

The Best Towns in Mississippi for Young Families



by MIKE ANDERSON on NOVEMBER 11, 2013

For young families, choosing where to live is one of the most important financial decisions they will make, and it means more than buying a home. It means buying into the community, including its local economy, with the jobs it has to offer, and, for those families with kids, its schools. We wanted to identify the communities with the best such opportunities in Mississippi, so we asked the following questions as we analyzed cities and towns across the state:

- **Does the town have good public schools?** We measured schools' academic performance with ratings from Great Schools. This non-profit compares a given school's standardized test scores to the state average to obtain a rating on a 1 to 10 scale (10 representing the highest score). Higher ratings led to a higher overall score.
- **Can you afford to live there?** We looked at both median home values in each town and ongoing monthly home costs, including mortgage payments, real estate taxes, insurance costs, utilities, fuel and other bills. Lower costs led to a higher overall score.
- **Is the town growing and prospering?** We assessed a town's economy by looking at average household income and income growth over the last decade. Higher income and greater growth led to a higher overall score.

Check out our cost of living calculator [here](#) as well as our mortgage rates calculator [for more information](#).

**4. Long Beach**

Long Beach is part of the Gulfport metro area. Its schools have a strong academic record, with two National Blue Ribbon Schools: Long Beach High and Middle, which earned the award in 2007 and 2009, respectively. The community was hit hard by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but it has been making a strong recovery. Earlier this year, the University of Southern Mississippi finished five major building projects on its Gulf Coast campus, effectively completing all repairs to Katrina-damaged structures.

Elementary was one of four Mississippi schools to earn a National Blue Ribbon this year.

Rank	City	Nearest big city	GreatSchools rating	Median home value	Monthly owner costs	Median household income	Growth, '99-'11	Overall score for young families
1	Petal	Hattiesburg	8	\$126,500	\$1,143	\$51,579	74.0%	68.8
2	Madison	Jackson	9	\$231,200	\$1,710	\$100,804	41.4%	61.8
3	Hernando	Memphis, TN	9	\$179,000	\$1,526	\$62,155	43.8%	61.0
4	Long Beach	Gulfport	9	\$156,800	\$1,396	\$56,916	31.5%	60.5
5	Olive Branch	Memphis, TN	9	\$166,000	\$1,448	\$68,287	23.7%	59.7
6	Brandon	Jackson	9	\$162,200	\$1,307	\$62,819	18.0%	59.5
7	Pearl	Jackson	8	\$108,200	\$975	\$43,384	15.3%	58.3
8	Grenada	-	7	\$86,100	\$904	\$32,584	27.3%	56.5
9	Southaven	Memphis, TN	8	\$141,000	\$1,271	\$56,105	20.2%	55.9
10	Ocean Springs	Biloxi, Gulfport	8	\$169,600	\$1,429	\$61,469	34.0%	55.9
11	Corinth	-	7	\$97,900	\$862	\$28,738	22.6%	53.3
12	Oxford	-	8	\$212,600	\$1,632	\$34,875	69.9%	53.1
13	Ridgeland	Jackson	8	\$170,200	\$1,363	\$51,529	19.7%	51.8
14	Biloxi	Gulfport	8	\$158,400	\$1,404	\$42,529	24.7%	51.5
15	Brookhaven	-	6	\$83,400	\$1,010	\$31,478	27.8%	50.6

**Methodology**

The overall score for each city was derived from the following measures:

- GreatSchools city rating. GreatSchools city ratings are calculated by averaging the weighted overall rating for each school in the city (weighted by the number of students enrolled at the school)
- Median home value from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP04, half-weighted)
- Monthly homeowner costs from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP04, half-weighted)
- Median household income from the U.S. Census (2011 ACS, data set DP03, half-weighted)
- Income change between 1999 and 2011 from the U.S. Census (data sets P053 and DP03, half-weighted)