



# Regional Snapshot: The Cost of Living in Metro Atlanta



Atlanta Regional Commission, June 2019  
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## In Summary...

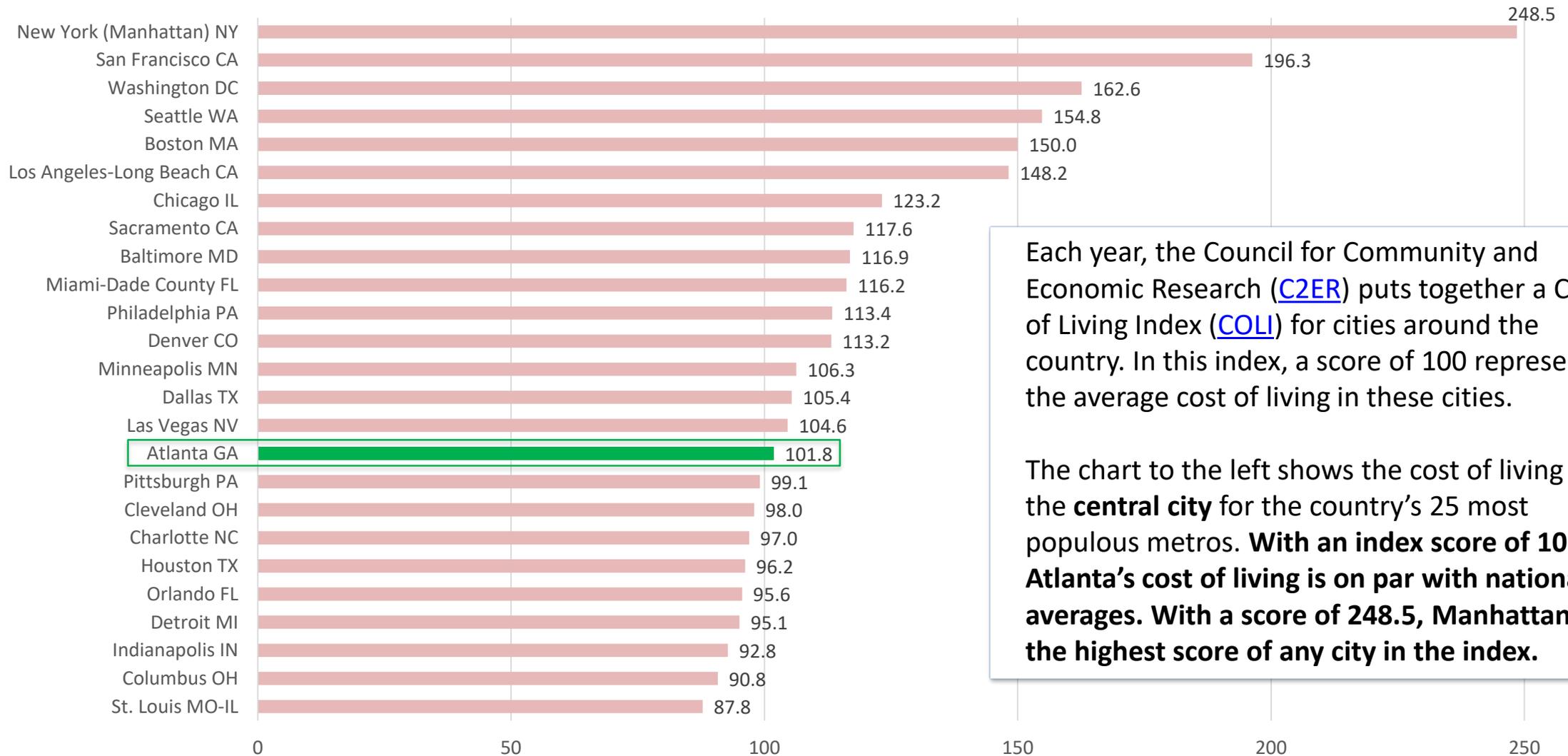
Atlanta's cost of living is on par with the national average.

Housing cost is the biggest driver for higher costs of living in the country's most expensive cities, which often see prices for things like groceries and medical expenses closer to those of cities with a lower cost of living.

Atlanta's cost of living related to housing is slightly elevated compared to some of its peer metros, but this is offset by its comparatively cheaper utility costs.

A resident living in Manhattan (the country's highest cost of living) has to make \$122,059 to have the same buying power as someone making \$50,000 in Atlanta.

