

# Fastest-Growing Cities in Illinois



by [Maggie Clark](#) on April 5, 2014

Written By Maggie Clark

It has taken Illinois longer to come out of the recession than other states and unemployment here ([8.7%](#) in January 2014) is still higher than the national average ([6.6%](#) in January 2014). However, there are many areas throughout the state showing signs of growth. The state was the [eighth](#)-largest source of tech jobs in the country in 2012, boosted by tech [companies](#) in Chicago and startups in Champaign, our #3 city. Vibrant and diverse Chicago suburbs continue to attract new residents and support local businesses, and in central Illinois, innovative redevelopment projects like [Uptown Normal](#) are attracting new investment to the region.

Our top 10 fastest-growing cities in Illinois ranged from diverse suburbs to college towns to regional hubs. Our analysis examines the following variables to determine which areas are experiencing the fastest growth:

- 1. Population growth.** We measured growth in the working-age population from 2009 to 2012.
- 2. Employment growth.** We evaluated growth in the percentage of employed residents from 2009 to 2012.
- 3. Income growth.** We calculated growth in the median income for workers from 2009 to 2012.

For a more detailed review of our methodology, please see the “Methodology” section at the bottom of the study.

For more information on these and other places, check out [NerdWallet Cities](#) and NerdWallet’s [Cost of Living Calculator](#).

## The Top 10 Fastest-Growing Cities in Illinois

### 1. Chicago Heights

It was Chicago Heights’ mix of employment growth, population growth and income growth that earned it the top spot on our list. In Chicago Heights, the median income increased by 10.3% between 2009 and 2012 and the city added more than 1,500 residents during that time, according to U.S. Census data. Along with new residents, new businesses are moving to town: Senior Lifestyle Corp. recently [opened](#) Prairie Green at Dixie Crossing, a new assisted living community, which features more than 100 apartments and 45 new [jobs](#) in Chicago Heights. Pita Pan, a bakery that produces flatbread for national fast-food chains, recently completed an expansion of its bakery in Chicago Heights and [plans](#) to add at least 40 new jobs. Chicago Heights is also home to Prairie State College, a community college offering two-year [degrees](#) and professional [certifications](#).

### 2. Melrose Park

Melrose Park’s 20.4% population growth secured this west Chicago suburb’s number two spot on our list. The Hispanic community is the largest group of the 18,641 residents in Melrose Park: 69.6% of residents [self-identified](#) as Hispanic or Latino in 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. To make sure everyone has a voice in village government, the village has a dedicated Hispanic [liaison](#) to partner with the Latino community in town. City planners predict that Melrose Park’s population will [reach](#) almost 30,000 residents by 2030. Most of that growth will be among young adults ages 20-30, planners [predict](#).

### 3. Champaign

A hub of central Illinois, Champaign is home to the University of Illinois flagship campus and saw median incomes in town grow by 32.2% between 2009 and 2012. Tech companies are expanding in Champaign, including new [jobs](#) added at Intel and an [expansion](#) of the Yahoo! offices at [The Research Park at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#). The Research Park is also supporting job and income growth in Champaign through its startup incubator [EnterpriseWorks](#), which supports science and technology startups with lab and office space, entrepreneurship classes and the resources of the university community. The city’s population also grew by 4% between 2009 and 2012, laying claim to almost 70,000 residents.

### 4. Woodstock

Woodstock was the filming location for the cult classic Groundhog Day, but it’s not just groundhogs that are popping up in Woodstock. The percentage of residents employed increased by 9.1% between 2009 and 2012, earning Woodstock a high spot on our list. Aside from the yearly Groundhog Day [festival](#), Woodstock is home to large businesses including [Catalent](#), a biotechnology company, and [Centegra Hospital-Woodstock](#), which both [employ](#) more than

1,000 workers in the Woodstock area. Woodstock is [located](#) in McHenry County on the border of Wisconsin and Illinois, situated between Chicago, Rockford, Ill., and Milwaukee, Wis.

