

# AARP Index: Ranks six Wisconsin cities among most “livable” in the U.S.

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Six Wisconsin cities, including Milwaukee, Madison, Fitchburg, Sheboygan, La Crosse and Sun Prairie, were all ranked in the top 10 in their respective population categories for being among the most “livable” in the country, according to data analyzed from the newly updated AARP Livability Index.

The index, first launched in 2015, uses more than 50 national data sources to score every neighborhood and community in the U.S. based on seven categories of livability, including housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement and opportunity. New features include updated data with the ability to see change over time among the different categories of livability.

“The country is finding out what we’ve known for some time – that Wisconsin is a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson.

“We know that a majority of older adults want to remain living in their homes and communities as they age. This index is a valuable tool to help municipal leaders and individuals improve their communities and better meet the needs of people of all ages as the number of older adults in America continues to grow,” Wilson said.

Along with overall livability trends, AARP identified the top 10 large, mid-size and small cities in terms of their livability scores. Milwaukee made the top 10 for cities above 500,000, while Madison was among the most livable cities with populations ranging from 100,000 to 500,000. Included in the top 10 cities with populations of 25,000 to 100,000 are Fitchburg, Sheboygan, La Crosse and Sun Prairie.

“The data shows that these communities and hundreds of others across Wisconsin are adapting to their aging populations and making sure their communities are safe, walkable, affordable and economically viable to support all generations,” Wilson said.

Here is what the results showed about the six Wisconsin communities ranked as most livable by the index.

Milwaukee – is a top scorer when it comes to transportation. With every public transit station being ADA-accessible, it has affordable ease of movement and abundant transit options. The city ranks a little lower when it comes to equal opportunity and diversity.

Madison – is a city where citizens are involved in what’s happening around town. Park and open space improvements, for one, are made with heavy public input whether it’s in the form of surveys, forums or census information used. The city is dedicated to creating public spaces that fit the needs of its residents.

Fitchburg – is also very civically engaged, but caters to a younger population. The city began investing in economic growth, trying to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and attracting smaller businesses and innovation to the area. It also has its fair share of recreation spots for nature lovers.

Sheboygan – has a transportation system that is 100 percent accessible and ADA-compliant, while most neighborhoods are walkable. The city promotes civic engagement with a senior center, museums and plenty of natural trails and parks for those who love to be outdoors.

La Crosse – has a younger population that commutes with ease. Being located on the Mississippi River gives residents access to outdoor recreation on top of the historical sites around town. The city is working to improve streets, sidewalks and public transit to become a hub of the region by connecting other areas.

Sun Prairie – Age is almost evenly distributed, making it a little more diverse than other locations. With input from residents, Sun Prairie is improving streets, sidewalks and public spaces. The community does encounter traffic congestion during commute times, but has access to the region’s culture and natural sites.