## Cost of Living for 25 Largest Metros

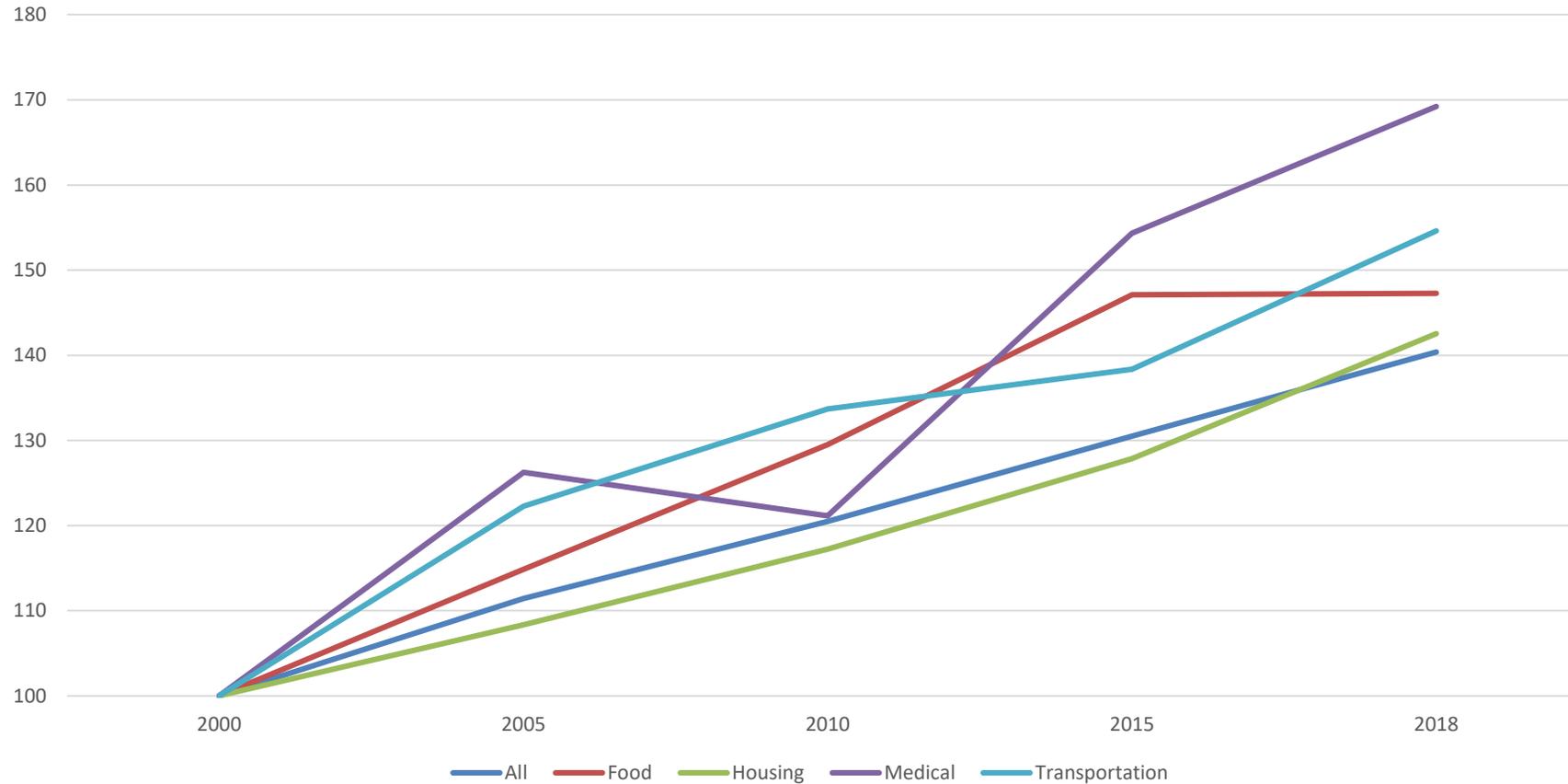


Each year, the Council for Community and Economic Research ([C2ER](#)) puts together a Cost of Living Index ([COLI](#)) for cities around the country. In this index, a score of 100 represents the average cost of living in these cities.

The chart to the left shows the cost of living in the **central city** for the country's 25 most populous metros. **With an index score of 101.8, Atlanta's cost of living is on par with national averages. With a score of 248.5, Manhattan has the highest score of any city in the index.**

