

Rural Livability

As an economic
development strategy

Dr. Amanda Weinstein

Director of Research, Knowledge, and Evaluation



Introductions



Amanda Weinstein

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- **United States Air Force Academy**
- **Air Force veteran**
- **Business analyst**
- **PhD, Ohio State University**
Agricultural, Environmental, and
Development Economics
- **Economics professor**
University of Akron
- **Consultant**
various local, state, national, and
international organizations

BUILDING A TECH ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM

Housing

Public Health and Safety

Public-sector leadership and support

Post Secondary Education Partnerships

Culture and entertainment options

Private and Nonprofit Sector Engagement

Quality PreK-12 education and accessible childcare

Attractive "live-work" downtown

Necessary Infrastructure



Broadband Infrastructure



Local Leadership Capacity



Coworking and Entrepreneurship Spaces

Direct Drivers



Scalable Tech Entrepreneurship Support and Incubation



Access to Capital



Access to Digital Jobs



Digital Workforce Development and Support



Inclusive Tech Culture Building

OUTCOMES



Local wealth creation by startups



Quality digital employment

QUALITY OF LIFE

Foundational Elements

The Rural-Urban Divide

Resource

Map Monday: Rural Hospitals Closing Their Doors



LIFE AND HEALTH IN RURAL AMERICA

Poll: Many Rural Americans Struggle With Financial Insecurity, Access To Health Care

KFF Health News

Looming Cuts to Emergency SNAP Benefits Threaten Food Security in Rural America

In a few weeks, pandemic-era emergency boosts to SNAP benefits, formerly known as food stamps, will be rolled back across 32 states,...

Feb 23, 2023

AUGUST 19, 2021



Some digital divides persist between rural, urban and suburban America

BY EMILY A. VOGELS

Rural Americans have made large gains in adopting digital technology over the past decade and have narrowed some digital gaps. However, rural adults remain less likely than urban adults to have home broadband and less likely than urban adults to own a smartphone, tablet computer or traditional computer.

Young and Homeless in Rural America

Most social services come through the schools — but it can be difficult to get to them.

Series: Challenges To Wisconsin's Rural Schools

Enrollment Declines, Funding Sources Put Wisconsin's Rural Schools In A Bind

Districts Like Adams-Friendship Contend With New Needs, Decreasing Resources

Taylor Palmby, The Observatory

AAMCNEWS

Health Disparities Affect Millions in Rural U.S. Communities

New Statewide Survey: Rural Wisconsin Residents Want Access to Internet Now and Don't Care How They Get It

By David Keech - September 12, 2023

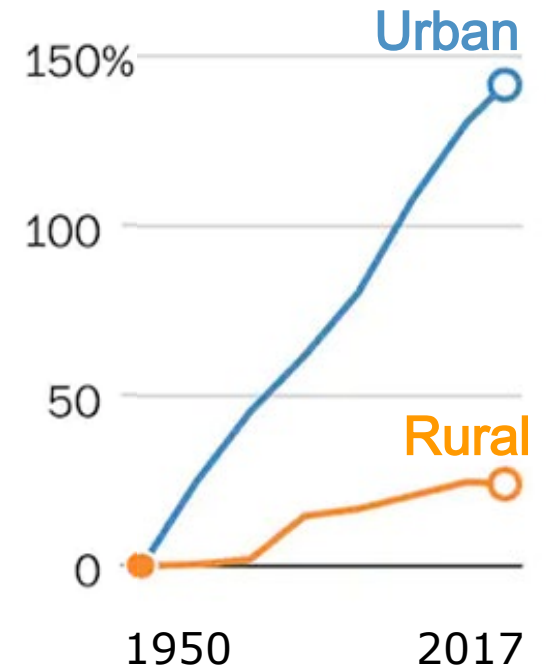


MANY SMALL TOWNS ARE STRUGGLING

Globalization , automation , decline in entrepreneurship , and the rise of the knowledge economy have disproportionately affected rural areas

([Center on Rural Innovation, 2023](#); [Devaraj et al., 2020](#); [Goetz et al. 2018](#); [Kilkenny and Partridge, 2009](#))

