



Omaha is America's best city for cheapskates

Written By Steve Jordon at World-Herald

Omaha's low cost of living, above-average wages, plethora of free events and frugal billionaire merit the title of America's best city for cheapskates, Kiplinger's online magazine says.

Expenses in Omaha's 856,222-person metro area are 12.3 percent below the national average, including housing costs, which are 18.8 percent lower. The \$56,324 median household income is \$3,584 above the national median.

Writer Stacy Rapacon said the article considered low-cost or free activities, on top of a recent look at cities with favorable gaps between living cost and average income.

"We really wanted to include the fact that there's an abundance of things to do in the area," she said, citing the Omaha area's 155 public libraries and museums (1.8 per 10,000 people).

Karla Ewert, a spokeswoman for the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, chuckled when she heard about the city's "cheapskate" designation.

"I think it's the terminology that's funny," Ewert said, "but I think the message is, if you don't have a lot of money you can still live in Omaha and there are wonderful things to do. You can still get involved and have a great life in Omaha."

Other signs of cheapness: 11 Dollar General stores within 10 miles of downtown; average apartment rent of \$740 a month; and investor Warren Buffett's decision to live in the same house he bought in 1958 for \$31,500.

Rapacon said she mentioned Buffett because the magazine, which focused on personal finance, included him in a recent article on the frugal habits of the super-rich, and his home-buying history is widely known.

For cheapskate-favored activities, the website recommends the Gene Leahy Mall, the Old Market and festivals such as Taste of Omaha and Shakespeare on the Green.

Rapacon said the listing tended to favor cities in the middle of the country. "The coasts did not prove very friendly to cheapskates," she said.