



LOCALINTEL

Attracting Talent That Can Live and Work Anywhere

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A Guide to Promoting Your Location's Quality of Life Advantages

The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for many workers to question what matters most when it comes to their personal and professional priorities. In response, many sought to reorientate their work/life balance by leveraging remote and hybrid work opportunities and relocating to towns and cities offering a higher quality of life.

For economic developers, this shift has given small and mid-sized communities the opportunity to attract talent based on their community's superior affordability and quality of life. In this article, economic developers will learn more about current workforce trends and how communities are promoting their quality of life advantages to attract quality talent.



Part 1: Trends

The Great Resignation

Workers are leaving their jobs at a record pace. The pandemic exposed just how unhappy many people are with their workplaces. This has led to a phenomenon that economists are calling 'The Great Resignation' but is it all just about resigning from terrible jobs?

As it turns out, it's more about reimagining the workplace than resigning from it. According to a national survey conducted by Development Councilor's International in 2022, over 1,000 people were asked what the primary triggers that caused people to relocate in the past 24 months. The top three reasons given were:

1. To have a better quality of life (46% of respondents)
2. Wanted to be closer to family (31% of respondents)
3. Realization that you wanted a different lifestyle (27% of respondents)

The same survey also found that the percentage of respondents reporting that a better quality of life was a top trigger increased from 38% in 2021 to 46% in 2022. This tells us that:

- People are placing a greater importance on work-life balance than ever before.
- Workers are reshaping new career paths to better align with their goals and ambitions.
- Employers that offer the right balance of pay, benefits, and work arrangements will successfully attract quality talent.

Organizational psychologist and professor at Texas A&M University Anthony Klotz is known as the person who coined the term "The Great Resignation." In an interview with CNBC, he explained:

"It's not just about getting the job or leaving the workforce; it's about taking control of your work and personal life and making a big decision – resigning – to accomplish that. This is a moment of empowerment for workers, one that will continue well into the new year."

Takeaway 1 for economic development marketers:

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, more workers than ever before are starting to demand a better work-life balance. Going forward, this is going to be a huge driver for workers as they look for more suitable employment. It will also be a primary reason why people choose to relocate to places that can offer the quality of life they are searching for.

Flexible Work Arrangements Will be the Norm, Not the Exception.

In the same CNBC interview, Klotz goes on to state that he believes flexible work arrangements will become the new norm. The most sought-after employment element following the pandemic has been the ability to work from anywhere. Research from the Work from Home Research Project suggests that people value location flexibility as much as a 10% pay increase.

Going forward, companies will have to learn how to adapt and heed employees' calls for flexibility in the workplace if they want to continue to attract and retain quality talent.

During the pandemic, FlexJobs surveyed over 2,100 people who were working remotely during the pandemic. The results showed that a significant number of people were keen to continue working remotely post-pandemic. In fact, of those surveyed, 58% said that they would look for a new position if they were forced back to the office following the pandemic.

Another statistic from this survey shows that 65% of people want to continue working remotely full time, while 33% would prefer a hybrid situation. In aggregate, a whopping 98% of people from this survey prefer a more flexible work arrangement that allows them to better manage their work-life balance.

A study by McKinsey Global Institute entitled, *The Future of Work After COVID-19*, found that:

- Virtual meetings and remote work will continue in most workplaces.
- As much as 25% of the workforce in developed economies could effectively work from home three to five days a week.
- This shift to remote working arrangements is expected to ignite a mass migration of workers out of big cities and communities into suburban areas and smaller communities.
- Some organizations are already seeing the benefits of a flexible work environment, allowing them to reduce the overall amount of required space as they bring fewer employees into the office daily.

Even now, with lessening restrictions it doesn't look like remote work is going away, with roughly 25 to 30% of the eligible workforce continuing to work from home. So, what does this mean for businesses that have been used to a typical business model?

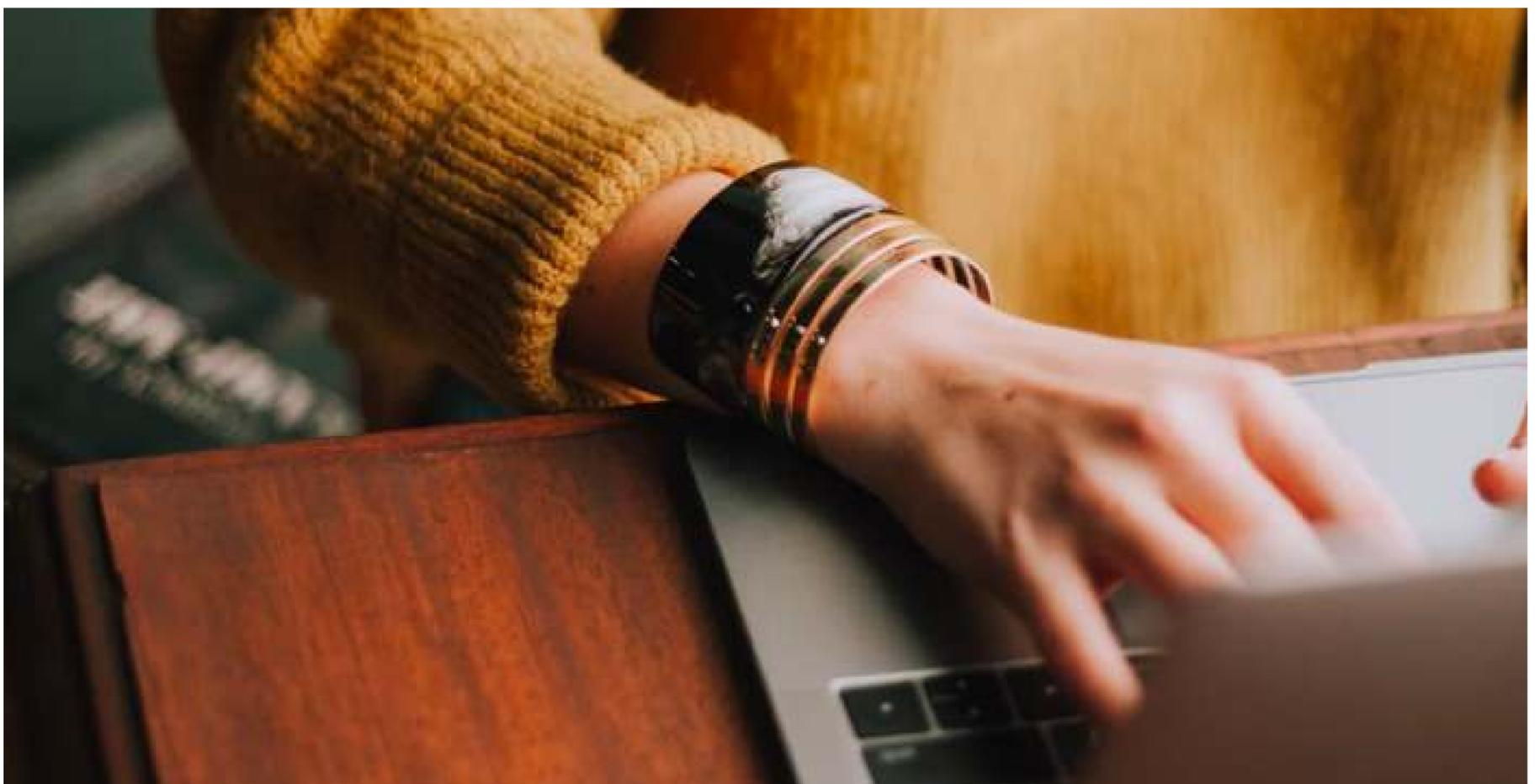
Why Are Businesses Embracing Flexible Work Arrangements?