Change in population since 1950



Source: [Washington Post](#) , and [Goetz, Partridge, and Stephens \(2018\)](#)

THE BALL CORPORATION

“There was nothing about the town that particularly appealed to me , but the men were all courteous, kind, and businesslike”

—Frank Clayton Ball, 1887



BUT MANY SMALL TOWNS ARE PROSPERING

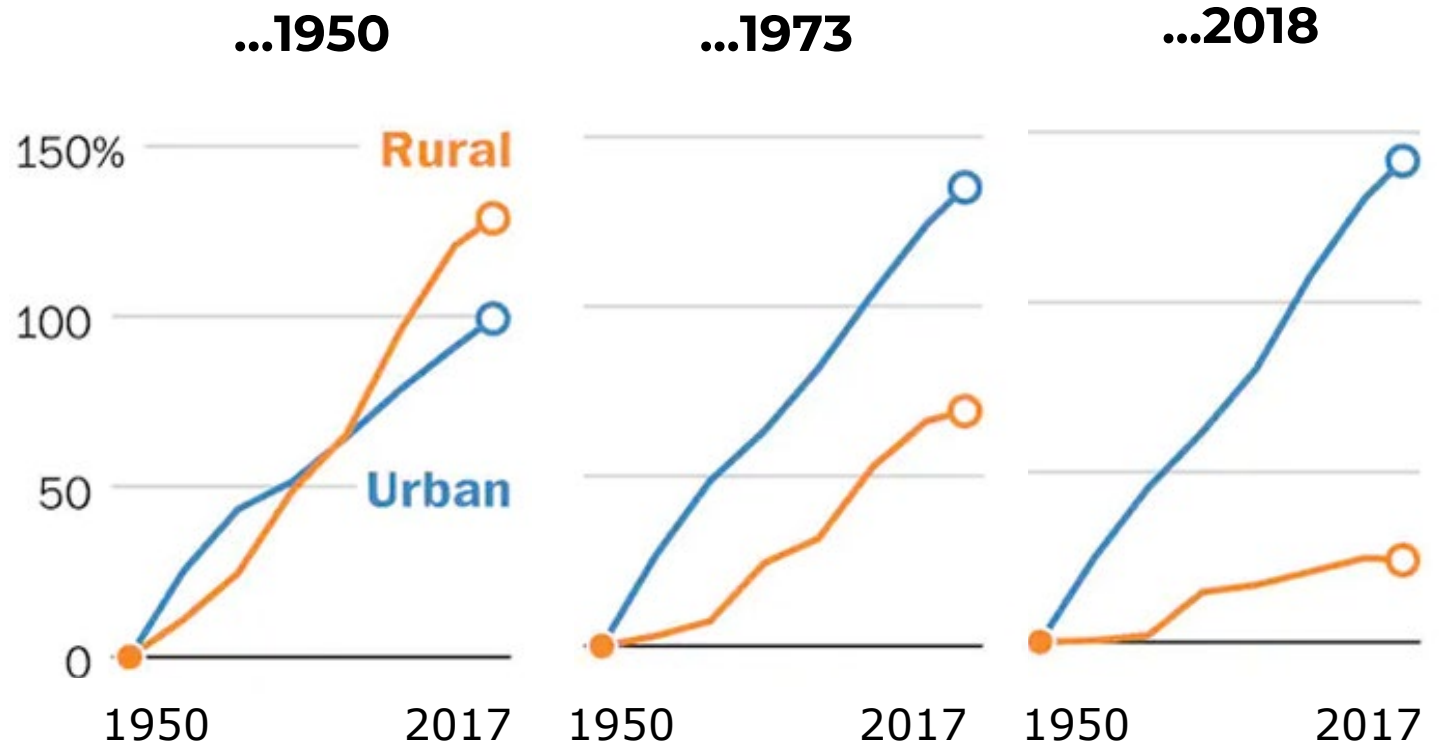
High -amenity and metro -adjacent small towns and rural communities tend to fare better

(Goetz et al., 2018; Mulligan, 2013; Deller et al., 2001)

Change in population since 1950

The areas defined as metropolitan in 1950 have since grown more slowly than the rural remainder of the country.

