

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 01 **IN THE NEWS**
Ames named #4 "Best Small Cities to Make a Living"
- 02 **LOCAL WORKFORCE**
Local Workforce Summary
First Quarter 2016
- 02 **RETAIL SALES**
Key Retail Indicators for
Ames, FY 2014 vs 2015
- 03 **HOUSING**
Residential Housing
Sales

Housing Units Building
Permits

Residential Sales Detail
- 04 **COST OF LIVING
COMPARISON**
Q1 2016 Data

In The News

Ames ranked as one of the best places to make a living

MoneyGeek.com released rankings of the best big, mid-sized, and small U.S. cities to make a living. The rankings take into account not only cost of living in these cities but also incomes of residents compared to the cost of living.

The "Best Cities to Make a Living" study is MoneyGeek.com's first series of rankings of U.S. cities.

"Our rankings go beyond looking at affordability alone," said Lydia Poon, Executive Editor of MoneyGeek.com. "By comparing cost of living to what you can potentially earn in a particular city, we located the places where you can get the most bang for your buck. These are the cities in America where you're more likely to have a well-paying job relative to what you'll pay for living expenses."

To calculate the ranking, MoneyGeek.com evaluated cities by population range out of a total group of nearly 30,000 cities reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. The cost of living in these cities in the second quarter of 2015 was compared to the national median cost of living in the same time period and also to the earning potential of workers in these cities across all professions for which the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics had data. The top cities in the study were cities that offered the highest salaries relative to the cost of living.

The full list of Small Cities (among cities of population less than 100,000) includes: 1. Olympia, Washington, 2. Ithaca, New York, 3. Kennewick, Washington, 4. Ames, Iowa, 5. Cheyenne, Wyoming, 6. Wilmington, Delaware, 7. Kalamazoo, Michigan, 8. Houma, Louisiana, 9. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and 10. Ogden, Utah.



Local Workforce

LOCAL WORKFORCE SUMMARY APRIL 2016 (not seasonally adjusted)

	Total Workforce	Total Employed	Total Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Ames, April 2016	40,000	39,300	700	1.7%
Ames, April 2015	39,800	39,000	800	1.9%
Ames, April 2011	36,100	34,900	1,200	3.4%
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Story County, April 2016	58,900	57,700	1,200	2.0%
Story County, April 2015	58,500	57,200	1,300	2.2%
Story County, April 2011	53,900	51,900	2,000	3.7%

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Retrieved June 2016

Retail Sales

KEY RETAIL INDICATORS FOR STORY COUNTY, FY 2014 vs. FY 2015

Key Retail Indicators for Ames

Ames	FY2014	FY2015	% Change
Real total taxable sales (\$)	834,240,253	884,223,348	6.0% ▲
Number of reporting firms (annualized)	1,192	1,180	-1.0% ▼
Population	62,984	64,073	1.7% ▲
Average sales per capita (\$)	13,245	13,800	4.2% ▲
Average sales per firm (\$)	700,013	749,659	7.1% ▲

No distinctions are made among student households, non-student households, or group quarters in the calculation of per capita sales and related indicators.

Source: Retail Trade Analysis Report Fiscal Year 2015, Issued March 2016, Iowa State University Department of Economics, Retrieved June 2016

Housing

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING SALES - QUARTER 1 2015 vs. QUARTER 1 2016

Q1 2015 vs. Q1 2016 Comparison	Q1 2015 Average Price	Q1 2016 Average Price	% Change	# of Sales Transactions Q1 2015	# of Sales Transactions Q1 2016	% Change	2015 Median Price	2016 Median Price	% Change
Ames & Rural Ames subdivisions	\$198,023	\$212,212	+7.2%	116	116	0%	\$169,150	\$188,725	+11.6%
Story County excluding Ames & rural Ames subdivisions	\$166,642	\$158,108	-5.1%	52	48	-7.6%	\$150,000	\$145,000	-3.3%

Sales as reported to the Central Iowa Board of Realtors, 1/1/2015—3/31/2015 and 1/1/2016—3/31/2016

Source: Hunziker & Associates, June 2016



HOUSING UNITS BUILDING PERMITS (YTD)

	Q1 2016	Q1 2015	Q1 2011
Total	137	143	242
Single-Family	43	40	25
Multi-Family	94	103	217
2-Unit	0	0	0
3- and 4- Unit	0	0	0
5+ Unit	94	103	217

Source: State of Cities Data Systems, June 2016

Preliminary Data for 2016 is subject to subsequent revision throughout the year.

