

## What? Emmett's the Second Best Place in Idaho to Retire?

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Emmett Mayor

Organizations that simply look at limited data to make an assessment about a town without any kind of terrain walk or personal visit amuse me. For example, recall a couple of years ago when “Road Snacks” assessed Emmett as number six out of the ten worst places to live in Idaho. They chose us because based upon their “scientific” data, our median income per household amounted to only \$27,853, coupled with an unemployment rate of 5.6% and a housing vacancy rate of 11.8%. Middleton, Caldwell, Payette, Mountain Home and Nampa were ahead of us on the list in that order. (For being the worst place to live in Idaho, Middleton sure has a snazzy looking high school.) It's worth noting that Sandpoint attained the penultimate ninth position on the list of ten worst places.

I mention Sandpoint because another outfit called SmartAsset (whoever or whatever that is) has Sandpoint as THE place to retire in Idaho. Emmett comes in at number two—so, we are at least the first loser. What I conclude from all this, then, is this: the *second* best place to *retire* in Idaho is the equivalent of being the *sixth* worst place to *live*.

The methodology utilized by SmartAsset is intriguing, to say the least. They took location (as in “location, location, location”) and matched that against three criteria: First, they looked at state and local tax rates, considering only two types: income and *sales*. What about *ad valorem*? Not interested, apparently. Moreover, for income, SmartAsset calculated effective rates based on a “typical” retiree, earning \$35,000 annually. But that doesn't work in Emmett. The mean income per household two years ago was \$27,800 and only recently rose to \$28,125. Yet, since SmartAsset assessed *every* city in the state exactly the same, it made it easy for the uniform result of 16.9% for taxes throughout Idaho. This gives additional credence to the notion there are three types of liars: garden variety liars, those darned liars, and, finally, statisticians.

Next, SmartAsset considered the number of doctors' offices, recreation centers and retirement centers per thousand residents for each town. Lastly, they considered the percentage of seniors in each area compared to the total population. Emmett has two medical doctors per 1000 population, 0.8 recreation centers per 1000 and 0.5 retirement centers per 1000 with 21.7 % of the population being seniors. (Whether that begins at 55 or 60 or some other age is not stated.) Let's be real, folks. It's the people that make a town worth living in, not statistical gobbledygook.