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Gentrification on the urban fringe: Prosperity and displacement in West Marin,
California

By
Jessica Lage

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Geography

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Nathan Sayre, Chair
Professor Richard Walker
Professor Nancy Peluso
Professor Rachel Brahinsky

Spring 2019

Gentrification on the urban fringe: Prosperity and displacement in West Marin,
California

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Jessica Lage

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Nathan Sayre, Chair

The global housing crisis, the epidemic of foreclosures, and rising global inequality have put the spotlight on gentrification in cities around the world. In the gentrifying San Francisco Bay Area, Marin County (and West Marin in particular) has escaped attention by gentrification scholars, but it is an essential part of the larger story of gentrification in the Bay Area. This dissertation examines the history of gentrification in West Marin, its relationship to regional socioeconomic transformations, and its local articulations.

Gentrification in West Marin has similar characteristics to that in San Francisco and Oakland, though the continuity in West Marin's physical landscape conceals the extent of the socioeconomic transformations gentrification has caused. West Marin communities feel the effects of the Bay Area's tech economy in high home prices, increased short-term rentals and second-home owners, and long commutes for workers. Many of the people most affected are also not readily visible—often undocumented immigrants who work in agriculture and are isolated by living conditions and by language and culture. The local agricultural economy, rather than disappear in the face of rising land prices, has been mandated to remain, and has had to transform itself to stay viable. In doing so, agriculture has created a culture of food that contributes to the gentrification of West Marin, as it draws an elite customer base and contributes to the shrinking housing available for the workers that keep the agricultural and service sectors going. This dissertation engages with the literature on urban, rural, and agricultural gentrification in order to understand local articulations of gentrification processes, and what they can tell us about the consequences of gentrification in general.

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Map of region



Public lands adapted from Bay Area Protected Lands Database

Map by Ben Pease, www.peasepress.com

Map of study area



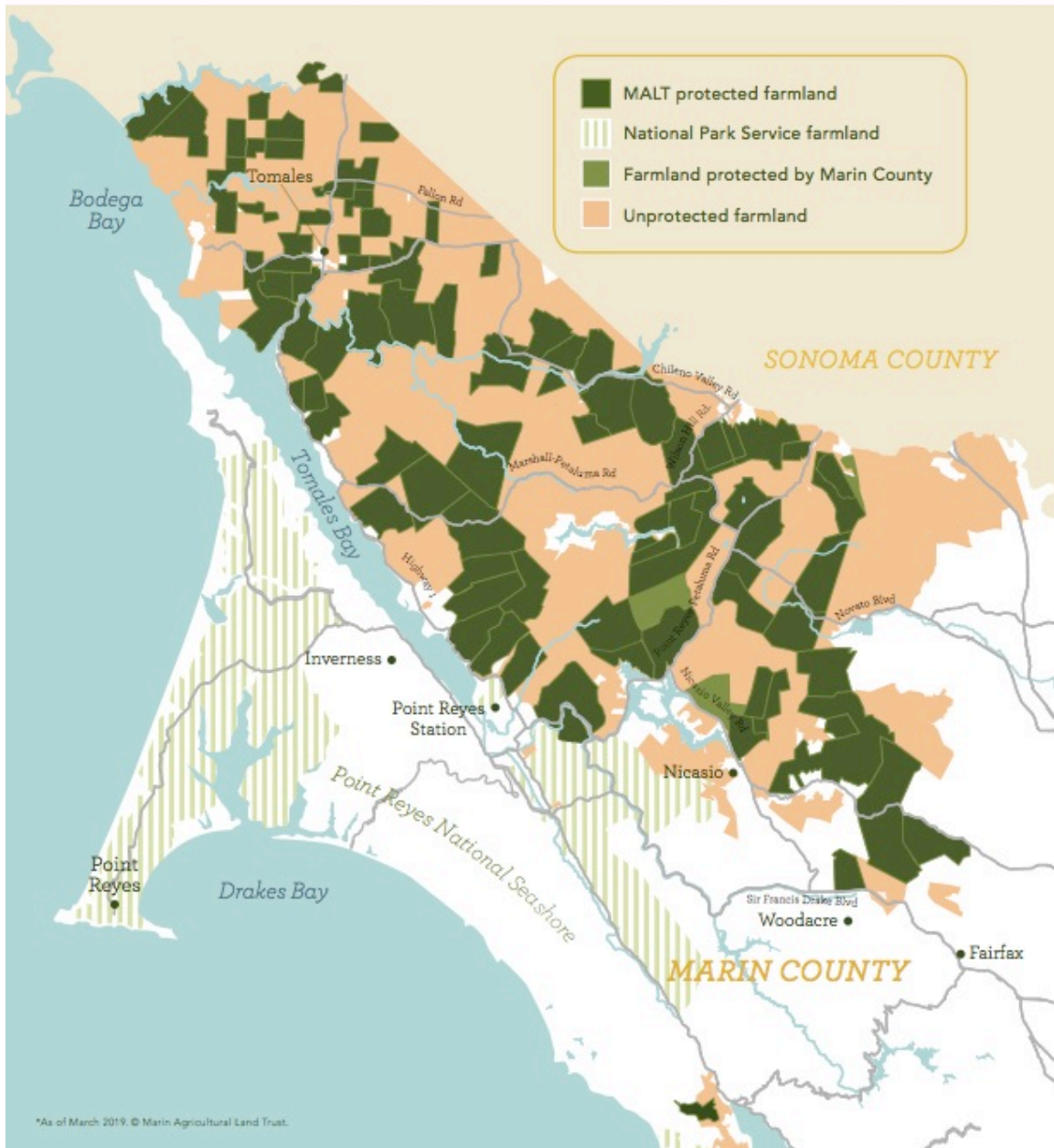
Map by Ben Pease, www.peasepress.com

Public lands adapted from Bay Area Protected Lands Database

Map of protected agricultural lands



PROTECTED FARMLAND



Introduction

Mention gentrification in Marin County to someone who doesn't live there and you will likely receive blank stares. Marin County, on the northwest fringe of the San Francisco Bay Area, is an unusual site for gentrification as it's usually understood. Marin is one of the most scenic counties in the Bay Area, with nearly 85 percent of its acreage preserved as agricultural or recreational open space (Marin Economic Commission 2007). Marin is considered a homogenous—white and wealthy—neighbor to San Francisco, known for its open space, mountain biking, spiritual gurus, and combination of San Francisco professionals and hippie back-to-the-landers, relics of the 1970s. Marin County is closely associated with hostile rejection of affordable housing. But gentrification? Are there any low-income communities to be pushed out?, you might ask. Where are the new gentrified neighborhoods? West Marin in particular, is confounding to conventional associations with gentrification: it is rural in appearance—mostly ranchlands—with small towns whose physical landscape gives few clues of a gentrified population.

But unpack Marin a little more, and you find that, like the rest of the Bay Area, the county has extreme income and racial disparity and an acute housing crisis. Marin County ranked number one in California for racial disparity in 2017; it has the second-highest level of income inequality of the state's counties; and 54 percent of households spend over 30 percent of their income on housing (Advancement Project California 2017; Burd-Sharps and Lewis 2012; First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission 2017). In 2017, a two-bedroom apartment rented for an average of \$3018 per month; a household would need to make \$120,000 per year to afford it (First 5 Marin 2017). While rents have risen dramatically in the past few years, already in 2011, 60 percent of Marin's workforce lived outside of Marin County, and a majority of those workers commuted to jobs that pay less than \$40,000 per year. The average commute was 30 miles round-trip, but the number of "extreme" or "mega" commuters was growing.¹ Over ten years ago, in 2008, already 9 percent of Marin's workforce (9,900 employees) commuted from outside of the Bay Area, from places as far away as Sacramento County, over 80 miles one way (Hickey 2011), and numbers have certainly risen.

Marin is one of numerous communities across the nation where disparities between housing availability and demand and between rents and wages are drawing attention and raising concern. As demand for housing grows and speculators control the market, affordable housing is increasingly hard to come by in large and medium-size cities.² California is becoming more and more painfully aware of the state's housing crisis as the state's homeless population grows, companies say they can't recruit workers, and income disparity rises. A state senator from San Francisco compared the "explosive costs of housing" to a wildfire spreading around the state: "This is no longer a coastal, elite

¹ An analysis from the US Census Bureau defines extreme commuters as those who as travel 90 minutes or more to work; long-distance commuters travel 50 miles or more to work; and mega commuters put them both together and travel 90 minutes or more *and* 50 miles or more to work (Rapino and Fields 2013).

² Here, and throughout this document, I use affordable housing to refer to housing that low- to moderate-income families would be able to afford with no more than 30 percent of their monthly income, as defined by the federal government.

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housing problem. This is a problem in big swaths of the state. It is damaging the economy. It is damaging the environment, as people get pushed into longer commutes” (Nagourney and Dougherty 2017).

Yet, as the global housing crisis, the epidemic of foreclosures, and rising global inequality have put the spotlight on gentrification in cities around the world (Lees et al. 2008), Marin County has escaped attention by gentrification scholars, despite gaping inequality and a housing squeeze. But Marin, and West Marin in particular, illuminate the complexities of gentrification processes.

Gentrification and displacement are regional processes that are “inherently linked to shifts in the regional housing and job market” (Zuk 2015a). Gentrification both reinforces and thrives on inequality, as it usually involves the in-migration of upper income residents who displace working class residents, often communities of color. It is not a new process; scholars have documented waves of redevelopment with accompanying displacement going back over a century (Brahinsky 2011), long before the term was coined (Lees et al. 2008, Smith 1996). In the Bay Area, the story of gentrification has nearly as long a history as that of urbanization in the region (Walker 1996). There are commonalities across time, as well as across geographies, but just as each time period reveals new twists, so do different parts of the Bay Area reveal different experiences of gentrification. In the current wave of gentrification in San Francisco, the capital attracted and produced by the tech economy is transforming neighborhoods, pushing out working- and middle-class families, and bulldozing the uniqueness that defines San Francisco. Residents, activists, and scholars are concerned that San Francisco’s diversity—of race, ethnicity, age, socio-economic level, and occupations—is being lost.

Across the bay, cities like Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond have their own particular histories of displacement and development (Rhombert 2004, Self 2003, Moore 2000, Johnson 1996). Recent waves of gentrification in these cities are changing the composition of long-time middle- and lower-income, largely African American neighborhoods (Brahinsky 2014; Phillips, et al. 2014; McClintock 2010). Scholars have explored how displacement in the inner city shapes the geography and demographics of Bay Area suburbs and exurbs (Schafran 2018). Yet gentrification does not just take place in low-income neighborhoods: a 2015 study found that gentrification had transformed about 10 percent of Bay Area neighborhoods, that people were being displaced in 48 percent of the region’s neighborhoods, and that low-income and moderate/high-income neighborhoods were almost equally affected (Zuk 2015a).³

Yet while Bay Area cities were sprawling into suburbs, on the northern rim of the bay, Marin was permanently limiting growth beyond its already developed corridors. On the brink of suburbia, West Marin instead became destination for tourists and second-home

³ It is also important that nearly half of Bay Area census tracts are undergoing some form of neighborhood transformation and displacement. According to the study conducted by Zuk et al., gentrification only accounts for less than half of the tracts that experienced some form of displacement between 2000 and 2013. The number of tracts that are at risk of displacement is 25% greater than those that have already experienced it, which leads the authors of this study to conclude that neighborhood transformation in the Bay Area is still in the early stages (Zuk 2015a).

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owners, not only because of its natural beauty and protected seashore, but also because of its local food economy and agricultural attractions. Rural in appearance, West Marin feels remote, reached only on winding, two-lane, coastal or country roads, but it is only an hour from San Francisco and East Bay cities—in one of the most tech-rich regions in the world.

What does this rural idyll have to do with gentrification and displacement? While apparently contradictory, West Marin is an essential part of the larger story of gentrification in the Bay Area and it exposes how gentrification in the core and hinterlands are linked. Over several decades, expanding and gentrifying San Francisco has played a role in shaping West Marin, as West Marin's farms have fed gentrifying San Francisco. Today, newcomers—in this case primarily second-home owners, many with connections to the corporate tech world—are displacing long-term residents; tourists flock to visit the seashore as well as experience the local foodie economy first-hand; the workers, many of whom are Mexican immigrants and their second- and third-generation West Marin families, who support the agricultural and recreation economies are moving to suburban destinations beyond (like neighboring Sonoma County), where real estate is still relatively affordable. West Marin is also a classic story of the New West—with a twist: a productive rural area turned “amenity region,”⁴ with “increased demands for amenity space, residential and recreational property, second homes, and environmental protection” (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001, 501). But the twist is that agriculture has continued, and the stronger it gets, the more threatened it is by its own success.

With this perspective, while West Marin's evolution reveals itself as a process of gentrification, it doesn't fit neatly into existing theorizations of urban or rural gentrification. An important body of scholarly literature examines gentrification in urban areas (see Lees et al. 2008); another set of literature examines gentrification in rural areas and explores whether theories regarding urban gentrification can illuminate rural processes (Phillips 1993, 2004; Cloke and Thrift 1987, Darling 2005). Both of these literatures are useful to understanding West Marin, but neither adequately explains it. A much smaller category of gentrification literature addresses agricultural gentrification (Sutherland 2012, 2018), which is useful in understanding how West Marin's history of open space and agricultural land protection have defined a different course of gentrification—yet also doesn't account for the particularities of West Marin.

Gentrification is not uniform across space: “context, place, locality, and scale all play a crucial role” in creating local articulations of gentrification processes (Butler and Lees 2006). West Marin's demographic, physical, and institutional landscape means that gentrification happens differently—that is, similar processes occur but for different reasons and in different ways. These local articulations, and how they relate to gentrification in the larger context is what I undertake in this research. I use the literature on urban, rural, and agricultural gentrification as one of the theoretical foundations for my research, but my goal is not so much to look for similarities or differences across geographical sites, but rather to understand the way processes of gentrification articulate in one particular place, and what that can tell us about gentrification in general.

⁴ An amenity region is defined by the natural or recreational features that draw tourism, retirees, second-home owners, or others whose work fits into this “new” economy.

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Gentrification is deeply rooted in social dynamics and economic trends. Its signs, effects, and trajectories are to a large degree determined by its local context...In the end, the 'why' of gentrification is less important than the 'how' and the repercussions of the process (Van Weesep 1994) (Lees et al. 2008).

Research origins

I began my research with two things in mind. On the one hand, living in the Bay Area since the 1970s, the ramifications of urban gentrification are a constant presence. I have seen tremendous transformations in neighborhood composition, the physical landscape, the imposing presence of growing wealth and the distressing presence of growing poverty. I see the changes where I live reverberate throughout the landscape of California. A frequent visitor to West Marin, I became curious about the changes I observed there: more Latinos working everywhere, Latino families in the town park and picnicking in the seashore; and at the same time, more people everywhere, fancy sports cars, a different social class of people on the trails. It was clear that the socioeconomic changes in the rest of the Bay Area were extending to West Marin.

On the other hand, I had studied ownership change on ranchlands in the Western U.S. and wanted to explore more deeply the social changes in rural communities that were experiencing influxes of new migrants and their relationship to broader social and economic processes. I was especially interested in the juxtaposition of wealthy and low-income migrants and the ways in which different parts of the community were experiencing changes in their communities. The ranching presence in West Marin links it to history of the many Western resort towns that were once based in the “productive” economy—ranching, mining, logging. But West Marin’s history both coincides with and diverges from the story of the Western U.S. West Marin is a tale of gentrification in the age of what Lees calls “super-gentrification,” in a place that is physically proximate to one of the biggest, wealthiest economies in the world.

To understand how processes of gentrification play out in different political and physical landscapes, and how their consequences compare to current understandings of gentrification, I use literatures on urban and rural gentrification to explore West Marin’s development. I examine the dynamics of gentrification in this scenic agricultural area, characterized by its proximity to San Francisco, natural beauty and recreational amenities, land protection and strict development regulations, and a strong agricultural sector. My research adds to the empirical understanding of how the San Francisco Bay Area has developed geographically and demographically, as well as contributes to the theoretical literature on how gentrification plays out in different landscapes. My research also adds to the fledging literature on the dual migration of wealth and labor to gentrifying areas, in which lower income workers accompany the in-migration of high-

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income residents in order to meet the needs of the service economy.⁵ Exploring dual migration expands understandings of class and ethnicity in gentrification processes.