# Cost of Living in Atlanta Over Time

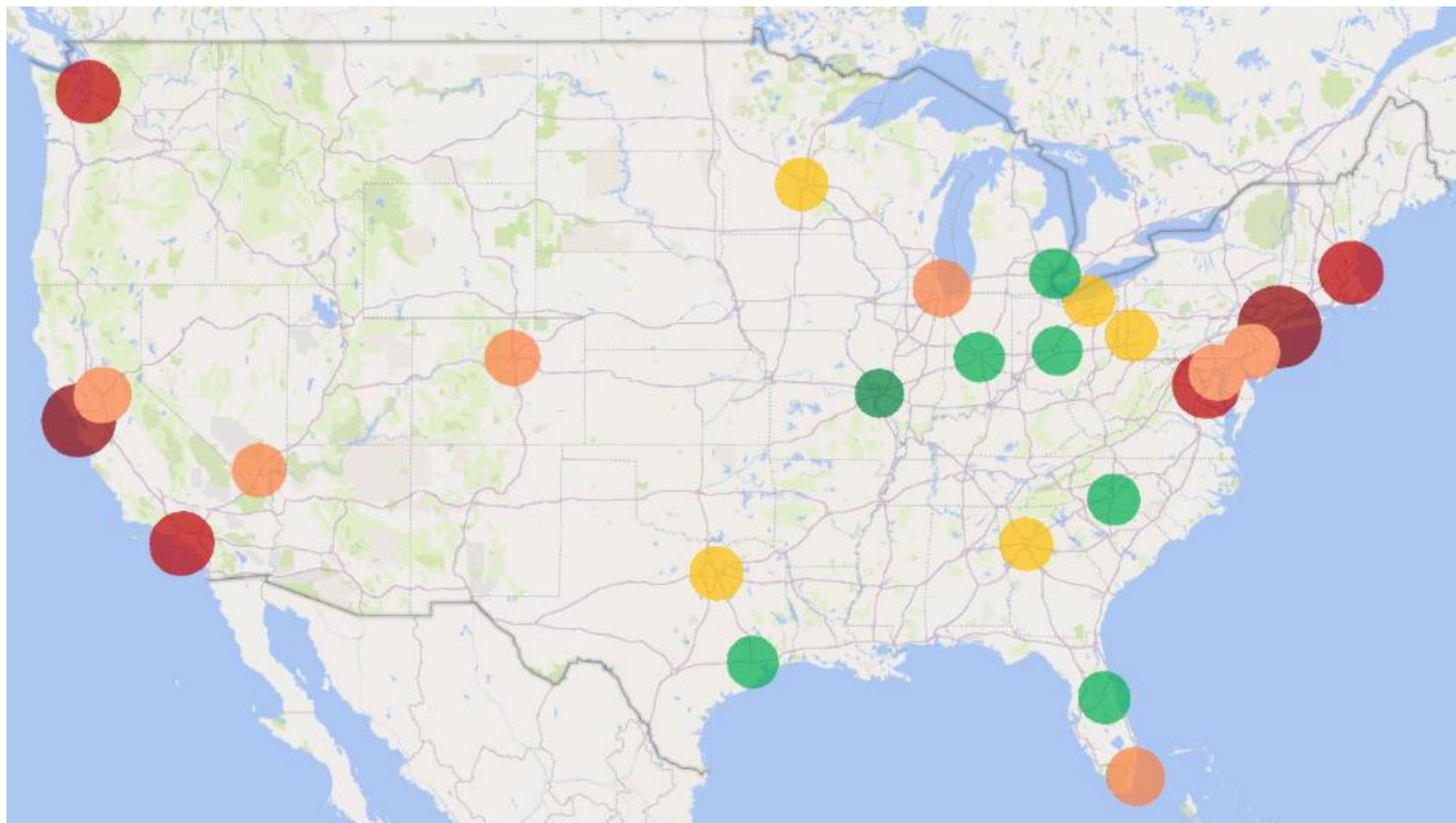
Atlanta MSA CPI, 2000-2018



The C2ER index offers a point-in-time snapshot of Atlanta’s cost of living compared to cities around the country. This chart shows Atlanta’s [Consumer Price Index](#) over time, transformed so the baseline year of 2000 is an index score of 100.

Produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **this index measures change in the cost of consumer items over time.** Here we can see that **overall cost in the city has increased by 40 percent since 2000, and we’ve seen the biggest gains in medical and transportation costs.**

# Mapping Cost of Living

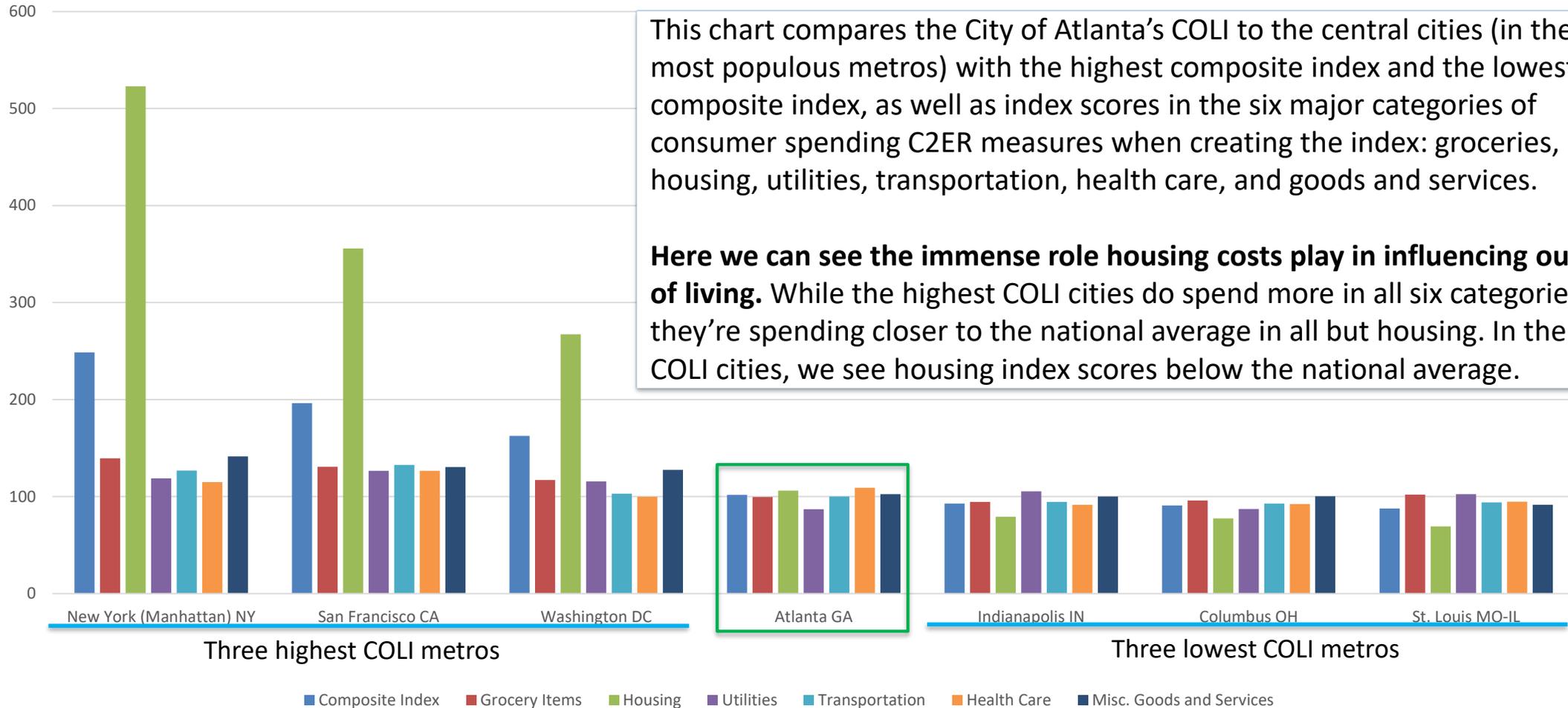


This map shows how the cost of living (COLI) in these cities varies based on location. Green represents central cities whose cost of living is below average, yellow represents cities whose cost of living is average, and shades of red represent cities whose cost of living is above average.

