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CHARLOTTE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Survey: Charlotte No. 2 for small biz

Charlotte Business Journal - by [Adam O'Daniel](#) Staff writer

Looking for good news in a recession? How about this: Charlotte is one of the best places in the nation to start a small business.

The Queen City this week received the No. 2 ranking for best metro areas to start a small business from Bizjournals, the online division of **American City Business Journals Inc.**, the parent company of the *Charlotte Business Journal*. Raleigh claimed the top spot, followed by Seattle; Austin, Texas; and Boise, Idaho.

Charlotte's ranking rests heavily on the city's strong business and population growth during the past five years. The months-long process to rank the top 100 cities for small business found Charlotte's population increased 17.4% from 2003 to 2008, compared with the national rate of 4.8%. Employment in the city increased 15.4% in the same period. And from 2005 to 2006, the most recent government data, the number of small businesses in Charlotte grew 4%, three times the national rate and the seventh-highest rate nationwide.

Another reason Charlotte ranked high on the list is its concentration of small companies. Charlotte has more than 27 small businesses per 1,000 residents, according to the Bizjournals research.

Keva Walton, **Charlotte Chamber** vice president for member value, says the city's major corporate growth over the past decade helped spawn the healthy small-business environment.

"The more we attract large businesses, the more that creates spinoff opportunities for small businesses," he says. "Look at how much we've grown. I think that influx of new people and new ideas coming to our area brings about the opportunity for innovative small companies."

Marcia Merrill founded her small marketing company, **Red Rover Communications**, five years ago after establishing herself in corporate public relations. She took advantage of the booming Charlotte economy and targeted small and midsize businesses looking for creative ways to grow their brands. Her list of clients includes about two dozen small businesses and corporate customers such as Bank of America Corp.

"The community offers a good climate for small business and the marketplace is receptive to them," says Merrill, a Charlotte transplant. "It may just be the Southern way, but people are accessible and open to new approaches and conversation."

BEST PLACES TO START A SMALL BUSINESS

TOP 10

1. Raleigh
2. Charlotte
3. Seattle
4. Austin, Texas
5. Boise, Idaho
6. Salt Lake City
7. Orlando, Fla.
8. Oklahoma City
9. Denver
10. Portland, Maine

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