

Look for a Small Town that Meets Your 'Must Haves' and Some of Your 'Would Be Nice' Items

I enjoyed "Legal Opportunities Abound in Greater Wisconsin" (96 Wis. Law. 14 (Oct. 2023)). I am a small-town attorney who grew up in a city of 3 million people. While in law school, I met my husband who is from a town of roughly 200 residents. When it came time for me to look for my first job, my husband wanted to live in a small town, and I thought, "Why not? It will be a new adventure!" We landed in Baraboo.

One of my favorite quotes is "Life begins outside of your comfort zone." I was definitely uncomfortable at first. Shortly after we moved, I heard a "whrrr" noise through our open window. My



husband told me it was a tractor pull. I had never heard of a tractor pull and thought the only thing being pulled was my leg!

Once I adjusted to small-town life, I found it suits me, both professionally and personally. Professionally, the partnership track is usually shorter. I never lack for clients, and I don't have to advertise. I have been able to adjust my hours and income to suit the needs of me and my family. My commitment to work-life balance has been supported. I remember a partner at my first firm telling me to go home when he saw me working after 5 p.m.

On a personal level, I like the friendliness and sense of community. I have always enjoyed TV shows set in small towns, like *Northern Exposure* and *Virgin River*, because of the way everyone knows and supports each other. I like the fact that my local friends do not consist solely of other professionals. I have known a tattoo artist, a professional clown, and a former educator who became a Buddhist monk. I like the opportunities to get involved – currently I serve on the board of a nonprofit and I am a hospice volunteer.

Recently one of my college friends (an attorney for a retail giant) commented that I have done the best job (out of our group of 6) of playing and having fun. I attribute this to the flexibility I have as a sole practitioner and to the slower pace and family-first culture of Baraboo.

I have had to give up big-city conveniences like 24-hour grocery stores and lattes whenever I want them. But I don't miss the traffic congestion and constant sirens. When we need a big-city fix, we spend a long weekend in Chicago, Minneapolis, or Milwaukee.

If you are considering moving to a small town: 1) Think of it as an adventure; 2) Make a list of amenities and characteristics you want such as an airport with commercial flights nearby, a respected rural hospital, good schools, places to engage in your hobbies (lakes for fishing, trails for hiking, and so on); 3) Sort your list into "must haves," "would be nice," and "can live without."

Then look for a small town that meets all your "must haves" and some of your "would be nice" items.

Attorney Nancy Thome

Ash Street Law Office LLC, Baraboo

nthome@ashstreetlaw.com **WL**

HOW TO SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wisconsin Lawyer publishes as many letters in each issue as space permits. Limit to 500 words, no endnotes. Submit to "Letters to the Editor," *Wisconsin Lawyer*, P.O. Box 7158, Madison, WI 53707-7158, or email them to wislawyer@wisbar.org.