As business leaders move operations back into the office, many are embracing the shift that took place during the pandemic.

HP's Global Head of Commercial PCs, Andy Rhodes, states, "I think there's been enough change fundamentally that we'll remain in a hybrid mode." Numerous well-known companies now offer fully remote or hybrid work arrangements including Apple, Microsoft, Shopify, Slack, Twitter, Upwork and LinkedIn.

While incorporating hybrid work arrangements, organizations are now beginning to understand the benefits of a remote-work friendly business model, including reduced office rental costs, increased productivity and creating a corporate culture that is flexible and aligned with employee needs

Takeaway 2 for economic development marketers: The companies that manage to embrace hybrid and remote workforce operations are going to be the ones that attract the top knowledge workers going forward. So how can economic developers use this new growth model to benefit their communities?



What Does Today's Workforce Trends Mean for Economic Developers?

The shift towards an acceptance of remote and hybrid work has opened doors that provide smaller communities with an opportunity to attract talent and build their economies on a competitive level.

For far too long, traditional economic development strategies have focused on only attracting large companies or competing to win production plants, and manufacturing facilities. In many instances municipalities and state governments even often offered large tax breaks to lure these contracts and the economic stimulus that often follows.



The Decline of “Elephant Hunting”

Focused efforts to attract a specific size of business or type of industry to an area is referred to as “Elephant Hunting” and it has been a mainstay within economic development for decades. This approach typically relies on practices like offering tax incentives, infrastructure and land cost reductions, and other tools to attract big business to an area.

One of the highest profile examples of this approach was the very public competition run by Amazon to find a location for its second headquarters, better known as Amazon HQ2. Over 200 locations submitted applications. A report by Brookings titled ‘Five economic development takeaways from the Amazon HQ2 bids’ identified:

- These bids reveal that the HQ2 competition was largely based on a region’s ability to offer incentives.
- In Amazon’s request for proposals, the company encouraged cities to think big. But in most cases, the creative thinking was exclusively focused on incentive offers.
- Leading with investments as broader drivers of economic development is an attractive proposition for a company like Amazon. One of the winning bids—Northern Virginia—provided incentives that were smaller in scale than many of its competitors, but were more targeted to investments in workforce development, quality of life and infrastructure.

- Many of these HQ2 bids looked very similar. Whether they were non-public bids influenced by the support of local businesses, or simply an attempt to harness every possible incentive dollar for Amazon, the lack of civic input was palpable.

Ultimately, an incentive driven approach to economic development creates an uneven playing field for smaller towns and cities, as they lack the infrastructure and tax base compete. Plus, the competition for these firms is as intense as they are few and far between, so the likelihood of winning one is slim.

Takeaway 3 for economic development marketers: With the advent of a remote and hybrid work revolution, this traditional economic development model is getting a shake-up. Gone are the days of baiting corporate executives with tax breaks as we are now entering a new era where the pursuit of amenities, quality of life, and culture is what will be needed to draw skilled workers and professional talent.

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Part 2: Quality of Life

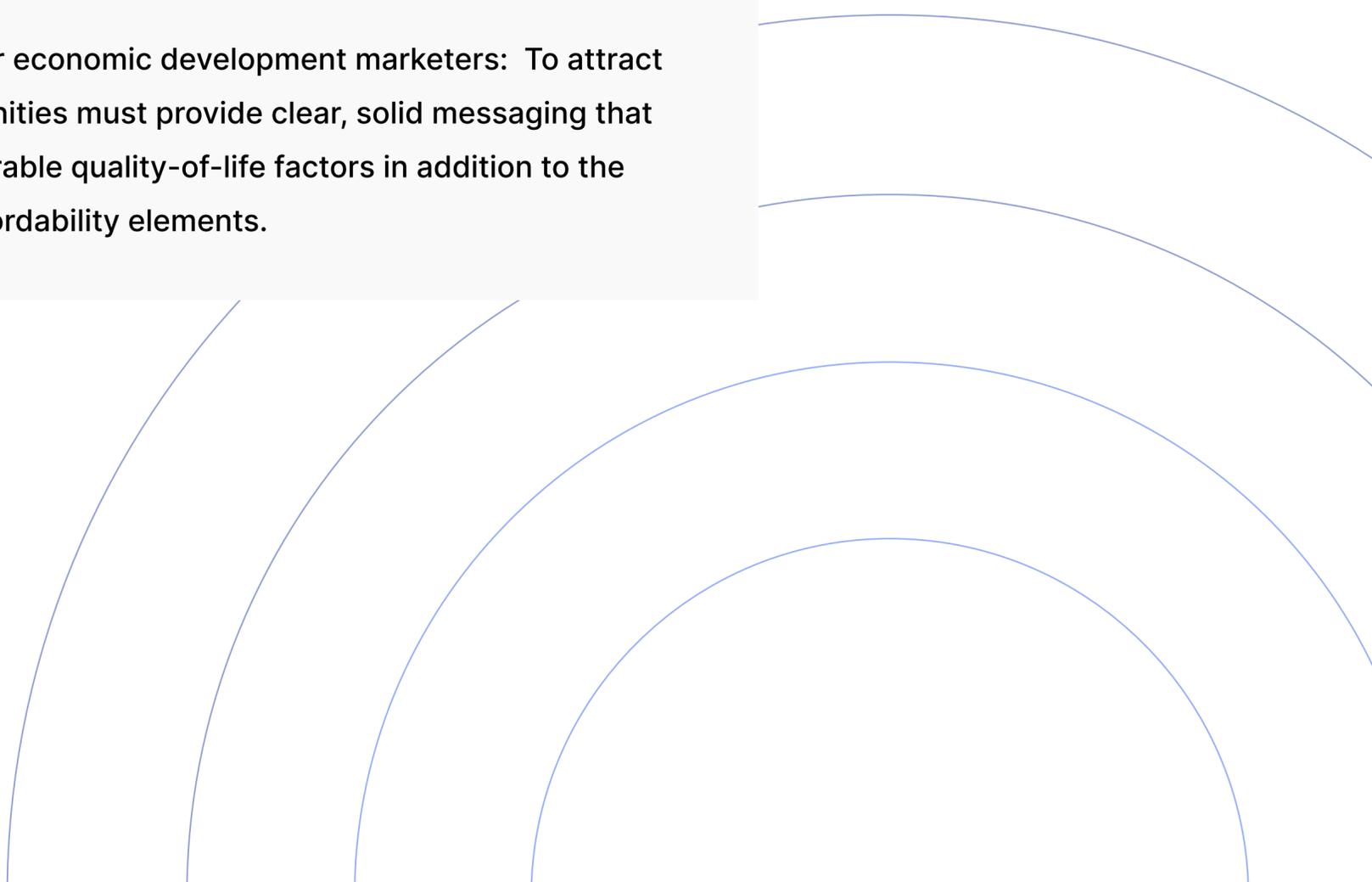
What is Quality of Life?

