

Hartford edges out Buffalo to become Zillow's hottest market for 2026

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Competition among buyers will be hottest in the Northeast and Bay Area, where building has lagged

- The New York metro area is third in Zillow's list of hottest markets for 2026, followed by Providence and San Jose to round out the top five. In these markets, Zillow expects price cuts to be rare, listings to move fast and strong price growth.
- Inventory is still 63% below pre-pandemic levels in Hartford, the largest deficit among the 50 largest U.S. metros by population.
- More than 66% of homes sold above list price in Hartford in 2025, leading all major metros.

SEATTLE, Jan. 8, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Competition for houses is set to be fiercest in Hartford this year, beating back-to-back leader Buffalo in Zillow's annual [hottest markets forecast](#)¹.

Common among the Northeast and coastal California metros at the top of the list are few options for buyers to choose from. That spurred fast sales and home price growth in 2025 and should keep home values rising fast in 2026.

"Competition among buyers will be stiff and sellers will have the upper hand in this year's hottest markets. Shoppers will need to tap all the resources they can muster in these fast-moving markets, from their team of experts to tech aids to financial assistance, but successful buyers will quickly gain equity," said Zillow chief economist Mischa Fisher. "In today's market affordability is all-important, but any improvements in 2026 will depend on location."

Zillow's hottest market analysis ranks the nation's 50 most populous metros based on:

- Home price growth — both past and expected.
- 2025 Zillow data on housing market competition: how quickly homes sold, how often sellers cut prices, and the share of homes that sold for over list price.
- Job growth per new home permitted.²

Hartford ranked fourth on Zillow's 2025 predictions list, which called out a nation-leading appreciation forecast. That prediction proved prescient — home values grew faster in Hartford than in any other major metro last year, up 4.6%. The climb should continue in 2026; Hartford is forecast to lead price growth yet again this year, though at a slightly more relaxed pace of 3.9% annually.

Buyers faced extreme pressure in Hartford last year, with a nation-high 66.4% of homes sold over asking price and the second-lowest share of homes with a price cut, at just 16.5%. Injections of inventory aren't likely to come from either existing owners or builders; buyers should be prepared for bidding wars and broken hearts.

Zillow forecasted Buffalo to be the hottest market in [2024](#) and [2025](#), and both calls were on-the-money. Sellers held a strong advantage in negotiations there throughout last year, giving it the highest competition value on Zillow's [market heat index](#) among major metros.

At third on the list is the New York metro area, which includes parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Contributing to its high ranking in 2026 are a positive home price forecast, strong employment, and the lowest share of listings with a price cut among major metros at just 13.5%. [Economists at StreetEasy® have predicted](#) a faster-moving market with more inventory within New York City's five boroughs this year.

Marketwide Zillow predictions for 2026 call for home values to recover from a flat spot in 2025 and rise modestly by 1.7%. Mortgage rates are forecast to continue a gentle downward path toward 6%, which should give a boost to home sales, and affordability should improve somewhat for renters and buyers alike.

How shoppers should handle hot markets:

- Financial Preparation. On-time rent payments (even past ones) can [help raise renters' credit scores](#). Shopping [around for a mortgage](#), getting pre-approved and utilizing down payment assistance programs (found on every Zillow listing) can give shoppers a financial and competitive edge.
- Shop smart. Digital touring tools can quickly separate top options from incompatible ones, while Zillow's BuyAbility tracks mortgage rates and price cuts to make sure search results are within the budget.

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2026 Hottest Markets Rank	Metropolitan Area	2025 Rank	Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI), October 2025	ZHVI Year over Year (YoY) Growth, Oct. 2025	Home Value Growth Forecast, YoY in Oct. 2026	Zillow Market Heat Index 2025	Change in Inventory Versus 2018–2019 Averages
1	Hartford, CT	4	\$381,760	4.3 %	3.9 %	89.6	-63.0 %
2	Buffalo, NY	1	\$277,499	3.7 %	2.5 %	95.8	-39.1 %
3	New York, NY	41	\$704,284	2.9 %	1.5 %	76.3	-48.4 %
4	Providence, RI	3	\$503,409	2.5 %	3.0 %	70.0	-54.9 %
5	San Jose, CA	48	\$1,558,466	-2.1 %	1.2 %	90.6	-26.7 %
6	Philadelphia, PA	5	\$378,054	3.0 %	1.7 %	59.8	-39.4 %
7	Boston, MA	16	\$717,711	1.2 %	1.5 %	75.2	-30.3 %
8	Los Angeles, CA	34	\$941,869	-1.2 %	1.1 %	63.4	-18.5 %
9	Richmond, VA	9	\$383,275	1.3 %	2.1 %	69.1	-34.2 %
10	Milwaukee, WI	42	\$369,303	3.7 %	2.1 %	65.2	-25.7 %

¹ This press release includes forward-looking statements about future housing market conditions, mortgage rates, and other economic factors. These statements are based on current expectations and assumptions, which are subject to change. Actual outcomes may differ materially due to changes in economic and market conditions. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date of this release, and Zillow Group undertakes no obligation to update them.

² The 2025 Hottest Markets analysis included household growth data from the U.S. Census that was not available for this year's study.

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