## 5. Rolling Meadows

It was Rolling Meadows' working-age population growth that earned it a spot on our list: its population grew by 8.4% between 2009 and 2012. Located in the northwest Chicago suburbs in Cook County near Arlington Heights, Rolling Meadows is an inclusive community with a city ride-share [program](#), a free [discount prescription drug program](#) and [bilingual](#) city employees to welcome Spanish-speaking residents. Adding to the community's desirability, this summer it plans to restart its weekly "[farmers and food trucks](#)" program where people can purchase fresh food, flowers and crafts from local vendors.

## 6. Berwyn

Berwyn's working-age population surged by 16.1% between 2009 and 2012, one of the highest population growth rates on our list. Through a Neighborhood Stabilization Program grant from the state, Berwyn [offers](#) homebuyers 10-30% off the appraised value of newly remodeled bungalow-style homes, plus down payment assistance. Add that to the new [restaurants](#), diverse [population](#) and outdoor [activities](#) the city has to offer, plus easy [access](#) to downtown Chicago and it's no surprise this city is growing so quickly.

## 7. South Holland

South Holland's mix of employment growth and population growth put this village on our radar. The population of this south Chicago suburb grew by 8.5% between 2009 and 2012 and the unemployment rate in South Holland continues to drop. New businesses, including Panera Bread and Extreme Clean Car Wash, [opened](#) last summer. This summer, the Town Center Marketplace will [reopen](#) with a farmer's market and locally made crafts and baked goods on sale each Friday. For residents looking to start a small business or recruit talented employees, South Suburban College's [Business and Career Institute](#) offers small business [counseling](#) and continuing education and [certification](#) for adult learners.

## 8. Normal

Normal's combination of population, employment and income growth makes this town anything but normal. Located in central Illinois between Champaign, the state capital of Springfield and Peoria, Normal saw a 4.5% population increase between 2009 and 2012 and incomes here grew by 7.8% during that same period. Normal has undergone a big change since 2009: using federal transportation money and private investment, Normal built a new town center known as [Uptown Normal](#), with a children's museum, a [roundabout](#) traffic circle that recycles rain water and [Uptown Station](#), a centralized transportation hub. Dozens of local [retail stores](#) and [restaurants](#) have popped up in the new town center. Normal is also home to [Illinois State University](#), which [employs](#) 3,251 people, making it the second-largest employer in the region.

## 9. Glen Ellyn

Due west of Chicago near the large suburbs of Naperville and Downers Grove sits Glen Ellyn, which saw growth in income, population and employment, earning it a spot on our list. The median income for workers in town increased by 5.2% between 2009 and 2012. Glen Ellyn's [downtown](#) is booming, boasting three new businesses this [year](#) and four last [year](#). The village is also [located](#) on the Union Pacific/West Line of Chicago's Metra commuter rail, so residents can easily commute to jobs in downtown Chicago. For future business growth, local entrepreneurs can partner with the [College of DuPage](#), located in Glen Ellyn, to find great [employees](#) and get help with [entrepreneurial development](#).

## 10. Des Plaines

Population and employment growth drove Des Plaines' ranking on our list. The city's population increased by 6.4% between 2009 and 2012 and the percentage of residents employed grew by 5% during that same period. New opportunities continue to emerge at [Metropolitan Square](#), a mixed-use development of shops, restaurants and condominiums in Des Plaines. The area is also home to the new [Rivers Casino](#), offering gambling, food, live entertainment and jobs for local residents. The city is within a 15-minute drive to O'Hare International Airport and has its own stop on the Union Pacific/Northwest [line](#) of the Metra commuter rail into downtown Chicago.

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Rank	City	Nearest Big City	2009-2012 Working-Age Population Growth	2009-2012 Employment Growth	2009-2012 Median Income Growth	Overall Growth Score
1	Chicago Heights, Illinois	Chicago	7.4%	9.7%	10.3%	59.2
2	Melrose Park, Illinois	Chicago	20.4%	2.7%	(18.0%)	52.9
3	Champaign, Illinois	Champaign	4.0%	1.9%	32.2%	52.3
4	Woodstock, Illinois	Rockford	3.7%	9.1%	0.4%	51.1
5	Rolling Meadows, Illinois	Chicago	8.4%	4.2%	(4.6%)	47.4
6	Berwyn, Illinois	Chicago	16.1%	(1.3%)	(6.8%)	46.7
7	South Holland, Illinois	Chicago	8.5%	3.4%	(7.3%)	45.5
8	Normal, Illinois	Bloomington	4.5%	2.2%	7.8%	45.0

