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Ready to buy? These 10 Connecticut cities and towns have plenty of homes priced well for first-time buyers



By **KENNETH R. GOSSELIN**
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Home sales across Connecticut increased for the second month in a row in October, a new report this week showed, and first-time homebuyers — often an active purchasing segment — surely played a part.

But where might first-time buyers be settling into their starter homes?

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To find out where first-time buyers might be landing, The Courant first asked the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, which has an active first-time buyer program. Through a little more than the first 10 months of this year, first-time homebuyers paid an average of \$195,738 among more than 2,400 loans, CHFA said.

With that average, The Courant then asked The Warren Group, which tracks real estate trends in New England, to sort sales of single-family houses statewide, through October of this year. Warren used a range of \$185,738 to \$205,738 to broaden a bit from the average price provided by CHFA. The sales reported for each town here reflect that calculation.

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The sampling isn't scientific and there could be some downsizings in the mix. But the results show towns and cities that are likely on the radar of first-time homebuyers.

Here is the top 10 list:



The third annual Fall for Enfield festival was held on the town green this year. (Dennis Hohenberger/Special to Courant Community)

1. Enfield

Number of sales: 109

Population: 43,120

Median household income: \$73,494

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One fact: Due to a surveyor's error in 1642, Enfield was initially settled as part of Massachusetts but a century later, seceded to Connecticut.

Paul and Nancy Reiman capture a photo of the fall foliage from Castle Craig in Meriden in October. (Aaron Flaum/Record-Journal via AP) (Aaron Flaum/AP)

2. Meriden

Number of sales: 95



Population: 62,875

Median household income: \$57,350

One fact: The stone Castle Craig observation tower atop East Peak may have been inspired by a Norman French tower, a Turkish tower on the Danube or an ancient tower in Scotland.

Lake Compounce in Bristol is the oldest continuously operating amusement park in the United States.

3. Bristol

Number of sales: 93

Population: 59,535

Median household income: \$64,586

One fact: Bristol's Lake Compounce is the oldest continuously operating amusement park in America, opened in 1846.

The Barnum Museum on Main Street in downtown Bridgeport. (Christian Abraham, Associated Press)

4. Bridgeport

Number of sales: 85

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Population: 148,729

Median household income: \$44,841

One fact: Despite its urban, industrial image, Bridgeport has more than 1,300 acres of public space, earning it the nickname, “The Park City.” Two of them, Seaside and Beardsley parks, were the vision of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York’s Central Park.

William Brown, director of the Eli Whitney Museum in Hamden, stands in the armory barn built by Whitney in 1816, when he was in the business of making guns. The ornate barn is an example of Whitney’s ingenuity. (STEPHEN DUNN)

5. Hamden

Number of sales: 81

Population: 62,545

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Median household income: \$74,281

One fact: Iconic inventor Eli Whitney established a factory complex in Hamden in the early 19th century, after supercharging the South's economy with the cotton gin. In his Hamden factory, he perfected the innovation of the milling machine for interchangeable rifle parts.

The Shady Glen restaurant is known for its famous fried cheese cheeseburger. (Dan Haar / Hartford Courant)

6. Manchester

Number of sales: 78

Population: 62,697

Median household income: \$67,325

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One fact: Geno Auriemma, longtime head coach of the UConn women's basketball team, lives in Manchester.

Advanced Grow Labs, one of the first licensed medical marijuana producers in Connecticut is located in West Haven. (Mark Mirko / Hartford Courant)

7. West Haven

Number of sales: 78

Population: 58,318

Median household income: \$55,299

One fact: West Haven, incorporated as a town in 1922 and a city in 1961, is the state's youngest city despite being one of the state's oldest settlements.

A summertime concert at Great River Park in East Hartford. (Courant File Photo)

8. East Hartford

Number of sales: 67

Population: 53,241

Median household income: \$52,049

One fact: Silver Lane, a major thoroughfare in East Hartford, may owe its name to the Revolutionary War when French troops camped there and were paid in silver. Or, it may simply have been the location of a well-known local silversmith.

A portion of Tweed New Haven Airport is in in East Haven. (Patrick Raycraft/Hartford Courant)

9. East Haven

Number of sales: 64

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Population: 29,332

Median income: \$63,051

One fact: East Haven soda company Foxon Park Beverages is a town landmark, using the same recipe since its founding in 1922.

Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford was first to manufacture the helicopter. Sikorsky was acquired by Lockheed Martin in 2015. (Cloe Poisson)

10. Stratford

Number of sales: 58

Population: 51,903

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One fact: Stratford claims a place in aviation history as the site of a flight by Gustave Whitehead in 1901, a full two years before the famed flight by the Wright Brothers in Kitty Hawk, N.C.

SOURCES: The Warren Group; Connecticut Economic Resource Center community profiles; courant.com; w3r.org; connecticuthistory.org; bridgeport.org; eliwhitney.org

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