Columbia — #1 of 8: Renters Over the 30% Rent Threshold

Columbia has South Carolina's highest rent burden

Source: ALEX Intelligence · Published November 26, 2026

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THE DATA

50.4%

Renters Over the 30% Rent Threshold (2024)

Columbia ranks #1 of 8 South Carolina metros on renters over the 30% rent threshold.

This means over half of renters in the Midlands are spending more than a third of their income on housing — a level that signals acute affordability pressure. While employment remains stable, rising inflation and mortgage rates are tightening household budgets, especially for lower-income households. The data reflects a market where demand outpaces supply, pushing rental prices into historically high territory.



Photo: Abductive · CC0 · Wikimedia Commons

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-26-columbia-sc-standing-rent-burden-msa



01

Affordability is the new frontier of competition

Columbia’s rent burden isn’t just a headline — it’s a structural driver of market behavior. With 50.4% of renters over the 30% threshold, the Midlands is entering a phase where affordability is no longer a policy concern but a market reality. This pressure is reshaping investment, pushing developers toward higher-density, lower-cost units, and making rental stabilization a critical priority for local leaders. The market is not just expensive — it’s structurally unbalanced.

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02

Rent burden fuels long-term migration patterns

High rent burden often leads to out-migration, but Columbia's case is different. Despite the burden, the region continues to attract new residents — a sign that the labor market and quality of life are strong enough to offset cost. However, this trend may not be sustainable. If rent burden persists without wage growth, the Midlands could see a reversal in net migration. The current influx may be a temporary equilibrium, masking deeper demographic shifts that could emerge by 2027.

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