The term “quality of life” is subjective and can mean different things to different people. The Oxford Dictionary defines quality of life as, “the standards of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by a group or individual.” But how can it be quantified as something that you can promote about your location?

Development Councilor’s International decided to tackle the question in their report, “Talent Wars.” They asked over 1,000 people what the term “quality of life” means to them. More specifically, they were asked “After your basic criteria have been met when considering a new location to move to (i.e. housing, job, etc.), what specific quality of life factors become most important?”

Among the top answers were good school, safe, outdoor recreation, amenities, nightlife, and a sense of community. These are excellent indicators of the items that workers prioritize and, therefore, what a community needs to promote about their quality of life.

Takeaway 4 for economic development marketers: To attract talent, communities must provide clear, solid messaging that promotes desirable quality-of-life factors in addition to the career and affordability elements.



Why Small Towns Should Promote Their Quality of Life

In an article called “What Small Towns and Cities Need to Attract and Retain Workers”, author Stefan Palios states that communities can succeed by first identifying their positive features and benefits of living there and then promoting the heck out of them. These features and benefits can include:

- Family Friendly - Attract young families by touting excellent youth activities, childcare availability, and schools.
- Inclusivity - Show that your community is safe and accepting of all by offering a variety of cultural, arts, and entertainment options like local sports, clubs, cafes, galleries, community centers, etc.
- Community culture - Festivals or events that take place in your community
- Get outside - Show what natural beauty your region has to offer by providing access to outdoor recreation.
- Amenities - Can your community offer access to quality healthcare, groceries, restaurants, and other essential amenities?
- Reliable internet - Poor or unreliable service will be a deal-breaker when attempting to attract talent that relies on a solid internet connection to conduct their business.
- Affordability - A significant benefit to living in a smaller community is lower home/ rental prices.

Takeaway 5 for economic development marketers: By identifying your location's best features and benefits, and then correlating them with the needs of workers, you will be setting your community up for success as you attempt to attract skilled workers and permanent residents.



Part 3: Case studies

What are Other Communities Doing to Attract Talent?

Many small cities and communities across the US and Canada have already launched highly publicized campaigns to attract talent.

Financial incentives

While the idea of municipalities offering incentives to attract new residents isn't necessarily a revolution it is one that has taken off with incredible force. Harvard Business School professor Prithwiraj Choudhury wrote about the phenomenon recently for the Harvard Business Review, saying that "this past year it has been on steroids."

Choudhury has been advising local governments to develop programs and campaigns that attract remote workers and Tulsa, has been one of the most successful in the country. Tulsa has led the way in resident attraction and retainment by promoting the quality of life advantages they offer, plus bonuses of \$10,000 cash in the first year with free co-working space.

After seeing the success that Tulsa had with its campaign, other municipalities and states began to take notice and follow suit, such as:

The Shoals, Alabama

\$10,000 in cash your first year

Topeka, Kansas

As much as \$5,000 for rent in your first year

As much as \$10,000 for a home purchase

Bonus Incentive: Jimmy John's has offered an additional \$1,000 if you relocate to one of their delivery zones!

