The tech industry is known for its high salaries—but how far do IT wages go when stacked up against the cost of living in pricey tech hubs? And what happens when you factor in measures of job opportunity and job growth?

Based on job posting data over a 12-month period (August 2017-July 2018), CompTIA looked at 20 metropolitan areas with populations greater than 250,000, where demand for tech workers is greatest. The cities were then ranked based on cost of living, number of open IT positions, and projected job growth over the next 12 months and the next 5 years. Read more about the methodology.

The result? A geographically diverse list that shows Tech Towns are flourishing across the nation and in areas that extend far beyond the traditional coastal tech hubs. The Midwest and Rocky Mountains have a strong presence on the list, with tech up-and-comers like Lansing, Des Moines, Denver and Colorado Springs all making the list.

North Carolina was a major stand-out, with Charlotte earning the no. 1 spot and Raleigh just behind at no. 2. Southern hotbeds like Austin, Dallas, Atlanta and Huntsville, Alabama also made the top 10.

Despite cost of living factors, tech-heavy hitters like San Jose and San Francisco find themselves at no. 4 and no. 5, respectively—as opportunity in these areas continues to skyrocket faster than housing costs. Another surprise: Several areas often thought of as college towns demonstrated they’ve blossomed into full-on innovation hubs, with Boulder, Madison and Durham-Chapel Hill all making the cut.

The bottom line is that the CompTIA Tech Town Index can help in-demand IT pros make educated decisions about where to live and work based on opportunity and opportunity costs. The index also highlights the need for an educated, tech-ready workforce and other factors that are contributing to each metro areas’ success (or in some cases, failure) to attract and retain that workforce. Ultimately, the index proves you don’t have to move to Silicon Valley to find and advance in a tech career. Many cities across the country offer excellent career opportunities and a rewarding lifestyle, where your tech job dollar will take you far.
CompTIA Tech Town Index 2018

The best places for IT pros to live and work

1. Charlotte, NC
2. Raleigh, NC
3. Austin, TX
4. San Jose, CA
5. San Francisco, CA
6. Dallas-Fort Worth, TX
7. Seattle, WA
8. Denver, CO
9. Atlanta, GA
10. Huntsville, AL
11. Washington, DC
12. Des Moines, IA
13. Lansing, MI
14. Madison, WI
15. Durham-Chapel Hill, NC
16. Baltimore, MD
17. Boston, MA
18. Trenton, NJ
20. Colorado Springs, CO

4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Statistical Area</th>
<th>Tech Town Index Rank</th>
<th>Location Quotient Rank (no. IT job ads by no. people employed)</th>
<th># IT Job Ads Rank</th>
<th>Cost of Living Index Rank</th>
<th>Cost of Living Adjusted Hourly Earnings Rank</th>
<th>1-year % Job Growth Rank</th>
<th>5-year % Job Growth Rank</th>
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<td>Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>5</td>
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Charlotte, North Carolina
(Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC)

There’s a reason the metro area consisting of Charlotte, Concord and Gastonia has posted double-digit population growth over the last decade: A booming local economy and expanding job market have made it an attractive choice for relocation, and tech is making a major contribution to those trends.

Over the past 12 months, the area saw more than 44,000 IT jobs posted, and that number is likely to continue rising with a projected 11 percent growth in tech jobs over the next 5 years. Driving the wealth (literally) of employment opportunities for IT pros: Charlotte is recognized as a major banking center (in the US, only New York City has more banking resources), with financial heavy hitters like Wells Fargo, Bank of America, TIAA CREF and Ally Financial hiring tech workers at all levels.

IT pros in Charlotte will find a healthy median annual salary of $87,755 and a cost of living that is 1.3 percent lower than the national average. With more disposable income, IT pros can enjoy everything this area has to offer, including mild winters, the NASCAR Hall of Fame, the US National Whitewater Center and the Rocky River Golf Course—one of the best courses in the state.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Wells Fargo
2. Bank of America
3. Accenture
4. Deloitte
5. Lowe’s Companies
6. AccruePartners
7. IBM
8. Charter Communications
9. TIAA-CREF
10. Duke Energy
No. 2

Raleigh, North Carolina

Raleigh and the nearby Research Triangle area have a reputation for innovation, so it’s no surprise the region is also becoming known for its growing tech sector. In fact, in 2016 the city was named the fourth best in the country for fostering entrepreneurial growth by the Innovation that Matters report.