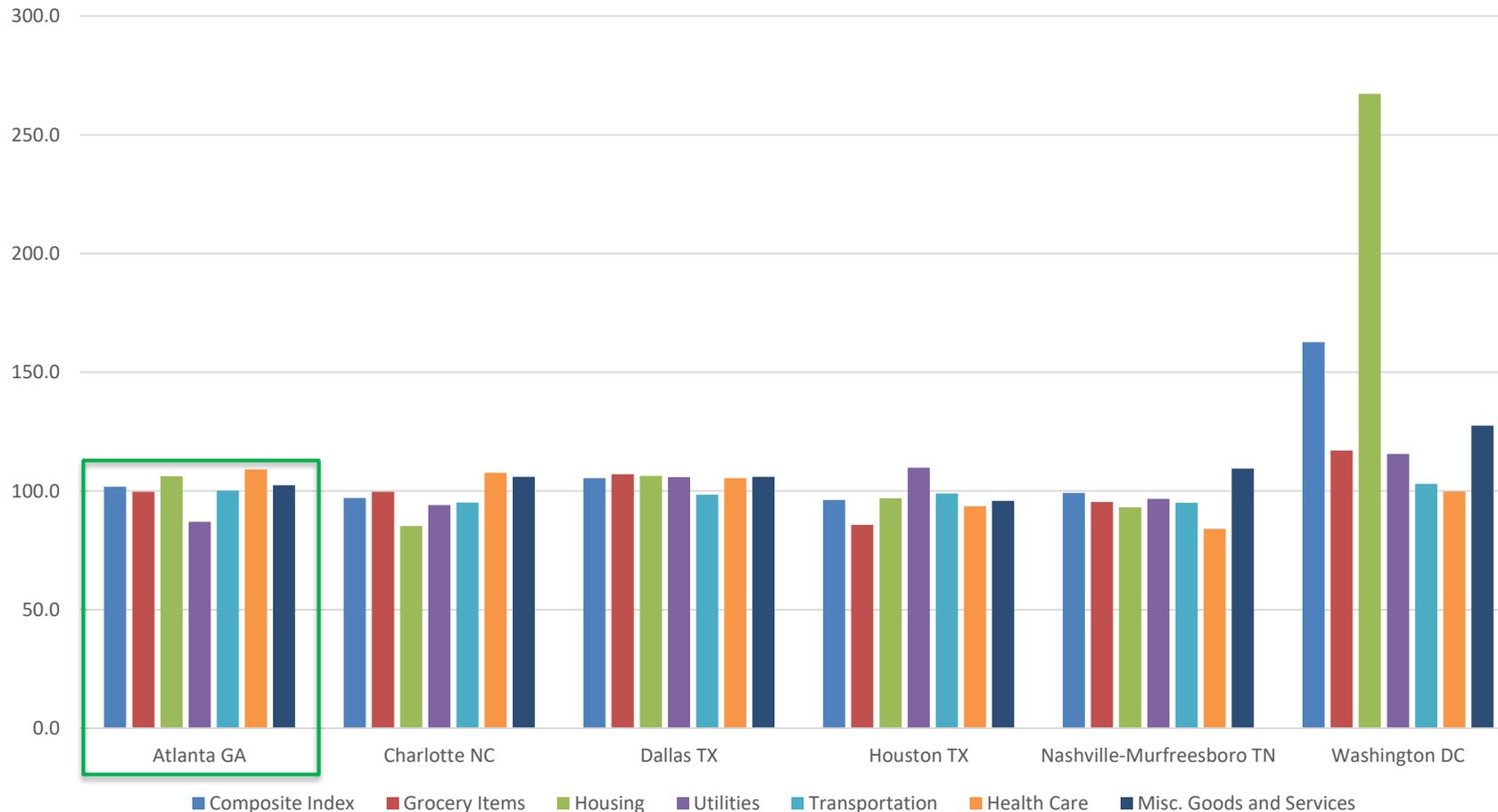
**Generally, the most affordable of the country's largest metros are in the Midwest and Southeast. The cities with the highest cost of living are in the Northeast and along the West Coast.**

● 87.8 (lowest, St. Louis) ● 90.8 - 97 ● 98 - 106.3 ● 113.2 - 123.2 ● 148.2 - 162.6 ● 196.3 & 248.5 (highest, San Francisco and New York)

# Cost of Living Comparison: Highest vs Lowest



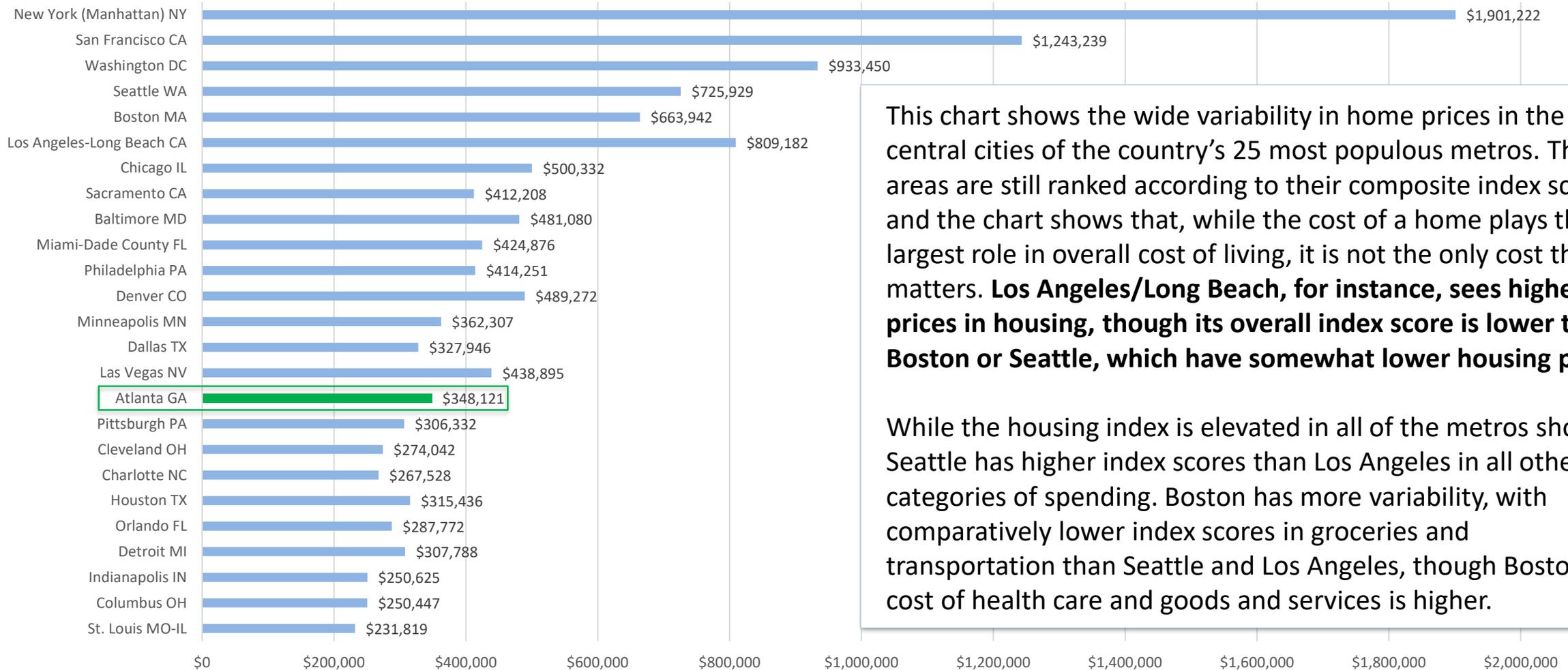
# Cost of Living Comparison for Peer Metros



