

# Middleton tops Money's list

The city is dubbed the best place to live in the U.S., and shares the love

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MIDDLETON — The Good Neighbor City is being quite neighborly.

Instead of taking all the credit for its top spot in Money Magazine's annual best place to live list, Middleton officials say the award announced Monday will be good for the Dane County area and wouldn't have happened without the amenities offered

in Madison and other nearby communities.

The city of more than 17,000 that abuts Madison's Far West Side was ranked seventh in 2005, the last time the magazine ranked cities with between 7,500 and 50,000 people. Madison got the top nod for all cities in 1998.

"It's good for the Capital region," said Van Nutt, executive director of the Middleton Area Chamber of Commerce. "Middleton is part of

Dane County and as a whole, this is good for everybody."

Middleton was one of 2,876 communities considered in the rankings, which were based on economic vitality, job availability, safety, green space, ethnic and racial diversity and cultural amenities.

Middleton beat out Hanover, N.H. and Louisville, Colo., in a close race, according to Craig Matters, the magazine's executive editor, who visited Middleton a few weeks ago.

While Hanover, N.H., was too dependent on Dartmouth College, and Louisville, Colo.'s economy was narrowly focused on technology, Middleton offered more economic diversity, Matters said.

The city benefits from Madison — home to state government, UW-Madison and UW Hospital — but itself is home to companies such as American Girl, Electronic Theatre

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Controls, Parts Now, Standard Imaging and in the near future, up to 1,000 employees at the under-construction UW Medical Foundation.

"We found Middleton because lots of other people have already found Middleton and it has a lot to offer," Matters said. "Middleton just felt a little more real."

Jennifer Alexander, president of the Regional Economic Development Entity, an organization charged with economic development in southern Wisconsin, said "the entire region benefits with this type of recognition."

Middleton Mayor Kurt Sonntag, who was elected in April,

said "certainly the regional economy is what makes us succeed."

Editors at the magazine said the downtown, schools, the mix of retail and dining opportunities, parks, Lake Mendota and the 550-acre Pheasant Branch Conservancy on the city's north side were key in the decision.

"It's a great resource that more and more people are becoming more aware of," said Jim O'Brien, a retired UW-Madison professor and president of Friends of Pheasant Branch.

Robby Olson, 30, a youth minister at First Presbyterian Church in Waunakee, moved to Middleton in 2004 from California when his wife started working on her doctorate in music history at UW-Madison.

Middleton offered more house for the money than Madison and

is a midway point between his work and her school.

Olson and his wife, Jenni Veitch-Olson, 27, bought a condominium on Allen Boulevard near Lakeview Park and slowly began to discover what the city had to offer.

"There's variety in Middleton we didn't expect," Veitch-Olson said, while sipping coffee at Barriques Coffee Trader. "Middleton's accessible. Nothing's too far away."

Keith Schrudlach, 47, has lived in the city 26 years and has raised five children there. He bought his 1906-built home at Middleton Street and University Avenue in 1995 and cherishes the neighborhood.

"We've got young kids, old ladies and empty nesters," Schrudlach said while sweeping leaves from the street. "The demographics are wonderful."