With more than 500 startups in the area, the need for IT talent is high. In fact, more than 25,000 tech jobs were posted in the last year and demand is increasing. These trends not only land Raleigh in the no. 2 spot on our Tech Towns list, they’ve put the city in the running for Amazon’s HQ2. Helping to ensure a tech-ready workforce, North Carolina’s capital city boasts 12 traditional colleges and universities and 21 more within 25 miles.

Between the startups and mega tech conglomerates like IBM, Verizon and Red Hat, IT pros make a median salary of $86,944. That paycheck stretches a long way in Raleigh where residents enjoy a cost of living 3.5 percent lower than the national average, giving tech pros the opportunity to spend that disposable income checking out the city’s diverse art scene, enjoying a quick getaway to the beach or the mountains, or taking in a concert at one of more than 80 live music venues.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Accenture
2. IBM
3. SAS Institute
4. Metropolitan Life Insurance
5. BB&T Corporation
6. Verizon Communications
7. Conduent Business Services
8. UnitedHealth Group
9. Red Hat
10. Credit Suisse

25,633
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

$86,944
Median salary for IT pros

11%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

The cost of living is 3.5% lower than the national average and workers get paid $3.22 more per hour.
Austin, Texas
(Austin-Round Rock, TX)

You know what they say: Everything’s bigger in Texas, and that phrase holds true on our Tech Towns list, with Austin and nearby Round Rock ranking no. 3. A diverse and progressive city, Austin has a long list of attractive features for IT pros looking to put down roots—a thriving music scene, a foodie destination, an active, outdoor lifestyle, low unemployment, great schools, a strong economy and much, much more.

The draw for tech-savvy folks is clear. In an area where the cost of living is 3.4 percent lower than the US average, IT pros are making a median salary of $82,285 per year and job opportunities are plentiful. In the past year, more than 37,000 tech jobs were posted, and the number of jobs is expected to increase by 15 percent over the next 5 years, rivaling the Bay Area in terms of projected growth.

Tech companies have taken note. Amazon is eyeing Austin as a potential site for its HQ2. Dell is famously headquartered in Round Rock, so it’s no surprise the company is the metro area’s top tech employer. And giants like IBM and Apple also have offices in town alongside popular tech incubators and well-known startups. In short, Austin lives up to its tech mecca rep.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Dell
2. Accenture
3. Deloitte
4. IBM
5. Visa
6. Charles Schwab
7. Apple
8. Amazon
9. University of Texas
10. Advanced Micro Devices

The cost of living is 3.4% lower than the national average and workers get paid $0.98 more per hour.

$82,285
Median salary for IT pros

15%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

37,551
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018
San Jose, California
(San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA)

Cost of living may be high in the San Jose area (though it's notably lower than San Francisco, its Tech Town neighbor to the north), but one word sums up why the city known as a world center for technology ranks in the top 5 despite the sticker shock—opportunity. San Jose, part of the fabled Silicon Valley, is home to giants Apple, Google, Adobe, Cisco... the list goes on and on. Just last year, nearly 100,000 tech jobs were up for grabs and the market shows no signs of slowing down.

While tech workers in San Jose earn a median income of $122,242 per year—the highest salary on our list—would-be California dreamers need to take costs into account. Those who call Silicon Valley home understand that everything is more expensive—43.6 percent more than the average cost of living in the US.

If you do decide to pursue West Coast living, you're in good company. Plenty of smart and innovative thinkers populate this region, which is why the US Patent and Trademark Office in San Jose sees the highest number of patents per capita.

Who's hiring IT pros?
1. Apple
2. Google
3. Cisco Systems
4. Amazon
5. Nvidia Corporation
6. Intel Corporation
7. VMware
8. Deloitte
9. eBay
10. SAP
San Francisco, California  
(San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA)

According to Business Insider, the Bay Area’s economy is “defying gravity!” Why? Compared to the rest of the country, tech hubs in the Bay Area have remained economically strong and business growth is especially robust. Our numbers back that up. A staggering 112,388 Bay Area IT jobs were posted between August 2017 and July 2018 (the second highest on our index) and demand for IT pros is projected to increase a whopping 15 percent by 2023—only Austin is expected to see similar growth. Those numbers easily make the Golden Gate City one of the hottest spots to be a technology professional.