A look at the central cities in Atlanta’s peer metros, defined by ARC’s [Catlyst economic strategy](#), shows that **we enjoy low utility costs both compared to these areas and nationally, with an index score of 87.**

Health care is an area where we see higher costs than in our peer metros. We have an index score of 109.1 in this category, where as Washington, DC — which has a significantly higher COLI score — has a health care index score of 99.8.

# Average Home Price for 25 Largest Metros

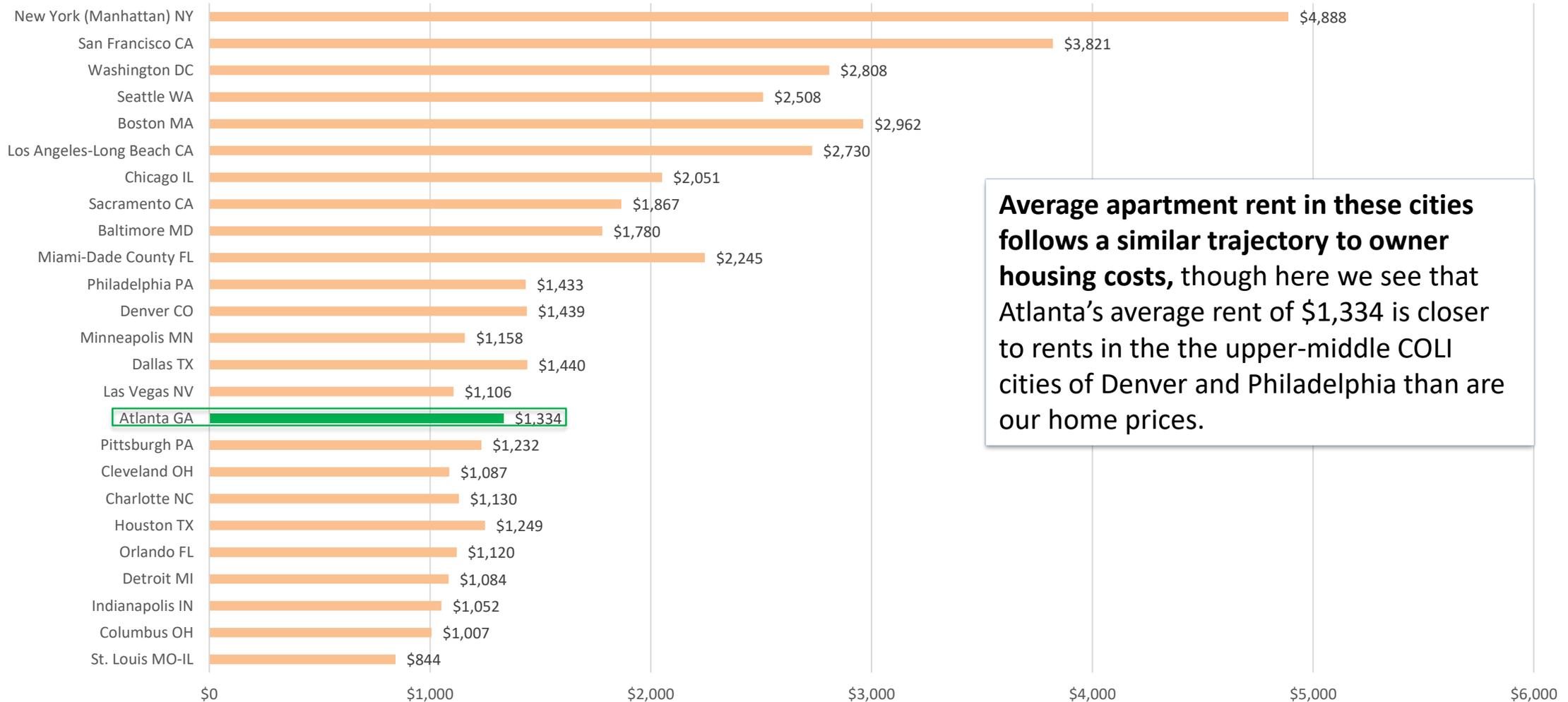


This chart shows the wide variability in home prices in the central cities of the country's 25 most populous metros. The areas are still ranked according to their composite index score, and the chart shows that, while the cost of a home plays the largest role in overall cost of living, it is not the only cost that matters. **Los Angeles/Long Beach, for instance, sees higher prices in housing, though its overall index score is lower than Boston or Seattle, which have somewhat lower housing prices.**

While the housing index is elevated in all of the metros shown, Seattle has higher index scores than Los Angeles in all other categories of spending. Boston has more variability, with comparatively lower index scores in groceries and transportation than Seattle and Los Angeles, though Boston's cost of health care and goods and services is higher.



