

Durham tops Raleigh, list says

Fortune ranks business climate

From Staff Reports

After years of being linked to Raleigh in "best places" lists, Durham gets to stand alone in Fortune Small Business magazine's "Best Places to Live and Launch" list.

The Bull City ranks No. 12 out of the 100 cities ranked. That put Durham ahead of Raleigh, which is No. 20, but behind Charlotte, ranked No. 8.

The magazine lists Durham's pluses as: "Thriving biotech and pharmaceutical industries, lots of local arts festivals and college sports." What makes it a good place to launch a business? Low-rent office space and support for fast-growth startups. RTP is also praised, as are the "unconventional workspaces" in downtown Durham that attract the "creative class." The city's lower cost of living gets a shout-out.

As for cons: "Perceived as the underdog of the Triangle region." It also gets lower marks for a higher crime rate than neighboring cities.

Raleigh, meanwhile, gets high marks for its growing tech industry, support of entrepreneurs, and the "\$2.5 billion renaissance" downtown. On the negative side: "Raleigh's infrastructure is having a hard time keeping up with its population growth."

To compile the list, the magazine ranked 296 census-designated metro areas by business friendliness and lifestyle offerings (i.e. museums, parks, clubs). It sent reporters out to pick the cities within the top 100 metro areas that best meet its criteria for mixing business and pleasure.

Topping the list was Bellevue, Wash. Other North Carolina cities that made the 100 were Asheville (No. 41), Greensboro (No. 50) and Winston-Salem (No. 56).

To see the list, go to money.cnn.com/magazines/fsb/bestplaces/2008. Be sure to check out the comments from readers. Not everyone agrees with the magazine's choices.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/business/nc/story/1071735.html>