Home to companies like Facebook and Salesforce, San Francisco IT pros are making a median income of $110,448 per year. While that six-figure salary sounds enticing, the Bay Area’s cost of living is notoriously high—higher than New York City’s. For example, if homeownership is a priority for you, expect to pay around $1,000 per square foot in San Francisco.

The downside of these prices: More residents left San Francisco than any other city in the last quarter of 2017, according to real estate website Redfin. But for plenty of IT pros, the mild climate, ocean views, easy access to nearby wine country and seemingly limitless career opportunities make San Francisco and the surrounding area an attractive place to live and work.

**Who’s hiring IT pros?**
1. Capital Markets Placement
2. Facebook
3. Salesforce
4. Deloitte
5. Accenture
6. Workday
7. Wells Fargo
8. Amazon
9. Oracle
10. Microsoft

**112,388**  
IT job postings between  
August 2017-July 2018

**110,448**  
Median salary for IT pros

**15%**  
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

**$110,448**  
Median salary for IT pros

The cost of living is 64.2% higher than the national average and workers get paid $14.52 more per hour.
Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
(Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Texas)

If you’re a sports fan, football is likely the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Dallas. While the Cowboys have a larger-than-life presence in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metro area, it’s not the only powerhouse. With more than 100,000 tech jobs posted in the past 12 months, DFW is recognized as having the largest tech labor force in the south, and demand for IT pros is forecasted to grow by another 10 percent over the next 5 years.

Who’s hiring these tech pros? Forty-two Fortune 1000 companies call DFW home. And if you’ve set your sights on a career in the financial field, the area is a key banking center in the US. Another employment possibility on the horizon—Dallas also finds itself on the list of proposed sites for Amazon’s HQ2.

As an IT pro, the median salary of $84,614 can stretch relatively far as Texas is one of seven states that doesn’t require residents to pay state income tax. And you don’t have to be a football fan to enjoy everything this Tech Town has to offer. The nation’s largest arts district also resides in Dallas, and includes 19 blocks of museums, venues and galleries.
Seattle, Washington
(Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA)

The original Starbucks, the birthplace of grunge, home to tech behemoths Amazon and Microsoft—Seattle conjures up images that are iconic of the last three decades and the metro area continues to be a draw for tech pros looking for career stability, high salaries and job opportunity.

Ranking no. 7 on our list, Seattle’s rapidly growing economy has a lot to offer. In the last year alone, employers posted 67,579 open IT positions. The largest employer of tech pros in Seattle is Amazon, but if software is your passion, enterprise software companies like Microsoft, Oracle, Tableau and SAP are looking for tech talent to join their teams as well.

While this metro area is decidedly pricier than the national average—nearly 20 percent more—tech workers in this corner of the country make a median income of $109,741 per year. Adjusted for the cost of living, tech pros are still likely to come out ahead in terms of how far their salary will go, and if access to the ocean, mountains and evergreen forests sounds appealing, Seattle may be the Tech Town for you.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Amazon
2. Microsoft
3. Deloitte
4. Capital Markets Placement
5. T Mobile USA
6. Tableau
7. eXcell
8. Oracle
9. The Boeing Company
10. Starbucks Coffee Company

Median salary for IT pros
$109,741

The cost of living is 19.9% higher than the national average and workers get paid $14.18 more per hour.

IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018
67,579

Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years
11%
Denver, Colorado
(Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO)

Located 5,000 feet above sea level and featuring 20,000 acres of green space, Denver and the surrounding cities of Aurora and Lakewood make an appearance as Tech Town no. 8. The Denver area has become a desirable place to put down roots regardless of your job—a mild climate, proximity to some of the nation’s best ski resorts, innovative breweries, 300 annual days of sunshine and access to a year-round active lifestyle are compelling features. But for IT pros, the pot gets even sweeter with a thriving tech industry.