Research methods

In order to understand the complex interactions among regional and global economies, agricultural and housing market trends, and migration that are transforming West Marin, I used a mixed-methods research approach, grounded in political economic analysis. My methods have also been shaped by my foundation in political ecology. While I have not attempted to describe a political ecology of gentrification in this dissertation, the approach of political ecology has fundamentally shaped how I understand this case, and my analysis includes attention to ecological aspects,⁶ to the role of discourses in shaping housing availability and community dynamics, to the role of public and private institutions in creating the possibilities for gentrification,⁷ and to the role of social movements.⁸

The primary-source documents I analyzed included: real estate data, to trace changes in the housing market statewide, regionally, and in Marin County; U.S. Census data, to understand demographic and socio-economic changes in Marin County, the Bay Area, and California; newsletters and pamphlets developed by University of California Cooperative Extension, to identify trends in the agricultural sector; Marin County livestock and crop reports, to trace changes in the market for farm and ranch products in recent decades; county and local planning documents, both for historical context and to understand the influence of formal and informal development requirements on housing availability; newspaper archives for historical and contemporary context; and surveys of the housing market and housing needs conducted by the county and a non-profit housing organization.

I interviewed 38 people in the course of my research, including county planners, real estate agents, National Park Service employees, housing activists, social workers, ranchers, historians, journalists, and community members (see Appendix I for a complete list of informants, named and anonymous). Many of them I spoke to in person, others over the phone, and several more than one time. I also exchanged emails in addition to phone conversations with several informants, to clarify or request further information. The interviews were semi-structured, as I had a set of questions I wanted to cover, though my questions were open-ended, in order to identify and explore new connections and ways of seeing.

⁵ These migrations are not always residential migrations—rather, they may mean daily in- and out-migrations, with implications for traffic, the environment, quality of life for workers, and community composition.

⁶ Considering the impacts of long commutes on the environment, the long-term prospects for agriculture given environmental constraints, environmental constraints in housing development.

⁷ The critical role of Marin County in farmland protection and in promoting agricultural diversification strategies for ranchers; also non-profit MALT in protecting farmland.

⁸ The movement to protect Point Reyes National Seashore and to protect agricultural landscapes; the alternative food movement and how it shaped possibilities for agriculture in West Marin.

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The in-depth interviews I conducted served not only as a triangulation of the insights I gained through written primary and secondary research, but also as a way of understanding how individual experiences and decisions connect to larger processes of change. Insights gained through interviews are critical in “periods of great economic and social change,” Schoenberger argues, because interviews uncover a “richness of detail and historical complexity that ... allows one to reconstruct how and why particular phenomena came to be” (1989, 188).

My theoretical approach to gentrification, as a process in which “the calculus of capital becomes interwoven with the entire range of social and cultural dimensions of individual’s choices,” guided my research method. Hearing the story of West Marin through the lived experiences of community members and observers illuminated how “even the most apparently individual, personal decisions turn out to be bound up with larger social and collective processes” (Lees et al. 2008, 55).⁹

Dissertation outline

I begin by reviewing the literature on gentrification in Chapter 1, to ground the dissertation theoretically. Chapter 2 describes the development of Bay Area urban centers and the processes of suburbanization and exurbanization, placing Marin County, and West Marin more specifically, in the regional context of the Bay Area. In Chapter 3 I describe the reasons for the surprising consistency of West Marin’s physical landscape, even while its socio-economics are changing rapidly. Chapter 4 examines land conservation for recreation—the Point Reyes National Seashore—and its implications for gentrification. I describe West Marin before the national seashore was established and examine the early effects of the expanding recreation and tourist economies in the area and the consequences for the housing market. In Chapter 5, I examine the policies of the primary land protection agency in West Marin, the National Park Service, and how they affect the housing supply. Chapter 6 explores the ways in which the residents who have established themselves in West Marin work to keep the landscape and community desirable, as they imagine they should be, while at the same time preserving their own privilege. Land conservation in West Marin includes protecting agricultural land as well as land for recreation; Chapter 7 examines the ramifications for West Marin communities of preserving agricultural land and how it has intertwined with gentrification. Finally, recreation- and agriculture-based tourism, as well as a housing market dominated by second-home owners, have transformed West Marin’s economy. The in-migration of tourists and amenity-seekers is matched by that of low-wage service workers. Chapter 8 explores this dual migration and dual labor market by describing the interconnections between Mexican immigration and the gentrification of West Marin. In the conclusion, Chapter 9, I reiterate the importance of understanding the changes in West Marin as a process of gentrification, based in the agricultural economy of the area, but created by the larger processes of economic and social changes beyond West Marin.

⁹ See Chapter 1, Introduction

Chapter 1. Defining and explaining gentrification

Gentrification occurs when capital is invested—sometimes by way of in-migration of higher income residents, sometimes by way of speculators or developers looking to flip properties and make a large profit—in working-class, lower-rent neighborhoods. A history of disinvestment characterizes these neighborhoods, in real estate and also often in jobs and other resources. Once investors arrive, local governments often rezone or introduce other policies that continue to attract wealthier residents and make redevelopment of the neighborhood easier. Housing costs rise, displacing long-time working-class residents. Gentrification does not always precede displacement; in fact, often displacement precedes gentrification or they happen simultaneously. In addition, low-income residents may be displaced in both low-income and high-income neighborhoods (Zuk 2015a). Wherever it happens, gentrification and the displacement it causes most always involves a racial aspect: gentrifiers are most often white and those displaced are often people of color.¹⁰

Gentrification engenders debates about what are its primary causes—the mechanisms of economic production or changes in the industrial and occupational structure of advanced capitalist cities. Production-based explanations are founded on the idea that gentrification, while shaped by individual decisions and preferences, is fundamentally driven by economic production, or, as Lees et al. put it, “the underlying rules of the game—economic relations, legal principles and practices, institutional arrangements, and pure political struggles—in which value and profit are produced” (42). Consumption-based explanations focus on the loss of manufacturing employment in cities and the expanding group of middle-class professionals whose lifestyle preferences drive urban change (Lees et al. 2008, 90). While some scholars give more weight to production explanations and others to consumption explanations, most now accept that both contribute to understanding gentrification. As Lees et al. describe the dynamic between production and consumption in urban gentrification, “the calculus of capital becomes interwoven with the entire range of social and cultural dimensions of individuals’ choices of where and how to live in the urban environment. Even the most apparently individual, personal decisions turn out to be bound up with larger social and collective processes” (55). Consumption-based decisions on the part of gentrifiers, while significant, happen within and are shaped by the social and economic larger context of economic forces of production.

Early gentrification studies, however, accepted neoclassical economic and sociological explanations of consumer preference as the guiding force behind urban and suburban growth. The explanations celebrated gentrification as a “natural” process that restored spatial equilibrium and brought about a positive urban renaissance (Lees et al. 2008, 51), ignoring the questions of for *whom* was gentrification a positive process, who stood to gain and who to lose in such neighborhood transitions, and why were some

¹⁰ I want to emphasize that this is *most* often but not always the case. Similar dynamics can be at play between different communities of color, for example Asians and African Americans and Latinos. Recent studies have also examined a black middle-class as agents of gentrification in several places (Chronopoulos 2016, Zuk et al. 2015, Moore 2009).

neighborhoods profitable to redevelop while others were not? (Smith, cited in Lees et al. 2008, 50).

In reaction, geographer Neil Smith, drawing on David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, described what became the most influential production-based explanation for gentrification processes, what he called the “rent-gap” (Smith 1987, 1996, 2002). The process of uneven development, a fundamental dynamic of capitalist expansion in which investment and disinvestment “see-saw” over time and across space, formed the basis for his theory. Smith’s contribution was to link the broader processes of uneven development to urban real estate and gentrification. He did this by examining the role of the rent-gap, which is the difference between the actual economic return from a land parcel under its present use (or the “capitalized ground rent”) and what it could potentially earn if it were put to its highest or best use (or the “potential ground rent”). Actual economic returns and potential economic returns diverge over time, creating a rent gap: as infrastructure ages, *capitalized* ground rent decreases; *potential* ground rent almost always increases, as long as the location continues to be desirable. Disinvestment in the urban core is critical to this process, as it creates an increasing disparity between actual and potential rents. The importance of this to understanding gentrification is that the growing rent gap primes a location for investment—by developers, home owners, new businesses—as it creates opportunities for profit. New developments change the land use as well as the land *users*—or residents. And the cycle of gentrification has begun.

Waves of gentrification

Ruth Glass first used the term “gentrification” in reference to urban change in 1964, but processes of redevelopment and displacement in working class neighborhoods have a much longer history. The Haussmannization of Paris, beginning in 1853, is an oft-cited example, as are 1930s displacements in cities like New York, New Orleans, and Washington D.C. Systematic gentrification, however, is traced to the post-war 1950s. Hackworth and Smith (2001) lay out a timeline of gentrification, in which it becomes apparent that gentrification cycles coincide with cycles of economic growth and decline.

Prior to 1973, the first wave, or “sporadic gentrification,” occurred in a few neighborhoods in Northeastern U.S. and Western Europe. During the economic recession of the mid-to-late 1970s, investors and developers bought up properties in devalued neighborhoods, laying the groundwork for the second wave, in the 1980s, which Hackworth and Smith term “the anchoring of gentrification.” In this stage, the process spread to smaller, less globally connected cities, and conflicts over displacement of the working class also became more common. Again in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the inner city residential land markets collapsed after the 1987 stock market crash, significantly slowing the process of gentrification and causing some observers to announce that “degentrification”—or a reversal of the process—was underway. However, as Smith observed, ‘it would be a mistake to assume, as the language of de-gentrification seems to do, that the economic crisis of the early 1990s spelt the secular end of gentrification’ (quoted in Lees 2000).

As the economy picked up again in the early 1990s, gentrification entered a third wave. Hackworth and Smith call this “post-recession gentrification... a purer expression of the economic conditions and processes that make reinvestment in disinvested inner-urban

areas so alluring for investors.” They observe that as the scale of investment increased, so did the degree of corporate, rather than smaller-scale capital: “economic forces driving gentrification seem to have eclipsed cultural factors.” They identified four ways in which third-wave gentrification was distinct from earlier phases: gentrification expanded from the inner city to more remote neighborhoods; larger developers were involved in the early stages of the process in a given neighborhood (increasingly involved in “orchestrating reinvestment”); resistance to gentrification declined; and the state became more involved than it had been in the second wave.

Lees (2000) described gentrification as “a cyclical process driven largely, but not completely, by investment flows.” She noted that “the gap between old gentrified property and newly gentrified property is as dramatic today in certain neighbourhoods as the difference between ungentrified and gentrified property (the rent gap) was back in the 1970s.” Lees coined a new term to reflect a “whole new wave of high-end super-gentrification” driven by that price differential (2003). Super-gentrification, as Lees defines it, indicates further gentrification super-imposed on an already gentrified neighborhood. It is characterized by “financification”—higher financial or economic investment in the neighborhood than previously, driven by globally connected professionals, who bring global social, economic, and cultural connections (Lees et al. 2008, 130). The term aims to reflect the involvement of a different type of capital, and a different type of gentrifier—with more money and more connections to global capital.

Lees’ use of the term super-gentrification was important for several reasons, as Butler (2007) explains. At a time when scholars were questioning the continued relevance of the term gentrification, Lees’ work clarified that though the displaced residents may be middle-class first- or second-generation gentrifiers themselves, the process of neighborhood change is still one of gentrification. The difference was in the urban class structure, which was evolving to include a group of people who had the capital to quickly transform the urban housing market, and—importantly to this dissertation—expand those markets by buying second and third homes in surrounding areas (Butler 2007).

While cities are still ostensibly in the “third wave of gentrification,” its defining characteristics have evolved yet again since Hackworth and Smith defined these stages at the beginning of the millennium. Scholars, activists, and observers of gentrification agree that the gentrification happening today is qualitatively and quantitatively different from earlier cycles. In addition to super-gentrification, scholars and activists use hyper-gentrification or uber-gentrification to describe the changes that have come about with the advancement of capitalism. These refer both to the pace of change, which is faster now than ever before, as well as to the ways in which the tech economy accelerates the expansion of the gentry.¹¹ If gentrification, however, is “hyper” or “uber,” so is almost everything else. The qualities of “late-stage capitalism”—speed, globalization of finance, dominance of technology, increasing inequality, etc.—also define this stage of gentrification.

¹¹ The term uber-gentrification was used before the transportation company Uber was founded.

What's rural about gentrification?

Gentrification is widely conceived of and defined as an urban phenomenon, but “[t]he notion of rural gentrification has had almost as long a history as has the term gentrification in general” (Phillips 2004, 13).¹² Attempting to highlight the commonalities, Phillips argues that many of the processes regarded as urban in nature “are complementary, if not necessarily fully commensurable, with a series of rural studies” (25). Many studies of rural gentrification apply aspects of urban gentrification theories to rural areas, focusing on shifts in class structure, capital accumulation, and housing ownership and availability. Other key themes are the transition to post-productive landscapes and social dynamics and struggles between long-term residents and newcomers (Smith and Krannich 2000, Walker and Fortmann 2003). But most studies focus on the consumption-driven motivations and practices that are central to gentrification rather than attempting to understand the dynamics of economic production behind gentrification; in rural contexts, writes Phillips, “the emphasis has generally been on the movement of people rather than capital” (2005, 478). Phillips also notes the aversion to recognizing the class dimensions in rural gentrification and the tendency instead “to couch their studies in terms of a range of other concepts, such as counter-urbanisation, rural migration, rural re- and de-population, rural demographic change, rural development, rural regeneration, and rural restructuring” (2005, 478-9).

A handful of scholars have tried to redirect the focus of rural gentrification studies toward production. Phillips has explored the parallels between “postproductionist” theories of rural areas and the cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment that underlies the rent gap in urban areas (2004). Ghose examines rural gentrification in Missoula, Montana, comparing it to processes of urban gentrification (2004). She emphasizes that “primarily White, middle-to-upper class citizens motivated by lifestyle preferences” are the gentrifiers in both rural and urban gentrification, but the lifestyle preferences that draw people to urban areas contrast with the those that motivate the rural gentrification process in the U.S., which are “the need for a slower life style among the small towns of the Rockies, to raise one’s family in the tradition of hearth and home in proximity to wilderness and away from the chaotic and violent urban cities” (530).

Ghose also takes a step towards balancing production and consumption explanations by exploring the role of developers and real estate agents in creating the landscape that draws a certain consumer preference. She pays significant attention to the rising housing costs that accompany in-migration to Missoula, the displacement of lower-income locals, and the sprawling new development that eats away at the primary attraction of the area. She concludes that “the developers and realtors are as much an active agent in shaping the new residential landscape of Missoula as the consumers are” and that in the case of Missoula, these “producers” “have catered to the consumer preferences in elite landscapes as these generate the largest profit margins” (539).

¹² The 1980 Oxford American Dictionary defined gentrification as the “movement of middle class families into urban areas causing property values to increase and having the secondary effect of driving out poorer families” (cited in Lees et al. 2008).

Bryson and Wycoff (2010) examine rural gentrification in Montana as well, taking pains to emphasize the importance of economic processes in rural gentrification. They cite the classic Western history of boom and bust economies as part of the uneven investment and disinvestment of capital in the rural West and show how this has played out in Hamilton and Anaconda, Montana. Their focus is on the relationship of nature and capital investment (see also McCarthy and Guthman 1998). Bryson and Wycoff argue that rural and urban gentrification share many characteristics: “both phenomena have a tendency to displace longtime residents, commodify space, and involve a shift from landscapes of production to landscapes of consumption” (2010, 55). However, they claim, what distinguishes the two is the relative importance of nature to the process of rural gentrification.

Eliza Darling (2005) refines this argument about the role of nature in rural gentrification. She argues that it is not simply nature that defines the difference between urban and rural gentrification, but rather the “material production of nature by the state management of the local landscape.” In her case study in the Adirondacks, the “specific status as a state-regulated wilderness park with a unique set of political-ecological restrictions on investment” (1016)—more than simply the rural character of the area—is what has influenced how land is valued and how it becomes part of a cycle of disinvestment and investment. She also shows that the drive to maximize profit on the part of landowners is as fundamental to rural gentrification as to urban, but what constitutes undercapitalized land rent is different, meaning that gentrification has a distinct “geographical expression” in rural areas from that in urban areas (1015).