## Average Monthly Apartment Price: 25 Largest Metros



**Average apartment rent in these cities follows a similar trajectory to owner housing costs, though here we see that Atlanta's average rent of \$1,334 is closer to rents in the the upper-middle COLI cities of Denver and Philadelphia than are our home prices.**





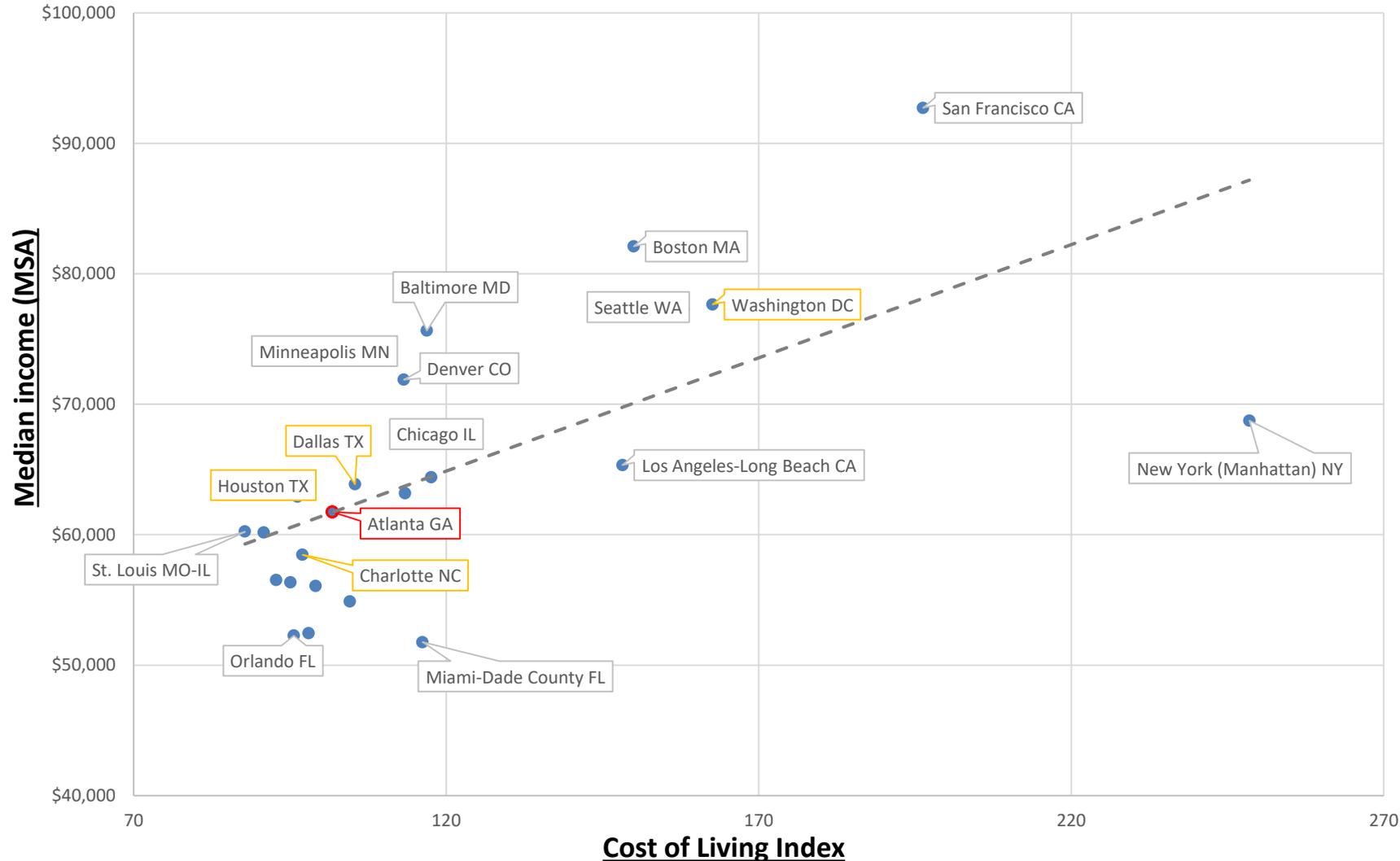
# Cost of Select Items: Highest COLI metros and Atlanta peer metros

City	Ground Beef	Half-Gallon Milk	Dozen Eggs	Bananas	Coffee	Wine	Energy Cost
New York (Manhattan) NY	\$5.48	\$2.56	\$2.51	\$0.79	\$5.77	\$12.06	\$ 217.46
San Francisco CA	\$3.66	\$2.86	\$3.37	\$0.79	\$6.58	\$8.45	\$ 237.13
Washington DC	\$4.52	\$2.49	\$1.74	\$0.57	\$4.50	\$11.37	\$ 214.35
Atlanta GA	\$4.01	\$1.90	\$1.98	\$0.59	\$4.77	\$12.80	\$ 128.19
Charlotte NC	\$3.93	\$1.75	\$1.39	\$0.54	\$3.76	\$9.80	\$ 153.16
Dallas TX	\$3.87	\$2.62	\$1.87	\$0.50	\$5.29	\$8.18	\$ 184.17
Houston TX	\$3.64	\$1.18	\$1.58	\$0.48	\$3.51	\$7.04	\$ 197.51
Nashville-Murfreesboro TN	\$4.21	\$1.78	\$1.51	\$0.56	\$4.03	\$9.76	\$ 157.08
<b>AVERAGE</b>	\$3.91	\$1.93	\$1.80	\$0.56	\$4.35	\$8.83	\$ 167.73

The table to the left shows the average cost of several types of common grocery store purchases as well as of energy. Cells highlighted in dark orange-red are significantly higher than the average of the group shown, and cells in green are lower.

