

# Good news for Ridgecrest...

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## Ridgecrest 4<sup>th</sup> best for young families

By Aaron Crutchfield, Managing Editor

*Ridgecrest is the fourth best city in northern California for young families.*

This is according to a survey released this week by NerdWallet. The study cited public school excellence, home affordability, and growth and prosperity as the three factors that matter most to young families. The survey analyzed 128 cities from the Oregon border to San Luis Obispo County and east. Of those, Ridgecrest scored fourth.

“As the place with the most affordable housing in our top 10 cities, Ridgecrest had a 2012 median home value of \$184,200, which is considerably lower than the state median of \$383,900,” the survey said. “This Kern County city, with light traffic and its proximity to Death Valley and the mountains, is a peaceful place for outdoor lovers.”

Clovis, just east of Fresno, took the top spot in the rankings for second year in a row, with Folsom placing second and Dublin third.

After Ridgecrest, Rocklin placed fifth, followed by Orinda, El Dorado Hills, Roseville, Granite Bay and Walnut Creek.

To measure school quality, the study used data from GreatSchools, which compares students’ test scores and other statewide data to rank schools on a 1-10 scale. To measure home affordability, the study used U.S. Census Bureau data to weigh median home values and monthly homeownership costs, including mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities and other bills. More affordable homes led to higher scores. To measure growth and prosperity, the study used census figures that detailed median household incomes from 2012, and long-term income growth since 1999.

Schools in Ridgecrest had a GreatSchools rating of 7, and the city had a median home value of \$184,200. The median monthly homeownership cost was \$1,338, and the median 2012 household income was \$60,885. The median income growth from 1999 to 2012 in Ridgecrest was 35.29 percent.

Affordability played a role in Ridgecrest’s rise to the top five. No. 1 Clovis had a median home value of \$259,000 in 2012, with a median monthly homeownership cost of \$1,981, which is \$643 more per month than Ridgecrest. But the median household income was \$63,983 in 2012, which is just \$3,098 more than in Ridgecrest, or \$258.17 more per month. That means the median income earner paying the median homeownership cost is ahead by \$384.83 in Ridgecrest compared to Clovis.

Homes were even more expensive in the rest of the top 10; Roseville had the next least expensive homes, at \$326,700.

The schools made up 40 percent of the score, while median home values, monthly homeowner costs, median household incomes and income change from 1999 to 2012 each made up 15 percent of the score.

The heavy weighting toward school quality explains how Orinda made the top 10. Its schools got a rating of 10, which helped make up for the most expensive housing in the survey, with a median value of \$983,600, and a median homeownership monthly cost of \$3,888. It's worth noting that Orinda also had the highest median household income in the survey, at \$162,267.