Another growing subset of rural gentrification studies that offers insights for West Marin focuses on agricultural gentrification. Sutherland (2012, 2018) argues that agricultural gentrification is distinct from urban and rural gentrification in that gentrification is possible from within the existing farm household, rather than always or only a consequence of in-migration. In this way, farmers themselves can be considered agents of gentrification (2018).

While all of these literatures help to understand gentrification in West Marin, they are not enough. Almost all rural gentrification literature classifies in-migrants or newcomers as middle-class or affluent urbanites—an important segment of in-migrants, but not the whole story, as West Marin’s dual migration shows.¹³ Wilderness gentrification, while a useful addition to the rural gentrification literature, doesn’t touch the complicated politics of land conservation, key to the evolution and gentrification of West Marin. And the literature on agricultural gentrification still considers landscape change as an unvarying feature of gentrification. West Marin shows otherwise.

Gentrification in West Marin, rather than a case of one type of gentrification, demonstrates the complex interrelationships between city and country and how each gives rise to the other—and the intertwining of gentrification as well. In West Marin, apart from the long history of interactions, urban Marin County and the urban Bay Area in general gave material form to West Marin. In the next chapter I outline the history of

¹³ Nelson and Nelson 2010, and Nelson et al. 2009, 2010, and 2014 are important exceptions, as I discuss in Chapter 8.

Chapter 1

the Bay Area and Marin County, with an eye to how Marin, and West Marin in particular, developed as it did. More than a rural area, West Marin is an urban fringe, saved from suburbia by the urban; it is a created rural space, by and for the urban. And the urban surroundings continue to “create” West Marin, as they fuel a particular gentrification. Perhaps what West Marin most reveals are the characteristics of the current era of gentrification—of super, hyper, uber-gentrification. The current “wave” of gentrification in West Marin, as in many places, is not the first, but it is quicker and perhaps more dramatic, more drastic than previous ones.

Chapter 2. Why Marin is different: urbanization, suburbanization, and demographics of the Bay Area

...whenever I consider the relations between country and city, and between birth and learning, I find this history active and continuous: the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system (Williams 1973, 7).

Since the Gold Rush of 1849 drew significant population and capital to San Francisco, creating demand for resources up and down the state, the urban centers of California and its hinterlands have been intimately linked—the “wider system” of city and country, as Raymond Williams calls it. Neil Smith emphasizes that localized transformation, while not always apparent that it is part of larger processes, is the product of uneven development—the shifting of capital investment in both a sectoral and a geographical sense—occurring at regional, national, and global scales (1996). Gentrification is linked to much broader processes of capital investment than those at the neighborhood or local scale, though it may manifest most visibly at the local level. These understandings of gentrification as a relational process, the product of transformation on many scales, are what make a regional context for studies of gentrification so important. In that light, this chapter describes the development of Bay Area urban centers and the processes of suburbanization and exurbanization, placing Marin County, and West Marin more specifically, in the regional context of the Bay Area.

San Francisco came onto the world stage with the Gold Rush, when fortune-seekers from around the world streamed into the city. Wealth, first in the form of gold, also flowed into the city. Since then, capital from San Francisco companies has shaped the growth of the broader Bay Area (Causa Justa :: Just Cause 2014). San Francisco developed as the financial hub, where banks and insurance firms were located. Oakland, where the railroad and port were based, was the transportation hub, and later became the manufacturing center. The economic activity of San Francisco and Oakland not only shaped the built environment (i.e., the high office buildings versus the low-slung factories along the railroad), but also shaped the demographics of the cities. Working class neighborhoods largely comprised of immigrants grew up around the economic centers of both cities.

By the 1880s, San Francisco had the highest concentration of immigrants of any other U.S. city (Walker 2018; Causa Justa::Just Cause 2014). San Francisco and other growing Bay Area cities relied on immigrants from China and other Asian countries, as well as European immigrants, as the main labor force for their expanding economies. By the 1900s, San Francisco’s population had reached 350,000 and Oakland’s 150,000 (Causa Justa :: Just Cause 2014). Between 1910 and 1950, the “pull” of manufacturing jobs and the “push” of Jim Crow in the U.S. South created a huge exodus of African Americans to northern cities. Many concentrated in the urban Bay Area, in West and North Oakland, Richmond, and South Berkeley. In the first quarter of the 20th century, many Mexican immigrants came to the Bay Area and settled primarily in the Fruitvale district of Oakland, the Mission of San Francisco, and East San Jose. During WWII, the Fillmore and Hunter’s Point became predominately African American neighborhoods in San Francisco and West Oakland’s Black population expanded. The population of Richmond

Chapter 2

grew from 23,000 to over 100,000 during World War I, as workers from the South and Midwest poured in to work in the shipyards. African American, Mexican, and other workers of color and immigrant workers were an integral part of the Bay Area economy, but discriminatory housing policies across the cities and redlining in the working class neighborhoods where they lived, close to the manufacturing centers, segregated them from the rest of the cities.

Changes in the national and global economies during the 1970s shaped Bay Area cities in significant ways. As more manufacturing jobs were sent offshore, deindustrialization in the United States meant low-wage service jobs replaced unionized factory jobs. In the Bay Area, the information technology and electronics industry expanded, shifting the economic hub to Silicon Valley; in the next decades, capital from the tech industry became the primary influence, not just on the Bay Area economy, but also on the landscape. The electronics and information services sectors boomed, offering high-paying jobs to a relatively small sector of the population—much smaller than the many workers who lost their jobs in manufacturing. These were fundamental changes to the Bay Area’s physical landscape and demographics, and they continue to reverberate today.

Meanwhile, white managerial workers and those employed in Silicon Valley’s nascent tech industries were moving out of the city centers to the rapidly expanding suburbs. Suburbs quickly ate up the landscape, following the path of the newly built freeways, first south from San Francisco, down the peninsula toward Silicon Valley. Oakland and the East Bay had already surpassed San Francisco in size by the 1950s. As San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley exploded with growth after World War II, they grew larger than San Francisco by the 1960s and all of Alameda County by the early 1970s (Walker 1996).

Tech money has been the driving force behind recent waves of gentrification in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area, refiguring the real estate market and the demographics of the region (Schafran 2013). In the 1990s, venture and stock market capital was pouring into Bay Area cities: “In 1999...the Bay Area received twice as much venture capital (5.5 percent) as the next largest metro area, and almost ten times the U.S. metro average (Atkinson and Gottlieb, 2001)” (Schafran 2013, 671). The capital, Schafran explains, was concentrated in Santa Clara, San Francisco, and northern Alameda counties. “While this upsurge in investment initially had an impact on commercial rents in Silicon Valley and San Francisco, the profits and salaries earned from the growing tech ‘miracle’ quickly multiplied in the local real-estate economy as a new generation of dot-com millionaires and young twenty-somethings bought and rented Silicon Valley and San Francisco real estate to new heights” (*Ibid.*). Private and public capital was invested in development and condominium construction. Housing costs went up, as did the number of evictions. This wave of gentrification, first concentrated in San Francisco neighborhoods like the Mission District (Solnit and Schwartzberg 2000), expanded to the far reaches of the Bay Area, as many displaced people moved across the bay to Oakland, and further out to the suburbs beyond (Causa Justa :: Just Cause 2014).

The population shift in the 1960s and 1970s, in which whites left the cities for the suburbs, began to reverse, as higher-earning whites returned to the city centers, newly dominated by information technology jobs rather than manufacturing. Lower-income communities of color, displaced by rising rents, moved to the suburbs—and beyond (the Central Valley)—though still often commuted back to San Francisco and Oakland for

work. A result of both tech money that has reshaped the economy and the 2008 foreclosure crisis, the racial and socio-economic composition of the inner cities and the suburbs began to switch places; poverty rates rose in the suburbs and declined in the inner city. Urban centers also began to lose the middle class, as middle-income residents left for the outer reaches of Alameda and Contra Costa counties (primarily Vallejo, Fairfield, Stockton, etc.), as well as to other parts of California and out-of-state. Between 1990 and 2011, the African American population in San Francisco went from 10 percent to 5 percent. In Oakland, in the same time period, the African American population dropped from 43 percent to 26 percent.

Reverberations from the expanding tech economy in the Bay Area have created extreme income inequality, a context in which gentrification both flourishes and is further propelled. According to the 2017 Race Counts study, “at the same time that the tech boom created wealth and attracted a highly educated, high-earning workforce, it also increased housing prices and promoted gentrification, while exacerbating existing racial disparities” (Advancement Project California 2017).

Marin County

The history of Marin County lays a different foundation for the process of gentrification.¹⁴ Unlike San Francisco and East Bay cities, Marin never developed as a financial or manufacturing hub. Instead, agriculture and ranching dominated Marin, beginning in the early 1800s, when Californios raised longhorn cattle for their hides and tallow (UCCE Marin). During and following the Gold Rush, many immigrants who came to San Francisco moved north to Marin to look for other opportunities to make a living. West Marin became a center of agricultural production for San Francisco, with European immigrants running most of the agricultural enterprises. Dairy ranching in particular took hold in the Point Reyes (see Chapter 7).

Development pressures

In the late 1800s, urban recreationists began to venture to Marin for weekend escapes. The expansion of transportation systems, like ferry service from San Francisco, made Marin more accessible for daytrippers. Mt. Tamalpais, Marin’s landmark, rising nearly 2580 feet above the coast, drew hikers and sightseers, especially after the construction in 1896 of the railroad that chugged to the top of the mountain.

In the 1890s, real estate speculators began to develop the town of Mill Valley, on the flanks of Mt. Tamalpais. One of them, William Kent—also the largest landowner in the county—was the first to set aside land from development in Marin: Kent saved the last stand of prime redwoods on Mt. Tam from the logging companies by buying it up and turning it over to the federal government to form Muir Woods National Monument. Kent next helped establish the Marin Municipal Water District, which protected Mt. Tam (as well as the water supply for the properties he owned) (Walker 2007).

¹⁴ The land area of Marin County is 606 square miles. Over 250,000 people live in the county, most of them in the eastern county; about 67,500 of those live in the unincorporated county, which is mostly West Marin.

Chapter 2

The first major suburban expansion from San Francisco came after the 1906 earthquake. A second wave of more intense development pressure came after the 1937 completion of the Golden Gate Bridge and the extension of Highway 101 north from San Francisco through Marin (Walker 2007). The Marin Conservation League, a group of wealthy, politically well-connected Marin residents, many of them women, mobilized in the 1930s around the threat of growth that the Golden Gate Bridge posed. They succeeded in getting the county to adopt a zoning ordinance, to hire a planner, and adopt a recreation plan. They also worked to set aside small areas of land around the county, and preserved a remarkable amount of land as open space in the late 1930s and early 1940s, most of it in West Marin. (Drake's Beach, 1938; Stinson Beach, 1939; Shell Beach, 1943; Samuel P. Taylor State Park, 1940; and Tomales Bay State Park, 1948.)

In the 1950s, the county had several more large-scale highway projects in the works, fueled by state and federal funding. The state pushed to turn the one-lane, winding Highway 1 along the coast into a multilane expressway, with several smaller freeways crossing the hills from urban Marin to the coast. Two bridges were planned, one from San Rafael to Richmond, and one from San Francisco to Marin via Angel Island.¹⁵

In general, growth wasn't yet perceived negatively in Marin County, in part because there was little tract home development and more "small-scale additions to existing neighborhoods" in areas of east Marin like San Anselmo and Fairfax (Dowall 1984, 59). In addition, since Marin's housing prices were already higher than average even then, "newcomers were overwhelmingly similar to existing residents in terms of income level, job choice, and lifestyle" (Dowell 1984, 60). As the Bay Area boomed with suburban growth, it appeared that Marin was next in line.

Nationwide, the years between 1950 and 1970 saw an important shift in perspective on the suburbs. As Adam Rome describes in *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, the suburban developments that in 1950 were celebrated for their tremendous earthmoving, transformational capacities, by 1970 were "symbols of environmental destruction" (Rome 2001, 2). Marin activists became dedicated to protecting Marin from growth. Their early conservation actions had laid the groundwork for a significant movement to set aside land for recreational use and protect it from development. The largest swath of protected land, Point Reyes National Seashore, was established in 1962 and finally fully acquired in 1972 (see Chapter 5).

In 1967, the pro-growth Marin Countywide Plan proposed extensive suburban development throughout Marin. Marin conservationists began to advocate for a general plan that would concentrate development along the Highway 101 corridor, protecting the ranches and coastal lands of West Marin. A turning point in the struggle was the election of "green" members of the Board of Supervisors who redirected the previously pro-growth energy in county government (Griffin 1998). The new board first nixed an expansive development in southern Marin on the coastal headlands, and then turned to the general plan. It repealed the 1967 plan and proposed a preliminary environmental plan in 1971, after a study ordered by the planning department ("Can the Last Place Last? Preserving the Environmental Quality of Marin") provided a different vision for West

¹⁵ Only the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge was built, in 1956.

Marin.¹⁶ The plan proposed that development be clustered around the Highway 101 corridor, with West Marin agricultural and coastal areas protected from development (Griffin 1998).

The 1973 Countywide Plan: two Marins

In 1973 the first Marin Countywide Plan was finally implemented. Unlike earlier proposals, the plan that the Board of Supervisors finally adopted “stressed open space preservation and low-density, clustered development” (Dowall 1984, 59). The central concept of the plan was that the county would be divided into three corridors. Each corridor would have its own zoning laws that would enforce distinct planning goals. The goal of the coastal recreation corridor (coastal West Marin) was for the land to be mostly acquired by federal and state parks. In the inland rural corridor, which encompassed most of West Marin’s agricultural land, the idea was to adopt A-60 zoning—or one residential unit per sixty acres, with the goal of maintaining agriculture and open space. Any new development in these areas would be confined to existing town limits. The city-centered corridor (East Marin) would be where the bulk of county residents lived and worked; most residential development would be limited to this area surrounding Highway 101 (Rogers 2007), and West Marin would remain largely rural.

Marin looks the way it does today largely because of the 1973 Countywide Plan; in ways both intentional and unintentional, the plan fundamentally shaped Marin’s physical and demographic landscapes, essentially creating “two Marins”: West Marin is primarily open space, protected recreation and agricultural lands. Most significant development—commercial and residential—and transportation networks are in East Marin; but rather than the dense residential neighborhoods planners may have expected, most of the development along Highway 101 was commercial.¹⁷ So while Marin was creating low-paying jobs in retail and restaurants and other service jobs along the 101 corridor, the county was not building housing for these workers.¹⁸ Development restrictions and resistance to growth have been the defining factors in shaping the future demographics and build-out of the county.

Population and housing units grew more slowly in Marin County than the 1973 and 1982 county plans had predicted. As the commercial development would indicate, jobs, however, increased more quickly than expected, and transportation policies that had been developed based on lower projections quickly proved insufficient. The 1982 county plan assumed that Marin would have more residents than jobs, so that the commute to San Francisco would continue to be a significant one (as well as the commute of Sonoma

¹⁶ The study was called “Can the Last Place Last? Preserving the Environmental Quality of Marin.”

¹⁷ Major retail establishments, auto malls, restaurants, and hotels are more profitable for cities because they draw more sales tax than the money cities have to put into public services for them. Residential development, on the other hand, doesn’t provide direct revenue (like sales tax) for localities, so the cost to provide them with public services is higher than what the city makes from the property taxes they pay. Especially after Proposition 13 limited the revenue cities would receive from property taxes, cities depended more and more on sales tax to meet their budgets.

¹⁸ Marin is not unique in this tendency. In California “many cities and counties have oriented their land use planning and approval process disproportionately towards the development of commercial establishments and away from higher-density multifamily housing” (Alamo and Uhler 2015, 19).

County residents who pass through Marin County on their way to jobs in San Francisco). But transportation patterns were changing in unexpected ways: in the early 1980s, numbers of commuters from Sonoma to Marin increased (nearly doubled between 1975 and 1985, according to Marin County 1994), while those going to San Francisco decreased; commuters traveling to jobs within Marin also increased.

