

RATING

10,000-15,000

THE TOWNS

The extremely close race for the top spot here saw Weston and Canton edge out last time's leader, Old Saybrook. Weston might have lengthened its margin with lower real estate prices, but it's a pretty long drop from its median house price of \$748,000 to second-place Old Saybrook's \$398,000. On the other hand, Weston's median was \$965,000 four years ago and \$830,000 in 2009, so it is moving, willingly or not, in a more affordable direction.

Young families looking for a nice combination of reasonably low real-estate prices and good school performance might look to No. 4 Granby or, better yet, East Hampton, where the median house price is around \$235,000 and the test scores are solidly above average. There's frontage on the Connecticut River, too, but that'll cost you extra.

And speaking of rivers, it's hard not to notice that the Naugatuck River Valley remains a benighted place as far as these surveys are concerned—and has been since our first one in 1992. From Plymouth and Thomaston, through Waterbury and Naugatuck, down to Derby and Ansonia, the unemployment rates remain stubbornly high and efforts at redevelopment have been spotty at best and non-starters at worst (like Naugatuck's highly touted "Renaissance" project, which has gone nowhere in the five years since it was announced). The solution, as always, is threefold: jobs, jobs and jobs. Maybe Gov. Malloy can make the Naugatuck Valley the lab for his much-awaited jobs initiative.

KEY TO THE NUMBERS

The numbers below represent only a small portion of all the data collected to determine town rankings.

Crime rate is the average number of major crimes in 2007, 2008 and 2009 per 1,000 population.

SAT score is the average combined verbal, math and writing scores in 2010 (perfect score is 2400).

The median house price is based on first-half 2011 sales.

The 2009 equalized mill rate determines the local tax burden by dividing the tax rate by the grand list.

Library expenditures per capita are for 2010.

PIC points take into account per-capita income, equalized mill rate, adjusted equalized grand list per capita and aid to children. It is an indicator of wealth and need—the number shows where the town ranks among all 169 cities and towns in the state; the greater the number, the less need in the community.

Voter turnout reflects those voting in the November 2008 presidential election.

TOWN	EDUCATION	CRIME	ECONOMY	COST	LEISURE
1. WESTON	1	1	1	20	
2. CANTON	3	2	5	18	
3. OLD SAYBROOK	5	7	2	19	
4. GRANBY	4	4	8	13	
5. NEW FAIRFIELD	6	3	3	16	1
6. ORANGE	2	12	6	17	
7. CLINTON	13	10	7	12	
8. SOMERS	7	8	9	14	
9. CROMWELL	9	13	11	11	
10. EAST HAMPTON	8	6	15	8	1
11. NORTH BRANFORD	14	11	10	9	1
12. OXFORD	12	5	4	15	1
13. COVENTRY	10	15	12	10	1
14. STAFFORD	11	9	17	7	1
15. WINDSOR LOCKS	19	17	13	3	1
16. DERBY	20	20	18	5	
17. GRISWOLD	16	14	16	2	2
18. PLYMOUTH	15	16	19	4	1
19. EAST WINDSOR	18	19	14	6	1
20. WINCHESTER	17	18	20	1	1