Morgantown, West Virginia

\$12,000 in cash

\$2,500 in outdoor gear rentals

Free co-working space

Social Events

Northwest Arkansas

\$10,000 in cash

The State of Oklahoma

You could receive a \$10,000 grant

The State of Minnesota

Moving expenses up to \$2,500

Free Co-working space

The State of Alaska

\$1,600

No income tax

The State of Vermont

\$10,000 over two years

The State of Kansas

Up to \$15,000

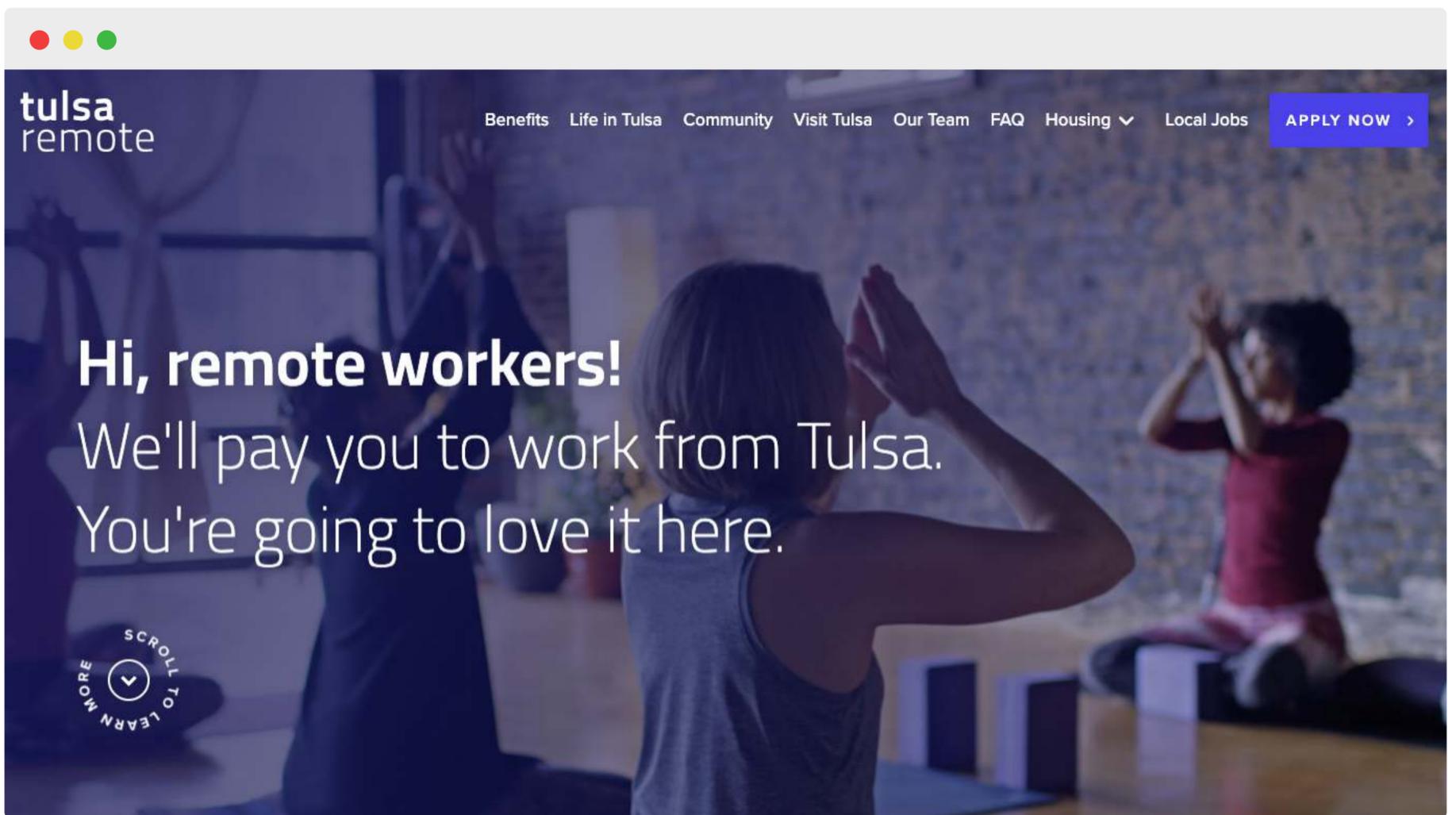
State of Iowa

\$10,000

Welcome Pack

The State of Tennessee

Relocation packages available for programmers



Many critics of these programs have said that they are expensive, time-consuming, and can result in rural gentrification in communities that are unable to adequately support the growth.

A researcher with the University of Utah named Dayna Rumore published a study in the Journal of the American Planning Association that looked at the development challenges facing 1,200 gateway and natural amenity region communities of the American Mountain West region.

“What we’re seeing in some communities is rural gentrification, which is having a spill-over effect where people can’t afford to live in the communities anymore,” Rumore added that “placed with really good outdoor recreation access have gotten hammered.” Resulting in “big-city challenges” for these small communities like overwhelmed infrastructure, trouble keeping employees, and overburdened schools.

While these issues can arise in communities that are unprepared for the growth, locations with the proper infrastructure and planning will be well suited. Studies have shown that the ROI far outweighs the cost when it comes to investing in a campaign to promote your community's QOL advantages.

Even countries are offering payments for people to relocate in 2022, including:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Spain | Chile |
| Switzerland | Mauritius |
| Italy | Croatia |
| Ireland | |

Marketing Campaigns

Many other communities have started creating their own aggressive marketing campaigns, only without the financial incentives.

For instance, the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, just launched an effective campaign designed to drive people and industry to their town by positioning itself as a hub for tech-related sectors such as:

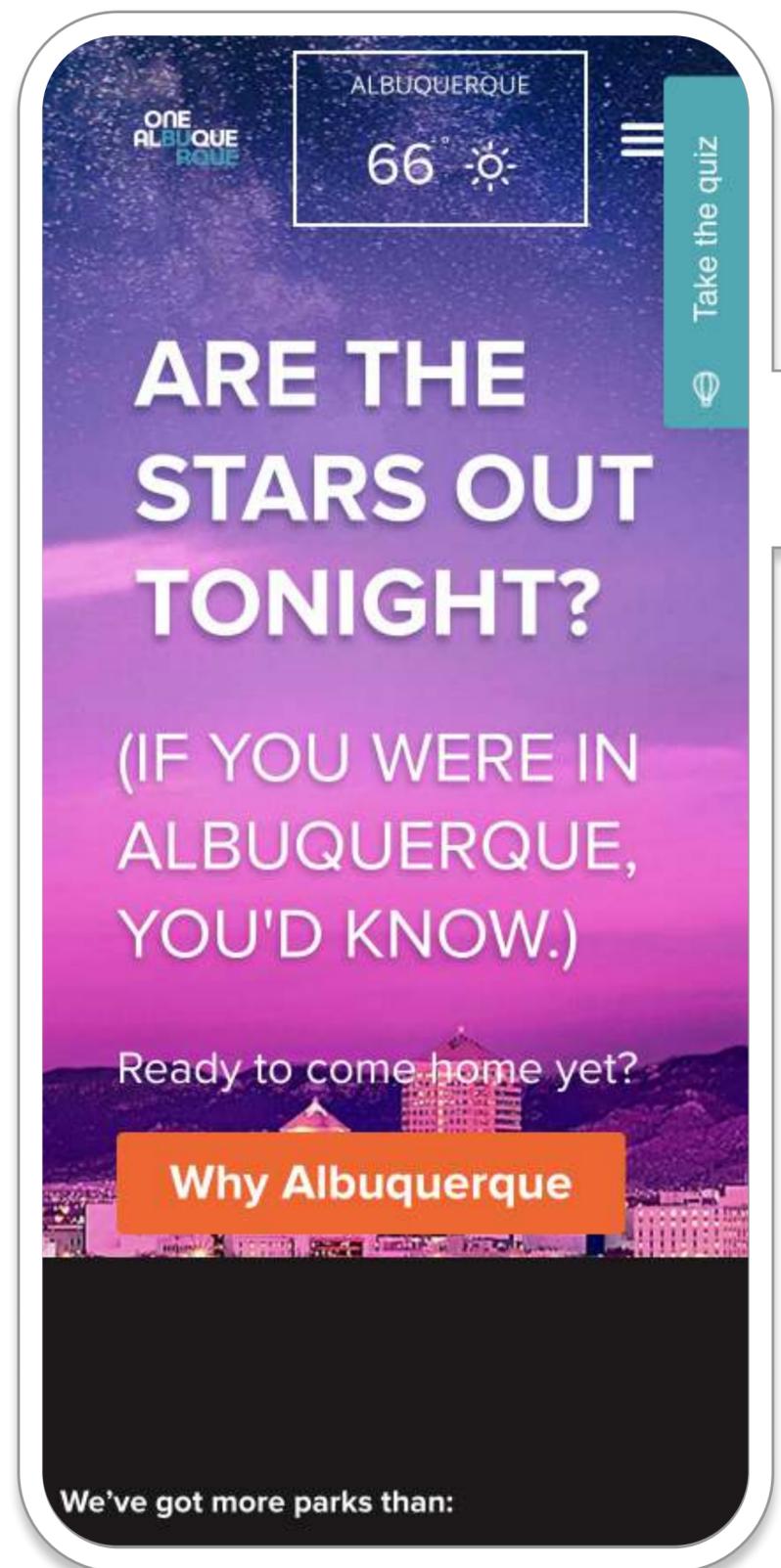
- Bioscience
- Directed Energy
- Aerospace Technology
- Film and Digital Media
- Smart City Technology

Albuquerque also boasts affordable housing, plenty of access to outdoor and nature-related activities, a top-tier healthcare system, an average monthly cost of living of \$1,500, and a diverse and inclusive population with a rich cultural and historical background.