Transportation

The 1973 Countywide Plan locked into place the transportation network: it barred new roads and freeways—or any expansion of the existing transportation system. Marin’s main thoroughfare, Highway 101, crosses into Marin from San Francisco at the Golden Gate Bridge and runs inland from the coast, passing through Sausalito, Corte Madera, San Rafael, and Novato before reaching the Sonoma County border near Petaluma.

Public transportation has not compensated for the restricted transportation network. Golden Gate Transit buses carry significant, but declining, ridership across the Golden Gate Bridge to jobs in San Francisco, and ferry service to San Francisco is well used. But within the county, and into Marin from Sonoma County, Marin Transit buses provide limited options. In addition, Marin County has no Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. While a cursory view of the lack of BART in Marin County would label it a forbearer to the affordable housing debates in recent decades, its history is different. In the 1950s and ‘60s, when BART plans were in the works, Marin County had not yet set aside hundreds of thousands of acres of green-space, and while white and wealthy, the county was decidedly pro-growth. In fact, Marin residents overwhelmingly supported BART in their county, as did developers who foresaw that BART would bring growth. Rather than the community rejecting BART due to fear of growth, argues Louise Dyble, BART didn’t reach Marin because of “special district officials acting behind the scenes to influence public policy” (Dyble 2003, 289). While early studies concluded that the trains would pose no problem to the bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge District, concerned about losing toll money, found engineers who would claim that trains on the span would compromise the integrity of the bridge. Another concern was that the county’s small population would not provide enough of a tax base to support the project. (San Mateo County had already withdrawn, increasing the cost to Marin.) Marin officials, before BART was put to a vote, felt pushed to withdraw the county from the future transportation system, “involuntarily and upon request,” according to then-Supervisor Peter Behr (Prado 2010).

In 1990, BART in Marin was revisited, and new studies concurred with the initial ones that found there would be no problem with trains on the bridge; but the cost of the extension was estimated at \$3 billion and was abandoned (Prado 2010). In 2018, the first SMART trains began to run between Marin and Sonoma County, after voters approved a sales tax increase in 2008 to fund the commuter rail service, but it still hasn’t connected to wider rail service in the region.

Marin County demographics

Marin’s lack of public transportation options is one factor that keeps the county white and wealthy. Marin’s population increased significantly between 1950 and 1960, from 85,619 to 146,820 (42 percent) and another 29 percent between 1960 and 1970, to 206,038. Subsequent increases have been less substantial, only adding 19 percent between 1970

and 2010. Whereas gentrification in the Bay Area urban core sent lower income African American and Latino residents to the East Bay suburbs, the Marin suburbs stayed overwhelmingly white: in 1970, 96 percent of the population was white. In 2010, the county was 80 percent white, in contrast to the Bay Area as a whole, which was 52 percent white in 2010. Marin has the highest median income in the state (Franchise Tax Board 2019).

Marin County residents are the most educated of those in any other Bay Area county (and in the state). Of county residents age 25 or older, 93 percent have at least a high school diploma, compared with 82 percent statewide; 57 percent of these have a bachelor's degree, and 9.6 percent have an advanced degree (Statistical Atlas 2018). Over half of the county's population is employed in professional, management, or financial business occupations, but most of them work outside the county. The county's most important economic sectors—services, construction, and transportation—employ less than a quarter of the county's population, but are therefore a major source of employment for residents of nearby counties (Community Development Agency 2013, II-3).

As I introduce above, while Marin is overwhelmingly white and wealthy, it is also has extremely high inequality. A recent report found that Marin County has the greatest racial disparity of all California counties in areas including crime and justice, economic opportunity, health access, healthy built environment, housing, and education (Advancement Project California 2017). Marin's communities of color are concentrated in two areas: Marin City, which is 46 percent African American, and the Canal District of San Rafael, where over half of the county's Latino residents live. A 2011 audit by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of Marin County found several problems with Marin's fair housing compliance, including the segregation of communities of color.¹⁹ The audit also discovered that the county had built only a small portion of the low-income housing mandated by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).²⁰ HUD also learned that a fair housing document, an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI), which is supposed to be updated every five years, had not been since 1994. The county supervisors accepted an updated AI and designed an implementation plan that included "putting minorities and low-income residents on the committee that makes community development grant decisions" and increasing diversity training for county staff—the two more straightforward goals. Two other goals—streamlining the rezoning process for affordable housing and improving public transportation—are much more complicated prospects (See Chapter 6 on zoning and community opposition). The county's intentions will come head to head with residents' strong opposition to development, particularly the development of affordable housing.

¹⁹ Some sources say it was a routine audit by HUD, others say that HUD identified Marin as a "county of interest" because it is primarily white.

²⁰ The HUD audit of Marin County came on the heels of a lawsuit housing advocates brought against Westchester County, NY, which asserted that the county's exclusionary zoning impeded compliance with federal fair housing laws by receiving federal funding.

Marin County and affordable housing²¹

Every seven years, the state of California calculates a Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) based on projected population growth. For the 2007 to 2014 cycle, the Bay Area issued permits for only 57 percent of the 214,500 units the state mandated. Marin County issued permits for only 32 percent of the units required by the RHNA, lower than all other Bay Area counties (ABAG 2014).²² While not unique—resistance to development is ubiquitous in affluent suburbs throughout the Bay Area and across the nation—Marin is particularly fierce in its resistance, especially to multi-unit and affordable housing. An employee of the planning department described community response to development as “vitriolic” (Anonymous 14, personal communication, October 25, 2015).

In recent years, Marin residents have rejected several proposals for projects that would have provided low-income housing for residents of Marin. The Marin County Housing Element attributes community resistance primarily to concerns about traffic,²³ water supply, impact on schools and other infrastructure, and loss of open space. It also cites concerns about “community character,” which it defines as including the visual impact of increased density, the impact of affordable housing on property values, and the need to distribute affordable housing more evenly throughout the county (III-2).

In the course of my research I spoke with many county and non-profit employees involved in housing development. Most of the above, my interviewees emphasized, as do many housing activists and other concerned community members, are smokescreens; whatever the stated reasons, they say that racism and classism, expressed both overtly and more subtly, underlie all the challenges to affordable housing. One of my interviewees in the Community Development Agency described a program the county started with the intention of increasing renter stability by making evictions more difficult (among other things). The idea, she told me, was that with so much opposition to development in the county, residents would be happy to find new ways to preserve existing affordable housing, somewhat ameliorating the housing crisis without developing new housing. But, she said, residents opposed the program, revealing that “[p]eople are opposed to having low-income people in their neighborhoods, period. They will find any possible angle to fight it” (Anonymous 14, personal communication, October 15, 2015).

In 2008 the state legislature passed a bill that required two regional government agencies, Metropolitan Transportation Council and the Association of Bay Area Governments, to create a long-range plan for the region’s transportation, housing, and land use. The idea is

²¹ Marin County’s dismal history of affordable housing is complex enough to be a dissertation in itself. This dissertation covers enough background to provide context for struggles over gentrification and housing in West Marin, but does not go into detail.

²² Interestingly, Marin was not ranked last in the Bay Area for permits issued for “very low” and “low” income housing. In fact, it far surpassed most other Bay Area counties in those areas, but other counties came closer to meeting goals for “moderate” and “above-moderate” housing.

²³ The Housing Element does not explore why this concern, though widespread, does not hold weight; the bulk of the traffic in Marin is due to commuters, who, if they were able to live closer to their jobs, would not take up so much space on the roadways.

that every part of the Bay Area will weather its fair share of the burden of creating housing to serve the Bay Area population. The plan identifies priority development areas (PDAs)—areas that are located along existing transit corridors and near mass transit and other services—as where development will occur. Marin County, with immense pressure from unhappy residents, voted down all the proposed PDAs, leaving only two in the entire county—near San Rafael’s transit center and in Marin City, surely not coincidentally Marin’s two low-income, racially diverse pockets. A county supervisor lost her seat over some of the proposed priority development areas, as residents demonstrated their remarkable bitterness at the idea of sharing their communities with lower income and/or people of color (Peak 2014).

Conclusion

The understanding of gentrification as the product of transformation on many scales is what makes a regional context essential for studies of gentrification. In that light, this chapter has described the social geography of the Bay Area—the development of its urban centers and the processes of suburbanization and exurbanization, situating Marin County, and West Marin more specifically, in the Bay Area region. The history of the Bay Area—and Marin’s ties to San Francisco capital, jobs, residents, and conservationists—is integral to understanding the relational processes over time that have shaped West Marin.

Marin was early on a retreat for urbanites, and then became a suburb, with most residents commuting into San Francisco for work. Unlike the rest of the Bay Area, it did not develop an industrial base and did not draw significant numbers of immigrants. Strong activism around land protection has defined Marin since the late 1800s; the 1973 Countywide Plan followed that tradition by protecting large swaths of land in the county. West Marin was designed to be different—the rural counterpart to a suburban East Marin. But East Marin housing and transportation networks haven’t developed as early plans expected, and the county as a whole provides far more service jobs than affordable homes. The lack of housing and transportation options isolated Marin as a wealthy, white suburb, while gentrification in San Francisco and the East Bay resonated into the far reaches of other Bay Area suburbs. Rather than displacement of low-income communities of color, Marin confronts traffic congestion from the commuters into the county who fill the low-wage jobs the county depends on but for whom it does not provide housing. This represents many of the incongruities of gentrification in Marin County and perpetuates the idea that gentrification can’t happen in a place that is predominately white and wealthy. Marin’s history not only reveals how gentrification happens over time, in ways that go unseen from today’s perspective of Bay Area gentrification, but it also reveals the key role of “exclusionary displacement,” in which people can’t move into an area (Zuk et al. 2015). But the service-based economy in Marin County, and in West Marin in particular, means these workers are necessary to the economy. Their exclusion from county residence means daily in- and out-migrations.

Chapter 3. Continuity in the physical landscape: institutions and infrastructure in West Marin

It still looks pretty much the same. It's the socioeconomics that have shifted dramatically (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

In most gentrifying areas, where housing is becoming scarce for workers and other locals and demographics are changing, the physical appearance of the community is also transformed. In some cases, rampant new development accompanies gentrification: suburban subdivisions in rural areas or towering new apartment buildings in city centers; a proliferation of chain restaurants and stores, and commercial strip malls; or remodels and new development of fashionable boutiques and restaurants designed to attract and service a new class of residents. In West Marin, the physical landscape has changed little in comparison with other gentrifying areas. Not only has the footprint of development expanded minimally, but the towns have in large part avoided the high-end stores and redevelopment seen in both urban gentrified areas and gentrified small towns—like some close by: Napa, Healdsburg, and Carmel.

Yet the continuity of the physical landscape in West Marin belies the socioeconomic changes that are transforming the area. Institutions, infrastructure, and topography all keep the physical landscape looking a certain way in West Marin, unlike in other gentrifying areas. But the same institutional and infrastructure factors that keep the physical landscape relatively unchanged affect the housing supply, exacerbating the housing shortage.

However, institutional and infrastructure factors are not the only things that shape the landscape and housing supply. This chapter introduces these formative forces, and the next several chapters, the bulk of this dissertation, explore how another critical institutional control—land conservation for both recreation and agriculture—has created a desirable place and a particular community with a strong vision of what the physical and demographic landscape should look like. They explore how these things merge with community vision in regulating development both in formal and informal ways.

The geographic scope of West Marin varies depending on who you ask. Technically, the area stretches from Stinson Beach in the south to Tomales in the north, and includes all the communities that fall within that swath: Stinson, Bolinas, Olema, Inverness Park, Inverness, Point Reyes Station, Marshall, and Tomales. Some definitions extend east to include Lagunitas, Forest Knolls, San Geronimo, and Nicasio. This dissertation, following the logic of the Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM), focuses on the northern stretch of coastal West Marin, including the towns of Olema, Inverness, Inverness Park, Point Reyes Station, Marshall, and Tomales. I exclude Stinson Beach and Bolinas because they have had such housing market extremes that they skew the statistics about housing affordability and access in West Marin. Bolinas also has a more seasonal population of agricultural workers, which represents different characteristics and needs. I also exclude inland Lagunitas, Forest Knolls, and San Geronimo because coastal West Marin has a more distinct tourist economy, which is an important factor in this story.

Governance

A combination of institutions that function at various levels of government regulate land use in West Marin: the countywide plan works in conjunction with the California Coastal Commission, local community plans, and Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). Because West Marin is unincorporated, there is no municipal-level government—“everything goes to the county” or state level if you want to get anything done, one interviewee told me (Anonymous 4, personal communication). As one writer put it, “there is not much government out here...there are no town councils or other formal governing structures. Marin County takes care of the roads and the sheriff. The school districts run the schools” (Rowe 2010a).

State: Coastal Act and Coastal Commission

The California Coastal Act, passed in 1976, is a statewide legislation that established the Coastal Commission, tasked with protecting coastal resources along the length of California. The act created a mandate for coastal counties to regulate development and manage the conservation of coastal resources in the “coastal zone.”²⁴ The Coastal Commission has played an important, if controversial, role in governing land use. The commission steers decisions over any change or modification of the physical landscape in the coastal zone and is responsible in large part for keeping West Marin as it is today.

Marin County and the Coastal Commission work in conjunction to enforce the guidelines defined in the Coastal Act and Marin County’s two LCPs.²⁵ Both county and Coastal Commission permits are required for anything defined as development by the Coastal Act, which often includes even modifications to existing structures, including “changes in the nature or intensity of use of land or existing buildings, as well as land divisions and other activities” (Community Development Agency). (Certain development activities, such as repair and maintenance to existing buildings and harvesting of agricultural crops, are exempt from the requirement for a Coastal Permit.)

Local Coastal Programs developed in conjunction with local communities, establish specific procedures for each local “unit” to carry out the goals of the Coastal Act; they identify location, type, density, and other guidelines for development, as well as standards for public access and recreation, and protection of natural resources in the coastal zone. The first Marin County LCP was approved in 1981.²⁶ Community plans for towns in the coastal zone must be consistent with the policies outlined in the LCP; when not consistent, the guidelines set out in the LCPs prevail over all local and county policies and zoning.

²⁴ In Marin County, the coastal zone extends from the Sonoma County line to Point Bonita in the Marin Headlands near the Golden Gate Bridge. The inland area that the zone covers varies depending on topography; it generally extends 1000 yards inland from the mean high tide line of the sea, but in some areas, it extends up to 5 miles (Community Development Agency 1981, vii).

²⁵ The Marin County coastal zone was initially divided into two parts: Unit 1, the southern area, and Unit 2, the northern area. The current update to the LCP combines them into one.

²⁶ The update process for the Marin County LCP began in 2008 and continues underway as of this writing.

While the effect of the regulations in the 1976 Coastal Act make efforts to increase the housing supply more difficult, the act does not contain any housing policies specific to the coastal zone. The original act specified that “housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income shall be protected, encouraged, and where feasible, provided” (Community Development Agency 1981, 6-7), but the commission removed that requirement in later updates. Communities must comply with any local or state requirements that apply to housing supply, unless they do not meet other Coastal Act requirements. The Local Coastal Program for the Point Reyes area, however, recognizes that this creates a conflict: most of the county programs aimed at increasing housing availability for low and moderate income residents “are not applicable in the coastal zone and major obstacles stand in the way of developing additional coastal housing which is affordable to lower income groups” (Community Development Agency 2010, 195).

County: Marin County zoning and development code

As I describe in Chapter 2, the 1973 Countywide Plan divided the county into three corridors—the city-centered, the inland rural, and the coastal recreation—each with specific zoning laws developed to meet their goals. West Marin is in the coastal recreation corridor, where the intention was to confine development to existing towns through the use of village limit boundaries. The land surrounding the towns is zoned as A-60 (primary use is agricultural; one residence allowed per 60-acre parcel). In many cases, a combination of natural geographic features and federal or state protected land limit the area for potential development: Tomales Bay and Point Reyes National Seashore confine development in Inverness to a relatively small area. PRNS and the GGNRA also restrict development in Olema. Marshall is constricted by Tomales Bay to the west and agriculturally zoned land to the east. Point Reyes Station and the town of Tomales are less constrained by geographic features and protected land, but the village limit boundaries concentrate development within a confined area.

Within the established boundaries of West Marin communities, zoning determines what type and density of development can be built. Density ranges from one unit per 60 acres in the Agricultural, Residential Planned (A-60) zoning district to 45 units per acre in the Residential, Multiple Planned district (of which there are many fewer acres).

