

Buford is No. 3 on list of top U.S. cities

By [Rebecca McCarthy](#)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Published on: 04/01/08

With its small, well-funded school system, proximity to Lake Lanier and easy accessibility, Buford has enjoyed steady commercial and residential growth for years.

Now, the city of 13,576 people has been named the third best place in the country in which to live and launch a business.

The designation was given by CNNMoney.com, a service provided by [CNN](#), Money and Fortune. No. 1 and 2 on the list are Bellevue, Wash., and Georgetown, Texas. The national survey done by Fortune Small Business listed only one other Georgia city — Savannah, at No. 99.

"It's great, but we like to stay hid," said longtime City Commission Chairman Philip Beard. "We think we're the best-kept secret around and we'd like to keep it that way. But somebody got out of Buford with that information."

Fortune Small Business looked for places that "combine a great business environment with alluring leisure offerings." Lake Lanier, affordable housing, safe neighborhoods and a mix of artists and business people make the city attractive, the report said.

"I talk to people in other parts of the country, and they talk about the crime and how expensive it is to live, but we don't have the crime and expense here," said artist Mavis Stevens, a Buford resident. "There's a wonderful blend of a hometown and a sophisticated city all in one that's completely welcoming to artists."

Buford has an abundant supply of entrepreneurs and, as part of Gwinnett, offers tax incentives to various businesses. The report credits the Buford Business Alliance for bringing members together to network and support tourism.

"Some businesses have done extremely well, and we're happy it's worked out that way," Beard said. "We're still selling commercial permits for new buildings and business licenses. They're still lined up, and we haven't seen a decrease yet."

The Buford City Schools drew artist Barbara McGuire and her family to the area. She sells her unique jewelry at Carisma, a gallery on Main Street. The report mentioned the city's renovated downtown.

"There's a huge opportunity here because of the ability to be a start-up business," McGuire said. "You can use your imagination and begin relatively easily, but you need to be a destination business to do well."

> To read the CNNMoney.com report about Buford, go to:

http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2008/fsb/0803/gallery.best_places_to_launch.fsb/3.html

For more information on the Buford Business Alliance go to: www.VisitBuford.com