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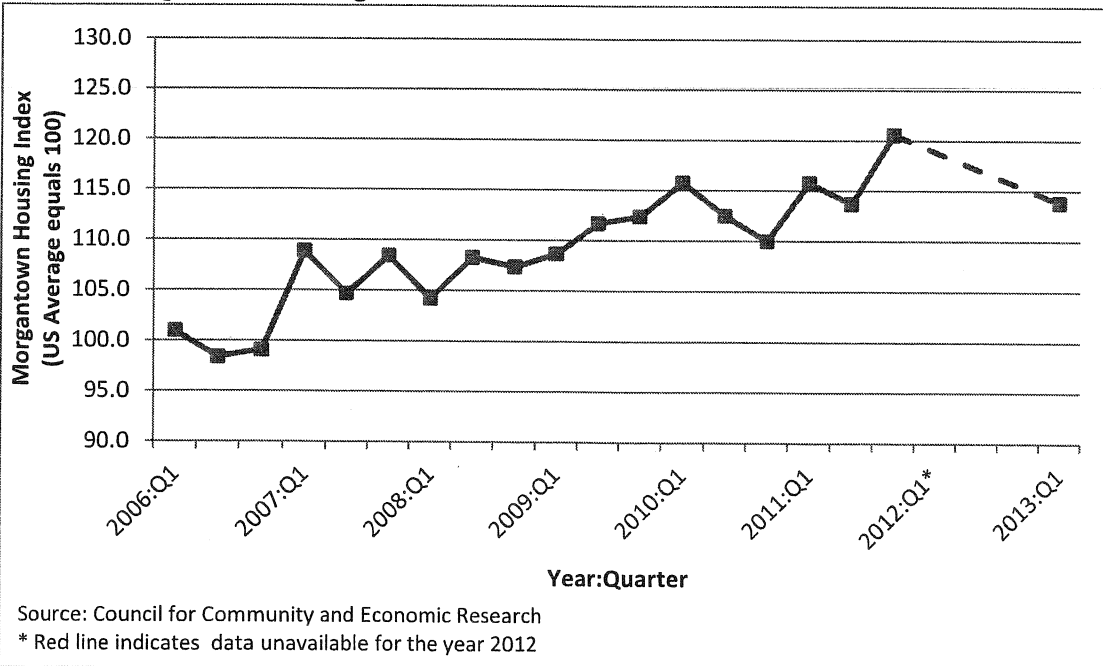
## Cost of Living in Morgantown Higher than National Average

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The cost of living in Morgantown was 2.7 percent higher than the national average in January, according to new survey data. Most of the elevated cost of living is attributed to above-average housing prices, which were 13.8 percent higher than the rest of the country.

Morgantown's housing costs have been rising relative to the national average since the 2006 (Figure 1). In the first quarter of that year, Morgantown's housing index was 101.0, indicating that the city's housing prices were 1.0 percent above the national average, which is set to 100. By the first quarter of 2013, Morgantown's housing index had risen to 113.8.

**Figure 1: Morgantown housing cost index 2006-2013**



The new data come from a survey conducted in January by the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) and the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER). The organizations collected price data for a basket of 57 types of goods and services in 302 cities across the United States.

The index compares the cost of living among professional households in the top income quintile in each participating urban area. The index calculates a city's relative cost of living in comparison to the national average. Six broad categories are considered as part of the index: groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous purchases. These categories are then aggregated to create a city's composite score.

Morgantown's composite index fell in the middle of the three West Virginia metropolitan areas that participated in the survey (Table 1). The city's cost of living was 8.8 points above Martinsburg, but 0.9 points below Winchester, VA, metropolitan area, which includes Hampshire County, WV. Morgantown was higher than most nearby comparable university communities, however. Columbus, OH, for example, had a composite score of 88.0, which was 14.7 percentage points below Morgantown's.

**Table 1: Cost of living index comparison**

	Composite index	Groceries	Housing	Utilities	Transportation	Health Care	Misc.
<b>West Virginia Participating Metro Areas</b>							
Morgantown, WV	102.7	96.0	113.8	95.5	100.0	95.8	100.6
Winchester, VA-WV	103.6	100.2	98.7	99.6	95.2	106.5	113.4
Martinsburg, WV	93.9	93.1	80.4	100.3	113.1	101.3	95.2
<b>Other University Communities</b>							
Cincinnati, OH (University of Cincinnati)	90.8	98.9	76.5	83.1	106.5	100.8	94.5
Columbus, OH (Ohio State University)	88.0	92.3	78.1	96.9	94.7	95.9	88.1
Knoxville, TN (University of Tennessee)	89.0	90.3	83.8	89.0	86.2	94.1	93.1
Lexington, KY (University of Kentucky)	91.4	92.0	78.4	96.1	101.5	98.2	95.8
Pittsburgh, PA (University of Pittsburgh)	95.6	104.8	80.4	96.7	106.6	103.3	98.8
Tampa, FL (University of South Florida)	92.7	98.6	76.2	94.5	105.0	97.5	98.0
<b>Major US Metro Areas</b>							
Atlanta, GA	96.6	100.3	87.8	91.6	103.4	105.2	100.3
Boston, MA	140.5	125.2	176.7	147.2	108.6	125.0	129.0
Denver, CO	103.2	99.9	113.4	99.8	89.2	102.5	102.6
Houston, TX	99.8	87.6	108.0	98.7	97.2	100.3	99.2
Miami, FL	106.8	103.6	114.4	97.1	112.5	99.1	103.7
New York, NY (Manhattan)	227.1	146.4	461.7	131.6	131.8	105.1	148.6
Philadelphia, PA	121.9	122.2	140.5	126.5	106.5	98.1	114.0
San Francisco, CA	168.6	122.6	310.0	95.8	120.1	114.7	118.7
Washington, DC	141.7	111.3	246.6	111.6	104.1	103.3	96.2

Source: Council for Community and Economic Research Cost of Living Index May, 2013

Morgantown's housing index was considerably higher than both of the other participating metro areas in West Virginia. Martinsburg's housing index was 80.4, while Winchester's was at 98.7. About three-quarters of the housing index is based on the average sale price of a new four-bedroom, 2,400-square-foot house. Morgantown's average house price in that category was \$348,491, well above the national average of \$293,504. The remainder of the housing price is determined by the average rental rate for a two-bedroom apartment. Morgantown's average rent was \$876, slightly below the national average of \$887.

Morgantown's cost of living was about average to slightly below average for the other categories considered in the survey. Groceries, utilities and health care prices were between 4 and 5 percentage points below the national average. Prices for transportation, which includes car maintenance and gasoline, were equal to the national average. And miscellaneous purchases, which include a wide variety of goods ranging from veterinary services to sports equipment, cost about 0.6 percent more than the national average.