Local: community plans

In unincorporated Marin, many towns generate community plans that describe land use and development guidelines specific to the locality. The standards they lay out help to evaluate the discretionary planning applications required in planned zoning districts.²⁷ Local community plans are particularly important because through them, community preference gets translated into regulation. Chapter 6 explores how community plans work to express and validate community vision.

Permit process and cost

The confluence of state, county, and local regulations dictates everything from village boundaries to density, development specifications, and permit costs. Some people argue that even given the limitations on development due to zoning and the countywide plan,

²⁷ Community plans must be consistent with the Marin Countywide Plan as well as the Coastal Act.

where development is possible, county state, and local regulations make it increasingly burdensome to add to the housing stock.²⁸ In addition to the specific regulations that limit building, their abundance makes the review process so onerous as to decrease incentive. For each permit or approval, the county charges a fee. One West Marin resident I spoke with called the system “institutionally corrupt” because of how expensive just the permits make building or remodeling in Marin County (M. Dowie, personal communication, April 4, 2016). Another told me,

The whole process is onerous: building is subject to the local coastal program, the countywide plan, the county development code, and, in some communities, a community association. Applicants have to go through design review, coastal permitting, and they face stiff fees. Before you can even begin to build a house today, you spend \$20-30,000 just on fees to get your approvals, not counting your architect fees, and the studies you have to do. You might have to do a biological study, a spotted owl study (and that’s a federal study), soil stability, septic... You have to have a lot of money to do anything (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

A senior planner in the Marin County Development Agency argues that the county’s goal is responsible development that fits the site and the community. “Marin County doesn’t make it hard,” he says, but rather, “lots have constraints,” especially those that are still available to be developed now. Less complicated lots—not as steep or environmentally sensitive for other reasons—have already been developed (Anonymous 13, personal communication, May 8, 2017).

Physical/geographic and infrastructure limitations

West Marin’s topography also plays a certain role in guiding development. Prominent ridgelines (many also protected land) and several miles of shoreline along Tomales Bay have more development restrictions than other areas, regulated by the county and Coastal Commission.²⁹ Steep hillsides that are prone to erosion also limit development and raise construction costs.³⁰

Water availability and septic capacity are two significant obstacles to increased growth and greater density in West Marin (Local Coastal Plan 1981). The terrain and geology

²⁸ Studies on housing costs have shown that multiple layers of review in order to approve a development project not only slows its approval time but also is linked to higher housing costs. One study conducted in the Bay Area found that “each additional layer of independent review was associated with a 4 percent increase in a jurisdiction’s home prices” (Alamo and Uhler 2015, 17).

²⁹ Ridgeline building is restricted in Marin County (Community Development Agency 2005).

³⁰ After the powerful winter storms and heavy rains of the 1982 El Niño season caused landslides along Inverness Ridge, the community plan was updated, reassessing the existing densities and reducing the development potential on the ridge and the slopes that head down to Tomales Bay, given the propensity for erosion and the sensitivity of the terrain for septic systems.

vary in different towns, both of which affect access to water and effectiveness of septic systems.

Septic

All West Marin towns depend on septic systems, but the underlying geology modifies their effectiveness. On the western side of Tomales Bay, where Inverness and Inverness Park are located, the decomposed granite soils of the Point Reyes peninsula provide a good percolation rate for sewage. In contrast, the soils along the eastern shore of Tomales Bay “have significant percolation limitations for conventional septic tank systems” (East Shore Planning Area 1987, 11). These limitations, especially in combination with the proximity of the bay (and its shellfish industry), limit development along the eastern shoreline.

In Point Reyes Station, the downtown area is built on coarse gravel that allows for effective sewage percolation, but north and east of downtown, the soils (Franciscan graywackes, shale, basalts, and ultra basic rocks) do not provide sufficient percolation rates for standard septic systems. For this reason, the Coastal Commission mandated a “one-acre minimum lot size average,” even in areas where zoning would otherwise permit variable lot sizes and clustering of development (Point Reyes Station Community Plan [PRSCP] 2001, 56).³¹ (Chapter 6 discusses how sewage systems also become a player in housing and density debates.)

Water

Unlike other Bay Area counties, Marin’s water supply does not come from the Sierra Nevada. South and central Marin, serviced by the Marin Municipal Water District, receive water from seven local reservoirs, supplemented by the Russian River since 1976. West Marin obtains water from a combination of water districts and small systems. The North Marin Water District provides Point Reyes Station, Olema, Inverness Park, and Paradise Ranch Estates (a subdivision located on Inverness Ridge) through one interconnected system (PRSCP 2001, 55).³² The water comes from two wells that are supplied by Lagunitas Creek and an underground aquifer. Inverness has its own Inverness Public Utility District, which draws from two creeks and supplements from wells (Kimmey 2013).

While the granite soils of Inverness are good for sewage percolation, they are poor aquifers, and water availability has long been a concern in Inverness. Water moratoriums by the Coastal Commission and California Public Utility Commission have limited development in Inverness (Inverness Ridge Communities Plan 1983).

Marshall, along the east shore of Tomales Bay, and the inland town of Nicasio depend on well water. Four streams drain into Tomales Bay within the East Shore Planning Area.

³¹ The Coast Guard Housing Complex, built in 1969 in Point Reyes Station for employees and their families, depended on a gravity-fed sewage collection system. The sewage was stored in three holding tanks that had to be pumped out several times a week and hauled to the Coast Guard treatment facility in Sonoma County.

³² NMWD also supplies water for the National Seashore headquarters at Bear Valley, the Coast Guard Housing Facility, and several dairies.

Groundwater is limited. There are five public water systems fed by springs, wells, or surface runoff in the planning area; in 1987 they were believed to be at capacity (East Shore Planning Area 1987). Groundwater is limited and the agricultural operations along the eastern shore of the bay require a lot of water. Martin Griffin, in his account of the struggle to save the land along Tomales Bay from development in the 1970s, wrote: “As we emphasized over and over, *there is hardly any available water*. Wells can go down hundreds of feet without hitting a drop” (Griffin 1998, 97).³³

Transportation systems

Limited transportation also defines the physical landscape of West Marin. There are four main portals into West Marin. Highway 1 enters from the south, diverging from Highway 101 shortly after the Golden Gate Bridge and following the windy coastline. It passes through Stinson, skirts Bolinas, and heads up the Olema Valley (and the San Andreas Fault) to meet Sir Francis Drake Boulevard at the town of Olema. It then continues through Point Reyes Station and follows the coast of Tomales Bay, through Marshall, to reach the town of Tomales. In Tomales, one could then leave West Marin on the Tomales/Petaluma Road to return to Highway 101 at Petaluma, in Sonoma County. The major commerce that travels Highway 1 is tourism.

Sir Francis Drake leaves Highway 101 at Larkspur and passes through the well-heeled towns of Ross, Kentfield, San Anselmo, and Fairfax, and enters West Marin through the San Geronimo Valley, passing through Lagunitas and Forest Knolls, and Samuel P. Taylor Park to arrive at Highway 1 at the town of Olema. Lucas Valley Road leaves Highway 101 between San Rafael and Novato and takes a winding route by George Lucas’s Skywalker Ranch through the town of Nicasio and around the Nicasio Reservoir to arrive in Point Reyes Station. A few miles further north on Highway 101, Novato Boulevard leaves 101 to cross the town of Novato and meet up with the Point Reyes/Petaluma Road and continue to Point Reyes Station.

The Countywide Plan and the Local Coastal Program only allow road improvement projects that will enhance safety, but not increase the capacity of the roads. In 2001, they were at 20 percent of their design capacity (of 34,000 vehicles per day) (Point Reyes Station Community Plan 2001, 47).

There are two bus lines that connect East and West Marin. The West Marin Stagecoach travels from the bus hub in Marin City to Bolinas, stopping on Mt. Tam and at Stinson Beach and eventually arriving in Bolinas after a trip of one hour and fifteen minutes. Only four buses a day make the trip. The earliest arrives in Bolinas at 9:35 am. The other West Marin Stagecoach travels between San Rafael and Inverness; eleven buses run between 6:45 am and 7:45 pm, though three of those only go so far as San Geronimo. For

³³ The 1967 West Marin General Plan proposed city of 150,000 people along the shores of the bay, would have received water via aqueduct from the Russian River, made possible by Warm Spring Dam (Griffin 1998).

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working people who don't have access to a car in West Marin, public transportation is not a viable option.³⁴

Conclusion

This chapter describes the institutional, infrastructural, and topographic factors that shape the landscape. West Marin has material constraints to development in water availability, septic capacity, and accessible, developable lots. The county also imposes strict regulations that limit development. These all lay the foundation for the paradox of consistency in the landscape alongside deep changes in the socioeconomics of the community. And while they maintain constancy in the landscape, they also limit housing opportunities and contribute to West Marin's distinctive process of gentrification.

³⁴ Gary Giacomini, a former Marin County supervisor for the district that includes West Marin, told me: "People complain because there is no transportation in West Marin. And I say, and there's not gonna be. It's too damn expensive to send a bus out there...it's not going to happen".

Chapter 4. Creating a desirable landscape: land conservation, gentrification, and housing

Create a national park, restore a wetland, and people want to drive out here to partake of them. Start to create a local food economy, and more people come who are less interested in the landscape than in the food. The town fills with cars. Parking becomes a problem. A place in which ecology is practically a religion becomes, on summer weekends, a hot spot on air pollution maps.

We locals become a little cranky and walk around with a debate inside our heads. We like our neighbors who have started the ventures that help attract these crowds. We want them to succeed. We support local economy, organic food, all of it. Yet each success takes us a little further from what we thought we wanted to be—or at least from what this place used to be. It also drives up real estate prices, so that people who made the community what it is can no longer afford to be part of it (Rowe 2010a).

The extensive greenbelt that surrounds the Bay Area—and is one of its primary attractions—often gets the blame for aggravating an important aspect of gentrification: housing affordability. Some planners, housing organizations, and developers contend that, aside from the booming tech economy, land conservation is a primary reason for the high cost of housing: “A contentious debate exists in the San Francisco Bay Area between conservationists and homebuilders who assert that open space protection reduces available land and leads to higher home prices (Fimrite, 2005; McCabe, 2001; McHugh, 2003)” (Denning 2010, 1087). The argument is based in scarcity: “making land off-limits for construction shrinks the area’s housing supply and drives up prices” (Miles 2010). Indeed, since roughly 75 percent of all land in the Bay Area is protected as parks or open space, or zoned for farming or other rural uses and thus at low risk for development, open space is an easy target as a culprit for the housing crisis.

It’s true that in rural areas with no shortage of developable land, residential real estate prices are also higher near protected areas; housing shortages are notorious in towns near national parks and other protected open space (Phillips 1993, Rasker and Glick 1994, Ghose 2004). High housing costs mean that in many rural resort towns, “service employees...can’t afford the high cost of living in town anymore,” as much as they are needed to keep the tourist economy afloat (Ringholz 1992, 117).

West Marin, on the fringe of the urban Bay Area, is in the heart of Marin County’s 185,000 acres of protected land—nearly 85 percent of county acreage. Point Reyes National Seashore comprises over 70,000 acres of undevelopable land, and to the south and east are several more thousand acres of state park and Golden Gate National Recreation Area land. The rolling pastoral hills that dip into the waters of Tomales Bay are all protected as agricultural land by A-60 zoning (and many Marin Agricultural Land

Trust easements). While West Marin’s coastal hamlets seem far from the bustle of San Francisco and East Bay cities, they face the housing crisis that the rest of the Bay Area does, as the previous chapter describes. What, then, is the relationship between gentrification, land conservation, and housing?

I spoke at length with an Inverness resident who has been involved with the debates over housing affordability and availability, both as a decades-long resident and as a Marin County Planning Commissioner. He told me about a community land trust (CLAM) meeting he had recently attended. Attendees were discussing the goal for West Marin “of a more than adequate supply of housing at a reasonable price.” He repeated to me what he said at the meeting: “I know where you can find that—more housing than you can shake a stick at: Detroit.” He went on to say to me: “There is a direct relationship between desirability and lack of availability and high price. If this were a community in which there were all that available housing and it were cheap, we wouldn’t want to live here” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

It seems obvious that land protection in the form of national parks, wilderness areas, open space, and agricultural reserves makes adjacent communities more desirable. Protected land conveys amenities—recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, tranquility, etc.—that make people want to visit and to live nearby. But how a desirable landscape turns into a housing shortage isn’t as obvious. The idea that the mere fact of living next to acres of open space or recreational opportunities magically makes home prices rise is too straightforward. So is the simple scarcity argument. Instead, material processes create rising home prices, as the following chapters argue. As the rest of this dissertation explores, the theoretical understanding that I introduced in Chapter 1, about the intertwining of production and consumption, comes to light through the story of West Marin.

This chapter describes West Marin before the national seashore was established and examines the early effects of the expanding recreation and tourist economies in the area and the consequences for the housing market. The next chapter examines the policies of the primary land protection agency in West Marin and how they affect the housing supply. And the following chapter explores the ways in which the residents who have established themselves in the desirable landscape work to maintain the landscape and community as they imagine they should be, at the same time, preserving their privilege. The effect of the material processes I describe in each of these chapters is a shortage of available and affordable housing.

West Marin before the National Seashore and 1973 Countywide Plan

In the early 1800s, all of West Marin was a vast cattle ranch belonging to Mission San Rafael (Hart 1991). Mission San Rafael was one of the first in California to be secularized³⁵; the church distributed the land mostly to those to whom the Mexican government owed debts. Property lines were casual and written records were not well kept, leading to disputes and confusion about ownership (Mason 1970). The first

³⁵ The Secularization Act (1833 law, 1834 regulations passed) implied that California mission communities would become small self-governing towns; but while the intention was to distribute the land among the Native Americans who lived and worked there, most land ended up in the hands of elite Californio families.

incursion of San Francisco wealth in West Marin came when Andrew Randall, “a man of culture” (Mason)—a founder of the California Academy of Sciences and early California legislator—bought a portion of a Point Reyes land grant in 1852. Randall spent most of his time in San Francisco, though he moved his wife and four children to Point Reyes. Randall struggled financially, already pursued by creditors due to a series of complicated transactions with the purchase of the Point Reyes land and a dubious mortgage. He drove himself deeper into debt by buying more land on Point Reyes. By 1856 Randall’s land had nearly gone into foreclosure when one of his creditors shot him.

Several complicated transactions later, all of Point Reyes ended up in the hands of two brothers, San Francisco lawyers Oscar Shafter and James McMillan Shafter. With the Shafter, the tradition of San Francisco elites retreating to Point Reyes began. The sale of Point Reyes was contentious, and the Shafter ousted those who were living on the land. They eventually split the land between themselves and Charles Howard, and oversaw 20 ranches on the peninsula, during the heyday of the great butter empire (see Chapter 7).³⁶

After Oscar’s death, his brother James, a lawyer with musical and scientific hobbies, lived like a “country squire” in Olema. He had also borrowed heavily to invest in the North Pacific Coast Railroad (which eventually reached Tomales from Sausalito in 1875). Looking for a way to pay off his creditors, in 1889 Shafter subdivided 640 acres of his land along Tomales Bay, creating what is now the town of Inverness. He planned to build a lavish hotel to draw San Franciscans. He also designed “Shafter Colony” on Drakes Bay, where he subdivided 13,300 acres of his land, imagining a development that would mimic a “Los Angeles-type suburban paradise” (Mason 1970, 75).

Shafter Colony never came to be, but Inverness became a summer retreat for wealthy families from San Francisco, especially after the Golden Gate Bridge was built, shortening the trip from the city. Home building slowed during World War II, but picked up again afterwards, with professors and other professionals, especially from Berkeley, buying summer cottages in Inverness. Ranch hands from the point often wintered in the homes (Inverness Ridge Communities Plan 1983). By the 1960s, many summer-home owners had retired and moved to Inverness full time (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015).

Just south of Inverness, at the intersection of Highway One with Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (the crossroads between Bolinas and Point Reyes Peninsula), the town of Olema started out as a service town for the surrounding agricultural landholders. The town was composed primarily of a few houses occupied by local ranch managers or service providers. Because it was surrounded by large ranches, there was little room for residential expansion, and Olema remained a small sprinkling of buildings into the 1960s. It later became the site of some of the first B&Bs, as the national seashore drew visitors to the area.

