released this week by three national business magazines.

The Ogden area's outdoor splendor and burgeoning reputation as a ski-industry hub earned it the 18th spot for hottest midsize cities in Inc. Magazine's Boomtowns 2006 survey.

Forbes magazine lists the area as the 33rd best place for business among midsize communities, and Kiplinger's Personal Finance magazine ranks it as the 49th smartest place to live.

The Inc. Magazine and Forbes rankings are based on employment and other information from the Ogden-Clearfield Metropolitan Statistical Area, a geographical location encompassing Weber, Davis and Morgan counties, that had a population of more than 486,000 in 2005.

The rankings are partly due to an economic upsurge occurring in Layton and Ogden, said Davis County Commissioner Dannie McConkie. "People are migrating north to be near the economic engine that is Hill Air Force Base," he said. "The next decade is very promising for the Top of Utah."

Mayor Matthew Godfrey said the rankings reaffirm his belief that Ogden's downtown revitalization and proximity to mountains is creating a "cool factor" that is gaining notoriety for the city.

"It validates the direction the city is heading in," he said. "We'll use ... the three rankings to sell others on our strengths and our story as we pitch Ogden to businesses worldwide."

Godfrey attributed the rankings largely to The Junction, a multimillion dollar entertainment, retail and residential complex being built at the former Ogden City Mall site and excitement over a proposed gondola linking downtown to Weber State University and Malan's Basin.

Ogden Chief Administrative Officer John Patterson said the rankings could catch the attention of companies looking to relocate to a city that is affordable, business-friendly and has an outstanding quality of life.

"It helps over time," he said. "It puts us on their radar screen."

Inc. Magazine described Ogden as an "outdoors paradise" that is working to attract recreation equipment companies like Scott USA, which is building a multimillion-dollar ski equipment manufacturing and distribution facility in Business Depot Ogden.

The only other Utah MSA to make the magazine's hottest midsize cities list was Provo-Orem, which ranked ninth. St. George ranked second and Logan placed 16th in the small city category.

The Ogden area's 33rdplace ranking by Forbes as one of the best places to do business was based on factors such as its proximity to colleges, cost of living, crime rate, leisure amenities and job growth. Provo came in at 27th on the survey.

Kiplinger's Personal Finance magazine rated Ogden as the 49th-smartest place to live based on housing prices, cost of living, economic vitality, education, health care and cultural and recreational offerings. Utah cities ranking ahead of Ogden in the survey included St. George, 11, Logan, 15, and Provo, 21.

Ogden Community and Economic Development Director Dave Harmer said he is optimistic the city will rank even higher in future surveys by the magazines. "If we can keep the momentum going forward, hopefully we can improve our position," he said.