

# The Rising Stars: Six Cities Welcoming Young Professionals

The COVID-19 pandemic – and the subsequent shift to remote work – has fundamentally redefined where and how people live and work, creating new opportunities for smaller, second-tier cities to thrive.

But where are relocators going in 2024 – and what are they looking for? This post dives into the data for several [second and third-tier CBSAs](#) with populations ranging from 500K to 2.5 million that have seen positive net domestic migration over the past several years – where population inflow outpaces outflow. Who is moving to these hubs, and what is drawing them?

## Key Takeaways:

- Several metro areas saw positive net migration between July 2020 and July 2024 – including **Austin, TX** (3.6%), **Fayetteville, AR** (3.3%), **Raleigh, NC** (2.6%), **Des Moines, IA** (1.4%), **Oklahoma City, OK** (1.1%), and **Madison, WI** (0.6%).
- Relocators to these metropolitan areas tend to come from CBSAs which, on average, had younger and less affluent residents.
- Examining the characteristics of these metropolitan areas highlights significant job and housing opportunities, positioning these cities as new hubs for professionals and families.

## CBSAs on the Rise

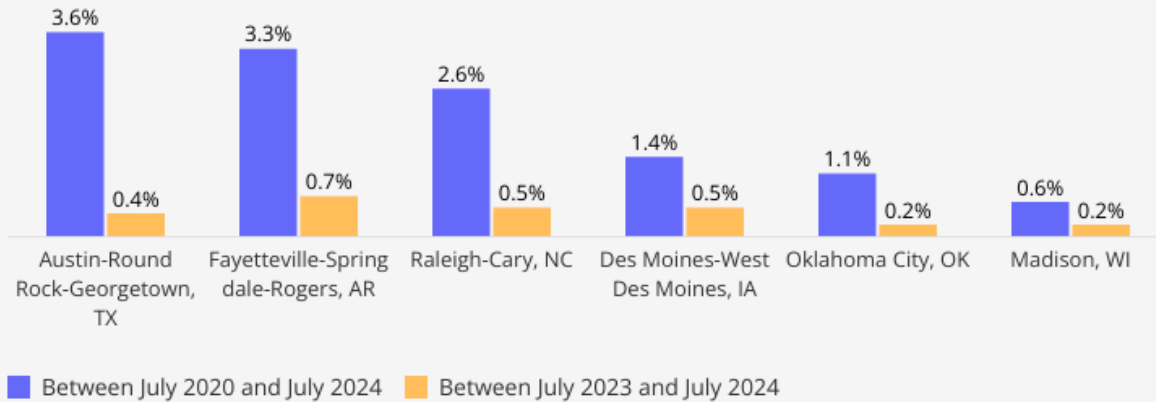
The past few years have seen a shift in where people are moving. While major metropolitan areas still [attract](#) newcomers, smaller, second-tier cities, which offer a balance of affordability, livability, and career opportunities, are becoming attractive alternatives for those looking to relocate.

Between July 2020 and July 2024, for example, the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX CBSA, saw its net domestic migration grow by 3.6% – not surprising, given the city of Austin’s ranking among U.S. News and World Report’s [top places to live](#) in 2024-5. Raleigh-Cary, NC, which also made the list, experienced net population inflow of 2.6%. And other metro areas, including Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR (3.3%), Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA (1.4%), Oklahoma City, OK (1.1%), and Madison, WI (0.6%) have seen more domestic relocators moving in than out over the past four years.

All of these CBSAs have also continued to see positive net migration over the past 12 months – highlighting their continued appeal into 2024.