9	Glen Ellyn, Illinois	Chicago	2.4%	4.5%	5.2%	45.0
10	Des Plaines, Illinois	Chicago	6.4%	5.0%	(11.2%)	44.2

## Methodology

The overall score for each place was derived from each of these measures:

**1. Population growth from 2009 to 2012** made up 33.3% of the total score. Data for the working-age population (16+) comes from the 2012 U.S. Census American Community Survey 3-year estimate for all places in the state, Table CP 03.

**2. Employment growth from 2009 to 2012** made up 33.3% of the total score. Data for the percent of employed residents comes from the 2012 U.S. Census American Community Survey 3-year estimate for all places in the state, Table CP 03.

**3. Income growth from 2009 to 2012** made up 33.3% of the total score. Data for the median earnings for workers comes from the 2012 U.S. Census American Community Survey 3-year estimate for all places in the state, Table CP 03.

We evaluated 119 cities, towns, villages and census-designated places (CDPs) in Illinois for this study. Places were excluded for lack of data availability for all metrics and inconsistent data reporting between 2009 and 2012.

Image: Seth Anderson/Flickr: <https://flic.kr/p/6EywRc>

## Fastest-Growing Cities in Illinois- Full Ranking

Rank	City	2009-2012 Working-Age Population Growth	2009-2012 Employment Growth	2009-2012 Median Income Growth	Overall Growth Score
1	Chicago Heights, Illinois	7.4%	9.7%	10.3%	59.2
2	Melrose Park, Illinois	20.4%	2.7%	(18.0%)	52.9
3	Champaign, Illinois	4.0%	1.9%	32.2%	52.3
4	Woodstock, Illinois	3.7%	9.1%	0.4%	51.1
5	Rolling Meadows, Illinois	8.4%	4.2%	(4.6%)	47.4
6	Berwyn, Illinois	16.1%	(1.3%)	(6.8%)	46.7
7	South Holland, Illinois	8.5%	3.4%	(7.3%)	45.5
8	Normal, Illinois	4.5%	2.2%	7.8%	45.0
9	Glen Ellyn, Illinois	2.4%	4.5%	5.2%	45.0
10	Des Plaines, Illinois	6.4%	5.0%	(11.2%)	44.2
11	Quincy, Illinois	1.8%	2.4%	11.3%	43.6
12	New Lenox, Illinois	6.1%	1.5%	1.5%	43.5
13	Oak Forest, Illinois	6.8%	2.7%	(5.6%)	43.3
14	Oak Lawn, Illinois	11.0%	(0.8%)	(5.5%)	42.8
15	Plainfield, Illinois	5.5%	1.1%	1.0%	42.1
16	Urbana, Illinois	6.2%	2.6%	(7.2%)	42.1
17	Lansing, Illinois	8.0%	1.8%	(9.5%)	42.0
18	Carol Stream, Illinois	1.4%	5.8%	(7.5%)	41.5
19	Aurora, Illinois	10.8%	(0.3%)	(12.0%)	41.1
20	Arlington Heights, Illinois	6.2%	1.4%	(5.3%)	40.9
21	Bloomington, Illinois	3.9%	0.3%	5.6%	40.9
22	Belleville, Illinois	8.8%	(2.2%)	(0.1%)	40.4
23	McHenry, Illinois	6.0%	2.5%	(11.2%)	40.3
24	Cicero, Illinois	8.9%	(2.6%)	0.2%	40.1
25	Burbank, Illinois	8.1%	(0.5%)	(7.6%)	39.5
26	Westmont, Illinois	6.5%	0.1%	(6.4%)	39.2
27	Naperville, Illinois	4.8%	(0.7%)	1.7%	39.0
28	Mount Prospect, Illinois	3.3%	2.5%	(7.2%)	39.0
29	Hanover Park, Illinois	15.4%	(7.3%)	(3.8%)	38.8
30	Galesburg, Illinois	1.9%	(1.5%)	12.3%	38.6
31	Blue Island, Illinois	6.6%	(1.3%)	(2.8%)	38.4
32	Streamwood, Illinois	6.4%	(1.4%)	(2.6%)	38.2

