The Woodlands ranked as No. 1 city in nation by Niche site

Jeff Forward, Staff writer
Updated: March 17, 2021 9:01 a.m.
Township officials celebrated the No. 1 designation from Niche.com with a posting to the township’s website touting the ranking and community amenities that led to the top spot. In 2020, The Woodlands was the second best place to reside in the nation in the Niche rankings and in past years it had been as high as seventh place on the list.

After several years in the top 10 of the best cities in the nation rankings, The Woodlands Township has ascended to the No. 1 spot for 2021 by Niche.com.

Township officials celebrated the designation with a posting to the township’s website touting the ranking and community amenities that led to the top spot. In 2020, The Woodlands was the second best place to reside in the nation in the Niche rankings and in past years it had been as high as seventh place on the list.

Several township board members lauded the ranking and said it was indicative of how great a community they feel The Woodlands is.
Director Ann Snyder said as a 30-year resident, she and her family are aware of how amazing the township is.

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“We, as a community, are truly fortunate to live in our hometown, The Woodlands, the “#1 best place!” My husband and I chose to live and raise our family in The Woodlands over 30-plus years ago and at that time commute to Houston because of Mr. Mitchell’s vision and its foundation,” Snyder said in an email. “The Woodlands is like no other and embraces all ethnicities, faiths, ages, cultures, socio-economic groups. The importance of nature has been integral since inception. Our schools are exemplary, public safety is always a top priority, our business community is second to none, the beautiful parks and pathways are enjoyed by people of all ages, and cultural events are plentiful! We are all blessed to live here where we live, work, play, learn and pray.”

Director John Anthony Brown, who relocated to The Woodlands from Philadelphia, said a combination of factors, including hard work marketing the community, led to the No. 1 designation this year.

“I feel the best form of marketing is that of our residents/visitors spread the word about this community, whether it’s social media posts, having family visiting, and showing them around while letting them see first hand all the great things we have to offer. Another thing that promotes our community is all the amazing amenities we offer, both indoors/outdoors,” Brown explained. “The proximity to being able to take advantage of these is extraordinary. Not many, if any, can say they have such high-quality options within walking (or) biking distance, or a short drive. I believe a lot of acknowledgment goes to the Township Staff, especially our Parks and Recreation
department, who continues to create new amenities for our residents, such as Texas TreeVentures.”

Criteria for honor

The Niche.com rankings are based on a range of factors about the community, including public safety and crime; public schools and other educational opportunities; cost of living and housing availability; diversity of residents racially as well as by education; nightlife and entertainment options; jobs and career options; and how family friendly a community is.

The top five cities in 2021 were The Woodlands at number one, followed by Arlington, Virginia; Naperville, Illinois; Overland Park, Kansas; and Cambridge, Massachusetts. The rankings look at a total of 228 cities in the nation and rely in part on surveys and
resident feedback.

For township directors, the designation is another feather in the cap of the township, which is often considered in design and urban planning circles as the best master-planned community in the nation.

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In citing why the township got the designation, Brown said it is a combination of word-of-mouth praise posted online from residents and huge community events with national profiles such as the Ironman Triathlon and the vast array of concerts at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion help spread the news about The Woodlands and all it has to offer. He also cited a robust corporate culture that attracts workers to the community from afar.

“We have amazing partners that bring international exposure, such as The Woodlands Marathon, Ironman, and The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival, which provide events that many of our active residents participate in and support those visiting from around the world. Also, having the Pavilion, which consistently ranks as the top five outside amphitheater in the world in sales, speaks volumes to the international products we have to offer,” Brown added. “The Woodlands offers the best amenities for corporate headquarters and their employees. Not only do we have a fantastic Healthcare sector, we have everything in place to provide a technology sector. This community’s design allows for us to thrive economically and provide for both our residents and business partners.”

Bruce Rieser, an Ohio native who relocated to The Woodlands decades ago from Chicago for his job, said he was proud of the work done by township staff and leaders...
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to help the community climb the rankings over the past few years to the No. 1 spot.

“It is very gratifying to be chosen by Niche as the Best City in America. It never gets old to receive recognition from experts that recognize the uniqueness of our hometown,” Rieser said.

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