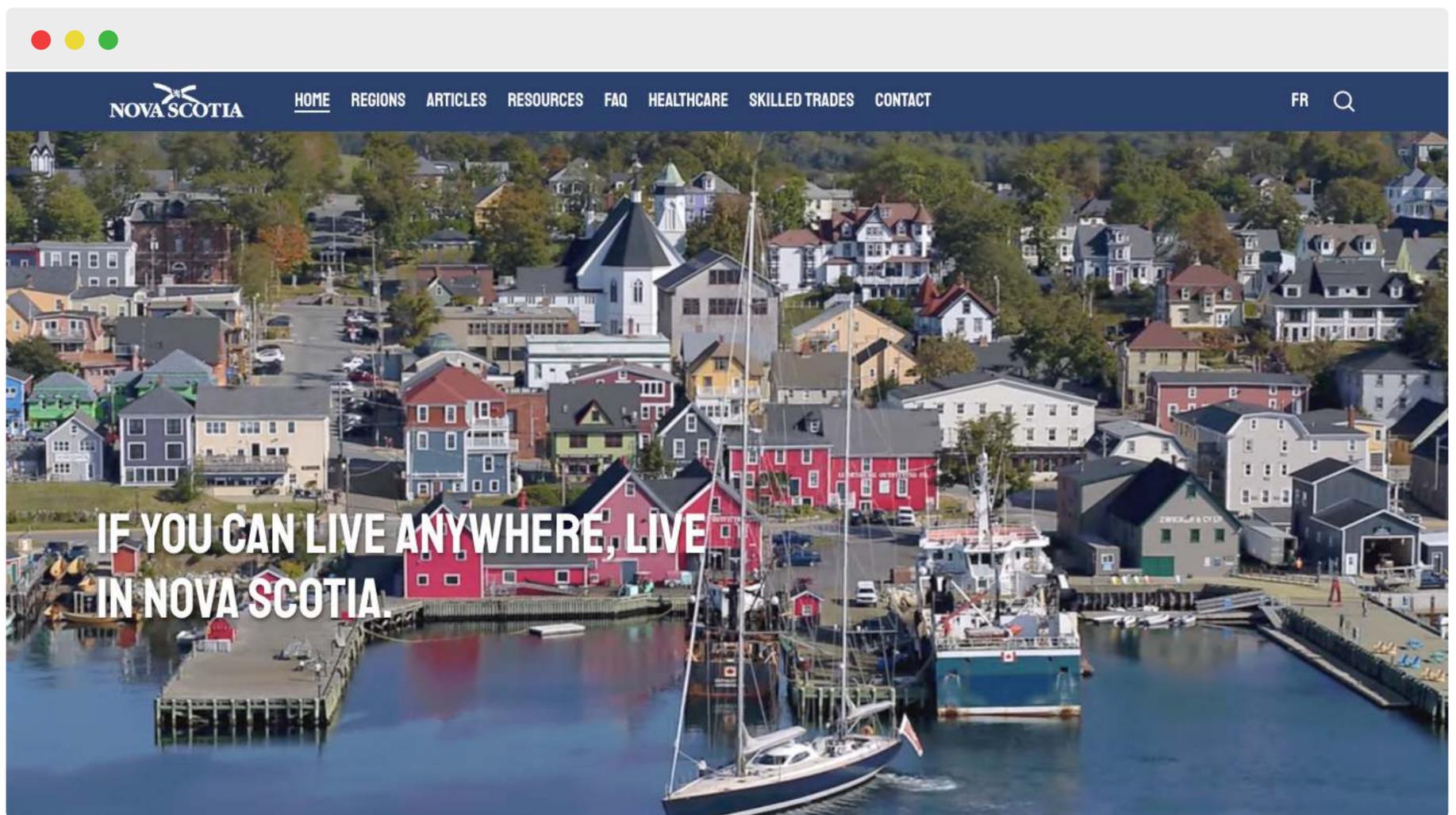
These are just some factors that might attract young professionals, young families, and new graduates to their city.

The small Canadian province of Nova Scotia launched its promotional campaign advertising such QOL factors as:

- Affordable housing
- Strong educational system
- A family-friendly environment
- A growing economy
- 99% internet coverage by 2023 which is better coverage than any other Canadian province currently offers



Nova Scotia also promises to have plenty of work for skilled tradespeople in industries like construction, industrial manufacturing, and motive power sector. They have even gone so far as to offer numerous grants, awards, and loans to those seeking training and apprenticeships in the trades.



Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, two communities in the province of British Columbia have launched their own campaigns designed to attract new residents.

Penticton, a city located in the BC interior, has positioned itself as a remote workers' paradise with an idyllic quality of life, an outdoorsy lifestyle, and a fast, reliable internet and communications network.

As a quickly growing city, they also boast a wealth of employment opportunities in:

- Construction
- Wine Making
- Manufacturing
- Technology
- Tourism
- Retail
- Health Care
- Trades
- Viticulture

Penticton is city on the rise and it is an excellent place for entrepreneurs to launch their businesses. This is a prime example of a city that is embracing the needs of their target demographic and highlighting the elements in their communities that attract the people they need to drive their economic growth.

In another BC community on the rise, City of Prince George, economic developers are doing an excellent job with their talent attraction campaign. They are promoting quality of life advantages such as:

- A low cost of living
- Plenty of job opportunities, especially in sectors like retail, manufacturing, customer service, construction, and health care.
- Affordable housing
- A growing urban cityscape with a variety of amenities

- Short commute times
- Quality healthcare providers
- Access to quality education from pre-school through to Ph.D. level
- Endless indoor and outdoor entertainment options
- The natural beauty and outdoor access of the regions

Many of these advantages resonate with young professionals, recent grads, and young families. By appealing to these groups, they are also appealing to their family and friends who are likely to follow. People like empty nesters and retirees.

Economic developers in Marquette, Michigan, have launched an aggressive campaign in an attempt to attract remote workers and those “re-evaluating” their priorities. Promoting an outdoor living paradise rooted in community and sustainability where people can lay down roots.

This is a sizable community that is on the rise, so right now, its focus is on attracting new residents. The more residents they are able to attract, the more money they will have to dedicate to schools, healthcare, and other community services. More residents also means more amenities and new business being attracted to the area. Marquette is the perfect example of a community in the early stages of this new economic growth model.