33	Buffalo Grove, Illinois	0.8%	2.7%	(3.1%)	38.1
34	Gurnee, Illinois	8.1%	(1.6%)	(7.8%)	37.9
35	Wheaton, Illinois	(2.0%)	3.4%	(0.1%)	37.3
36	Round Lake Beach, Illinois	6.4%	(1.8%)	(3.7%)	37.3
37	Pekin, Illinois	0.4%	2.8%	(5.2%)	37.1
38	Woodridge, Illinois	(3.1%)	3.6%	1.5%	37.0
39	Park Forest, Illinois	(0.4%)	3.9%	(8.0%)	36.9
40	DeKalb, Illinois	(5.5%)	(3.0%)	35.3%	36.9
41	Roselle, Illinois	6.2%	(0.5%)	(10.4%)	36.6
42	Elmwood Park, Illinois	2.3%	(1.7%)	5.3%	36.3
43	Edwardsville, Illinois	(0.9%)	0.6%	4.7%	36.2
44	Lake Zurich, Illinois	(1.5%)	2.1%	(0.3%)	35.9
45	Wheeling, Illinois	6.2%	(0.8%)	(12.1%)	35.6
46	Freeport, Illinois	2.2%	0.8%	(7.3%)	35.5
47	Belvidere, Illinois	4.1%	0.8%	(12.8%)	35.4
48	Lake in the Hills, Illinois	0.3%	1.8%	(7.5%)	34.8
49	Crystal Lake, Illinois	(3.2%)	2.8%	(1.8%)	34.6
50	Carpentersville, Illinois	1.9%	2.4%	(15.7%)	34.6
51	Moline, Illinois	0.5%	(2.1%)	6.5%	34.4
52	Orland Park, Illinois	4.5%	(2.2%)	(5.2%)	34.4
53	Joliet, Illinois	0.8%	(1.5%)	3.1%	34.3
54	Bloomington, Illinois	0.4%	(0.4%)	(0.9%)	34.1
55	Lockport, Illinois	(6.6%)	4.2%	(0.1%)	33.8
56	Palatine, Illinois	4.8%	(2.8%)	(5.4%)	33.6
57	Decatur, Illinois	1.6%	2.9%	(19.9%)	33.4
58	Machesney Park, Illinois	2.2%	(1.3%)	(5.1%)	33.3
59	St. Charles, Illinois	3.9%	(2.5%)	(5.3%)	33.3
60	Wilmette, Illinois	6.4%	(4.5%)	(5.6%)	32.9
61	Park Ridge, Illinois	8.0%	(6.1%)	(3.6%)	32.9
62	Zion, Illinois	0.3%	2.2%	(15.0%)	32.8
63	Downers Grove, Illinois	(1.8%)	2.0%	(8.6%)	32.7
64	Lombard, Illinois	4.4%	(3.8%)	(3.7%)	32.6
65	West Chicago, Illinois	4.2%	(3.2%)	(5.7%)	32.4
66	Dolton, Illinois	4.4%	(3.2%)	(6.5%)	32.3
67	O'Fallon, Illinois	3.5%	(3.4%)	(4.2%)	31.9
68	Northbrook, Illinois	0.7%	(1.8%)	(2.9%)	31.8
69	Glenview, Illinois	1.3%	(1.1%)	(7.9%)	31.6
70	Oak Park, Illinois	(2.5%)	(0.3%)	(0.3%)	31.5
71	Crest Hill, Illinois	4.2%	(6.0%)	3.0%	31.5
72	Libertyville, Illinois	(1.8%)	(0.9%)	(0.1%)	31.5
73	Collinsville, Illinois	(3.1%)	1.7%	(7.0%)	31.4
74	Lisle, Illinois	(4.5%)	2.7%	(9.6%)	30.5
75	Waukegan, Illinois	(0.1%)	(1.4%)	(6.0%)	30.4
76	Lake Forest, Illinois	(6.5%)	(0.8%)	10.1%	30.4
77	Rockford, Illinois	(6.1%)	3.0%	(7.8%)	29.9
78	Elgin, Illinois	4.2%	(2.2%)	(17.1%)	29.9
79	Glendale Heights, Illinois	8.5%	(5.4%)	(16.7%)	29.9
80	Bartlett, Illinois	5.0%	(5.5%)	(7.6%)	29.4
81	Chicago, Illinois	(3.2%)	(0.5%)	(3.8%)	29.4
82	Batavia, Illinois	(2.7%)	(1.3%)	(2.4%)	29.1

