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# The Ground Floor

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## Settling for Second-Best

[Today's housing numbers](#) present further evidence of a cooling market, but prices in many cities still require average Americans to commit to a diet of [Top Ramen](#) and beans in order to make ends meet. However, a couple of recent articles counsel home seekers not to search for their dream neighborhood, but rather to aim for one that is sort of okay, but close to where they would want to live in an ideal world.

Yesterday, the *Wall Street Journal's* [Real Estate Journal](#) noted that Boise, Idaho, posted one of the top percentage gains in population, in large part due to its affordability and its proximity to high-priced West Coast markets. In addition, *Business Week* has put together a list of the "[25 Best Affordable Suburbs in the U.S.](#)" While specifically stating there is "no reason to give up and settle," the article evokes a nostalgia for the [Mayberrys](#) of yesteryear:

Here's a novel idea: Move to a suburb where you won't break the bank or get your car broken into. A community with reasonable home prices and decent schools. A suburb close to your city job, with a lively downtown of its own.

However, it seems that these communities are less Mayberry and more [Lake Wobegon](#):

These suburbs may not have the greatest schools in the country, or the lowest crime rates, but most of them do better than average in these categories.

The September/October issue of *Multifamily Trends* also looked at the [downtown housing boom in second-tier cities](#), noting that the demographic trends driving empty nesters and young adults to the urban areas are not restricted only to the larger cities.

Granted, some people prefer to live in second-tier cities or smaller suburbs, but should home seekers who don't shoot for second-choice cities to get more house for the money? Or are the "best" communities worth the sacrifices necessary?

Posted by [Amadie Hart](#) on November 17, 2006 in [Housing](#) | [Permalink](#)