According to definitions from...



Source: [Washington Post](#), and [Goetz, Partridge, and Stephens \(2018\)](#)

THE QUALITY OF LIFE (R)EVOLUTION

“Mayors are shifting their focus from attracting firms to attracting residents by improving quality of life”

— *The Economist, September 2021*



ESTIMATING QUALITY OF LIFE IN SMALL TOWNS

Markets can reveal preferences for locations and for amenities

Households are willing to pay higher housing prices and even forego higher wages to live in areas with higher **quality of life**



THE LOCATION PREMIUM



Martha's Vineyard, MA



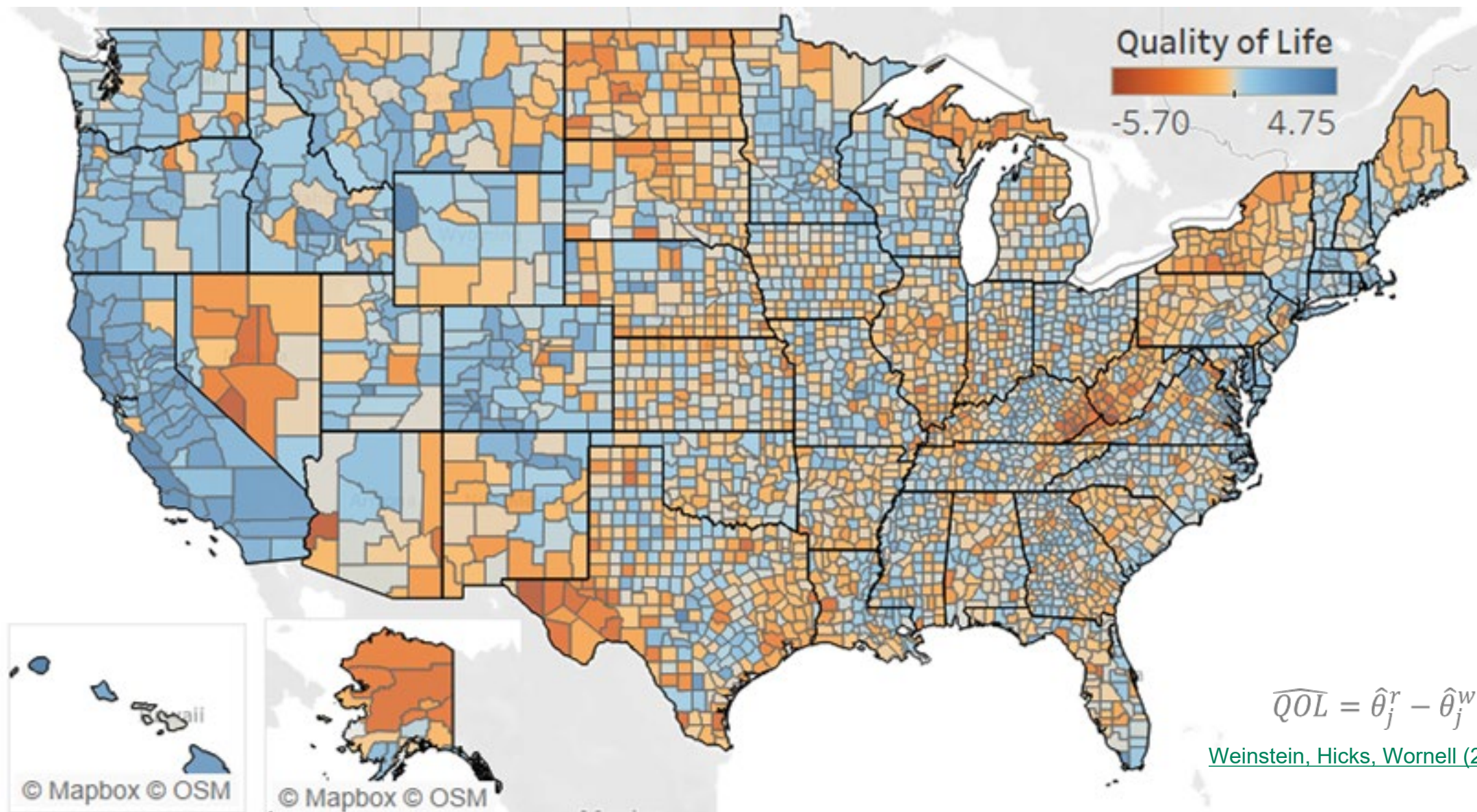
Enon, OH



TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN

“Half the pay for a view of the bay”