North from Olema and across Tomales Bay from Inverness, Point Reyes Station started as a stop on the North Pacific Coast Railroad that ran along Tomales Bay. A local landowner, Galen Burdell, saw the possibilities for development that the railroad provided. He subdivided his land, brought water to the town, and began to build. Point

³⁶ See Livingston 1993 for a complete history of the Point Reyes ranches.

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Reyes Station became the hub of the area, where the feed stores, the blacksmith, and other agricultural services were located. “Unlike many West Marin villages which developed as seasonal places of residence...Point Reyes Station has historically been a place of full-time residence for individuals engaged in agricultural and commercial pursuits...” (Point Reyes Station Community Plan 2001, 26). Eventually, the town became a popular place to retire to from the nearby ranches, and it attracted people from elsewhere, “because it was a lovely little rural community” (D. Livingston, personal communication). People even commuted to East Marin from Point Reyes Station beginning in the late 1920s. In the early 1900s, a large plateau (“the Mesa”) to the north of town was subdivided with the idea that it would attract residents, though it was developed slowly. In the 1950s, Point Reyes Station grew as more artists moved there, as well as commuters, and retirees from urban areas and from the ranches (*Ibid.*).

North from Point Reyes Station on Highway One, the small town of Marshall developed similarly to Olema. Large agricultural properties surrounded a small downtown. There were only a handful of houses, occupied mostly by the shopkeeper and a few fishermen. The train went through Marshall, but its constricted geography—between the bay and ranches—kept it from expanding, other than to the south along the bay. In the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, a long row of houses, most of them modest structures on piers over the water, were built. The owners were mostly weekenders, many of whom became involved in the community.

West Marin was a conservative area, socially and politically, comprised mostly of ranchers and others involved in agriculture, along with a smattering of artists and summer residents. In the 1950s, some summer people had begun to retire to their vacation homes and lived there year-round. West Marin towns also attracted many artists, drawn by the scenery as well as the quiet lifestyle and still relatively cheap land. But it was still something of a hinterland: one long-time resident remembers Point Reyes Station in the 1950s, when as a child she would spend Sunday afternoons at the gas station where Highway One runs through town, counting the passing cars—about five or six all afternoon (S. Hall, personal communication, 2003).

Newspaper archives, local history books, and many conversations with long-time residents gave me a sense of the evolution of West Marin over the past several decades. The authorization of the park in 1962 coincided with the flowering of the hippie generation and the back-to-the-landers. Dewey Livingston, who moved to West Marin in the 1980s, described the changes both that he lived and that he has documented as a local historian. In the late 1960s and early ‘70s, the counterculture discovered West Marin. Hippies—“the back to the land hippies and not the city hippies so much”—began to move to West Marin. “And craftspeople. It was a real mix of folks... But a lot of people came and bought houses and they didn’t farm or they didn’t do any of that. It was more of a creative type of deal. They just wanted to live in a quieter place, a good place to raise kids.” The social and political culture of West Marin began to change: “It was the people who came in the 1960s and ‘70s who made it liberal” (personal communication, February 4, 2015).

Many discovered in West Marin a place where they could live a simple life, raise their kids, and build a home. The “attractions here were great. It was cheap, there was land to expand... a whole lot of people [...] came at that time...and found places to rent...” (D.

Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015). Many existing residents resisted their arrival, but the counterculture “would not have been able to move out here so successfully if there weren’t a lot of people willing to rent to them.” The transformation of the community “would not have happened if the whole community had put up walls, and said, ‘We’re not renting to hippies.’” Instead, “they found lots of cheap places to live and were able to fairly quickly establish themselves as not radical, creepy, morally corrupt, drug addicts like people were fearing” (*Ibid.*).

Most new arrivals found occupations and eventually bought empty lots and built their houses. “Usually fairly modest houses, but usually interesting as far as the crafting of them. A lot of architect builders [were] developed by this experience—you get work as a carpenter and then you end up designing your own home... And then a lot of those folks [became] community leaders” (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015). For others, the old Inverness summer homes, many of which were just “shacks without insulation,” provided an inventory of fixer-uppers. Many hippies eventually upgraded the homes with weatherproofing and fully furnished kitchens so that they were livable year round (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). The newcomers brought substantial changes to the community, not just in politics and professions, but also by founding some of the essential community institutions, including the community center, the health clinic, and the radio station.

At the same time, another wave of in-migration began to transform the West Marin community as well: Mexican immigrants came to work on the dairy ranches. Most were from Jalostotitlán or surrounding towns, the result of an extended network that stemmed from the first Mexican immigrant who came to Point Reyes. Single men came at first and then sent for their girlfriends or wives and began families in West Marin. They were essential to the dairy ranches, working the difficult double milking shift. Most lived in housing provided on the ranches (see Chapter 8).

Even after the incursion of new residents in the 1960s and ‘70s began a substantial shift in the community, by and large West Marin remained a forgotten little corner of the Bay Area. One resident remembers growing up in the early 1970s; he describes being able to stand on a street corner in Point Reyes Station and not see anyone for twenty minutes. “It was a ghost town,” he told me; “half the businesses were boarded up.” When he was a teenager in the 1980s, he went to high school “over the hill” in Mill Valley, and he had classmates who had never heard of Inverness. Young people didn’t want to hang out in West Marin. “In the Reagan ‘80s,” he said, “people couldn’t get out of Marshall quickly enough” (R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016).

Land conservation

As the back-to-the-landers and hippies migrated to West Marin to enjoy the relative remoteness, quiet, and freedom to live as they desired, the future of the land in West Marin was being actively debated. As Chapter 2 describes, Marin conservationists—led by upper-class women who formed the Marin Conservation League—worked hard to fight postwar suburban development in East Marin and to secure land for state parks. They turned their sights to West Marin in the early 1960s. Point Reyes had been identified as a possible national park in the 1930s but not until the late 1950s did the National Park Service revisit the idea. With the support of Congressman Clem Miller and

the newly formed Point Reyes National Seashore Foundation, Point Reyes became one of two national seashores. (Cape Cod had been established shortly before.) (See Chapter 5 for the preservation process of Point Reyes National Seashore in more detail.)

The Point Reyes Peninsula was only one of many areas set aside for conservation in Marin the 1960s and '70s. Conservationists also succeeded in preserving Bolinas Lagoon and the ranchland (Audubon Canyon Ranch) that bordered the coast south of the Point Reyes Peninsula. In the same decade, a large development on the Marin Headlands just north of the Golden Gate Bridge was planned and then thwarted by Marin's well-organized and well-heeled group of conservationists (Walker 2007). In 1972, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established, which would eventually span 75,000 acres on either side of the Golden Gate, from Point Reyes south to San Mateo County.³⁷ In addition to the recreational spaces that were set aside from development, Marin's Countywide Plan that was signed into effect in 1973 preserved agricultural land from development, keeping West Marin from becoming a sprawling suburb traversed by highways. (See Chapter 2 for more details.)

But while activists were working fervently to preserve the Point Reyes Peninsula, there were few supporters of the national seashore among local landowners in West Marin. It was "hotly contested by many West Marin residents, who saw the doom of ranching with government exercising only dilettantish care of the land removed from grazing or hunting" (Inverness Ridge Communities Plan 1983, 5). Inverness residents, mostly transplants to the area from elsewhere, did support the seashore, and "made up for their lack of numbers by devotion and acumen" (*Ibid.*). But most supporters lived in East Marin, San Francisco, or the East Bay. The seashore, for them, would be a vital escape from the stresses of urban life. In *Island in Time*, Harold Gilliam encouraged the establishment of Point Reyes National Seashore, alluding to the "frenetic pressures of city life" and praising Point Reyes as a near-by, easy-to-reach escape for residents of San Francisco, which he called the most densely populated city in the United States with the exception of New York. As local historian Dewey Livingston said to me in a conversation about the preservation of the seashore, "...parks for the most part are created and supported by city people who have this idea that we need a park to recreate in and preserve certain things that we value that we don't have in our cities, and it displaces a lot of people" (personal communication, February 4, 2015).

Parks and open space, while they benefit everyone, come to be the domain of the elite. Richard Walker calls Marin and the coastal foothills of the San Francisco peninsula the Bay Area's "west side" (2007). The west side, he writes, "reveals the upper-class element in land conservation. The rich and near-rich nestle into the mountain slopes and charming foothills, then fight to keep their capacious front and backyards unspoilt" (108-109). He goes on to say that Marin "has become even *more* exclusive over time, ironically, because the greenbelt is something worth paying for—and guess who has the money?" (109). Not only was the conservation of Marin's open space and recreational land undertaken largely by well-off urban residents, but it also primed the place for the entry

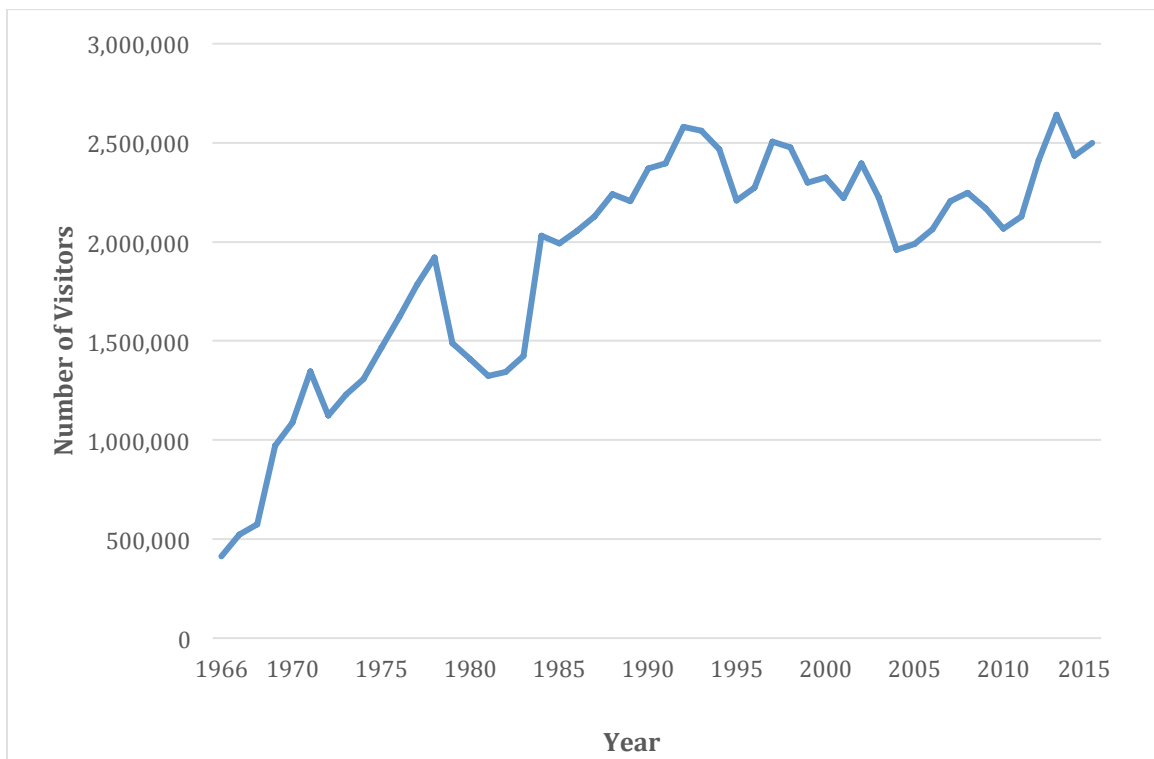
³⁷ Other land preserved for recreation in West Marin is: Mt Tamalpais State Park, established in the 1920s; Samuel P. Taylor State Park, 1945; Tomales Bay State Park, 1952; and several Marin County Open Space District holdings.

of more wealth, a fact that is key to my argument about rural agricultural gentrification, and as the rest of this chapter describes.

Development of a tourist economy and the transformation of the housing market

Close to the urban centers of the Bay Area, Point Reyes National Seashore quickly began to attract visitors. When the park started keeping track of visitors, in 1966, it recorded 411,300 visitors. The numbers increased for the rest of the 1960s, reaching just over one million in 1970. Visitors continued to come in greater numbers in the 1970s, with a slight drop at the beginning of the 1980s. But by 1984, visitors had topped 2 million, and more continued to come for the rest of the '80s. In 1992, nearly 2.6 million people visited the seashore, the most since the park began to keep records. After 1992, visitation dropped slightly, until it reached a low of 1.96 in 2004, roughly the number of people who visited in 1985. Since 2004, the numbers rose again to reach 2.6 in 2013, 2.5 in 2015, and 2.4 in 2016, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Figure 1: Point Reyes National Seashore Visitation 1966-2015³⁸



Over time, a small tourist industry took hold. A smattering of outdoor outfitters opened their doors in West Marin towns, catering to seashore visitors who wanted to kayak on Tomales Bay or Drakes Estero. Several horse ranches began offering guided tours. But most seashore visitors came to hike, bird-watch, and explore the beaches. As the seashore's popularity grew, it became apparent that there were few accommodations for

³⁸ (National Park Service 2016)

these visitors to spend the night. Some hotels existed, but Bed and Breakfasts quickly became a common way to supplement incomes. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw something of a boom in B&Bs in West Marin towns (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015 and R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016). Both new owners who bought specifically to start a B&B, as well as people who decided to turn their existing home into a B&B, were among the early B&B operators.

As the tourist sector expanded, so did the number of overnight accommodations. B&Bs had not generated a great deal of controversy in the community. The 1982 Inverness Ridge Communities Plan, in fact, encouraged the establishment of “non-traditional places of overnight accommodations”—like “Bed and Board” rather than motels and hotels, which the plan reasoned would bring with them traffic, more water usage, and waste disposal concerns. But because many of the B&Bs were created out of homes, or second units were turned into a B&B rental—or owners moved into the second unit and created a B&B in their home—little by little, a significant number of potential rental properties were taken off the market.

Bed and Breakfasts were the first step in a process of displacement that has accelerated as the B&B phenomenon has morphed into a widespread trend of turning homes into vacation rentals.³⁹ According to local historian Dewey Livingston, “. . .there’s been a lot of displacement from [the B&B industry]” (personal communication, February 4, 2015). Many people converted backyard cottages—“and those tend to displace people from real affordable housing” (*Ibid.*).

Not only did B&Bs begin to displace residents and take otherwise available homes off the market, but one of the most famous ones came to represent the transformations of the community as it started to attract greater wealth. Manka’s Inverness Lodge was one of the earliest accommodations to put Inverness “on the bucket list of most savvy travelers,” according to the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Fischer 2016). Margaret Grade and her partner Daniel DeLong bought Manka’s Inverness Lodge in 1991 from the Czech family that had owned it for 40 years. They converted it into a romantic but pricey getaway that attracted a wealthy and prominent clientele. *Food & Wine Magazine* named it one of the 50 best hotel restaurants in the country. In December 2006, a fire burned the lodge to the ground. Grade and DeLong wanted to rebuild, but faced a difficult process of obtaining permits from the Coastal Commission; they also confronted a backlash from the community. The controversy over whether or not Manka’s should be rebuilt heralded many of the issues that have since taken on more immediacy. The community was experiencing a sustained increase in housing prices; residents were realizing that access to housing for the community was becoming increasingly difficult and feared “that their hometowns [were] being transformed into exclusive enclaves of the rich and privileged” (Liberatore 2007). Manka’s represented this exclusivity, but at the same time, the lodge and restaurant provided jobs for about 30 people and was an important buyer of local organic produce and other products. The inn played contradictory roles in the community.

³⁹ Many B&Bs have more recently transformed their operation into a vacation rental by renting the entire house rather than individual rooms—or in some cases at least offering the option (see Ten Inverness Way, Holly Tree Inn, and The Blackthorn, all pioneers of the industry).

Plans to rebuild Manka's stalled, and meanwhile, the owners went on to buy several properties in Olema. In 2012 Grade and DeLong bought the Olema Inn for \$1.65 million; in 2014, they bought the Old Schoolhouse for \$995,000 and Druid's Hall (for an undisclosed price). Grade and DeLong transformed the Olema Inn into a haven of locally sourced meals, which are adorned with fanciful names that emphasize their local-ness (as at Manka's), like "A Bouillabaisse of All Things Green from the Garden" and "Leg of a Neighbor's Duck" (Levin 2013a).