## Several Mid-Size CBSAs Are Seeing Positive Domestic Net Migration Into 2024

Net Migration Change



### Younger and Hungrier

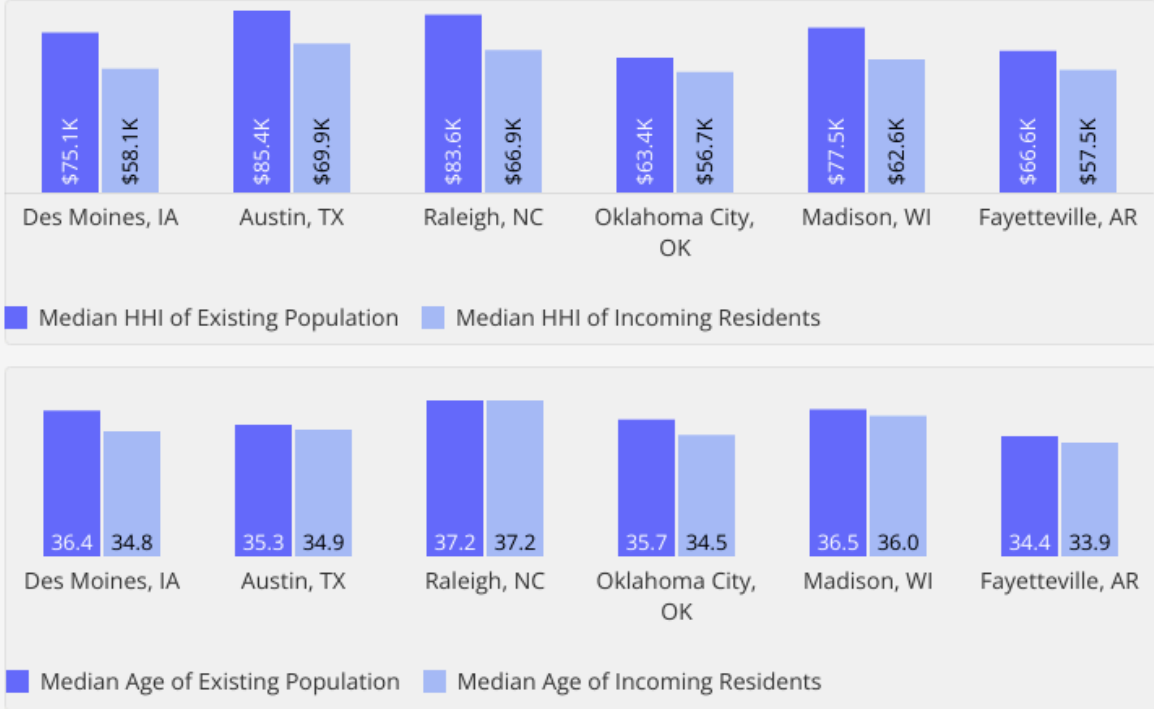
What is driving domestic migration to these hubs? While these metropolitan areas span various regions of the country, they share a common characteristic: They all attract residents coming, on average, from CBSAs with younger and less affluent populations.

Between July 2020 and July 2024, for example, relocators to high-income Raleigh, NC – where the median household income (HHI) stands at \$84K – tended to hail from CBSAs with a significantly lower weighted median HHI (\$66.9K). Similarly, those moving to Austin, TX – where the median HHI is \$85.4K – tended to come from regions with a median HHI of \$69.9K. This pattern suggests that these cities offer newcomers an aspirational leap in both career and financial prospects.

Moreover, most of these CBSAs are drawing residents with a younger weighted median age than that of their existing residents, reinforcing their appeal as destinations for those still establishing and growing their careers. Des Moines and Oklahoma City, in particular, saw the largest gaps between the median age of newcomers and that of the existing population.

## Mid-Tier Cities Attract Younger Newcomers With Lower HHIs Than CBSA Average

Demographics in CBSA | July 2020 - April 2024



### Housing and Jobs: Upgrading and Improving

Career opportunities and affordable housing are [major drivers](#) of migration, and data from [Niche's Neighborhood Grades](#) suggests that these CBSAs attract newcomers due to their strong performance in both areas. All of the analyzed CBSAs had better "Jobs" and "Housing" grades compared to the regions from which people migrated. For example, Austin, Texas received the highest "Jobs" rating with an A-, while most new arrivals came from areas where the "Jobs" grade was a B.

While the other analyzed CBSAs showed smaller improvements in job ratings, the combination of improvements in both "Jobs" and "Housing" make them appealing destinations for those seeking better economic opportunities and affordability.

## Jobs & Housing Prove To Be Main Draws for Incoming Residents

Niche Market Grades | April 2020 - April 2024

Jobs	Des Moines, IA	Austin, TX	Raleigh, NC	Oklahoma City, OK	Madison, WI	Fayetteville, AR
Grade For Areas of Origin	B	B	B	B	B	B
Grade At Destination CBSA	B+	A-	B+	B+	B+	B+

Housing	Des Moines, IA	Austin, TX	Raleigh, NC	Oklahoma City, OK	Madison, WI	Fayetteville, AR
Grade For Areas of Origin	B	B-	B-	B	B-	B
Grade At Destination CBSA	B+	B	B+	B+	B	B+

\*Based on [Niche Neighborhood Grades](#) Dataset Combined with Placer.ai Migration Data

### Final Grades

Young professionals may be more open than ever to living in smaller CBSAs, offering opportunities for cities like Austin and Raleigh to thrive. And the demographic analysis of newcomers to these CBSAs underscores their appeal to individuals seeking job opportunities and upward mobility.

Will these CBSAs continue to attract newcomers and cement their status as vibrant, opportunity-rich hubs for young professionals? And how will this new mix of population impact these growing markets?

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