QUALITY OF LIFE



$$\widehat{QOL} = \hat{\theta}_j^r - \hat{\theta}_j^w$$

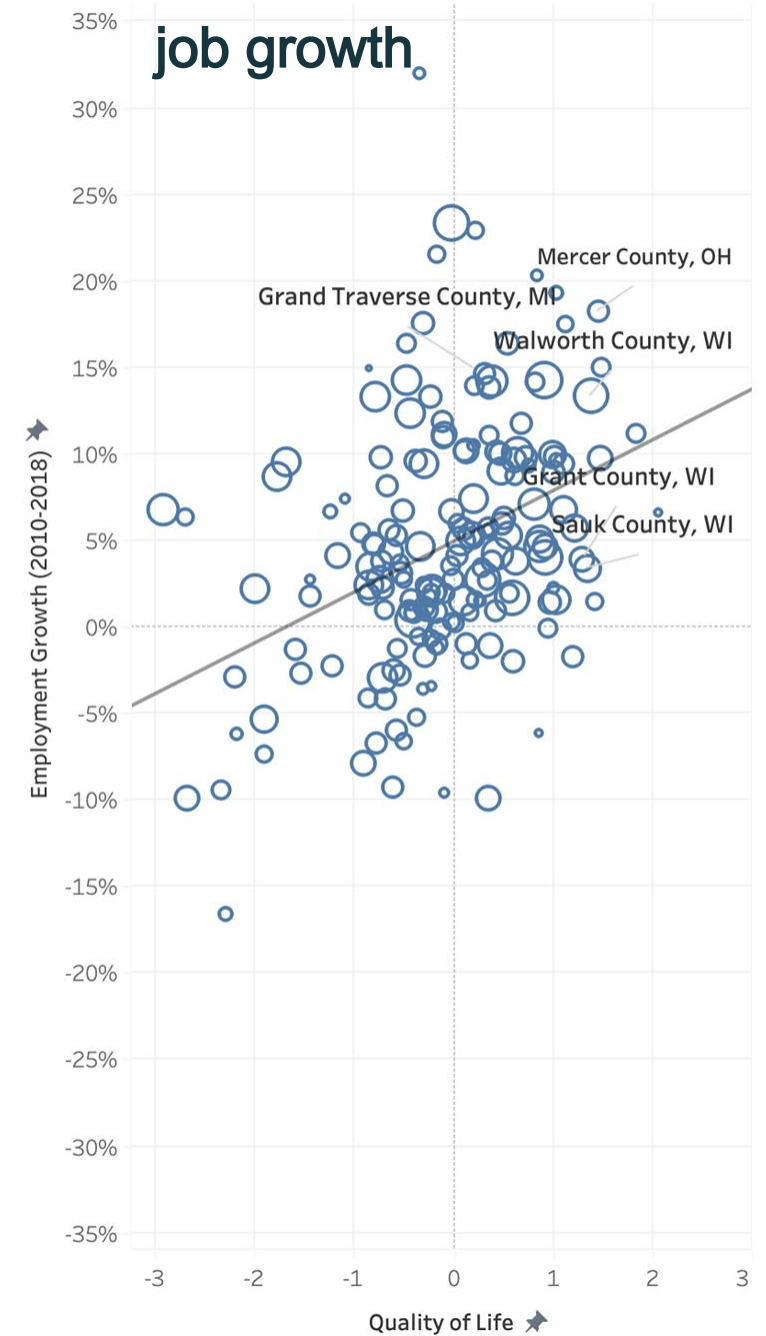
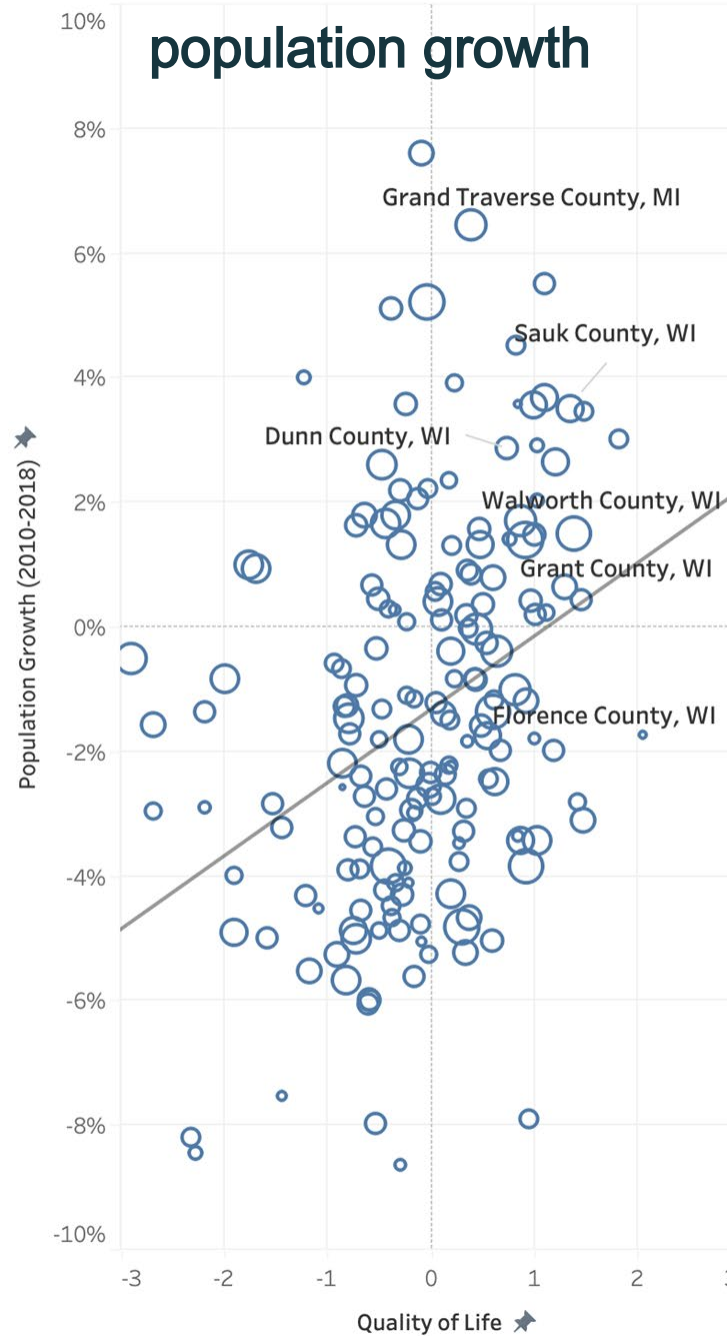
[Weinstein, Hicks, Wornell \(2022\)](#)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Matters more for
population growth
and **job growth**