83	North Chicago, Illinois	(1.4%)	0.5%	(14.5%)	28.9
84	Schaumburg, Illinois	5.0%	(6.1%)	(6.6%)	28.9
85	Peoria, Illinois	(5.2%)	0.5%	(4.3%)	28.4
86	Addison, Illinois	(1.2%)	(0.4%)	(12.7%)	28.4
87	Bolingbrook, Illinois	6.8%	(7.7%)	(7.8%)	28.1
88	Calumet City, Illinois	(2.2%)	(0.5%)	(12.0%)	27.6
89	Evanston, Illinois	(2.6%)	1.6%	(19.2%)	27.6
90	Geneva, Illinois	(6.5%)	2.7%	(12.5%)	27.5
91	Algonquin, Illinois	(9.1%)	0.5%	3.7%	27.4
92	Grayslake, Illinois	(2.1%)	(0.4%)	(14.2%)	27.0
93	Springfield, Illinois	0.5%	(4.7%)	(4.9%)	26.9
94	Niles, Illinois	0.8%	(4.5%)	(7.5%)	26.5
95	Loves Park, Illinois	(12.4%)	3.2%	(0.1%)	26.4
96	Elk Grove Village, Illinois	4.4%	(7.6%)	(7.0%)	26.0
97	Tinley Park, Illinois	(8.3%)	1.4%	(6.6%)	25.9
98	East Peoria, Illinois	(1.0%)	(5.8%)	0.5%	25.7
99	Rock Island, Illinois	1.0%	(4.5%)	(11.2%)	25.5
100	Carbondale, Illinois	(3.6%)	(5.7%)	6.7%	25.3
101	Alton, Illinois	(5.5%)	(1.6%)	(4.2%)	25.2
102	Morton Grove, Illinois	2.3%	(7.8%)	(2.7%)	25.1
103	Homer Glen, Illinois	(2.0%)	(4.1%)	(5.6%)	24.9
104	East Moline, Illinois	(2.8%)	(2.9%)	(8.5%)	24.8
105	Maywood, Illinois	(1.9%)	(6.2%)	2.3%	24.8
106	Villa Park, Illinois	(6.4%)	(0.4%)	(9.5%)	24.2
107	Kankakee, Illinois	1.2%	(10.5%)	6.5%	23.4
108	Hoffman Estates, Illinois	(6.0%)	(2.3%)	(5.8%)	23.3
109	South Elgin, Illinois	(1.7%)	(8.4%)	6.3%	23.3
110	Granite City, Illinois	(2.8%)	(6.7%)	0.6%	22.5
111	Highland Park, Illinois	(4.5%)	(4.7%)	(3.8%)	22.1
112	Vernon Hills, Illinois	(5.6%)	(3.9%)	(4.7%)	21.8
113	Romeoville, Illinois	(3.7%)	(5.9%)	(2.6%)	21.7
114	Elmhurst, Illinois	(5.2%)	(5.2%)	(2.0%)	21.4
115	Skokie, Illinois	(0.3%)	(6.8%)	(12.0%)	20.6
116	East St. Louis, Illinois	(6.1%)	(0.8%)	(21.6%)	19.9
117	Danville, Illinois	(0.3%)	(8.4%)	(11.3%)	18.7
118	Darien, Illinois	(1.7%)	(9.4%)	(3.9%)	18.4
119	Mundelein, Illinois	(4.3%)	(4.8%)	(20.1%)	16.6

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