

West Hartford: One of the Ten Best Cities in the Country

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Incorporated on May 3rd 1854, West Hartford is a town of 63,908 and encompasses 22.4 square miles, situated exactly 98 miles from both Boston and New York City. Quiet suburban neighborhoods of early-mid twentieth century colonial style single-family homes typify much of the town. West Hartford Center, a thriving downtown commercial district, has in recent years become a popular location for commerce and recreation in central Connecticut. An extensive network of town parks, pools, theatre groups, golf courses and a skating rink helps to ensure the availability of year-round recreation and a high quality of life.

Economy

Recent economic growth in

West Hartford has garnered much acclaim from local and national publications. Kiplinger's recently ranked it 9th on its nationwide list of Best Cities for the Next Decade. Key to this praise is the town's development of its West Hartford Center shopping district. Blue Back Square, a commercial and residential development adjacent to the existing town center constructed from 2006 to 2008, helped to amplify the existing popularity of the area. West Hartford has many additional shopping districts, including Bishops Corner, Corbins Corner, Elmwood Center and Park Road's Commercial district. Westfarms Mall is located in the southwest corner of town. This allows for life's daily needs to be within quick reach of any neighborhood.

In 2009, West Hartford had a labor force of 29,730 (27,580 employed/2,150 unemployed), and an unemployment rate of 7.2% (see Table 1). Nearly seventy percent of residents enjoy a short commute, working in town or in nearby Hartford. The town's five largest employers are the University of Hartford, Wiremold Co., Hebrew Home and Hospital, Colt's Manufacturing and Saint Joseph College. A majority of jobs in West Hartford were in the health care and social assistance (4,753) industry sector. Additional sectors of high employment contribution include retail trade (3,973), government (2,995) and professional, scientific and technical services (2,541). Other areas of note include the 46.2% growth in

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Table 1. West Hartford

Economic Indicators \ Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Population.....	63,589	61,578	61,365	61,424	61,392	61,173	60,794	60,486	60,495	NA
Labor Force.....	28,649	28,674	28,627	28,562	28,351	28,545	28,683	28,950	29,357	29,730
Employed.....	28,054	27,918	27,604	27,199	27,110	27,313	27,562	27,763	27,911	27,580
Unemployed.....	595	756	1,023	1,363	1,241	1,232	1,121	1,187	1,446	2,150
Unemployment Rate.....	2.1	2.6	3.6	4.8	4.4	4.3	3.9	4.1	4.9	7.2
New Housing Permits.....	60	90	52	45	39	21	66	104	118	38

Table 2. West Hartford Employment and Wages

Industry Sector	2000			2009			2000-09 % Chg		
	Estab.	Jobs	Wages	Estab.	Jobs	Wages	Estab.	Jobs	Wages
Total - All Industries	1,868	26,782	\$34,632	1,900	27,014	\$43,021	1.7	0.9	24.2
Construction	108	732	\$52,293	104	583	\$57,358	-3.7	-20.4	9.7
Manufacturing	77	3,014	\$44,629	63	2,452	\$61,068	-18.2	-18.6	36.8
Wholesale Trade	117	1,000	\$50,708	117	384	\$75,435	0.0	-61.6	48.8
Retail Trade	267	4,372	\$23,546	240	3,973	\$26,698	-10.1	-9.1	13.4
Transportation and Warehousing	13	157	\$27,739	20	213	\$33,264	53.8	36.0	19.9
Utilities	--	--	--	*	*	*	--	--	--
Information	30	355	\$43,391	26	337	\$68,152	-13.3	-5.1	57.1
Finance and Insurance	151	1,165	\$58,390	157	1,088	\$80,351	4.0	-6.6	37.6
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	77	476	\$35,843	68	409	\$47,793	-11.7	-14.1	33.3
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	225	1,510	\$52,558	326	2,541	\$54,373	44.9	68.3	3.5
Management of Companies and Enterprises	*	*	*	*	*	*	--	--	--
Administrative and Waste Management	106	1,306	\$22,640	96	1,219	\$32,299	-9.4	-6.6	42.7
Educational Services	31	2,707	\$32,934	36	3,405	\$41,893	16.1	25.8	27.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	175	3,573	\$31,344	224	4,753	\$37,216	28.0	33.0	18.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	15	421	\$18,428	29	404	\$22,325	93.3	-4.0	21.1
Accommodation and Food Services	94	1,617	\$14,444	120	2,364	\$18,370	27.7	46.2	27.2
Other Services (except Public Administration)	339	1,328	\$23,057	343	1,111	\$30,478	1.2	-16.4	32.2
Total Government	29	2,955	\$39,249	24	2,995	\$54,297	-17.2	1.4	38.3

* Not publishable

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accommodation and food service industry sector employment, rising by 747 employees from 2000 to 2009. As the Table 2 shows, average wages for all industries in West Hartford rose by 24.2 percent from 2000 to 2009. The largest income increase was found within the information sector, which experienced nine-year wage increases from \$43,391 in 2000 to \$68,152 in 2009.