Especially true for
small towns
(micropolitan areas)
and for the **Midwest**

([Austin, Weinstein, Hicks, Wornell, 2022](#))

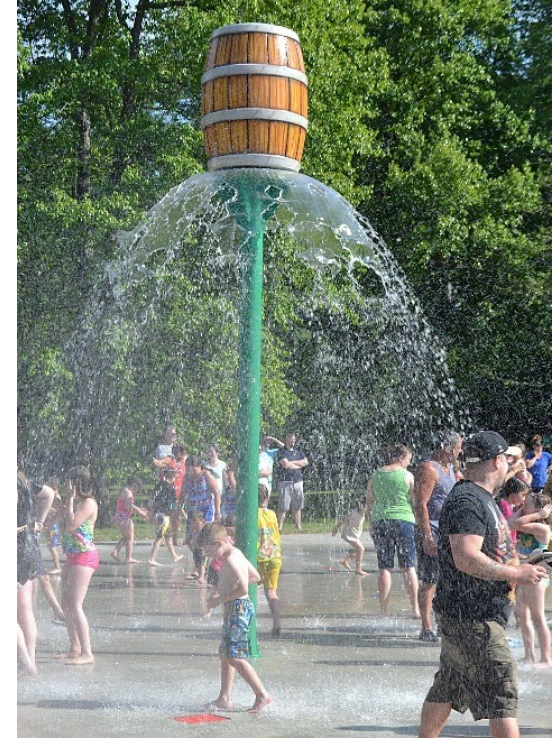


SO, WHAT MAKES A PLACE NICE?



SO, WHAT MAKES A PLACE NICE?

- Recreation
- Arts and culture
- Better health
- Food stores
- Personal care places
- Proximity to a metro
- Low crime rates
- Good schools
- Work from home (broadband)



SURVEY OF ENTREPRENEURS



Question :

What attracts innovative entrepreneurs to a location?

Answer :

Talented workers, and the quality of life that these workers like [\(Endeavor, 2014\)](#)

IT'S A ~~VICIOUS~~ VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

High quality of life places
keep & attract more people

[\(Weinstein, Hicks, Wornell, 2022\)](#)

Small businesses can
increase quality of life
providing local goods &
services we need and want

[\(Weinstein, Hicks, Wornell, 2022\)](#)

Growth of startups in the
knowledge economy → local wealth
creation & reinvestment → quality of life

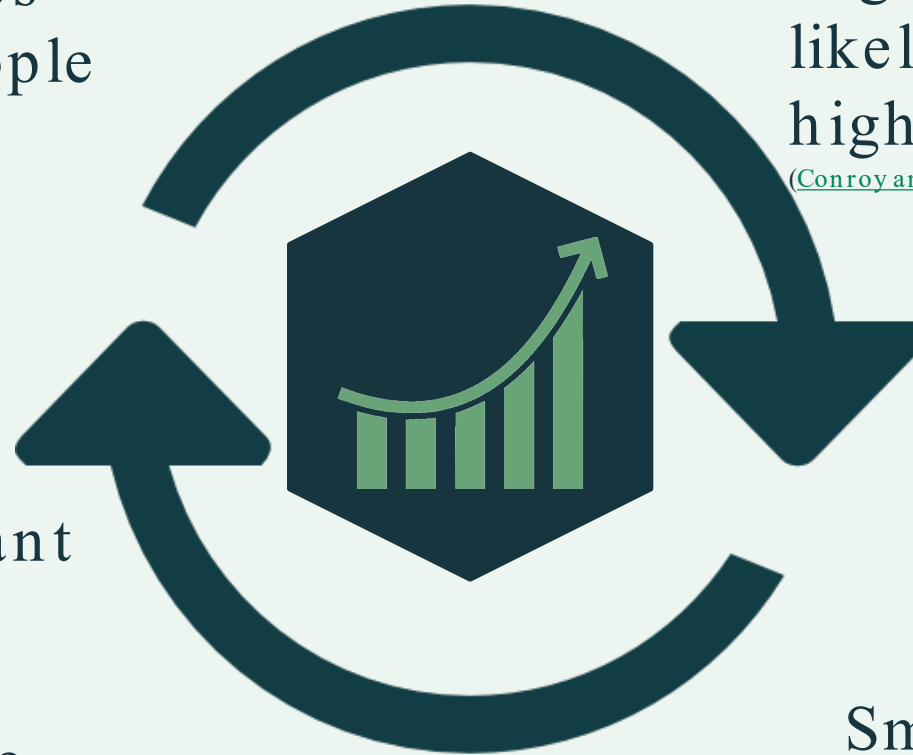
Highly skilled workers more
likely to start businesses in
high-amenity places

[\(Conroy and Watson, 2023\)](#)

Higher quality of life
increases business
startups

Small locally owned firms
can have a larger impact
on economic growth

[\(Fleming and Goetz, 2011\)](#)



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Thank you

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