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Austin is best U.S. city for small businesses

The Business Journals by G. Scott Thomas

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This week's editions of On Numbers have identified the best markets for small businesses within the nation's four regions. These were the winners:

East (21 markets): [Pittsburgh](#)

South (37 markets): [Austin](#)

Midwest (19 markets): [Minneapolis-St. Paul](#)

West (23 markets): [Salt Lake City](#)

Now it's time to combine the four lists and declare an overall champion.

The U.S. market that provides the best opportunities for small businesses to grow and prosper is Austin, which also finished first in On Numbers' rankings for 2011 and 2010.

Another three markets from the South -- Raleigh, Oklahoma City and Houston -- occupy the runner-up slots in this year's national rankings. Salt Lake City rounds out the top five.

On Numbers has fashioned a six-part formula to analyze small-business climates across the country. (A small business is defined as any private-sector employer with fewer than 100 workers.)

The formula's components include five-year population growth, five- and one-year private-sector employment growth, concentration of small businesses per 1,000 residents, one-year change in that concentration, and one-year growth in the number of small businesses.

The following database contains the full national standings, along with selected statistics. It can be re-sorted by any category. Just click the appropriate header.

Austin's number of small businesses increased 0.4 percent from 39,180 in 2008 to 39,350 in 2009, the latest year for which official figures are available from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). That was the biggest gain by any market. Ninety-seven of the 100 metros actually suffered losses.

Austin also ranks second in population growth (18.1 percent in five years) and private-sector job growth (6.3 percent in five years). Raleigh and McAllen-Edinburg, Texas, lead those respective categories.

National rank	Market	Small-business vitality score	Small businesses (2009)	Small businesses per 1,000 residents (2009)	2011 rank
1	Austin	46.88	39,350	23.06	1
2	Raleigh	40.89	28,067	24.96	7
3	Oklahoma City	39.34	32,223	26.27	2
4	Houston	37.48	117,886	20.09	18
5	Salt Lake City	33.10	30,978	27.39	26
6	Denver	32.39	72,256	28.35	8
7	Pittsburgh	29.42	57,888	24.60	23
8	San Jose	24.89	43,909	23.89	20

9	New York City	24.88	520,480	27.31	10
10	Seattle	23.81	95,164	27.83	5

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