MOVE UP
Prince George

Job Opportunities

JOB OPPORTUNITIES: TITLES, KEYWORDS, EMPLOYERS

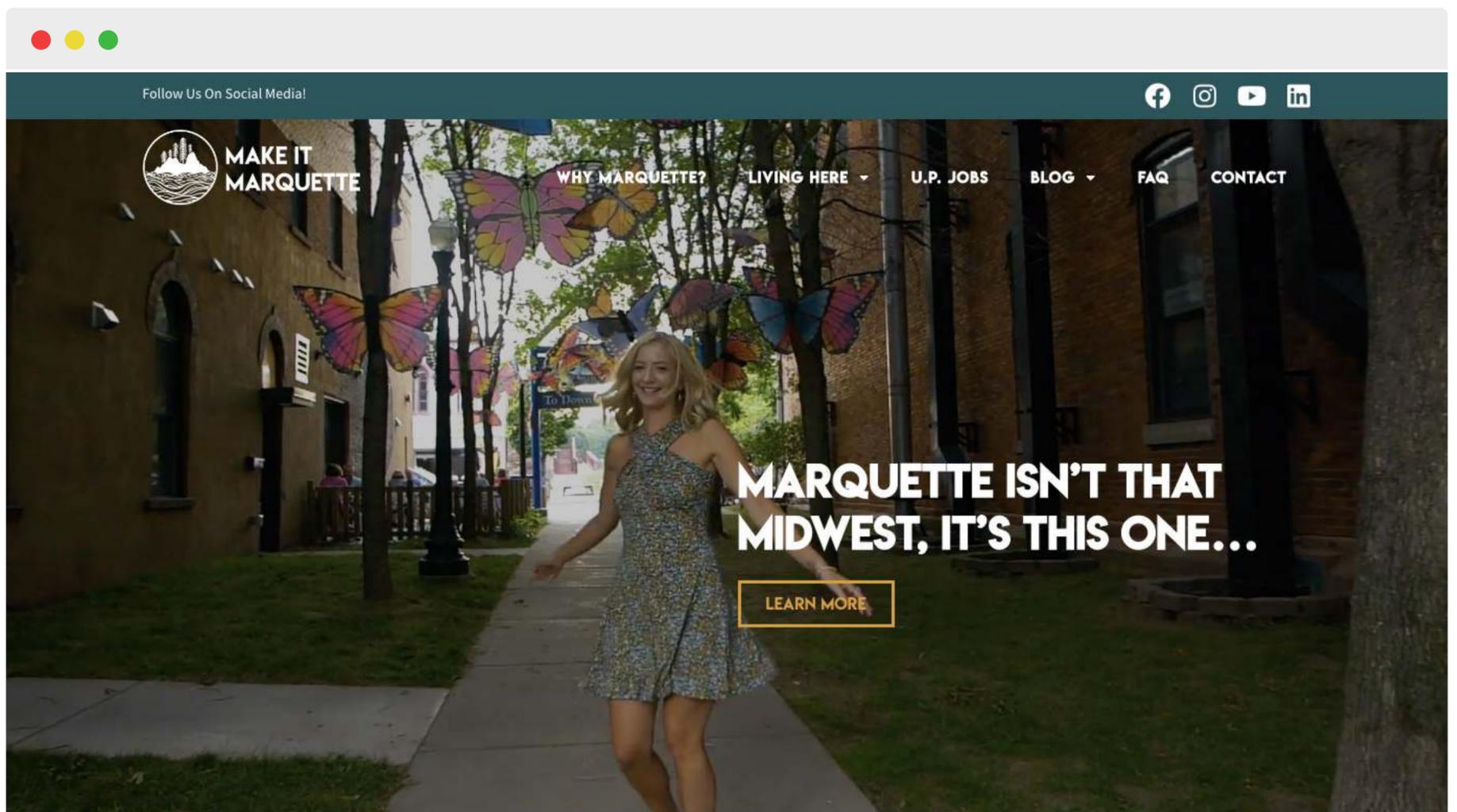
SEARCH

Get to know Prince George

SHAUNA'S STORY

Opportunity Knocks
There are a lot of reasons to consider an opportunity in Prince George. Let's start with ten. >

Map Out Your Life
You're close to everything in Prince George. Get a closer look at where to find what matters most to you. >



Some communities have even begun introducing pilot programs designed to attract new residents to their locations.

Thunder Bay, Ontario, is one of those communities. They recently introduced a new community-driven immigration program intended to share the economic benefits of immigration with smaller communities. This program creates a path towards permanent residency for skilled foreign workers who are hired to full-time permanent jobs that fill an identified labor shortage.

In a unique attempt to attract talent to the most remote destinations like Northwestern BC, the communities of Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, and the Hazelton's have combined their economic development efforts to attract growth to the region. This enables them to use their shared and individual quality of life benefits to appeal to a broader audience.

For instance, The Hazelton's offers a quaint, picturesque rural lifestyle, fiberoptic internet service, logical growth infrastructure, and endless natural beauty. While this might sound like an excellent opportunity for remote workers, home-based businesses, and online students, for young professionals, families, or retirees, the Hazelton's might not have the job opportunities, education, or healthcare services they value...yet. They are another community in the early stages of the new economic growth model. As their community grows, they will begin to attract permanent professionals, specialists, and new businesses.

So, while the Hazelton's can't offer those types of services currently, it doesn't mean that they aren't available elsewhere in the region. Terrace, by contrast, is the retail and service hub for the area offering a diverse economy and plenty of opportunities for trained professionals and entrepreneurs in the law, accounting, and service industries.

