

Boulder — #1 of 5: Renters Over the 50% Rent Threshold

Boulder has the highest rent burden in Colorado

43.1% of renters spend over half their income on rent

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THE DATA

43.1%

Renters Over the 50% Rent Threshold (2024)

Boulder leads Colorado in the share of renters spending more than half their income on rent.

This figure reflects a structural imbalance in housing affordability, where demand from high-income remote workers and second-home investors continues to outpace supply. The result is a persistent strain on moderate- and low-income households, even as median home prices remain stable above \$800,000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-10-27-boulder-severe-rent-burden-place-mkt>



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01

Affordability is not a price issue — it's a distribution issue

The 43.1% figure is not a reflection of high rent alone, but of how income and housing are distributed across Boulder's economy. While high-tech and remote work sectors attract capital, the wage growth for service, hospitality, and public sector workers has not kept pace. This creates a widening gap where housing costs absorb a disproportionate share of earnings, even as the median price remains static.

02

The market is not broken — it's behaving as designed

Boulder's rent burden is not an anomaly but a predictable outcome of decades of restrictive zoning, limited new construction, and a preference for high-value, low-density development. The city's political and planning systems have consistently prioritized preservation and amenity quality over density or affordability, making it functionally impossible to scale housing supply to meet demand without systemic change.



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