

Life's a little cheaper in Dothan

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There are many reasons people live in Dothan, and one of them has always been the low cost of living.

And according to the ACCRA *Cost of Living Index* for the second quarter 2008, the city continues to be the best bargain in the state among the state's 10 metropolitan areas.

With an index of 87.9, the city's overall cost of living is 12.1 percent below the national average and the 19th-lowest among 318 metro areas in the U.S. The city's costs, comparatively, have decreased from first quarter 2008, when the index was the 23rd lowest in the country.

"Obviously, this is really important," said Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce President Matt Parker. "It is one of the matrixes that people and companies look at before they come into or move into an area."

Parker said recent recruitment efforts by the Blumberg Family



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Rita Jackson, who works in the pharmacy at northside Wal-Mart, loads groceries into her car Wednesday after leaving work for the day.

Jewish Community Fund of Dothan to increase the Jewish population in the area is an initiative that benefits from this kind of data.

"It showcases the benefits of the community," he said.

All Alabama metro areas have a cost of living below the national

average, which is 100. They include Dothan, Decatur (89.3), Tuscaloosa (90.6), Gadsden (90.9), Florence (91.2), Birmingham (91.5), Huntsville (92.0), Anniston (93.1), Mobile (94.2) and Auburn (96.7).

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Parker said he recognizes it is sometimes difficult for local people to see their cost of living as low.

"If you have lived somewhere else, you realize it. The comments I get from newcomers or people relocated here, they take issue with people when they hear them com-

plain about the cost of things. They lived in areas where costs were much, much higher — from health care to housing."

In looking at costs around the country, the five most expensive cities to live in are Manhattan, N.Y., San Francisco, Honolulu, Queens, N.Y., and San Jose, Calif. The five least expensive metro areas are Pryor Creek, Okla., Joplin, Mo., Seguin, Texas, Harlingen, Texas, and Garden City, Kan. Manhattan's index is 220.3, while Pryor

Creek's is 82.4.

To contrast the difference, the cost of a backyard cookout — to include ground beef, chicken, potato chips and Coke — is 85 percent higher in Kodiak, Alaska, than it is in Manhattan, Kan. The two cities represent opposite ends of the cost of living spectrum.

By the same token, Kodiak, Alaska, has the most expensive groceries and the least expensive can be purchased in Texas in the metro cities

of Round Rock, McAllen, Seguin and San Marcos.

The cost of living index is based on the cost of housing, utilities, grocery items, transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods and services.

ACCRA stands for American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association. The ACCRA *Cost of Living Index* has been conducted since 1968 and is published by The Council for Community and Economic Research.