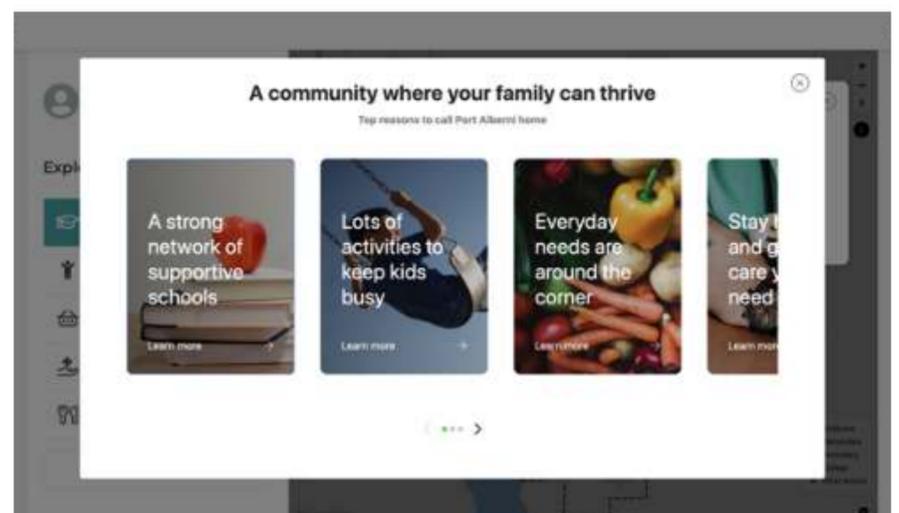
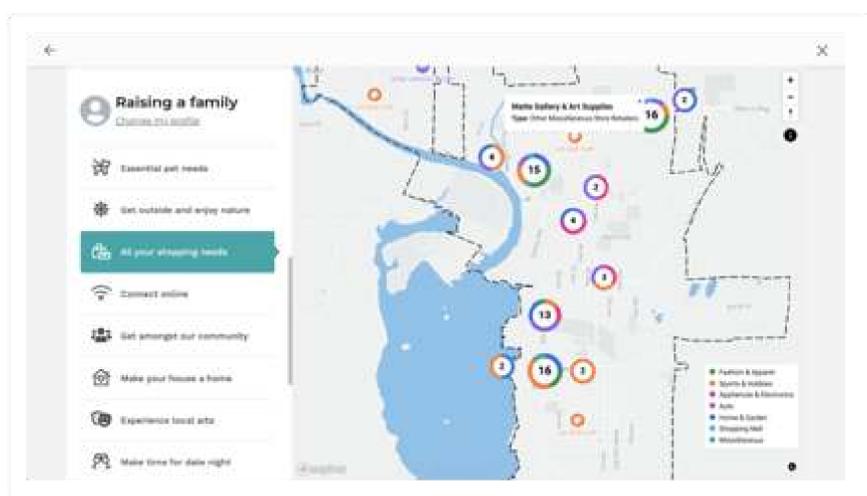
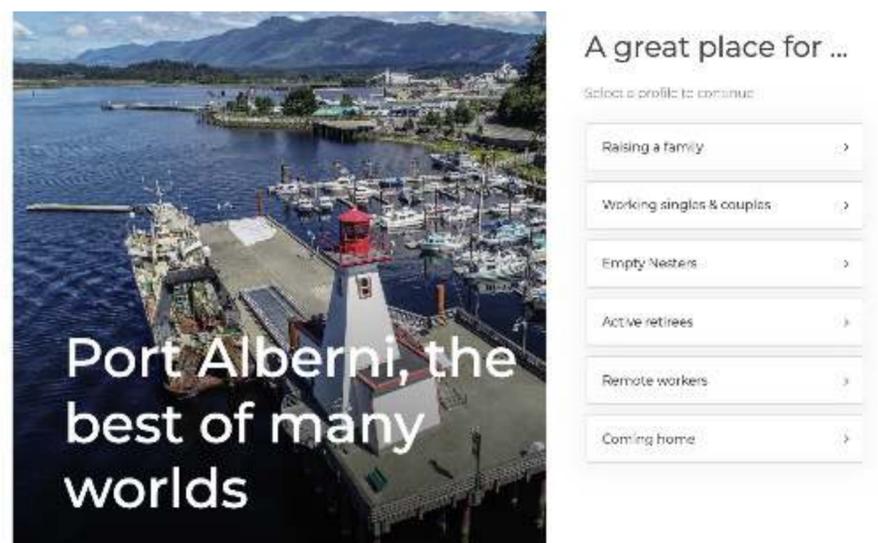
The brilliance of this combined campaign is that each of the four areas can benefit from the other's economic growth. While Prince Rupert might not be able to tote big city amenities as a draw to its community, nearby Terrace does have those things. It's an excellent example of smaller communities joining together for their combined growth.

Marketing your location's quality of life online

In recent years a number of innovative companies have created online products to help communities promote their quality of life and attract talent. Livability.com showcases what makes communities great places to live and appeal to people considering relocation. They create custom online, print and digital content delivery programs for chambers of commerce, economic development groups and city governments.

Localintel (the author of this report), provides a plug and play marketing tool that economic developers can quickly embed into their existing or new website to promote their location's community of life. The first of a kind tool includes 7 user-persona types and promotes 18 quality of life categories about a location via dynamic marketing messages, charts and maps.

Takeaway 6 for economic development marketers: Communities of all sizes should highlight the quality of life advantages that appeals to their target audience.



Part 4: take action

Four Steps to Promoting Your Community's Quality of Life

1. Understand Your Target Audience

Successful marketing campaigns understand their target audience and what drives and motivates them. When it comes to attracting talent and residents to your community, your audience is the people you are hoping to attract. This can include:

- Young families with kids - Prioritize family-friendly activities, healthcare, and education.
- Young professionals - Prioritize outdoor access, affordable housing, and job opportunities.
- Empty nesters - Prioritize healthcare, outdoor access, and cost of living.
- Retirees - Prioritize healthcare, community facilities, and cost of living.
- Returning former residents - Prioritize community, and jobs.
- Remote workers - Prioritize reliable high-speed internet and telecommunications network, outdoor access, and affordable housing.

Identifying which archetypes you are appealing to is essential because each has its own motivating factors. The things driving young families to a place are not going to be the same things that drive a person to retire there, so don't try to be all things to all people.

Identifying your target audience will help you speak to them on their terms. Identify your audience needs first, then list all the ways your community can meet those needs.

2. Assess Your Location's Advantages

The next step in creating a solid promotional campaign is to assess your community's quality of life advantages.

Take a look at the quality of life factors that matter most to your target audience. If we are looking to attract the same young professionals and remote workers from part one, that would be high-quality internet connection, affordable housing, and access to outdoor activities. Remember to emphasize the benefits and culture that you get living in a smaller community (that big cities don't have). Living in a big city isn't for everyone, so highlight the quality of life benefits that you can get by moving away from a metropolitan area, like:

- Lower cost of living
- More affordable housing
- Sense of community
- More space
- Less pollution
- Reduced commute time
- Better quality of life

For each item on this list, prepare one positive message about the way your community can contribute to those factors. Then list them in order starting with your most substantial competing factor.

3. Prepare Your Elevator Pitch

Next, you'll explain your quality of life advantages in a clear and compelling narrative to your target audience – this will be your elevator pitch.

The key to creating a good elevator pitch is a concise and persuasive promotional summary of your community's quality of life advantages and how they correlate to the intended demographic. Once you have established that, it will become the foundation for promoting your community quality of life advantages. All your marketing materials for the campaign will draw from and elaborate on the quality of life advantages outlined in your elevator campaign...including your website.

4. Update Your Number 1 Marketing Tool – Your Website

Your website the foundation for marketing your location effectively to the World. Its primary purpose is to promote your location advantages (including your quality of life), spark curiosity and encourage engagement.

