#1 of 5: Spread in Mean Commute Across the Market, in Minutes (2024)

Broomfield leads Boulder County in commute time

Boulder trails by 7.3 minutes on average

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THE DATA

7.3

Spread in Mean Commute Across the Market, in Minutes (2024)

The difference between Broomfield's 25.5-minute average commute and Boulder's 18.1-minute average reflects a growing spatial divide in regional accessibility.

This 7.3-minute spread is not just a number—it signals a structural shift in how people move across Boulder County. Broomfield, with its lower commute time, is becoming a more attractive hub for those seeking shorter commutes, while Boulder's higher average reflects increasing congestion and spatial fragmentation. The gap is not due to a single factor, but a confluence of housing density, employment concentration, and transportation infrastructure disparities.



Photo: Xnatedawgx · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-25-boulder-commute-spread

01

Commuting is a new form of economic zoning

The 7.3-minute commute spread reveals a de facto zoning shift: Broomfield functions as a low-commute, high-accessibility corridor, while Boulder is increasingly a high-cost, high-velocity urban core. This divide is not just about travel time—it's about access to opportunity. Workers in Broomfield enjoy faster access to regional employment nodes, while Boulder residents face higher time costs for commuting, reinforcing the city's status as a premium but isolated hub. Over time, this could drive labor market polarization, where lower-income workers are increasingly priced out of proximity to jobs, not just housing.

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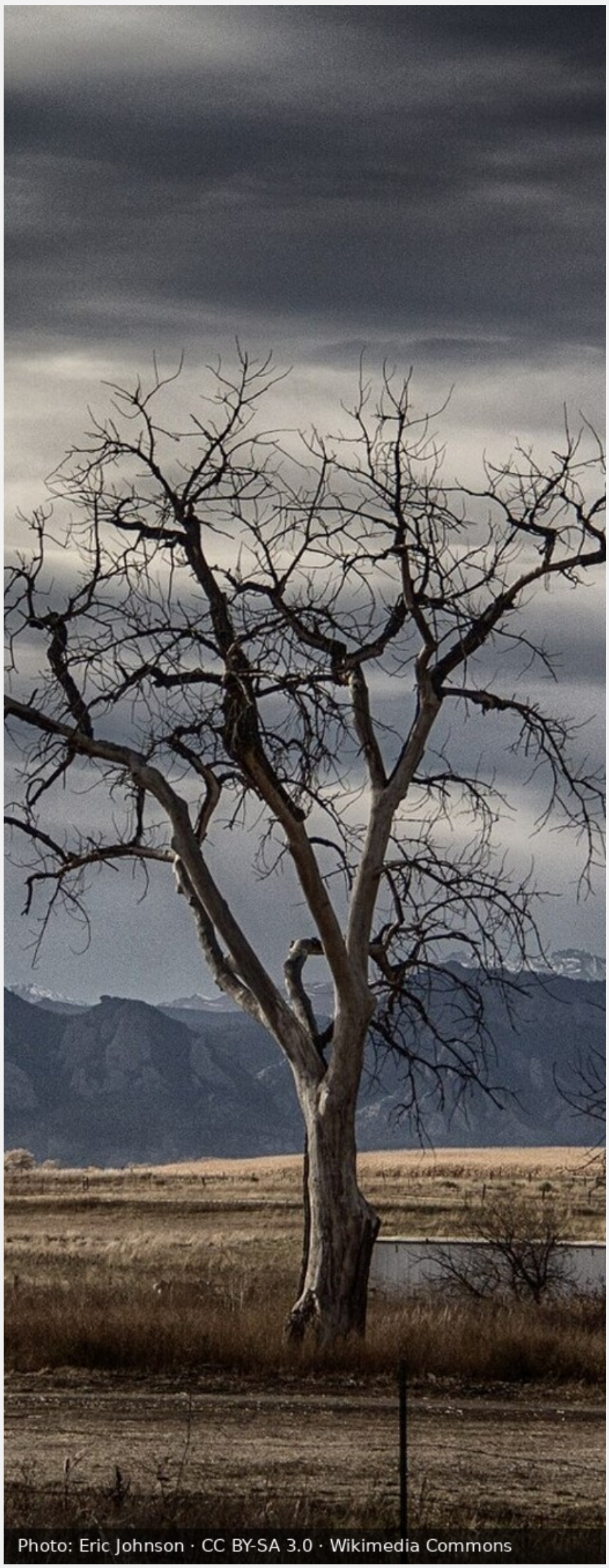


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02

Boulder’s centrality is becoming a liability

Boulder’s role as the regional anchor is being undermined by its own success. As the city’s median home price and rental burden remain the highest in Colorado, the high average commute time reflects a growing mismatch: people are drawn to the city’s cultural and institutional assets, but the infrastructure cannot keep pace. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle—higher demand drives up prices, which pushes workers to live further out, increasing average commute times. The city’s identity as a knowledge hub is being eroded by its own spatial inefficiency.

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