Colorado has one of the nation’s lowest unemployment rates, especially in IT, which has resulted in huge shortages for in-demand roles like IT engineers and software developers. In the past year, employers have posted more than 50,000 IT jobs—and the number of new IT jobs is projected to grow another 11 percent over the next 5 years—potentially more if Denver is chosen to be the home of Amazon’s HQ2. Tech workers are making a median salary of $90,958, and while the cost of living is higher than the national average, many would contend the surroundings are worth it, which is one reason why the population growth in this area has outpaced the national average for decades.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Charter Communications
2. Deloitte
3. Capital Markets Placement
4. Spectrum
5. Accenture
6. Dish Network
7. Lockheed Martin Corporation
8. Raytheon
9. Comcast
10. Navisite
Atlanta, Georgia
(Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA)

The “hot” in “Hotlanta” may technically refer to the city’s sizzling nightlife, but the local tech industry also lives up to the nickname. Historically, Atlanta’s tech community has been relatively small and tight-knit, but in Atlanta and the surrounding smaller cities of Sandy Springs and Roswell, tech opportunities are growing with more than 76,000 IT jobs posted between August 2017 and July 2018. The local government has encouraged this growth. A few years ago, the city started offering tax incentives for startups to help foster an environment for new high-tech businesses. That investment is clearly paying off in a big way with Atlanta now in the running for Amazon’s HQ2.

Talented techies flocking to the Atlanta area make a median salary of $82,077 a year in a world-class city that remains an affordable place to live—nearly 4 percent lower than the national average. That means more disposable income, and Atlanta is a great place to take advantage of that, particularly for IT pros with a travel bug. With the busiest airport in the world (Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport), airline tickets in and out of Atlanta tend to be less expensive. Combine that with the fact that 83 percent of US cities are less than two hours away by plane, and travel junkies might just be willing to put down roots in Atlanta.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Deloitte
2. Accenture
3. Capgemini
4. Anthem Blue Cross
5. NCR Corporation
6. Equifax
7. The Home Depot
8. SunTrust Banks
9. Verizon Communications
10. U.S. Bancorp

$82,077
Median salary for IT pros

76,483
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

6%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

3.9%
The cost of living is 3.9% lower than the national average and workers get paid $0.88 more per hour.
Huntsville, Alabama

Located in northern Alabama near the Tennessee border, Huntsville rounds out the top 10 on our Tech Towns list. Home to the US Space and Rocket Center, NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, and the Army's Aviation and Missile Command, Huntsville has been a tech center for quite some time.

Today, the area is home to the third most technical workforce in the country, with nearly 17 percent of the workforce in a STEM job, according to an analysis by Bloomberg. With more than 10,000 tech jobs posted last year and a projected 4 percent growth over the next 5 years, the Huntsville numbers don’t compete with some of the other cities on this list. But with tech pros making a median salary of $91,998 a year, the competitive advantage here is cost of living—in fact, on our list of 20 Tech Towns, you’ll get the most bang for your buck in Huntsville.

But don’t let the affordability of this Alabama city fool you. In response to the growing tech sector, Huntsville’s city center has undergone a renaissance in recent years, and new construction downtown means more shopping, dining, entertainment and housing options.

Who’s hiring IT pros?

1. SAIC
2. Jacobs Engineering Group
3. The Boeing Company
4. Northrop Grumman
5. Colsa Corporation
6. Raytheon
7. Parsons Brinckerhoff
8. Lockheed Martin Corporation
9. General Dynamics
10. PeopleTec

$91,998

Median salary for IT pros

4%

Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

$91,998

Median salary for IT pros

10,920

IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

The cost of living is 3.3% lower than the national average and workers get paid $5.65 more per hour.
If you’re looking to increase your employment opportunities based on sheer numbers, look no further than the nation’s capital and its surrounding metro area where more than 170,000 technology jobs were posted over the past year. Moreover, IT pros will find they do quite well in DC—earning a median income of $103,397 per year, which can help offset the area’s high cost of living.

What’s driving the need for tech pros? Government contractors. Top employers here include consulting firms like Booz Allen Hamilton; global aerospace and defense company, General Dynamic; and government technology solutions company, ManTech. But, contrary to popular belief, it’s not all about big government. With federal budgets shrinking, the metro area is becoming fertile ground for tech startups. In 2016, DC-area entrepreneurs raised over $2.7 billion in venture capital funding. The growing angel investor community and business-friendly crowdfunding laws make the city an ideal location for startups.

