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Press Release: Thursday, May 07, 2009

Firm: Cedar Rapids a top city for young professionals

By Adam Belz
The Gazette
May 7, 2009

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Cedar Rapids has been ranked one of the top cities in the U.S. for young professionals by a Madison, Wis.-based consulting firm.

Cedar Rapids ranks fourth among cities with a population of 100,000 to 200,000, according to Next Generation Consulting, a market research outfit that helps businesses and cities attract and retain young talent.

The only cities ranked higher than Cedar Rapids in its population bracket were Fort Collins, Colo., Charleston, S.C., and Eugene, Ore. Des Moines ranked twelfth.

“Take that, Des Moines,” said Christian Fong, chairman of Cedar Rapids’ Next Generation Commission, with a laugh.

The consulting company arrives at its rankings by measuring how healthy and green a city is, how much money people make, the city’s education and library system, its weekend and night life, cost of living, transportation and “social capital” — that is, how diverse and safe the town is and how many people vote.

Cedar Rapids performed well in cost of living and social capital, was above average in earning and life outside of work, and was average in education, transportation and health measurements.

Cities were rewarded in the rankings for doing well in several categories, and Fong wasn’t surprised that Cedar Rapids came out so well. Mountains and major metropolitan areas are great, he said, but ski towns don’t have a lot of good jobs, and it costs a lot to live in New York City.

“One thing that’s different about the next generation is our pursuit of really a balanced lifestyle,” he said, something he sees in many Midwestern cities. “This is the one place in the country where you can uniquely have a great paycheck, a great career, great civic opportunities, great social opportunities.”

Next Generation Consulting has worked for the Quad Cities and the Technology Corridor Business Alliance.