Thanks to increasing use of social media and decreasing attention spans, you have very little time to engage a person and keep them from leaving your website. Research has found that people simply won't stay on your website for long unless they find a reason to do so – and this needs to happen very quickly.

When a person first lands on your website they are in the early phases of research, which likely means comparing different locations and creating a shortlist. As such, your immediate priority is to communicate your location's quality of life advantages. This narrative needs to be upfront, relevant and engaging.



Fail to achieve this and there's a good chance the website visitor will quickly lose interest and leave without reviewing the all the amazing information you've gone to so much effort and expense to include. This will also result in your website having a poor return on investment.

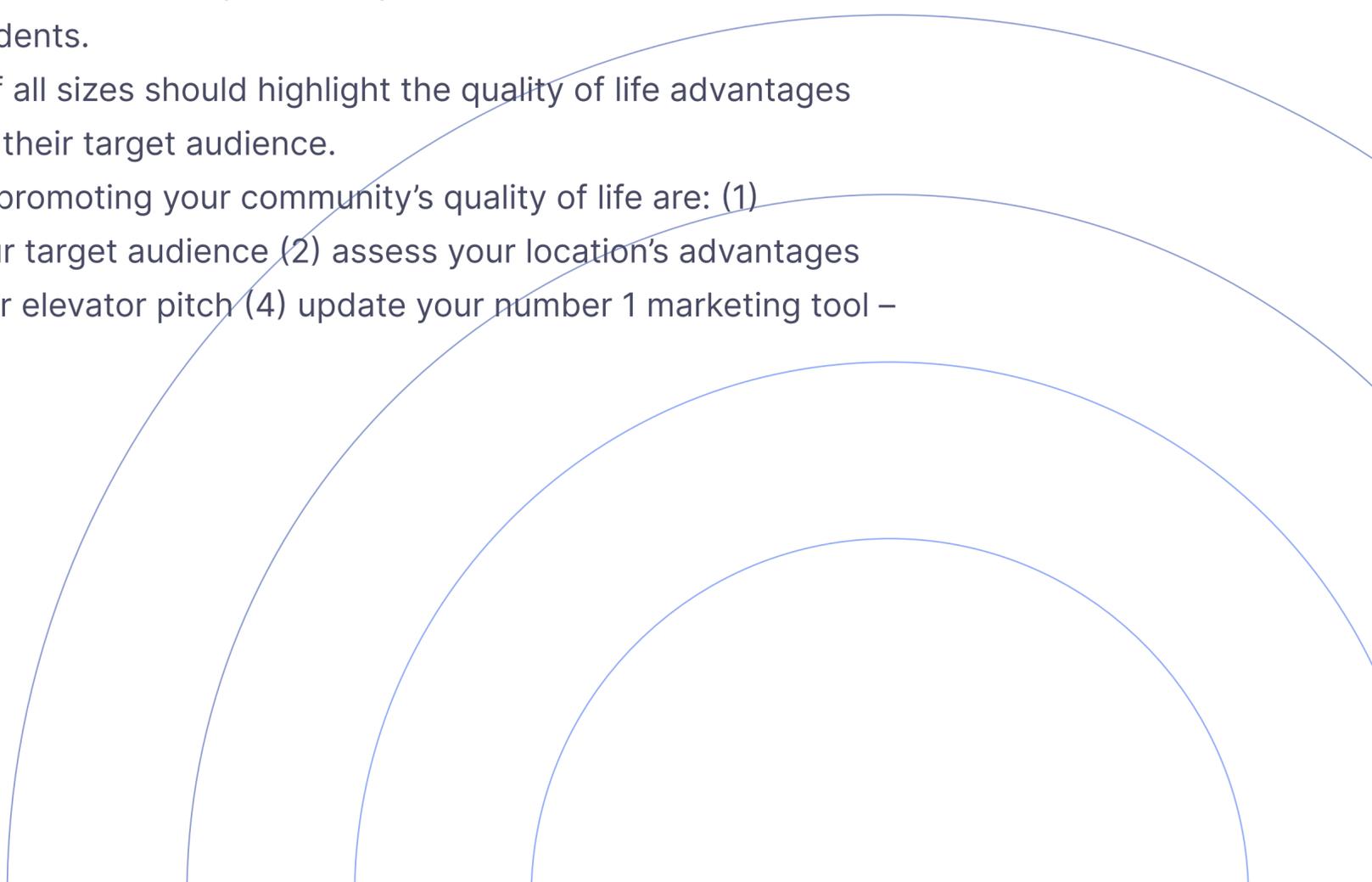
If you have an existing website and budget of less than \$5,000 then here's some actions you can take to effectively promote your location's quality of life advantages:



1. Complete steps 1, 2 and 3 above.
2. Create a page on your existing website dedicated to attracting talent and promoting your quality of life advantages. Add the following marketing content to the page:
 - Your elevator pitch to it (step 3)
 - High quality images that support your elevators pitch
 - 2 or 3 glowing testimonials from residents
 - Links to other resources or facilities providing information about key quality of life elements
3. Add Localintel's Quality of Life Advantages marketing tool to your website to increase engagement. Here's some example quality of life webpages to refer to:
 - Harlingen Economic Development Corporation
 - Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce
 - Rowan County Economic Development Corporation
 - Shuswap Economic Development Society
 - Choose Port Alberni
4. Promote and share your new quality of life webpage to local companies that are hiring talent from outside your location. They can share this page on their job advertisement and with applicants who currently live outside your location and are considering a move.
5. Ensure your quality of life webpage is being promoted via your organizations social media at least once a week.

Conclusion

Key takeaways

1. Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, more workers than ever before are starting to demand a better work-life balance. Going forward, this is going to be a huge driver for workers as they look for more suitable employment. It will also be a primary reason why people choose to relocate to places that can offer the quality of life they are searching for.
 2. The companies that manage to embrace hybrid and remote workforce operations are going to be the ones that attract the top knowledge workers going forward. Economic developers use this new growth model to benefit their communities.
 3. With the advent of a remote and hybrid work revolution, this traditional economic development model is getting a shake-up. Gone are the days of baiting corporate executives with tax breaks as we are now entering a new era where the pursuit of amenities, quality of life, and culture is what will be needed to draw skilled workers and professional talent.
 4. To attract talent, communities must provide clear, solid messaging that promotes desirable quality-of-life factors in addition to the career and affordability elements.
 5. By identifying your location's best features and benefits, and then correlating them with the needs of workers, you will be setting your community up for success as you attempt to attract skilled workers and permanent residents.
 6. Communities of all sizes should highlight the quality of life advantages that appeals to their target audience.
 7. The 4 steps to promoting your community's quality of life are: (1) understand your target audience (2) assess your location's advantages (3) prepare your elevator pitch (4) update your number 1 marketing tool – your website.
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