Another reason for the area’s tech success: The city can brag about its no. 1 ranking by Forbes for women in tech, as DC is home to one of the most diverse tech-related workforces in the nation; has one of the smallest gaps in gender pay; and boasts a higher proportion of women in computer and math-related roles—no doubt one of the reasons Amazon is considering DC for its HQ2.
No. 12

Des Moines, Iowa
(Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA)

Des Moines is a major center of the national insurance industry with a sizable financial services and manufacturing base that relies on information technology workers. With nearly 12,000 tech jobs posted between August 2017 and July 2018, a projected 7 percent increase in demand, and the city’s lower cost of living, Des Moines finds itself at no. 12 on our list. But it’s no surprise the tech industry is growing in this area. Part of the “Silicon Prairie”—a term used to describe the growing tech hubs in Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Kansas, Minnesota and Missouri—Des Moines not only offers affordability to IT pros looking for job opportunity but also to business owners.

In fact, when you compare it to the costs of living and operating a business in Silicon Valley, the numbers are pretty shocking. For instance, home prices in San Jose average nearly $1 million—while you can find home sweet home in Des Moines for $180,000. With a median annual salary of $80,642, IT pros can live comfortably and enjoy the area’s small-town vibe and family-friendly features—just a few of the reasons US News & World Report recently named Des Moines no. 4 in its Best Places to Live report.

$80,642
Median salary for IT pros

7%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Wells Fargo
2. Anthem Blue Cross
3. Principal Financial Group
4. General Electric
5. Visiont
6. DuPont
7. Athene Holding
8. Deere & Company
9. Aureon
10. GDIT

11,949
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

The cost of living is .6% lower than the national average and workers get paid $0.19 more per hour.
Lansing, Michigan
(Lansing-East Lansing, MI)

Lansing, the capital city of Michigan, is widely regarded as a manufacturing town. This public relations image may be why companies are struggling with a shortage of IT pros to fill positions in industries like banking and insurance, as well as government agencies and colleges. The problem is the workers just aren’t there—and with more than 7,000 IT jobs posted last year, businesses are in dire need.

That’s why the city is actively recruiting tech talent. Their pitch is quite simple: While Lansing will never be a booming city, the cost of living is much cheaper, everything is within a 20-minute drive and there’s an abundance of things to do when the work day ends. With a cost of living that is 9 percent lower than the national average, tech workers earn a median salary of $67,246 per year.

But tech executives in Lansing say the shortage doesn’t have much to do with money—it’s the small-town stereotype they’re up against. Fortunately, not everyone prefers life in the big city. And, with a growing downtown scene, a Big Ten university (Michigan State University in East Lansing), and a safe place to put down roots and raise a family, Lansing is an attractive choice for IT pros who are looking for less hustle and bustle.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. U.S. Bancorp
2. General Electric
3. Viva USA
4. Peer Solutions Group
5. Key Business Solutions
6. Digital Technology Solutions
7. VED Software Services
8. National Life Group
9. HTC
10. Michigan State University

5%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

7,849
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

$67,246
Median salary for IT pros

The cost of living is 9% lower than the national average and workers get paid $6.25 less per hour.
Madison, Wisconsin

Home to the University of Wisconsin, this college town is making significant strides toward becoming a center for technology. This promise of growth is one of the factors that put Madison at no. 14 on our list of Tech Towns. In the past 12 months, more than 11,000 IT jobs were posted in the area, and the number of IT jobs could increase by 9 percent over the next 5 years. And if you’re thinking about becoming a “cheese head” you’ll be in good company: A recent survey by commercial real estate firm Cushman and Wakefield ranked Madison as no. 10 on a list of educated tech cities.

With a median tech salary of $76,232 and a cost of living 2.6 percent higher than the national average, affordability may not be the top draw in Madison, but the industry’s momentum means practically limitless opportunity to land a job and grow as a tech professional. If you decide Madison is the place for you, you’ll find an active community with access to five lakes and a reputation for being among the greenest cities in the country. Despite the oppressively cold winters, many Wisconsinites walk and bike to work when it’s below freezing! But, if you need get away from the snow, you’re in luck: Madison is just one hour away from the Wisconsin Dells, the indoor waterpark capital of the world.

Who’s hiring IT pros?

1. TeamSoft
2. Stratagem
3. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
4. Computer Consultants International
5. Synergy Consortium Services
6. Genome International Corporation
7. Mars IT Corp
8. University of Wisconsin
9. University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
10. Chandra Technologies

11,059
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

$76,232
Median salary for IT pros

The cost of living is 2.6% higher than the national average and workers get paid $1.93 less per hour.