2016 RESIDENTIAL SALES DETAIL - EXISTING & NEW PROCESSED TO DATE

	Number Sold	Average Price	Average House Size	Price per Sq. Ft.	Average Year Built	Median Price	Annual % Change per Sq. Ft.	Cumulative % Change in \$ / SF (1995 base)
Existing	54	\$193,150	1,410	\$136.99	1966	\$176,500	1.6%	74.6%
Single-Family Detached	44	\$193,107	1,465	\$131.13	1961	\$163,250	-	-
Townhouses/ Condos	10	\$197,740	1,171	\$168.86	1987	\$200,450	-	-
New Construction Sales	6	\$409,836	1,801	\$227.56	2014	\$369,000	11.5%	138.5%
Single-Family Detached	6	\$409,836	1,801	\$227.56	2014	\$369,000	-	-
Townhouses/ Condos	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-	-

Source: Ames City Assessor, June 2016

Cost of Living

The Cost of Living Index measures relative price levels for consumer goods and services in participating areas. The average for all participating places, both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan, equals 100, and each participant's index is read as a percentage of the average for all places.

Iowa Cities	Ames	Burlington	Cedar Rapids	Davenport/ Moline/ Rock Island	Des Moines	Dubuque	Mason City	Waterloo / Cedar Falls
Composite Index (U.S. = 100.00)	94.5	85.4	95.6	98.1	88.8	88.3	88.4	93.8
Grocery Items	93.6	94.4	94.9	110.6	89.5	97.8	102.5	85.0
Housing	98.6	73.6	83.4	92.7	81.6	67.4	72.9	89.5
Utilities	82.7	99.8	108.7	93.7	95.9	92.1	91.5	106.0
Transportation	101.6	89.1	101.9	93.6	95.3	90.4	78.3	95.7
Health Care	96.3	95.2	104.3	93.6	98.4	93.2	98.4	99.3
Miscellaneous Goods & Services	92.4	84.8	98.9	101.3	88.9	99.6	97.1	95.8

Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research, ACCRA Cost of Living Index 2016 First Quarter Data, Published May 2016
* Does not include Story County health care costs as a whole, this is the total fee for procedure, not just co-payment or amount billed to insurer.

Big XII Cities	Ames	Manhattan, Kansas	Austin, Texas	Lawrence, Kansas	Norman, Oklahoma	Stillwater, Oklahoma	Lubbock, Texas	Fort Worth, Texas	Waco, Texas	Morgantown, West Virginia
Composite Index (U.S. = 100.00)	94.5	90.2	98.6	no data	79.3	86.9	90.6	104.4	87.0	97.8
Grocery Items	93.6	93.3	87.4	no data	90.5	90.1	94.6	92.2	80.7	102.8
Housing	98.6	86.6	95.8	no data	65.3	82.1	83.6	98.3	72.1	93.9
Utilities	82.7	86.7	107.6	no data	87.8	94.8	85.0	94.1	91.7	86.9
Transportation	101.6	90.5	97.9	no data	74.7	81.3	95.1	103.9	94.0	102.0
Health Care	96.3	93.6	103.7	no data	86.6	93.8	100.9	99.9	95.0	93.8
Miscellaneous Goods & Services	92.4	92.5	102.2	no data	84.6	88.2	93.9	118.4	97.4	101.5

Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research, ACCRA Cost of Living Index 2016 First Quarter Data, Published May 2016
* Does not include Story County health care costs as a whole, this is the total fee for procedure, not just co-payment or amount billed to insurer.

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This report has been compiled with the most current information available in an attempt to keep you informed on key aspects of the Ames/Story County economy. If there is information not included in this publication that you would like to see, please contact us at 515-232-2310 or lauren@ameschamber.com.

Online Resources

- > Ames Chamber of Commerce
- > Ames Convention & Visitors Bureau
- > Ames Economic Development Commission
- > Work In Ames - Local Job Board
- > The City of Ames
- > Regional Research, Stats & Data Hub
- > Iowa Economic Development Authority
- > Iowa State University
- > Iowa Workforce Development
- > ISU Research Park
- > Main Street Cultural District
- > Campustown Action Association
- > Story County, Iowa
- > Regional Capacity Analysis Program
- > U.S. Census Bureau
- > Cultivation Corridor