

## Marin's housing costs fuel long commutes, study finds

By Mark Prado  
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Those who work in Marin have the longest commute of any workers in the Bay Area, according to a study by affordable housing advocates.

The reason: many in Marin cannot afford to live near where they work, according to "Miles From Home," a report released by Live Local Marin, made up of the non-profit Housing Association of Northern California, an affordable housing advocacy group, and Greenbelt Alliance, an environmental advocacy group.

"While traffic problems are nothing new what we found is that, contrary to public belief, the traffic on 101 in Marin is not just due to people passing through, it is made up mostly of workers trying to get to their jobs in Marin," said Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the housing association.

Those coming to the county travel an average of almost 30 miles roundtrip. The study also shows that Marin imports 59.5 percent of its workers, more than any other county in the Bay Area.

"More than half of these in-commuters earn less than \$40,000 per year," Spaulding noted. "That's not enough to rent even a one-bedroom apartment in Marin. Is it any wonder they need to commute long distances? We're talking about workers like paramedics, kindergarten teachers and

child-care workers."

Marin's lack of affordable housing is cited as a primary cause. In order to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Marin, a \$56,000 annual salary is required, according to the report.

All

the cars on the road have an impact on the environment. Cumulatively, Marin's driving workforce puts 2.37 million pounds of carbon emissions into the air each day. Of those who work in Marin, 73.4 percent are single drivers, 23.1 percent carpool, 2.3 percent take transit and 1.2 percent bike or walk.

The Live Local Marin group is calling on cities, towns and the county to zone for more homes affordable to people who already work in Marin, so that they can live closer to where they work and drive less.

"Marin has a great legacy of environmentalism with more permanently protected parks, farms, and wetlands than



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any other Bay Area county," said Jeremy Madsen, executive director of Greenbelt Alliance. "But to create a truly sustainable county, Marin will need to provide affordable homes that allow workers to drive shorter distances. That's one of Marin's best ways to reduce its carbon footprint."

The report also found that commutes to Marin have increased and traffic worsened as home costs have risen at a time when Marin's economy has shifted to lower-paying retail and service sector jobs: teachers, home health aides, child-care workers and bank tellers.

Buying a home in Marin remains out of reach for many. The report says 77 percent of houses constructed in the county between 1999 and 2006 were priced for households earning \$80,000 or more per year, which only 11 percent of workers could afford.

Over the next five years, it is projected that 65 percent of jobs created in Marin will be in low-paying sectors, further widening the gap between supply and demand.

"We're trending in the wrong direction," said report author Robert Hickey, the housing association's Marin program manager. "As jurisdictions update their general plans, they have an opportunity to keep doing what works: to zone for a fuller range of housing choices near job centers so that people with roots in Marin can live closer to where they work."

Affordable housing has made a difference for Anelyn Gallego, who works at the California Highway Patrol office in Corte Madera.

She lives at San Clemente Place, privately managed affordable housing community, in Corte Madera. She just moved to complex last September. Before then she lived in Fairfield and it took her an hour to get to work.

"Now I just walk to work in two minutes," Gallego said. "I save gas and I have more time. It's the best."

To see the full report visit: [livelocalmarin.org](http://livelocalmarin.org).

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## BY THE NUMBERS

"Commute" represents the average roundtrip commute for Bay Area workers, in miles.

"Nonresidents" represents the percentage of workers who live outside the county in which they work.

County	Commute	Nonresidents
Marin	29.8 mi	59.5%
Alameda	23.5 mi	51.3%
Contra Costa	23.2 mi	48.7%
Napa	21.7 mi	46.1%
San Francisco	26.2 mi	56.9%
San Mateo	28.2 mi	59.3%
Santa Clara	22.9 mi	39.4%
Solano	19.8 mi	47.7%
Sonoma	18.3 mi	28.0%

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Source: Live Local Marin report

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