

Open Forum 2

Web Site Transcript

Chapter 1

A = Drew Grant, newscaster

B = Roberta Jackson, reporter

C = Kenny Flint, student

D = Fiona Maxwell, city planner

A: WTVA Action News at 6. I'm Drew Grant. Our lead story this evening: It's official—you live in the best place in America. Every year, City Select magazine lists the best places to live in the United States, and this year number one is right here in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our reporter Roberta Jackson explains why.

B: When it comes to naming the best place to live in America, you might expect to see places like New York City, Seattle, or San Francisco at the top of the list. But according to Kevin Ingles, editor of City Select magazine, you need look no further than Charlottesville. Among the advantages of living here, Ingles says, are that Charlottesville has little suburban sprawl and a beautiful, natural environment in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Let's face it, who wouldn't want to live here during fall's amazing changing colors? Or in winter with its perfect ski season, in spring when the flowers are blooming with life, or even in summer when you can escape the humidity of the East Coast? And as the home of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville has all the recreational and educational opportunities you could want in a small town. I'm standing here with Kenny Flint, a college student and Charlottesville resident. Kenny, how did you decide to come to Charlottesville?

C: I grew up in New York City—concrete everywhere, air pollution, all that traffic, you know. Here, I'm in the countryside—I look out my window at mountains. I feel closer to nature in Charlottesville than I ever did back in New York.

B: But there's nature in New York, too. What about Central Park?

C: Yeah, that's a great park with the lake and fountains and the art museums. But . . . it's so . . . planned, you know? There are busy roads on all sides, so it's like man-made nature. And I lived miles from Central Park. I had to drive or take the subway there. Nature here in Charlottesville is all around . . . and it's really natural—it's wild.

B: But does the natural beauty of the environment ever distract you from your studies?

C: Well . . . I've got to tell you. Sometimes, I'm sitting in class and I look out at the trees and mountains, and my mind drifts off.

B: When choosing its winner each year, City Select also looks at the cost of living and the cost of buying houses. Charlottesville's house prices are quite high, but the cost of living is low, so this is a very affordable city. Of course, now that the secret's out, everyone is going to want to move to Charlottesville. Reporting live from Charlottesville, I'm Roberta Jackson. Back to you in the studio, Drew.

A: Thank you, Roberta. This announcement by City Select is not all good news, though. The number one city on the list a few years ago was Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ann Arbor, like Charlottesville is a college town with a high standard of living, good public schools, and lots of natural beauty, so many people moved there. The increase in population has caused some new problems. There are now more cars, which means that there is more air pollution and more damage to the roads.

Another problem in Ann Arbor is sprawl—as the city has become busier, both new and old residents have moved out, bringing pollution and traffic to suburbs and nearby villages. The increase in demand for houses also pushed up the price of buying a home. For more on this aspect of the story, we turn to a city planner here in Charlottesville, Fiona Maxwell. Fiona, can we handle an increase in population?

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D: Yes and no. We have enough space to expand without creating sprawl and without destroying parkland . . . however, house prices in Charlottesville are already high, and we're going to need greater housing diversity if the city expands. This is an exciting opportunity, but it would be a shame if the cost of living here becomes so high that many people can't afford to live in the best place in America.

A: One more question, Fiona. Which city would you chose as the best in America?

D: Well, I live here too, so I would of course say Charlottesville . . . but I think the big cities can be great places to live too—Atlanta, for example, is a very well planned city and it's very affordable. But I still wouldn't move there!

A: Thank you, Fiona. So, it sounds like this announcement may turn out to be a double-edged sword for our town. I guess we'll find out. For more on this story, be sure to check our Web site . . .