

Circle Pines Named 3rd Best Suburb in America!

A column by Circle Pines Mayor Dave Bartholomay for the Quad Community Press Newspaper (11/15/2011)

You may have noticed that CNBC.com recently named Circle Pines #3 on their list of “10 Perfect Suburbs in America”. I suspect a lot of folks in the area think our town is a good place to live, but with typical Midwestern modesty, would never think of it as #3 in the whole country!

But before we delve into what drove this high ranking, let’s pause for a moment and realize that we do indeed live in a wonderful area with remarkable people, whose civility and continued investments in the community have paid off. Sure, there are some people who always seem to focus on the negative, wringing their hands and complaining about taxes or ‘government’, but it is very exciting when our community is lifted up in such a positive light. The simple truth is Circle Pines has the right combination of a high-performing school district, good housing options, attractive amenities like parks and trails, forward-looking community leadership and safe neighborhoods. People always searching for a problem should take note: Circle Pines has been nationally recognized as a tremendous community and we are going to continue implementing efficient and effective ways to improve the quality of life all across the city, and not allow an erosion of the public trust or the degradation of the valuable services that contributed to such a high ranking.

I’m sure some folks wonder how our community was chosen for such an honor. To quote from the report: “The analysts used their bank of databases to find the suburbs with the best mix of affordable housing, good schools, educated neighbors, low crime, employment, and reasonable commutes.” “Because of many things, Circle Pines is a very good place for families to consider. With an enviable combination of good schools, low crime, college-educated neighbors who tend to support education because of their own experiences, and a high rate of home ownership in predominantly single-family properties, Circle Pines really has some of the features that families look for when choosing a good community to raise children. Is Circle Pines perfect? Of course not, and if you like frenetic nightlife, it will be far from your cup of tea. But overall this is a solid community, with many things to recommend it as a family-friendly place to live.”

The report focused a lot on the Centennial School District, described as better than 94.8% of schools in the U.S. and better than 95.4% of the schools in Minnesota! I’m very proud of the teachers and staff at our schools, but I often wish for the funding levels of other metro schools and dream of what could be accomplished with that more equitable share of resources. But as we work our way towards that promised land, our community needs to continue supporting the school district as it keeps working to improve the learning experience, doing it smarter and more efficiently. And, most importantly, constantly innovating to stay better than 95% of their competitors!

While it is tempting to rest on one’s laurels at this point, we all know that maintaining a high quality of life in a city on a limited budget is always a challenge. Circle Pines will continue to do what we’ve always done – innovate and collaborate to provide more bang for the buck. We do that every day with our shared Police and Fire Departments and through our partnerships with the Centennial Schools, neighboring cities, Anoka County, the Y, the faith community and many, many others.

Working together, the best is yet to come!