

SWANKY TOWN SMACKDOWN

They're pretty, prestigious, and priced accordingly. But when it comes to livability, which gold-standard suburb reigns supreme? In this totally unscientific comparison, we weigh the stuff that *really* matters to see who's tops. BY DONNA GARLOUGH

	PRETTIEST OUTDOOR AND GREEN SPACES	MAIN STREET/TOWN CENTER CUTENESS RATING (SCALE OF 1-10)	COMMUTE TIME TO BOSTON	COOL BOUTIQUES AND SHOPS
BROOKLINE MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$1,188,750	Larz Anderson Park, Corey Hill Park, Hall's Pond Sanctuary, Amory Woods.	7 Score averaged between Washington Square, Coolidge Corner, and Brookline Village, all full of shops and restaurants, both indie and chain.	16	Redress Boston, Good Vibrations, Mint Julep.
WESTON MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$1,150,000	Burchard Park at College Pond, Weston Reservoir. 	3 What town center? 	26	Trove. 
LINCOLN MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$900,000	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, DeCordova Sculpture Park, Sandy Pond.	3 With stone walls and churches, the area around the commuter rail station is pretty and polished. But where's the retail scene?	32	None, really. 
OVERALL WINNER! WELLESLEY MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$880,000	Morses Pond, Hunnewell Arboretum at Wellesley College, Elm Bank Reservation.	7.5 Lots of shops and restaurants line a central artery with wide sidewalks. If only those stores weren't Chico's and the Gap....	26	Abigail's Children's Boutique, Gretta Luxe, Moxie, Isabel Harvey, Hudson, E. A. Davis.
MANCHESTER MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$780,750	Singing Beach, Masconomo Park, Coolidge Reservation. 	8 A quaint coastal village with a train station in the middle.	39	Gladstone Jewelry, Mimi.
NEWTON MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$750,000	Hammond Pond, Cutler Park, Auburndale Park, Cold Spring Park.	7 Lots of great pockets of retail shops and eateries, and the bustle of Newton Centre gives it a leg up, too.	21	Folklorica, X-Hale Boutique, Stash, LuxCouture, Tess & Carlos, 344.
WINCHESTER MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$739,900	Long Pond Nature Trail, Brooks-Parkhurst Town Forest, Winter Pond.	9 With brick sidewalks, park benches, and street lamps, the retail center near the downtown rotary is as cute as a button.	16	Book Ends, Recess. 
LEXINGTON MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$701,000	Willard's Woods, Teresa and Roberta Lee Fitness and Nature Path.	9.5 Between the Unitarian Church's white steeple and the Minuteman Statue, Lexington Green and Depot Square ooze historical charm. 	29	Nirva Atelier, Crafty Yankee.
CONCORD MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$700,000	Walden Pond, Great Meadows Natural Wildlife Refuge, Minute Man National Historical Park.	10 All around Monument Square are Colonial buildings and boutiques under adorable awnings.	35	Viola Lovely, Fritz & Gigi, the Dotted I.
BELMONT MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$695,000	Rock Meadow Conservation Area, Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary. 	8.5 A wee bit generic, but there are plenty of stores and casual places to grab a bite.	22	Bessie Blue, Thirty Petals, Artefact.
THE WINNER	WELLESLEY	CONCORD	WINCHESTER	WELLESLEY
	For having everything from English gardens to a sandy pond beach.	For its quintessential New England appeal. It's the perfect spot for a Sunday-morning walk.	For its lack of T crossings and lights. Sorry, Brookline!	For the chic trio of Gretta Luxe, Moxie, and Hudson.

NOTABLE RESTAURANTS	UPSCALE PAMPERING SPOTS	BMAGSCHOOL RANKING	FAMOUS RESIDENTS
 Washington Square Tavern, Cognac Bistro, the Publick House, Orinoco.	Violet Skin Boutique, Karen Golden Skin Care, MiniLuxe, Sara Jamison Esthetics.	23	Home to sports bigwigs Bob Kraft and John Henry, and BU president Robert Brown.
Dairy Joy. 	None.	3	In-season residence of Sox sluggers David Ortiz and Kevin Youkilis. 
Aka Bistro. 	Salon 160.	4	In-season home of Celtics forward Paul Pierce and hockey great Cam Neely. 
Blue Ginger, Alta Strada, the Cottage, Milestone.	Ardan Medspa and Salon, ID Salon, Grettacole, Bella Santé.	11	Birthplace of rocker Billy "The Stroke" Squier; home to Celtics guard Ray Allen. 
Cala's, the Landing. 	Salon Bogart. 	6	Birthplace of 24 and <i>Weeds</i> actress Sprague Grayden. 
51 Lincoln, Lumière, Blue Ribbon BBQ, Bokx 109, the Biltmore, Union Street.	Salon De Cinzia, Tête-à-Tête Salon, SalonCapri, Sylvestre Franc, Chrisso Studio, La Residencia Spa.	12	Hometown of <i>Friends</i> actor Matt LeBlanc (and half of <i>The Office</i> cast).
A Tavola.	Salone Estetica, Katana Salon and Spa.	20	Childhood home of decorated gymnast Alicia Sacramone. 
Lexx, Nourish. 	Indulgence Day Spa, Spa Blossom, Bella Santé.	5	Hometown of Dresden Doll Amanda Palmer; current home of historian Noam Chomsky.
80 Thoreau.	1 on 1 Self-Indulgence Spa, the Mane Escape.	2	Home to writer types Doris Kearns Goodwin and Alan Lightman.
Il Casale, Kitchen on Common.	Leon & Co., L'Essentiel. 	22	Home to Mitt Romney. 
BROOKLINE	WELLESLEY	CONCORD	NEWTON
For its tasty range of dining options, from beer bars to tapas spots.	For having the poshest <i>ahhh</i> -inducing retreats of the bunch.	For its stellar test scores and more.	For inspiring some of our favorite comedians.



BILL RODGERS: WHY I LOVE BOXBOROUGH

When I moved to Boxborough, I wasn't much of a trail runner. I was a marathoner, a road racer. I still am, but when you get older, you tend to look for trails a little more, to get away from the cars and look for shade from the sun, especially in the hot summers. In my neighborhood, we have a lot of wooded areas and trails for the runners, walkers, and dog walkers. There's one at the bottom of my street, called Steele Farm. I run on the trails and take my dog, Kiwi, out there. Living here is like a getaway. I'm on about three acres, and my backyard is all woods, with deer and foxes. It's pretty wild, and it's a retreat. I go to 25 races a year, all over the United States, and meet hundreds of runners. It's intense. So when I come back, I want to recover and lie low. At the same time, Boxborough is close enough to the airport and the city, the quality of life is good, and the schools are good. It's the kind of place where you buy your Halloween pumpkin from a neighbor. I love that.

—ASTOLD TO COURTNEY HOLLANDS

RODGERS IS A FOUR-TIME BOSTON MARATHON WINNER AND THE CO-OWNER OF BILL RODGERS RUNNING CENTER.