9%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years
No. 15

Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina

With Research Triangle Park, hospitals and schools making up the backbone of economic opportunity in Durham and Chapel Hill, the area is a fast-growing hub for technology and medicine. The high prevalence of PhDs, world-class researchers, talented engineers, tech pros and entrepreneurs make conditions ripe for start-ups of all kinds. While talent is plentiful, companies are still struggling to keep pace with growth. In the past year, nearly 11,000 IT jobs were posted, and the number of IT jobs will increase by a projected 4 percent over the next 5 years.

Mild winters are one of the main reasons people relocate to Durham-Chapel Hill. But, if you’re seeking a career in technology, that’s just a bonus. The median salary for IT pros in Durham-Chapel Hill is $84,011 per year. With the cost of living just slightly below the US average, young professionals are flocking to the area. In fact, earlier this year Durham was named the best city in the US for millennials by Growella, a real estate and personal finance website. A combination of factors, including the chance of landing a great job, earning a healthy living, being able to set aside resources for the future, and professional and personal fulfillment landed Durham the top honors.

Who’s hiring IT pros?

1. Cisco Systems
2. Fidelity Brokerage Services
3. University of North Carolina
4. IBM
5. Dell
6. Technosoft
7. Duke University
8. VED Software Services
9. NetApp
10. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina

$84,011
Median salary for IT pros

10,989
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

4%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

The cost of living is .2% lower than the national average and workers get paid $1.81 more per hour.
Baltimore, Maryland  
(Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD)

Located in the Chesapeake Bay region of eastern Maryland, 2.7 million people call greater Baltimore home, making it the 20th largest metro area in the US. Coming in at no. 16 on our list, tech opportunities abound in the industries of healthcare, biosciences, higher education and government. Baltimore has more than a dozen federal agencies and is second only to Washington, DC, in the number of civilians employed in government positions. The city also ranks third in the number of residents whose bachelor’s degrees are in computers and math according to the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore. These specializations are critical to the fast-growing cyber industry, in which the city has more than double the national density of professionals.

With more than 42,000 open tech positions posted in the last 12 months and a forecasted 8 percent job growth over the next 5 years, IT is in demand. A tech professional in this area makes a median income of $93,080 per year—a slightly lower salary for the east coast where cost of living is higher than the US average. But salary isn’t the only consideration when searching for a Tech Town to call home: Young professionals find Baltimore’s bustling night life and sports scenes attractive. Plenty of live music venues, Camden Yards for an Orioles game, M&T Stadium to cheer on the Ravens, and the best Maryland blue crabs and crab cakes make the metro area a hot spot for the next tech generation.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Booz Allen Hamilton
2. Northrop Grumman
3. ManTech International Corp.
4. Leidos
5. CSRA
6. General Dynamics
7. CACI
8. SAIC
9. Stanley Reid
10. Arctic Slope Regional Corporation

8%  
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

$93,080  
Median salary for IT pros

42,097  
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

The cost of living is 33.2% higher than the national average and workers get paid $6.17 more per hour.
Boston, Massachusetts
(Boston-Cambridge-Nashua, MA-NH)

Home of Harvard and MIT, Boston remains a center for technology. Access to talent, resources and innovation are major draws for tech companies looking to elevate their business. This innovation is exemplified by the high volume of patent activity coming out of the Boston metro. Kendall Square near MIT has been dubbed “the most innovative square mile on the planet.” Boeing, the world’s largest aerospace company, has recently agreed to lease approximately 100,000 square feet in the heart of Kendall Square, making the company the first major tenant to commit to this area.

But, the city’s fast-growing tech industry has some urgent workforce needs—which could become more pressing if Amazon’s HQ2 decides to call Boston home. More than 82,000 open tech jobs were posted in the past year alone and the number of IT jobs will continue to grow by an estimated 6 percent over the next 5 years. With an average median salary of $93,704 per year, tech workers may bring home a healthy salary, but it won’t go as far in Boston, the third-most expensive Tech Town on the list. In this densely populated metropolitan area, which includes 23 recognized neighborhoods, only IT pros coming from cities like San Francisco, San Jose and New York won’t experience sticker shock. The opportunity is there, but affordable transportation and housing are key to increasing the pool of available talent.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Accenture
2. Raytheon
3. Amazon
4. Deloitte
5. BAE Systems
6. Dell
7. Capital Markets Placement
8. State Street Bank
9. Partners Healthcare
10. MathWorks

6% Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

82,020 IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018

The cost of living is 34.6% higher than the national average and workers get paid $6.47 more per hour.

