

5 Small Towns in Nebraska to Put Down Roots in

Nebraska is often associated with small town life and that is a fair assessment of the state when you consider the largest city has a population of fewer than 500,000 people. They call it the Heartland for a reason. This region of the country is made up of many small urban areas connected together by the rural landscape. If you are researching your options in the Cornhusker State, consider five small towns that are worth calling home.

1. Woodland Park

Woodland Park is a very small town that sits just outside of the slightly bigger [Norfolk](#). With a population of just over 1,600, this is rural living at its best, especially if you want one those Nebraska towns where everyone knows your name. Life in Woodland Park puts you within driving distance of both Omaha and Sioux City, IA, so it is a practical commute option, as well.

This small town has one of the highest livability scores in the state, coming in at an impressive 81 out of 100 based on the cost of living, crime rate and education. Ninety-five percent of the students graduate high school, for example. That is 9 percent higher than the state average.

Its close proximity to Norfolk is another big plus. You can have access to a hospital and other larger town necessities but still can enjoy a rural lifestyle. There is even a community college in the area for those looking to go back to school or take continuing education courses. The cost of living score is 86.6 with 100 being the national average.

Homes in this area sell for around 119,500 dollars with plenty of green space and large lots. They average around 1,612 square feet and 18 percent of them were built after 1990, so there are newer structures. More than half will be “homestead” like properties, however; put up before 1950.

2. Gretna

You'll find the small town of [Gretna](#) just outside of Nebraska's biggest city, Omaha. It is far enough away, so it is not really a suburb, though. Gretna has its own public school system and city government, for example. The livability score in this small town is 82, so it offers top notch schools and low crime rate.

The cost of living is a little higher in Gretna than other small towns in Nebraska. It scores 91.1, but housing is a large part of that number. The median list price in Gretna is 334,603 dollars, but the homes are bigger than average. The median house size is 2,737, that is more than 1,000 square feet larger than Woodland Park homes.

Gretna has the added advantage of being a good location for those looking to commute or for some culture. It sits close to Omaha and Lincoln, so you can take advantage of the restaurants and nightlife in these larger cities and still drive home. There is plenty to do in town, too. Gretna hosts one of the state's largest outlet shopping malls called Nebraska Crossings.

3. Seward

With a population of 7,000, Seward is a little bigger than most rural towns Nebraska, so it is a good choice for those who want a few more amenities close to home. For example, you can see a movie at the Rivolit Theatre on Main Street after grabbing a bite to eat at RO's down the road. Seward is also known for its Fourth of July festival and celebration. In 1973, Seward was designated Nebraska's Fourth of July city and in 1979, Congress made it America's Official Fourth of July city.

The livability score in Seward is around 81 and it gets top marks in education and employment. The cost of living index is at 90, which is 3 percent lower than the state average and it boasts a 15:1 student to teacher ratio. In fact, education is the biggest employer in the town, as well. Education and health provide [32 percent](#) of the in-town employment with the next closest industry being retail at just 14 percent.

4. Waverly

On the outskirts of Lincoln, you find the small town of Waverly. This community is home to around 3,200 residents, many who work in the state capital. The livability score for Waverly is 81 in part because it has a top notch school system and low crime rate. Ninety-six percent of students that attend Waverly High School get their diploma.

The small size means amenities in the town are scarce, but it is a short drive to Lincoln where you have access to fine restaurants, art galleries and entertainment. Employment is not a big problem either, because the unemployment rate in Lincoln is one the lowest in the country.

One downside to Waverly is housing. The [median list price](#) is 675,000 dollars, but the homes are newer and very large. The median house size is 4,434 square feet and more than half having three or more bedrooms.

5. Aurora

With a population of just under 4,500, Aurora is what you might call a mid-sized small rural town. It offers a livability score of 80 out of 100. For such a small town, Aurora has a surprising number of amenities. It has coffee shops, a theater, fast food restaurants and a country club.

It also offers a low cost of living with an index of 85. That is 8 percent lower than the state average. Aurora is a professional town – more than half the residents have a college degree. They tend to be middle income families making more than 30,000 dollars a year. Only 26 percent of the population falls into the low-income category. Despite that housing is still very affordable in this area. Homes sell at 21 percent below the state average.