

#1 in Memphis metro, #1 in Tennessee — ALEX Intelligence 2026

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Lakeland leads all Tennessee cities in severe rent burden — ALEX Intelligence, 2026

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THE DATA

38.5%

Renters Over the 50% Rent Threshold (2024)

In Lakeland, nearly four in ten renters spend more than half their income on rent.

This figure — 38.5% — represents the share of renter households in Lakeland where housing costs exceed 50% of gross income, the threshold for 'severe rent burden' as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is the highest in both the Memphis metro and the entire state of Tennessee, signaling a deep structural strain on household budgets.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 • ALEX Intelligence computation

<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-10-12-memphis-severe-rent-burden-place-mkt>



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01

Rent burden as a proxy for economic pressure

The fact that Lakeland holds the top rank in both metro and state for severe rent burden is not an anomaly — it reflects a broader trend in Memphis-area neighborhoods where wage growth has failed to keep pace with rental inflation. This imbalance is not a sign of market strength but of market imbalance, where affordability has been sacrificed for short-term supply increases. The result is a population under chronic financial stress, limiting savings, mobility, and long-term investment in housing quality.

02

The hidden cost of labor supply

Lakeland's extreme rent burden is not isolated; it is deeply tied to regional workforce dynamics. As industrial expansion — such as Articast's new Madison County facility — accelerates, demand for low-to-mid-wage labor grows. But with stagnant wages and insufficient affordable housing, workers are forced to absorb escalating rent costs. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle: high housing costs deter new talent, yet low wages prevent rent relief. The real estate market, therefore, is not just a reflection of affordability — it is a constraint on economic growth.



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