

Santa Cruz ranked sixth in US for job growth

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SANTA CRUZ — The future for the city of Santa Cruz looks bright, according to Forbes.com, which has placed our coastal surf town at No. 6 on a list of best cities for future job growth.

The ranking, released Wednesday, cites Santa Cruz's projected annual job

growth of 3.4 percent, median household income of \$62,052 and an unemployment rate of 9 percent.

Forbes based its ranking on research conducted by Moody's Analytics. The list researched 200 of the largest cities by population that are expected to have the fastest and slowest rates of employment growth through 2015.

Texas holds seven of the

top 10 slots. Santa Cruz beat out Salt Lake City (seventh) and three Texas cities: Dallas (eighth), Laredo (ninth) and Brownsville (10th).

Austin heads the list with a projected annual job growth of 4 percent, a median household income of \$59,554 and an enviable unemployment rate of 5.5 percent. Unlike Santa Cruz, Austin is home to numerous large and expand-

ing companies such as Accenture, AT&T and Time Warner.

"When I think of the last half-decade in Santa Cruz, I see an unbroken string of entrepreneurship," said Hilary Bryant, Santa Cruz mayor. Public-private partnerships, collaborations with UC Santa Cruz on things like

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the Project for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, online government services, and weekly retention visits to businesses have all played a role, Bryant said.

She noted Cruzio Internet provider's efforts to bring fiber over the hill and "give new life" to the former Sentinel building by creating space for independent workers, as well as NextSpace Coworking's expansion across the state, the emergence of industry leaders such as Santa Cruz Bicycles, Ibis Cycles and Fox Factory, which had a public offering Thursday.

"Santa Cruz made Forbes' list because our business community is in the forefront of the emerging economy that is based upon networking small businesses together," Bryant said. "Our economic development strategy aligns with the new economy as we seek ways to improve the conditions for small businesses to thrive

here, as opposed to focusing on attracting large employers."

Joe Foster, executive director of the Santa Cruz County Business Council, said it was encouraging to make the top 10 after a rough couple of years.

"While we were hit hard during the economic downturn, we are bouncing back rapidly due in large part to our diverse economic drivers — tourism, hospitality, agriculture and academia," Foster said. "Couple those with an emerging class of local startups and it's easy to see the potential we have for future job growth."

While the ranking was unexpected, Bill Tysseling, executive director/chief executive officer of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce, said there is a certain chemistry of the moment putting Santa Cruz at the "edge of prosperity."

"I hope there's a reality in that," he said, noting an impressive entrepreneurial diversity in the area, from the university spinoffs relating to human genome research, marine biology

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■ To see the Forbes.com article, go to <http://www.itybityurl.com/2A09>.

■ To see Santa Cruz on the Forbes list, go to <http://www.itybityurl.com/2A0a>

and the game design courses as well as organic agriculture, creative collaboration, big data and patent development.

"It's the little seeds, the little success, I think, that stimulate the growth of a brand or a notion that we have the ability to support it," Tysseling said. Several infrastructure issues such as broadband, transportation and water will be important to support job growth. "Those are important to our ability to have a strong economy. Those are infrastructure things that will evolve as the business community evolves."

Pulling up the rear as the lowest ranked city for future job growth was Holland, Mich., with 0.5 percent job growth.