It shows that Atlanta's costs in most of these items (except wine) are about average. Again, we can see that **our energy costs are much lower than the nationwide average and even compared to our peer cities.**

# Relationship Between Income and Cost of Living

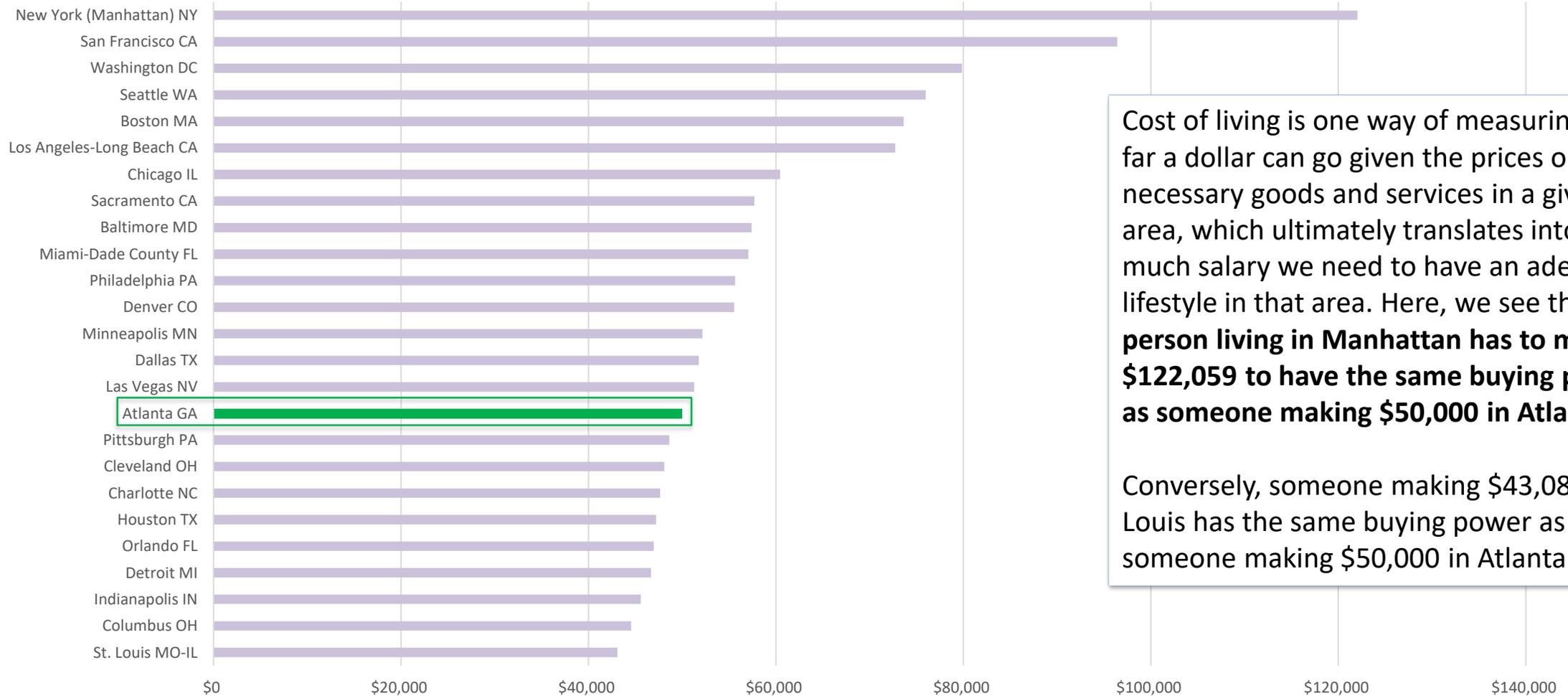


The chart at left shows how median household earnings at the MSA level compare to the central city’s cost of living index. The dashed line indicates the average relationship between the two. That means that **cities above the line have higher median incomes that help balance their increased cost of living**, whereas residents in cities that fall below the line have to stretch their dollar further to meet their cost of living.

Notably, **Atlanta’s income and cost of living are both on the line — essentially, this means that our cost of living is on par with our median income.**



## Income Needed For Equivalent of \$50,000 in Atlanta



Cost of living is one way of measuring how far a dollar can go given the prices on necessary goods and services in a given area, which ultimately translates into how much salary we need to have an adequate lifestyle in that area. Here, we see that a **person living in Manhattan has to make \$122,059 to have the same buying power as someone making \$50,000 in Atlanta.**

Conversely, someone making \$43,088 in St. Louis has the same buying power as someone making \$50,000 in Atlanta.

# If you are Moving From Atlanta to San Francisco and have a salary of \$50K...

If you move from Atlanta GA to San Francisco CA		
Groceries will cost:		31.12% more
Housing will cost:		234.99% more
Utilities will cost:		45.46% more
Transportation will cost:		32.46% more
Health will cost:		15.89% more

In San Francisco, you'll need to make **\$96,421** to afford the same lifestyle as an Atlantan making \$50,000. The table above shows that **the greatest increase in expenses will come from housing, which is 235 percent higher in San Francisco than in Atlanta.** The second greatest increase is in utilities, which will cost about 45 percent more.