The previous long-term owners of the Druid's Hall had turned it into a B&B, but before its conversion it served as housing and was also the site of the local preschool. "I knew a number of people who lived in the Druids Hall and when that got made into a B&B they were displaced" (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015). With Grade's conversion of the Schoolhouse to a visitor-serving business, another rental property was removed from the market in Olema.

As the number of vacation rentals increased, West Marin communities began to express concern about short-term lodgings and non-permanent residents, as reflected in the community plans. As early as 1982, the community plan for villages along the east shore of Tomales Bay recognized that as regional development expanded, their communities would become "desirable locations for both primary and secondary residences," and that they should take measures—such as developing job opportunities—so that they would not become primarily bedroom or resort communities (East Shore Planning Area 1987, 2).⁴⁰

The Point Reyes Station 2001 community plan noted that while the "community character [was] under increasing pressure from tourism and rapidly rising land prices," the community wished to "sustain the traditional character of Point Reyes Station as the commercial hub for rural West Marin and as a place of full-time residence for people preferring a predominantly rural life style" (i). The 2001 plan expressed community concern "about the proliferation of B&Bs in otherwise private residential neighborhoods." In addition to "[g]uest traffic, parking areas, signage and lighting, among other things," that would "intrude on the rural aspect of residential neighborhoods," it also identified the potential impact of B&Bs on the rental housing stock. The plan recognized that short-term rentals, defined as "less than 30 days and where the majority of the year the house is devoted to short-term vacation rentals," could reduce available housing for the community and "increase the visitor serving uses in the community" (29). The plan concluded that the existing regulations in the County Code were enough to "strike a fair balance between the interests of B&B owners and their neighbors"—"if adhered to." The code required that the primary use of the property be a single-family residence, with the B&B as "incidental" and a way "to allow local residents to supplement their incomes" (*Ibid.*).

While both community plans proposed ways to maintain a full-time residential population, they did not foresee just how popular short-term rentals would become with the advent of Airbnb and VRBO. Residents of Point Reyes Station, Inverness, Marshall,

⁴⁰ The plan also observed that "acquisition of agricultural land for investment purposes has increased over the past twenty years...."

and other West Marin towns claim that a significant number of homes are being converted to vacation rentals. Exact numbers are hard to come by, so I triangulated resident accounts, realtors' experiences, and data from a county survey to assess the extent to which short-term vacation rentals are affecting West Marin communities.

Estimates of the extent come in large part from community members. Many residents testified about the short-term rental phenomenon in West Marin at a series of Board of Supervisors meetings in late 2015 and early 2016. One attendee said that she moved to Point Reyes Station after Marshall had become a destination for vacation rental owners (Board of Supervisors meeting, February 9, 2016). Another said that in a three-block radius around her home in Point Reyes Station, four homes had sold last summer: three to second-home owners, and two of those would be rented on Airbnb to raise revenue to cover their expenses. "It's not just how much they can make," however, she stressed, "it's also the convenience" of being able to come whenever you want (Board of Supervisors meeting, November 17, 2015).

One of my interviewees used to have a home on Tomales Bay in Marshall; in 2002 she bought a ranch nearby. Her neighborhood along the bay—Little Malibu, between Marshall Boatworks and Hog Island Oyster Company—has had "complete turnover." When she owned her home there in the 1990s, of about 20 homes, she estimated, full-time residents occupied six of them; weekenders owned the others and only about two homes were vacation rentals. Now, she told me, only one full-time resident remains. The others are mostly vacation rentals, with a few weekenders still holding on (Anonymous 7, personal communication, October 13, 2016).

Realtors also corroborate the high numbers and the belief that new buyers in West Marin are buying not just a second home that they then rent out, but instead buying with the (often unstated, for loan reasons) intent of creating a vacation rental (Anonymous 8, personal communication, October 20, 2017; Anonymous 14, personal communication, October 25, 2015).

A county assessment conducted in 2012 also confirms community estimations. In 2012, county employee Alisa Stevenson conducted an inventory of vacation rentals in the Coastal Zone of Marin.⁴¹ While the survey offers a baseline, it is out-of-date and the numbers it reports are likely much lower than current numbers (A. Stevenson, personal communication, October 25, 2015). The survey found 357 vacation rentals in the Coastal Zone in 2012, including 200 in Stinson Beach, 27 in Marshall, 40 in Point Reyes Station, and 11 in Inverness. Stevenson said in a 2015 interview that vacation rentals just in Stinson Beach had increased exponentially in the three years since the survey, and assumed that numbers in all localities would have increased, making 357 remarkably low as a current estimate.

In 2017 the county commissioned a white paper on the effect of short-term rentals in the unincorporated county. The paper documents residents' claims that "owners are... increasingly opting to exit the long-term rental market so that the owner can rent his or her unit on an online hosting service (e.g., Airbnb, Homeaway, VRBO)..." (Wise 2017, 4). In addition to documenting exact numbers (which is in part difficult because

⁴¹ This is broader than my study area, because it includes Bolinas and Stinson Beach.

Airbnb and other rental sites don't require the owner to disclose the address until the unit is rented), another complication in measuring the impact of vacation rentals on the housing stock is that it is possible that not all short-term rentals were previously part of the available housing stock—that is, not all have been converted from long-term rentals.⁴² The white paper also points out that many listings on Airbnb and other vacation rental sites are “hosted”—that is, they are private (or shared) rooms in a house. These would likely not be part of the long-term rental stock. Listings that appear as “entire place” are more likely to otherwise have been long-term rental options (*Ibid.* 7).⁴³

As Airbnb and VRBO and other short-term rental companies have gained popularity, short-term rentals have become an important piece of the story of loss of housing in gentrified or gentrifying areas around the world. They play a particularly important role in West Marin because housing opportunities are already limited, and because it is a tourist destination. A Marshall resident emphasized at one of the Board of Supervisors' hearings that Marin's coastal zone experiences the housing shortage more acutely: “The major problems created by weekend rentals as well as places held empty simply as investments...lie within the coastal zone, because you're next to the park, you're next to the ocean” (P. Elmore 2016).

Short-term rentals are one of the manifestations of West Marin's desirable landscape that impacts the housing market by taking rentals off the market and thus also increasing the prices of remaining rentals. In this way, they play an important role in the gentrification of West Marin. They also link two possibly separate aspects of the housing market: second-home owners and tourism, because many second-home owners are buying explicitly to rent to tourists as a short-term rental.

Another phenomenon related to the increase in second-home buyers affects not only housing stock, but also community composition (exacerbating concerns that I will return to in later chapters). Vacant homes are becoming increasingly prevalent. The overwhelming sense from community members is that homes are not just vacant except for weekends when rented to vacationers, but completely empty the majority of the year. Many of those who are drawn to West Marin are buying a second—or third, or fourth—home, several people told me. Realtors confirm that recent buyers are buying vacation homes with no intent to rent them out when not there, because they have enough money not to need the income.

For those who don't need the extra cash, renting on a weekly or seasonal basis, or even hiring a caretaker (thus providing a local with housing, even if not contiguous throughout the year), is simply not worth the hassle, observed Inverness resident Wade Holland (personal communication, February 24, 2015). “They put in an alarm system. They don't want the extra work” (*Ibid.*). He estimates that about 50 percent of the homes in his town

⁴² These would include a room in a house that the owner didn't rent out before doing so on Airbnb, or a backyard cottage that an owner converted to a rental in order to take advantage of the possibilities short-term rentals offer.

⁴³ Airbnb claims that the majority of its listings are hosted, meaning that they would not be part of the long-term rental market anyway, but research in other cities does not support that.

are vacant. “They bought the houses as a place to go for the weekend that was easily reachable, but rural and nice, and a good place to bring up the kids...but what happens is they never come up.”

Dewey Livingston, also an Inverness resident, told me, “I have the sense that so many houses in my neighborhood are vacant... I calculated 50 percent. It’s changed a little bit, but it’s still hovering near 50 percent... And none that I can think of with the exception of the one across the street are being rented for vacation rentals. They’re just empty and there for when the family can come” (personal communication, February 4, 2015).

Housing crisis

In 2007, the Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM), an organization that works to ensure permanent affordable housing for the community, conducted a housing needs survey of renters in the Tomales Bay area.⁴⁴ The survey collected 110 responses from 40 businesses and organizations in the villages of Point Reyes Station, Inverness, Inverness Park, Olema, and Marshall. Nearly half of the respondents earned less than \$35,000 per year in 2006, with nearly one quarter earning less than \$24,000. Thirty-seven percent of respondents were Latino, while 61 percent were Anglo. The percentages were not proportional to those in the population as a whole (at that time Latinos comprised 12 percent of the total population), indicating that it was likely that Latino families were disproportionately feeling the effects of a difficult rental market. The majority of respondents—67.5 percent—worked in Point Reyes Station. Of those, 54 percent commuted to work five days a week, a daily average of 44.5 miles round-trip. Respondents included people who had worked in the area for many years: 56 percent of respondents had worked in the Tomales Bay area for 4 or more years, and 25 percent for more than 10 years. About 43 percent had worked three or fewer years in the area. Housing cost was the primary reason by far that workers in West Marin did not live in the community.

Since then, no one has gathered information about the specific geographic area of West Marin (though the county conducted a countywide survey in 2015; see Appendix). Even with such a high percentage of workers commuting into West Marin in 2007, community members and housing activists pinpoint the real “housing crisis” as beginning several years later. The executive director of the Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM), told me that the organization had noticed a dramatic increase in housing pressure on local residents and workers since 2011 (K. Thompson, personal communication, October 15, 2014). One interviewee described to me “almost daily” postings on a West Marin online forum from people looking for a place to live (W. Holland, personal communication).

⁴⁴ The survey sought responses only from those who didn’t own homes (although six homeowners responded). Because it was directed only at renters, certain jobs don’t appear in the pool of respondents—for example, as of 2007, firefighters in Point Reyes Station all owned homes outside of the community, but some live as far away as Redding and commute to Point Reyes Station. In Inverness, in contrast, firefighters are volunteers and are required to live locally. As a result, the town had recently lost firefighters who could not find local housing.

Residents testified at a series of Board of Supervisors meetings in 2015 and 2016 as to the extent of the affordable housing crisis in West Marin.⁴⁵ “We are in a desperate situation,” one said. “Things are escalating exponentially,” a teacher testified. Another woman I spoke with, who works in community services, called the situation “crazy, unaffordable, especially for Latino families and seniors.” She noted at least three seniors who are living in their cars, “which for this community is a lot” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015). In the small communities of West Marin, the numbers may not be high, but the impact is.

Evolution of the housing market

As the growing amenities of West Marin were attracting tourists, they were also attracting homebuyers. In this section, I examine the evolution of the housing market in California, the Bay Area, and Marin County as a whole, as context for West Marin’s housing market, which I address in the following section.

Housing prices in California have been inflated above the rest of the country since at least the 1940s (U.S. Census Bureau 2012), but starting in the 1970s, they increased dramatically (Walker and Schafran 2015, 20). One report found that between 1970 and 1980, California home prices increased from 30 percent above the national average to more than 80 percent above (Alamo and Uhler 2015, 3). For the next few decades, California was “in the vanguard” of the “great American housing bubble,” with the Bay Area ahead of the state as a whole (Walker and Schafran 2015, 21). By 2015, homes in the Bay Area were three times more expensive than the rest of the country (Alamo and Uhler 2015)—“the highest of any metropolitan area in the country and among the most unaffordable in the world” (Walker 2016).

In keeping with the rest of the state, housing prices in Marin County began to soar in the 1970s.⁴⁶ By the late 1980s, Marin was the second most expensive county in the nation. In the 1990s, homes in Marin were well over \$100,000 more than those in the greater Bay Area. The Marin County Assessor’s Office reports the median home price in 2000 as \$599,000. The Marin Economic Profile reported that by 2006, just before the bubble burst, it had doubled to just over \$1,000,000 (Marin Economic Commission 2007).⁴⁷ By 2014, the median home price in Marin County had rebounded to just over a million dollars again (Mara 2014) and in 2016 it was \$1.08 (Marin Economic Forum 2016).

Real estate data for West Marin are difficult to isolate from Marin County as a whole: information is available for the county, for each municipality, and for unincorporated Marin (sometimes referred to as “miscellaneous”). West Marin is the largest area of

⁴⁵ The meetings were organized in response to the countywide rental housing survey, as the county sought input on ways to ameliorate Marin’s housing crisis.

⁴⁶ By 1971, “Marin’s housing market had out-priced its middle and low-income residents, resulting in an affordable housing crisis,” according to opponents of development restrictions in the proposed Marin Countywide Plan (Economic Development Committee, Marin County 1971).

⁴⁷ Both of these numbers are higher than those reported in the BAREIS data. I am not sure why these discrepancies exist.

unincorporated Marin, but pockets of East Marin are also unincorporated,⁴⁸ so the term encompasses an area larger than my study area and is not precisely representative. In the next section I discuss the West Marin housing market based on other research.

One other discrepancy in the available data makes it difficult to track changes precisely: most real estate data reports home prices as the *median* price for a single family home. Median single family home prices for California are available from 1970 to 2013, but for the Bay Area, Marin County and unincorporated Marin, the median price is available beginning only in 1990 or 1994 (see chart below); the *average* single family home price for unincorporated Marin is available from 1970, but the possibility of large differences between average and median makes comparison between the two difficult.⁴⁹

The following chart summarizes home prices from 1970 through 2016.⁵⁰

Table 1: Median home prices, 1970-2016

	California	Bay Area	Marin	Unincorporated Marin
1970	\$24,640	Not Available	\$37,845*	\$30,235*
1980	\$99,550	\$112,500**	\$168,508*	\$152,680*
1990	\$193,096	\$232,638	\$353,223***	\$305,250*
1995	\$177,500	\$239,315	\$335,000	\$316,250
2000	\$241,778	\$433,890	\$530,000	\$625,000
2001	\$263,505	\$459,898	\$585,000	\$587,000
2002	\$318,309	\$492,415	\$625,000	\$631,500

⁴⁸ Kentfield and Greenbrae are unincorporated towns in East Marin; Woodacre, San Geronimo, Lagunitas, and Forest Knolls, also unincorporated, are usually considered part of West Marin, but I do not include them in my study area (see Introduction for why).

⁴⁹ The difference between average and median sales prices varies as much as \$100,000 to \$250,000. See http://bareis.com/sites/bareis.com/files/membership_report_final_thru_2016.pdf#page=3

⁵⁰ Except for the instances noted in the chart, median single-family home prices for Marin County and unincorporated Marin, from 1994 and beyond, are from Bay Area Real Estate Information Services (BAREIS at bareis.com). Median single family home prices for California, 1970 and 1980, are from Real Estate ABC.com (<http://www.realestateabc.com/graphs/calmedian.htm>), which credits the California Association of Realtors for its data. However, historical records available from the California Association of Realtors only provide median home prices back to 1990, for California, all California counties, and the Bay Area. I use California Association of Realtors (CAR; <http://www.car.org>) for median home prices for California and the Bay Area from 1990 through 2013. Data from different sources varies slightly. CAR data provided by Real Estate ABC is slightly different from data on the CAR website. Data from BAREIS is slightly different from CAR: I use BAREIS for Marin County data, rather than CAR, because BAREIS also reports data miscellaneous Marin. Data from the Marin County Assessor differs more significantly, for some years reporting a difference of over \$100,000 in median sales price. Again, I rely on BAREIS because their data covers a longer period of time. Data available from the Marin County Assessor's Office and from the Marin Economic Profile also differ from these numbers, both being higher than those provided by BAREIS. The difference may be that the assessor's office specifies that the data is only for single family detached homes, while BAREIS does not specify.

