#1 Best Place to Live in Texas — U.S. News 2026

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U.S. News & World Report ranks Killeen-Temple MSA highest in Texas

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THE DATA

1.16x

Ratio of Highest to Lowest County Median Rent in the Market (2024)

Bell County’s median rent is 16% higher than Lampasas County’s, revealing a growing internal divergence.

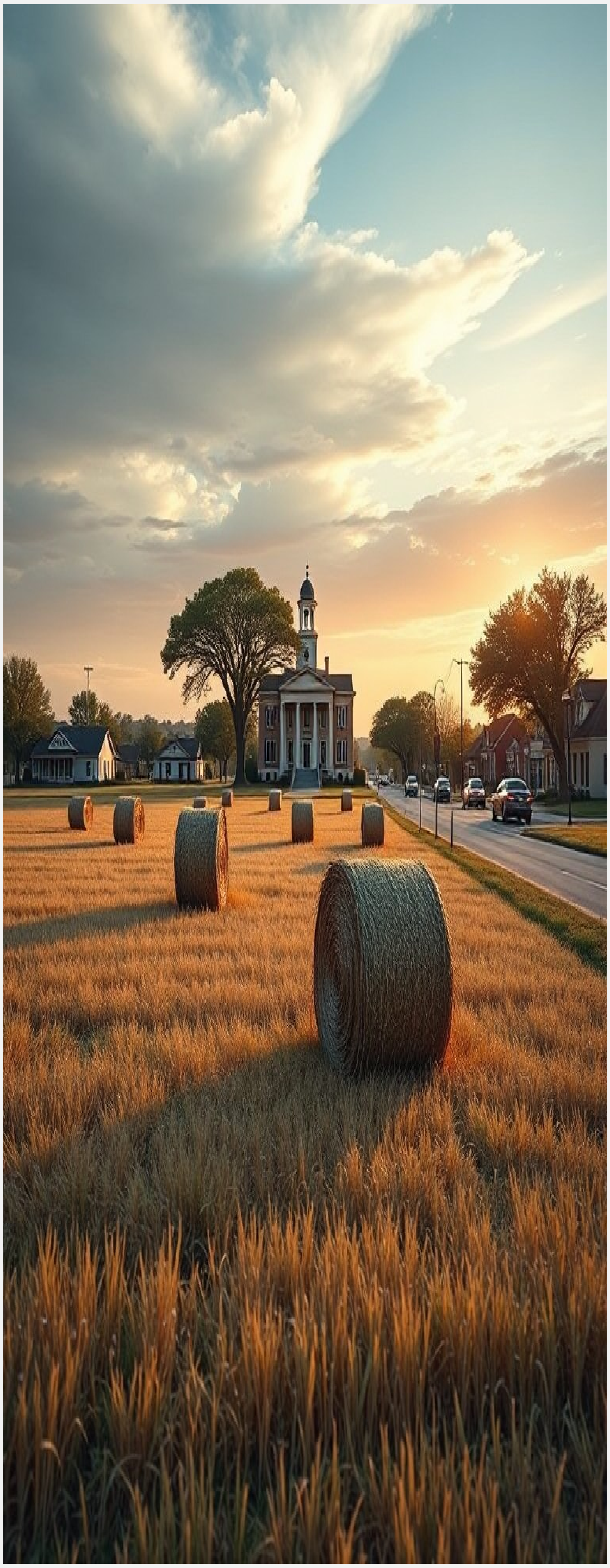
This 1.16x ratio reflects a structural split in housing affordability within the Killeen-Temple MSA. Bell County, home to Fort Cavazos and major military housing, commands higher rents due to demand from active-duty personnel and healthcare workers. Lampasas County, while benefiting from spillover growth, maintains more moderate pricing. The gap suggests that rent dynamics are not uniform across the region, despite shared employment engines.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-17-killeen-temple-within-county-gross-rent

01

Affordability is not uniform

The 1.16x rent spread reveals that 'best place to live' is not synonymous with 'most affordable.' While the MSA leads Texas in livability rankings, the cost of entry varies sharply between counties. Bell County’s higher rents reflect its concentration of military and medical employment, driving demand and limiting access for lower-income households. This internal stratification challenges the assumption that regional success translates to equitable housing outcomes.



02

Investment opportunity lies in disparity

The rent gap creates a strategic asymmetry: Bell County offers premium returns on rental property due to sustained demand, while Lampasas County presents a lower barrier to entry for first-time investors. The divergence is not a flaw—it's a signal. Investors who understand this internal market structure can position assets to capture both high-yield opportunities in Bell and long-term appreciation in Lampasas, leveraging the MSA's overall resilience.

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