In 2009, West Hartford's median household income was \$77,918, which was \$13,729 over Hartford County's \$64,189 and almost ten thousand over the state's \$68,055. Median home prices were in the \$300,000-\$399,000 range, whereas Hartford County and the state both had medians in the \$200,000-\$299,000 range. Comparing West Hartford's median home prices to median income yields a ratio of 3.91, with cost roughly four times median income. This is soundly within the middle range of such ratios for surrounding towns (Table 3). It must be acknowledged that these ratios are

not adjusted for home ownership rate variance between towns.

Quality of Life

West Hartford has long afforded its residents with the

Table 3.

Town	Median Home Price*	Median Household Income*	Price to Income Ratio
Hartford	\$168,000	\$29,150	5.76
Farmington	377,500	81,986	4.60
Avon	496,250	115,421	4.30
New Britain	168,700	42,759	3.95
West Hartford	305,000	77,918	3.91
Newington	249,000	72,249	3.45
Bloomfield	229,450	67,325	3.41

Source: CERC

*available 2007 data

amenities needed to enhance one's quality of life. Its extensive network of public parks, pools, as well as two public golf courses allows anyone the opportunity to pursue an active and healthy lifestyle. In addition to town parks, a 3,000-acre reservoir located west on Farmington Avenue offers 30 miles of beautifully wooded trails suitable for

biking, running and walking.

Education is of significant presence in the town. In addition to its 16 excellently rated public schools, the town has numerous private schools, including

Kingswood Oxford, Renbrook, Northwest Catholic High School, Solomon Shechter Day School and The American School for the Deaf. The town's three public libraries were recently renovated and provide students and residents alike with an ideal place to study, and 277,770 volumes of media. Colleges found in the town include the University of Hartford, Saint Joseph College and the University of Connecticut's Hartford campus. In 2006,

CNN noted the town to have the 10th highest rate of residents with graduate degrees per capita in the country.

With its vibrant local economy, sound emphasis on education and diligent adherence to sound development and town management, West Hartford will surely remain an excellent place to live, work and play for years to come. ■

GENERAL ECONOMIC INDICATORS

<i>(Seasonally adjusted)</i>	2Q	2Q	CHANGE		1Q
	2010	2009	NO.	%	2010
Employment Indexes (1992=100)*					
Leading	115.5	111.9	3.6	3.3	115.1
Coincident	102.4	103.2	-0.8	-0.8	102.0
General Drift Indicator (1986=100)*					
Leading	105.1	104.9	0.2	0.2	99.8
Coincident	106.9	107.8	-0.9	-0.8	106.6
Farmington Bank Business Barometer (1992=100)**	119.0	120.0	-1.0	-0.8	118.5
Philadelphia Fed's Coincident Index (July 1992=100)***	AUG	AUG			JUL
<i>(Not seasonally adjusted)</i>	2010	2009			2010
Connecticut	154.6	152.3	2.3	1.5	154.6
United States	159.0	156.7	2.3	1.5	158.9

Sources: *The Connecticut Economy, University of Connecticut **Farmington Bank ***Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

The Connecticut Economy's **General Drift Indicators** are composite measures of the four-quarter change in three coincident (Connecticut Manufacturing Production Index, nonfarm employment, and real personal income) and four leading (housing permits, manufacturing average weekly hours, Hartford help-wanted advertising, and initial unemployment claims) economic variables, and are indexed so 1986 = 100.

The **Farmington Bank Business Barometer** is a measure of overall economic growth in the state of Connecticut that is derived from non-manufacturing employment, real disposable personal income, and manufacturing production.

The **Philadelphia Fed's Coincident Index** summarizes current economic condition by using four coincident variables: nonfarm payroll employment, average hours worked in manufacturing, the unemployment rate, and wage and salary disbursements deflated by the consumer price index (U.S. city average).