



**Baltimore Ranks No. 7 on the Realtor.com® Forecast of
10 Best Markets for First-Time Homebuyers in 2026**

*Affordable prices, strong local amenities, and steady economic backdrops
key to being on the top of this year's list*

Baltimore, one of the market areas served by members of the Greater Baltimore Board of REALTORS® (GBBR), ranked number 7 on the Realtor.com® forecast of Top 10 best markets for first-time homebuyers in 2026. [See Realtor.com release.](#)

This year's ranking highlights a truth for many first-time buyers: the best opportunities are often found in markets that balance attainable home prices with everyday livability. In 2026 that balance is concentrated in the eastern half of the country.

In its most recent report, Realtor.com® unveiled the Best Markets for First-Time Homebuyers in 2026. This year's ranking includes:

1. Rochester, NY;
2. Harrisburg, PA;
3. Granite City, IL;
4. Birmingham, AL;
5. North Little Rock, AR;
6. Syracuse, NY;
- 7. Baltimore, MD;**
8. St. Louis Park, MN;
9. Pittsburgh, PA;
10. Garfield Heights, OH

“Baltimore’s placement on this list underscores the long-term value our market provides first-time homebuyers — from attainable homes to vibrant communities that support everyday life. It’s a city where buyers can build stability without sacrificing access, convenience, or character.” said Tiffany Harris, GBBR’s 2026 President.

“Buying your first home is one of the biggest financial and lifestyle decisions you’ll make, and where you buy can not only influence how soon you can take that step, it can shape the tradeoffs that homebuying requires,” said Danielle Hale, chief economist at Realtor.com®. “The markets that rise to the top in 2026 pair comparatively attainable forecasted home prices with strong local amenities and a supportive economic backdrop. For first-time buyers, that combination can mean a more manageable path to homeownership. All without giving up the neighborhood features that make a place feel like home.”

First-time buyers can still find affordability, but it’s the exception, not the norm

While [renting has become more affordable](#) in many markets and the path to homeownership remains challenging amid elevated home prices and mortgage rates, the places that rank highest in this year’s analysis tend to offer a rare affordability advantage: in all 10 featured markets, the median-priced listed home is affordable to the median-earning 25- to 34-year-old under the 30% “payment share of income” rule, assuming a 6.25% mortgage rate, a 30-year fixed mortgage and a 10% down payment.

Across the broader universe of more than ten thousand places evaluated, affordability is harder to come by. Only 35.2% of places in the analysis meet that 30% affordability standard at local median prices and incomes. That challenge is underscored by the fact that, even after recent improvements, the typical U.S. household still needs [seven years to save for a down payment](#), roughly double the pre-pandemic averages.

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[Renting has become more affordable](#) in many markets and the path to homeownership remains challenging amid elevated home prices and mortgage rates. The places that rank highest in this year’s analysis tend to offer a rare affordability advantage: In each of the featured markets, a typical 25- to 34-year-old could buy a median-priced home and spend less than 30% of their income on the monthly mortgage — the standard benchmark for affordability.

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Familiar places return and the geography stays decidedly east

For the second year in a row, the West is absent from the top 10, driven in part by higher home prices that aren’t matched by proportionately higher local incomes, alongside stronger post-pandemic inventory recovery that can temper appreciation expectations. With the exception of Baltimore, this year’s top markets are located in the eastern half of the country but not on the coast, offering first-time buyers a blend of attainable home prices and livability.

Urban advantages show up in the 2026 list

A common assumption is that first-time buyers must look to the suburbs or the outskirts to find an affordable home. The 2026 ranking challenges that narrative: six of the 10 featured places are the principal city of their metro. Because the methodology accounts for amenities such as shopping, day care, restaurants, grocery stores and nightlife — as well as commute times — centrally located markets can outperform suburban peers by offering more “everyday convenience” without requiring a tradeoff on price.

Affordable pockets in otherwise pricier regions

Each of the 10 featured markets has a median listing price below the national median and below its metro median, reinforcing that these are affordable pockets within relatively attainable metros.

2026 Projections for Baltimore, MD

- Rank: 7
- Region: South
- 2026 Forecasted 25- to 34-Year-Old Homeowner Share of Households: 19.10%
- 12 Month Ending November 2025 Inventory per 1,000 Household: 52.6
- 12 Month Ending November 2025 Median Listing Price: \$223,900
- 12 Month Ending November 2025 Price to Income Ratio: 3.6
- 2026 Forecasted Average Travel Time to Work (Minutes): 31
- 2025 First-Time Homebuyer Location Score (out of 10): 9

Methodology

This year, the candidate list of places was filtered to expose only areas with at least 500 homes for sale. The inventory of homes for sale and local median listing prices are from Realtor.com[®] December 2024 to November 2025 listing data and are reported at the Census-Designated Place level. The population, household count, household income, and average commute time data were sourced from 2025 and 2026 Claritas estimates based on U.S. Census Bureau data. Population and household count numbers, household incomes, and average commute times are at the city/place level. The stated forecasted unemployment rates are Moody’s Analytics projections of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics for each city/place’s surrounding metro area. Location scores for each place were aggregated from property-level assessments made by Local Logic in the third quarter of 2025 pertaining to the availability of shopping, day cares, restaurants, grocery stores, and nightlife near each known property in the place.

Local Logic is a leading location intelligence company using over 100 billion data points to power smarter real estate decisions. Trusted by 50 million users each month across 8,000-plus websites, Local Logic helps consumers, investors, and governments optimize neighborhoods, developments, and cities. Learn more at locallogic.co.

Affordability estimates are based on mortgage payments before taxes and insurance, assuming a 10% down payment and a 6.25% mortgage rate. The 2026 sales and price forecasts are Realtor.com® projections for each city/place's surrounding metro area as detailed in our 2026 Housing Forecast and Top Housing Markets for 2026 reports.

About the Greater Baltimore Board of REALTORS®

Founded in 1858 as the Baltimore Board of Real Estate Brokers and Property Agents, the Greater Baltimore Board of REALTORS® (GBBR) was the nation's first real estate board. A founding member of the National Association of REALTORS® and the Maryland REALTORS® association, GBBR has strived to promote the highest ethical standards and professional practices in the real estate industry for more than 167 years.

GBBR serves more than 4,500 members in the Greater Baltimore area. GBBR provides training, public and professional education classes and workshops, arbitration and mediation services, and works in the legislative and regulatory arenas to ensure that laws and policies benefit its members and preserve property owners' rights. For more information, visit www.GBBR.org.