As a recent transplant to Pittsburgh from San Francisco, I have something of an outsider's perspective on life in the 'burgh. In a nutshell, my message to Pittsburgh and the people who live here: Give yourself some credit, you're sitting on top of one of America's best-kept secrets.

I believe Pittsburgh suffers from an acute inferiority complex, because it isn't considered "cool" by people who haven't lived or spent time here.

Pittsburgh is an enigma to many Americans, giving rise to misconceptions and fallacies - such as the idea that Pittsburgh is a dirty, polluted, industrial city centered around steel mills. Because of this errant, misinformed mind-set, people living here seem to have bought into the idea that Pittsburgh is a second-class city, taking a back seat to "cool" cities like New York, San Francisco and Boston.

As a relative outsider looking in, I'm here to tell you Pittsburgh holds its...
own against almost any American city. Consider everything it has to offer.

For starters, a monthly mortgage payment on a five-bedroom house here is less than the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco or New York -- sounds ludicrous, but it's not an exaggeration.

One of the reasons I moved here from the Bay Area was the allure of actually being able to afford my own apartment, without needing roommates to help pay the rent. On top of that, the mere notion of buying a house someday isn't the pipe dream here that it was in Northern California.

Pittsburgh is a hotbed of corporate activity, including a growing technology sector, and what promises to be a formidable biotech presence.

These are the kind of industries that attract people from other cities, and I hope will help reverse Pittsburgh's "brain drain." Renowned academic institutions such as Carnegie Mellon and Pitt benefit the area immeasurably while fueling the local economy.

Of equal importance, unlike San Francisco, the economy here does not experience wild fluctuations, which translates to fewer "here today, gone tomorrow" companies.

For a city its size, Pittsburgh offers an amazing amount of culture and entertainment.

I have been pleasantly surprised with the amount of night life around town, even for a single "30-something." Even if I don't feel like patronizing one of the city's many restaurants, taverns and saloons, there's an abundance of theater, musical venues, symphony, opera, museums and other cultural endeavors at my disposal.

What's more, the number of foundations in town helping fund the arts is a testament to the city's commitment to keeping the area culturally thriving.

The addition of Heinz Field and PNC Park help position Pittsburgh in a positive light as well (if only we can get the Pirates out of last place).

And if that isn't enough, at the rate the polar ice caps are melting, Pittsburgh might soon be home to some of America's most exclusive beachfront property! I digress.
I have been told I am the poster boy for the kind of person Pittsburgh seeks to attract -- a young, single, professional transplant from a larger city.

If people would start to realize what has become clear to me -- that Pittsburgh has the makings of one of America's premier cities, and is actually a pretty cool place to hang your hat -- my scenario won't be an isolated incident.

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