Item	Atlanta GA	San Francisco CA	National Average
Phone	\$179.47	\$192.85	\$178.72
Tire Balance	\$46.35	\$61.14	\$47.42
Gasoline	\$2.64	\$3.50	\$2.61
Optometrist Visit	\$103.60	\$133.29	\$103.74
Doctor Visit	\$110.08	\$148.84	\$110.71
Dentist Visit	\$120.36	\$131.50	\$95.11
Ibuprofen	\$8.30	\$12.02	\$9.29
Prescription Drug	\$445.21	\$400.37	\$441.67
Hamburger	\$3.83	\$5.58	\$4.24
Pizza	\$9.99	\$11.72	\$10.32
Fried Chicken	\$3.97	\$5.75	\$4.13
Haircut	\$19.80	\$23.68	\$16.88
Beauty Salon	\$44.77	\$71.62	\$37.48
Toothpaste	\$2.33	\$2.72	\$2.40
Shampoo	\$0.83	\$1.29	\$0.99
Dry Cleaning	\$9.93	\$15.05	\$12.77
Man Dress Shirt	\$28.68	\$44.33	\$32.03
Boy Jeans	\$27.66	\$25.08	\$24.43
Women Slacks	\$27.89	\$52.84	\$31.75
Washer Repair	\$69.41	\$66.96	\$74.61
Newspaper	\$46.02	\$21.91	\$21.62
Movie	\$14.22	\$13.51	\$10.52
Yoga	\$16.47	\$20.79	\$14.83
Tennis Balls	\$2.63	\$4.40	\$2.52
Veterinary Services	\$52.58	\$61.66	\$51.47
Beer	\$9.48	\$10.46	\$9.03
Wine	\$12.80	\$8.45	\$8.83

# If you are Moving From Atlanta to Dallas and have a salary of \$50K...

If you move from Atlanta GA to Dallas TX		
Groceries will cost:		7.43% more
Housing will cost:		0.09% more
Utilities will cost:		21.47% more
Transportation will cost:		1.70% less
Health will cost:		3.40% less

In Dallas, you'll need to make **\$51,764** to afford the same lifestyle as an Atlantan making \$50,000. **The greatest increase in expenses will come from utilities, which cost 21 percent higher more than in Atlanta.** In Dallas, however, you'll see slight savings, in transportation and health-related expenses.

Item	Atlanta GA	Dallas TX	National Average
Phone	\$179.47	\$179.87	\$178.72
Tire Balance	\$46.35	\$52.05	\$47.42
Gasoline	\$2.64	\$2.38	\$2.61
Optometrist Visit	\$103.60	\$103.33	\$103.74
Doctor Visit	\$110.08	\$110.28	\$110.71
Dentist Visit	\$120.36	\$101.77	\$95.11
Ibuprofen	\$8.30	\$11.42	\$9.29
Prescription Drug	\$445.21	\$455.56	\$441.67
Hamburger	\$3.83	\$4.07	\$4.24
Pizza	\$9.99	\$8.86	\$10.32
Fried Chicken	\$3.97	\$3.96	\$4.13
Haircut	\$19.80	\$26.49	\$16.88
Beauty Salon	\$44.77	\$46.95	\$37.48
Toothpaste	\$2.33	\$2.77	\$2.40
Shampoo	\$0.83	\$1.04	\$0.99
Dry Cleaning	\$9.93	\$11.72	\$12.77
Man Dress Shirt	\$28.68	\$36.69	\$32.03
Boy Jeans	\$27.66	\$25.52	\$24.43
Women Slacks	\$27.89	\$39.38	\$31.75
Washer Repair	\$69.41	\$66.25	\$74.61
Newspaper	\$46.02	\$31.96	\$21.62
Movie	\$14.22	\$11.36	\$10.52
Yoga	\$16.47	\$19.96	\$14.83
Tennis Balls	\$2.63	\$2.67	\$2.52
Veterinary Services	\$52.58	\$64.03	\$51.47
Beer	\$9.48	\$8.51	\$9.03
Wine	\$12.80	\$8.18	\$8.83

# If you are Moving From Atlanta to Charlotte and have a salary of \$50K...

If you move from Atlanta GA to Charlotte NC		
Groceries will cost:		0.00% more
Housing will cost:		19.70% less
Utilities will cost:		8.04% more
Transportation will cost:		5.01% less
Health will cost:		1.38% less

In Charlotte, you'll only need **\$47,647** to afford the same lifestyle as an Atlantan making \$50,000. **The greatest decrease in expenses will come from housing, which is 19.7 percent less in Charlotte than in Atlanta.** You'll see a slight increase in expenditures devoted to utilities, however.

Item	Atlanta GA	Charlotte NC	National Average
Phone	\$179.47	\$174.22	\$178.72
Tire Balance	\$46.35	\$41.91	\$47.42
Gasoline	\$2.64	\$2.57	\$2.61
Optometrist Visit	\$103.60	\$122.56	\$103.74
Doctor Visit	\$110.08	\$106.56	\$110.71
Dentist Visit	\$120.36	\$115.25	\$95.11
Ibuprofen	\$8.30	\$6.91	\$9.29
Prescription Drug	\$445.21	\$475.76	\$441.67
Hamburger	\$3.83	\$4.20	\$4.24
Pizza	\$9.99	\$9.39	\$10.32
Fried Chicken	\$3.97	\$4.29	\$4.13
Haircut	\$19.80	\$17.33	\$16.88
Beauty Salon	\$44.77	\$37.13	\$37.48
Toothpaste	\$2.33	\$3.25	\$2.40
Shampoo	\$0.83	\$1.15	\$0.99
Dry Cleaning	\$9.93	\$10.24	\$12.77
Man Dress Shirt	\$28.68	\$40.97	\$32.03
Boy Jeans	\$27.66	\$20.52	\$24.43
Women Slacks	\$27.89	\$34.73	\$31.75
Washer Repair	\$69.41	\$77.00	\$74.61
Newspaper	\$46.02	\$10.83	\$21.62
Movie	\$14.22	\$11.78	\$10.52
Yoga	\$16.47	\$18.73	\$14.83
Tennis Balls	\$2.63	\$3.00	\$2.52
Veterinary Services	\$52.58	\$62.70	\$51.47
Beer	\$9.48	\$9.26	\$9.03
Wine	\$12.80	\$9.80	\$8.83