

Prescott Ranks #5 in Small Business Vitality

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Thanks to a couple of business books, a national magazine and First Lady Laura Bush, millions of people in 2004 learned that Prescott is a boom town, a “recreational haven” and a historic treasure.

In 2005, millions more have learned that Prescott is one of the best medium-sized cities in the United States in which to operate a small business. The news came in the form of a “small business vitality” survey conducted in late 2004 by American City Business Journals (ACBJ). The results, including Prescott’s No. 5 ranking among 283 metropolitan areas with populations between 100,000 and 500,000, were reported in January in the Phoenix Business Journal and in ACBJ journals in 41 other major U.S. cities.

Ranking above Prescott were Bend, Ore., Naples, Fla., Cape Coral/Fort Myers, Fla., and San Louis Obispo, Calif.

Ranking in the top 10 and below Prescott were, Fort Collins, Colo., Seaford, Del., Napa, Calif., Santa Fe, N.M., and Trenton, N.J.

Portland, Maine led the large-market rankings and Bozeman, Mont. led the small-market category.

The criteria for ranking a community’s small business vitality were:

> Number of small businesses per 100,000 residents > Change in the number of small businesses from 2000 to 2002 > Change in private-sector employment from 2000 to 2002 > Change in private-sector payrolls from 2000 to 2002.

A small business was defined as a business with 99 or fewer employees. The information for the survey was compiled by the Census Bureau in 2002 and was the latest available for business, private sector employment, and annual payrolls. Prescott’s ranking was determined by comparing the performances in the four areas against the averages for all markets of similar size.

City officials are not surprised by the top ranking for business vitality. City Manager Steve Norwood pointed out that the city’s sales tax revenues have exceeded projections for several years and commercial construction is on a record pace.

“We are riding a wave of growth and prosperity and there’s no end in sight. It’s a great time to live and do business in Prescott,” Norwood said.

Jane Bristol, Prescott Director of Economic Development, said the region

benefits from a small-business support network, including the Yavapai College Small Business Development Center, the local SCORE chapter and the Chamber of Commerce.

"It's gratifying to see so many existing and startup small businesses achieving success here," Bristol said.

The top-10 national ranking for small-business vitality comes on the heels of Prescott being tapped No. 6 of the top 10 emerging metropolitan areas, according to Cities Ranked and Rated. Prescott also ranked among the top 100 small cities in the country in Jack Schultz's book "Boomtown USA." And, BusinessWeek magazine ranked Prescott in its top 5 U.S. "recreation havens."