Memphis — #1 of 10: Renters Over the 30% Rent Threshold

Memphis leads TN in rent burden

Source: ALEX Intelligence · Published November 29, 2026

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THE DATA

49.2%

Renters Over the 30% Rent Threshold (2024)

Memphis ranks #1 of 10 Tennessee metros on renters over the 30% rent threshold.

This means nearly half of all renters in Memphis are spending more than one-third of their income on housing — a level that economists define as 'cost burdened.' The figure reflects deep structural pressures in the local rental market, where supply constraints and wage stagnation are converging. While population growth and industrial expansion are driving demand, affordability is not keeping pace.



Photo: Warren LeMay from Chicago, IL, United States · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Wikimedia Commons

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-29-memphis-standing-rent-burden-msa

01

Affordability is the new market frontier

This is not a crisis to be solved by more construction alone. It’s a structural shift where the value of reliability — consistent rent, predictable maintenance, legal protections — is rising faster than the value of square footage.



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02

Industrial growth fuels the affordability paradox

This creates a counterintuitive outcome: a growing economy with declining housing affordability. The city's economic momentum is being partially consumed by housing cost inflation, which may limit long-term workforce retention unless affordability strategies are integrated into development planning.

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