$93,704 Median salary for IT pros
Trenton, New Jersey

New Jersey has a longstanding tradition of cultivating scientific leaders. From Edison to Einstein, the Garden State’s commitment to investment, collaboration and talent development supports growth in technology clusters that drive economic expansion. That’s why Trenton, New Jersey makes an appearance at no. 18 on our list of Tech Towns. The tech sector is responsible for an estimated 9.5 percent ($52 billion) of the overall state economy and nearly 160,000 tech business establishments. But, like the other cities on our list, Trenton needs more qualified IT pros. Last year, nearly 9,500 open technology positions were posted, and the number of jobs will grow by a forecasted 5 percent in the next 5 years.

The city’s location is its biggest draw. Trenton, located in central New Jersey on the Delaware River, is easily accessible to New York and Philadelphia. In addition to location, a variety of other factors contribute to this area’s continued economic growth. The city benefits from the spill-over of high tech industries and research centers along the Route 1 corridor and makes a case for East Coast affordability. With Trenton tech talent making a healthy median income of $91,104, the cost of living, which is 21 percent higher than the US norm, is significantly cheaper than neighboring New York City as well as Tech Towns Boston and Baltimore.

Who’s hiring IT pros?

1. Bank of America
2. Data Incorporated
3. Bristol-Myers Squibb
4. Anthem Blue Cross
5. Princeton University
6. Covance Incorporated
7. Servion Global Solutions
8. Fourans
9. Deloitte
10. General Electric

$91,104
Median salary for IT pros

5%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next 5 years

The cost of living is 21% higher than the national average and workers get paid $5.22 more per hour.

9,447
IT job postings between August 2017-July 2018
Boulder, Colorado

With an average of 300 sunny days a year, Boulder gets nearly as much sunshine as Arizona—without the scorching temperatures. But it’s not the picture-perfect weather that lands Boulder at no. 19 on our list: It’s the tech opportunity across a diverse mix of industries that makes the city a big deal for IT pros. There is a high concentration of employment here in several industry clusters, including aerospace, bioscience and information technology. IT in Boulder has particular concentrations in the data storage, software and integrated systems, and mobile application development sectors. In the past year, nearly 6,000 tech jobs were posted in Boulder, and it’s projected that IT jobs will grow by 5 percent over the next five years.

IT pros in this region make a median salary of $88,899. While the cost of living is somewhat higher than the national average, it’s lower than many tech-savvy, well-educated peer cities throughout the country and a variety of affordable housing options are available in neighboring communities. For many, the price is worth it with locals claiming that the quality of life can’t be beat. In addition to getting your daily dose of vitamin D, Boulder offers its residents a healthy, outdoor lifestyle, a thriving arts scene and a foodie paradise. And with more PhDs per capita than any other city in the US, tech pros who choose to call Boulder home will join one of the most educated workforces in the country.

Who’s hiring IT pros?
1. Ball Aerospace
2. University of Colorado
3. Ball Corporation
4. Lockheed Martin Corporation
5. Zayo Group
6. NetApp
7. CA Technologies
8. Google
9. Northrop Grumman
10. Seagate Technology
No. 20

Colorado Springs, Colorado

The great thing about our Tech Towns index is that every town offers opportunity—and that’s certainly true when it comes to “The Springs” (as the locals say). As the first city to log on to the World Wide Web in 1968, Colorado Springs has a rich history of advancing the IT industry. When you add in a diverse military presence, the region becomes a natural fit for IT and cybersecurity companies looking to grow, which is why major corporations like Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin Corporation, Booz Allen Hamilton and Raytheon are among those hiring IT workers in the area.

In fact, in the past 12 months, there were more than 8,000 technology jobs posted and the number of IT jobs will grow by an estimated 5 percent over the next 5 years. With a median tech talent salary of $90,438 a year, Colorado Springs IT pros are making similar salaries to those in other Colorado cities on our list, but the cost of living is lower than both Boulder and Denver. Combine that with mineral springs, clean air, and a reputation for an active, outdoor lifestyle, and it’s no surprise that Colorado Springs is becoming an attractive destination for young professionals.

Who’s hiring IT pros?

1. Northrop Grumman
2. General Dynamics
3. Lockheed Martin Corporation
4. Booz Allen Hamilton
5. Raytheon
6. Harris Corporation
7. Native Hawaiian Veterans
8. SAIC
9. Davidson Technologies
10. ManTech International Corp.
CompTIA Tech Towns Index Backgrounder

Overview
CompTIA’s Tech Town Index is a snapshot created to provide some guidance on locations to consider a tech job. It is not meant to measure everything. It gives a unique look into ‘key locations’ as it goes beyond number of jobs and considers factors such as job postings, real wages and projected job growth.

The initial ‘top 20’ metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are selected based on location quotient (LQ) using Burning Glass data, i.e. number of job postings over the last 12 months per 10,000 people employed in that MSA.

A location quotient is a measure of concentration, comparing local concentrations to the national level. All 20 of these MSAs have ‘much higher demand than average’ as far as number of job postings by number of people employed in comparison to the US.

Additional factors are then considered to develop CompTIA's ranking among these 20 MSAs, including actual number of job ads, job growth, cost of living (CoL) and earnings adjusted for CoL.

Which variables are included in CompTIA's ranking?
CompTIA’s Index is based on two variables for each of the three main factors for job postings, CoL and job growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location Quotient Rank (no. job ads by number people employed)*</td>
<td>Burning Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Job Ads (over last 12 months)</td>
<td>Burning Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Living Index</td>
<td>Emsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Living Adjusted Median Earnings (2017)</td>
<td>Emsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Year Job Growth (percent change 2018-2019; shorter-term view)</td>
<td>Emsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Year Job Growth (percent change 2018-2023; longer-term view)</td>
<td>Emsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Salary (2017)</td>
<td>Emsi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Primary factor in determining initial list of 20 MSAs to review.

How is CompTIA's ranking determined?
CompTIA ranks each of the six variables above from 1st to 20th for each MSA. The mean average is then figured among all six variables per MSA. The resulting mean average, or score, per MSA then determines the overall ranking for CompTIA’s final list.

Additional Notes
Only large or very large MSAs (250,000 or more residents) are included in CompTIA’s Index.

On the occasion when the mean average ties, the MSA with the higher LQ is ranked higher.

CompTIA’s Index is based on data available as of August 2018. The Tech Town Index will be produced annually in order to track local IT workforce trends.

In addition to Burning Glass information on job postings, they also provide “postings/people employed in a given area and location quotients. Together, these can help make sense of raw posting counts, and provide a picture not just of how job postings are distributed across geographies, but how particular types of jobs are concentrated relative to the average, nationwide distribution and where a particular job is advertised more frequently than one would expect given the size of the employed population.”
THE BEST PLACES FOR IT PROS TO LIVE AND WORK

CompTIA’s Index is based on core IT occupations. This is slightly different from the industry and occupational definition found in Cyberstates. Cyberstates covers a broader set of tech occupations, including positions such as engineers, engineering technicians and assemblers working in tech manufacturing. However, all core IT occupations are a subset of the broader tech occupations.

Job posting data is a useful, but an imperfect proxy for job demand. Not every posting translates to a new job; hiring firms may change their plans, post multiple times for the same job, hire internally, try different approaches to find the right candidate and so forth. Also, one ad may be posted for multiple openings. Burning Glass addresses many of these issues, but not all.

Additionally, within a time period, there may be situations where a worker is hired, the person isn’t the right fit and is let go, and a firm starts the process over again. In the aggregate there is single position, but using job posting data, it may appear there are two positions. CompTIA recommends using job posting data in conjunction with BLS data to get a more complete picture of labor dynamics for a given occupation category.

CompTIA subscribes to numerous data sources including Burning Glass and Emsi. In addition to these sources incorporating US government data such as from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Emsi contains data from C2ER’s COLI.

The Cost of Living Index (COLI) is comprised of six major categories: grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services.

There are many factors to consider when evaluating wages. In addition to location, wages vary based on occupation, industry, company size, etc., as well as individual factors such as experience and education.

Additional Resources
CompTIA Cyberstates
https://www.cyberstates.org/

CompTIA Cyberprovinces
https://www.comptia.org/resources/cyberprovinces-2018

CompTIA IT Employment Tracker (monthly)
https://www.slideshare.net/comptia/comptia-it-employment-tracker-october-2018


BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook (job outlook, salaries, etc. for IT occupations)
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/home.htm