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2003	\$371,522	\$533,347	\$625,000	\$677,000
2004	\$451,068	\$622,158	\$750,000	\$845,000
2005	525,960	\$699,343	\$850,000	\$912,500
2006	\$560,641	\$733,129	\$864,500	\$975,000
2007	\$554,450	\$768,446	\$900,000	\$887,500
2008	\$360,790	\$586,698	\$790,000	\$817,500
2009	\$276,700	\$461,610	\$670,000	\$680,000
2010	\$305,631	\$523,523	\$700,000	\$675,000
2011	\$287,523	\$482,353	\$640,000	\$655,000
2012	\$321,389	\$539,001	\$679,000	\$592,000
2013	\$407,413	\$668,073	\$805,753	\$850,000
2014	Not Available	Not Available	\$875,000	\$1,195,000
2015	Not Available	Not Available	\$930,000	\$900,000
2016	Not Available	Not Available	\$975,000	\$1,350,000

*Average sales price. Not a reliable comparison, see footnote above, but the only available figure for these years. My information for unincorporated Marin does not provide median sales price before 1994. The 1990 figure comes from <http://blog.pacificunion.com/what-bay-area-home-prices-looked-like-25-years-ago/>.

**1980 Bay Area data is from http://www.data360.org/dsg.aspx?Data_Set_Group_Id=1346

***From CAR, because BAREIS doesn't provide median sales price prior to 1994.

The rental housing market reflects a similar boom. In California's coastal metropolitan areas, rents have increased since 1970, from about 16 percent higher than the rest of the country to about 50 percent higher (Alamo and Uhler 2015, 12).⁵¹ The 2015 Marin

⁵¹ A report from the Legislative Analyst's Office finds a strong relationship between housing supply and housing costs, though other factors, such as demographics, local economies, and weather also affect the relationship between supply and cost. One study reports that between 1980 and 2010, in coastal California in general, home construction was lower than national standards and lower than historical rates for the area. In the typical metro area in the United States, the number of housing units grew by 54 percent between 1980 and 2010. In coastal metro areas in California, it grew by 32 percent, in San Francisco by 20 percent. By comparison, between 1940 and 1970, housing units in California's coastal metro areas grew by 200 percent. The slowdown in building in on the California coast coincided with the rise in home prices. Apparently in contrast to the finding about low supply and high costs, while housing costs in California's inland metro areas are above the national average, they added housing at about twice the rate of a typical U.S. metro area between 1980 and 2010. The reason, the LAO finds, is their proximity to the coast: it is a result of displaced demand for housing on the coast—households and business that would locate on the coast if housing were not so expensive, locate to inland areas instead. The LAO finds that the "spillover effect" is considerable: counties adjacent to those with high housing costs tend to have high housing costs as well (Alamo and Uhler 2015, 12). These adjacent counties comprise what Walker and Schafran call "the commuting field" of the nine-county Bay Area boundary, which extends into inland counties like San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Yolo, and Sacramento counties. Commuters from these outlying counties to the East Bay, Silicon Valley, and San Francisco spend up to four hours a day getting between home and work (Walker and Schafran 2015).

County Housing Element reported that rental prices in the county increased approximately 13 percent between 2004 and 2013. The 2008 mortgage crisis affected Marin County less than the rest of California, but it increased pressure on the rental market as people who had lost their home looked for rentals.

Table 2: Average rental prices 2004-2013, countywide⁵²

Year	Average annual rent (studio to 3-bedroom)	Cost adjusted for inflation (2014 dollars)
2004	\$1483	\$1861
2005	\$1478	\$1794
2006	\$1537	\$1807
2007	\$1620	\$1852
2008	\$1695	\$1866
2009	\$1673	\$1849
2010	\$1667	\$1812
2011	\$1777	\$1873
2012	\$1920	\$1983
2013	\$2066	\$2102

West Marin

Since “unincorporated Marin” doesn’t precisely represent West Marin, in order to reconstruct a history of the housing market in West Marin over the past several decades, I interviewed residents and realtors and researched property records at the Marin County assessor’s office. As I describe in other chapters, West Marin was primarily an agricultural area with a few enclaves of summer homes that attracted families from San Francisco and the East Bay. Several things converged in the 1970s that began to change the housing market: housing prices in all of California began to increase; by then, West Marin had become a destination for back-to-the-landers and young hippies looking for an alternative lifestyle; Point Reyes National Seashore was fully acquired in 1972; and the 1973 Countywide Plan designated agricultural land in West Marin as off-limits for development.

Local (and former park service) historian Dewey Livingston described the authorization of PRNS as bringing more prominence to the area, attracting people and beginning “a little mini-boom” of people moving to West Marin. Some people built houses, but the park didn’t initially attract “a whole lot of development” or wealth to the area (personal communication, February 4, 2015). Home prices in West Marin lagged behind the rest of the county in the 1970s—largely because it was hard to get loans for what banks

⁵² From Marin County Housing Element (Community Development Agency 2015).

considered solely summer home communities, according to one realtor (B.G. Bates, personal communication, February 17, 2015). Those who were drawn to the area then describe finding a home or a plot of land to build on as difficult. One long-time resident first rented in Point Reyes Station in 1973 for \$110 a month. He “fell into the movement” out there of people “trying to make a community.” In 1976, he bought one acre in Point Reyes Station; with a risky loan he says he was surprised the bank gave to “a pony-tail-wearing hippie,” he designed and built a house on a shoestring budget (M. Livingston, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

“Things started going crazy here in the ‘70s and ‘80s” (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015). By the middle to the end of the 1970s, housing prices had doubled in West Marin as a whole, especially in the southern part of West Marin. Housing costs tripled in Bolinas and grew exponentially in the Seadrift neighborhood of Stinson Beach. In the early 1980s it again became hard to get loans, interest rates on mortgages hovered around 12 percent and the West Marin market “fell out” again and made it hard for local people to buy homes (B.G. Bates, personal communication). Even then, now-retired state park ranger Carlos Porrata told me that for “regular folks,” buying land in West Marin seemed out of reach. He and his wife bought a piece of land in Inverness in 1989, paying it off over the next ten years, and eventually building a house (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

One resident who moved to West Marin from “over the hill” (East Marin) in 1983 recounted renting numerous houses in Point Reyes Station and Inverness in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1998, he and his wife “finally” bought a house for themselves and their three children, for “just short of \$300,000.” Soon after, “everything went crazy. I never thought we’d be able to buy a house,” he told me. They were able to with a low-documentation loan from Countrywide Financial, “one of those...that turned into the huge scandal later.” Shortly after they bought, “things went haywire. Our house was 1000 square feet roughly. The house next door to us was about 730 square feet. It sold three or four years later for over \$600,000. We feel like we got in right at the last gasp” (Anonymous 2015).

By the mid-to-late 1990s, real estate agents describe the West Marin market as picking up again, along with the regional and national economy. One agent said the West Marin market improved as people began to “see the value in what they once considered too far away” (B.G. Bates, personal communication).⁵³ But the big change in the decade of the ‘90s, according to realtors and residents, was that tech wealth began to enter the West Marin housing market. Starting in the 1990s, three-quarters of the buyers of second-homes in Inverness had addresses in Palo Alto—the hub of the Silicon Valley tech economy during the dot.com boom.⁵⁴

The market “wasn’t prohibitively expensive...until the 2000s,” when it “really started going up and up and up,” one resident told me (D. Livingston, personal communication,

⁵³ The impression of decreased distance also may have had to do with in the advent of telecommuting.

⁵⁴ This is Wade Holland’s estimate, based on his years as Inverness Public Utility District Manager (1980s through 2001), during which he managed every change of customer on the water system.

February 4, 2015). According to one real estate agent and former West Marin resident, the economic recession of 2008 was a turning point for the second home market in West Marin (Anonymous 8, personal communication, October 10, 2017). Many homeowners had to sell, creating an opportunity for others to buy at good prices. Buyers, many from the Bay Area, began to pay all cash for a second or third home. Community members also describe a marked difference in their level of concern since 2008; they describe 2011 as when what was before concern about housing affordability and availability developed into a housing crisis (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

A snowball-type search of property records at the Marin County Assessor's Office reveals that many recent home buyers are not people working in the West Marin communities, but rather are second or third home owners, with primary residences in San Francisco, the Peninsula, the East Bay, Los Angeles, or beyond. Much of their wealth is connected to the tech industry. (As Wade Holland put it: "Nowadays it's San Francisco addresses. It's the same population, but the next generation... The young people in Silicon Valley aren't living in Palo Alto anymore, they're living in the city). A realtor described "a lot of tech money" entering the market, especially in Inverness: "94937. That's the zip code" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, October 10, 2017).

Whether from tech or not, the common denominator among recent buyers is money: "We've been discovered by monied people. Tech and movie stars," one community member told me (R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016). Another realtor described the new buyers as "rich people": "the most defining fact for them all is that they can afford to live in a place that allows them a lifestyle they want" (Peak 2013).

Following is a sampling of homebuyers in the 94937 (Inverness) zip code: The co-founder of Pandora paid \$1.35 million in 2008. An ex-Silicon Valley corporate lawyer paid \$1.35 million in 2012. A San Francisco entrepreneur and socialite couple paid \$900,000 in 2013. A Google software engineer paid \$1.57 million in 2013 (Peak 2013). A San Francisco-based lawyer bought a \$1.2 million home in 2013. A Salesforce executive vice president (and former Oracle executive) bought undeveloped land in Inverness for \$515,000 in 2013 (*Ibid.*). A lawyer for a prominent law firm that has represented tech companies Apple, Intel, and Facebook (as well as Chris Christie in a federal investigation about the Fort Lee lane-closure scandal) bought a home for \$870,000 in 2014. Celebrity Los Angeles art dealers bought for \$637,000 in 2013. A San Francisco-based real estate agent with Pacific Union bought a home for \$650,000 in 2016.

Just north of Point Reyes Station, in the community of Marshall, modest beach homes have seen tremendous turnover, as one of my interviewees described above. Some still sold for as little as \$5000 in the 1990s. By the 2000s, prices had surged: in 2006, a vacation rental company paid \$820,000 for a 952-square-foot cottage. More recent buyers have paid over a million dollars for homes as small as 750 square feet. Another vacation rental company, based in Los Angeles, paid \$1.21 million for a 1554-square-foot home in 2015. Amalfi West, a development company that built a Tiburon home that sold for \$13 million in 2016 bought a 671-square-foot cottage on Tomales Bay. They have applied for a permit for a 497 square foot addition. Other buyers of these small beachfront cottages include GTIS, a global real estate investment company, \$1.3 million, 2016; San Francisco-based investment entrepreneurs Obvious Ventures, \$1.65 million, 2016;

Silicon Valley-based investment service The Hive, \$1.35 million, 2015; a Menlo Park-based aerospace company, \$1.3 million in 2015; a San Francisco lawyer and Apple employee bought a home for \$1.4 million in 2014; a Wells Fargo employee bought in 2010 for \$721,500; and San Mateo-based real estate investment and property management company Raiser Resources, which bought a 2850 square foot property in 2006 for \$4.4 million. A Silicon Valley patent lawyer bought a Marshall cottage in 2017 for \$715,000. Point Reyes Station is less of a destination for second-home owners, but still experiences some of the same trends.

The rental market is also affected. As properties are sold to second-home owners or turned into vacation rentals, homes are taken off the long-term rental market and rental prices go up. Long-term rentals are scarce not only because there are few apartments (see Chapter 6), but the boom in property values has made the few rental properties available prohibitively expensive. One resident told me that rents in the past 10 to 15 years have escalated dramatically. “If you could find a pleasant, heat-able place with nice appliances,” he told me, “the market rate would be \$1800 a month, which assumes an annual income of \$65,000”—in order to meet the standard recommendation that housing comprise no more than 30 percent of income. Service workers in this area don’t have a chance, he said. I spoke with a woman who helps Latino families look for housing as part of her work at West Marin Social Services. She ends up finding housing in Sonoma County for many families, for between \$1800 and \$2100 for a two-bedroom apartment. There is nothing in West Marin at all in that range, she said (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Housing stock

The lack of affordable housing in West Marin is the result not only of high rents, but also of few rentals and inappropriate rental housing stock: most housing is single-family homes, “almost exclusively affordable to moderate-income households” (Community Development Agency 2015, II-4). There are few multi-family or Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units available for lower income families, senior citizens, or singles.

The prominence of the single-family home plays an important role in the availability of housing in West Marin. The Bay Area as a whole stands out as “a long-time mecca of the single-family home” (Walker and Schafran 2015), even in a nation where single-family homes prevail (Hirt 2015). Walker and Schafran document nearly 1.5 million single-unit, detached houses and close to a quarter of a million single-unit, attached dwellings in the Bay Area, which together make up more than a quarter of the total housing stock. Between 1996 and 2008, Marin County added nearly 6500 housing units (low in comparison to other counties in California) and nearly half of those (3107) were single-family detached homes. In 2008, single-family homes made up 60 percent of the county’s housing stock. (Apartments comprised nearly 30 percent, townhouses 9 percent, and mobile homes 2 percent.) (Marin Economic Commission 2009). Reviewing these numbers, the Marin Economic Commission recognized that Marin’s housing mix and supply do not meet the needs of the residents and that housing has not kept pace with job growth, resulting in housing costs increasing “dramatically over what would occur with normal inflationary increases in value” (*Ibid.*) Despite the commission’s recommendation that Marin build greater diversity of housing supply, by 2015, the percentage of single-family homes had increased 10 percent since 2008, to 70 percent of the countywide

housing stock (Community Development Agency 2015). For fiscal year 2013 to 2014, 55 percent of the new residential construction permits issued were for single-family homes (*Ibid.*).

West Marin in particular lacks multi-family units. Single-family homes comprise 83 percent of the housing stock in West Marin, and they are “almost exclusively affordable to above moderate-income households” (Community Development Agency 2015, II-3). In addition to being single-unit, the average size of newly built homes is about 3000 square feet (according to permits issued in 2013-2014) (*Ibid.*).

Undercapitalization

The rising home prices and the influx of tech money into the housing market that this chapter documents are familiar as characteristics of gentrification in the urban Bay Area. The resulting displacement and exclusionary displacement (when people can't people move into an area) that high home prices create also indicate a process of gentrification similar to that in urban areas. But what do the processes of devaluation and investment as we understand them in the inner city have to do with this desirable landscape, never apparently devalued or abandoned? What do scenic properties bordering a national seashore or farmland protected from development have in common with neglected buildings in the city center?

The parallels between undercapitalized land in and outside of urban areas may not be obvious, because what undercapitalized land looks like and what constitutes it vary depending on the type of landscape—whether city-center, urban fringe, or rural hinterlands (McCarthy 2008, Darling 2005, Sayre 2002). But, as I introduced in Chapter 1, while a different landscape, the fundamentals of gentrification in a rural or quasi-rural place are the same as those in urban areas. While scenic and recreation amenities draw residents and visitors, much as perhaps proximity to transit or “‘cultural diversity’ (coded language for the presence of communities of color)” (Causa Justa :: Just Cause 2014) do in urban areas, the drive to maximize profit on the part of landowners underlies gentrification regardless of landscape.

Land protection, by creating a scenic landscape, drew the gentry to West Marin; it also created what Darling calls “produced scarcity” of developable land, or “state engineered disinvestment through density restriction” (Darling 2005, 1029). The price of the remaining land went up; but perhaps more importantly, precisely by keeping the land out of development, land protection also laid the foundation for gentrification by making adjacent homes more valuable because of their coveted location. Existing homes in this scenic landscape began to draw investment by vacationers, tourists, and second-home owners. Two forms of undercapitalization are at work in West Marin.

Relative underinvestment

The mega-wealth of the globalized economy in the Bay Area make homes in West Marin look like bargains. Despite the high prices of West Marin homes, in comparison to the rest of the Bay Area, and given Bay Area demographics, West Marin provides a landscape of relative underinvestment for wealthy Bay Area professionals. The relative underinvestment is related to scale and location—the degree of inflatedness of the

housing market elsewhere in the Bay Area (primary residences) and the proximity to the tech world.

As Table 2 shows, even compared to the rest of the Bay Area, homes in West Marin were never a bargain; West Marin and Marin County as a whole have had one of the most inflated housing markets in the state for decades, far beyond the reach of working and middle-families. But as a second-home market, West Marin presents a bargain for those with tech industry and related salaries. The transformation in the West Marin housing market demonstrates the regional interconnections; gentrification in West Marin, rather than a separate phenomenon, is part of regional processes of economic and social transformation and gentrification. West Marin gentrifiers also demonstrate Lees' description of super-gentrification (2006), those urbanites who—while transforming urban housing markets—are also expanding the metropolitan housing market by buying second and third homes in surrounding areas.

Short-term rentals

Short-term rentals are the other primary aspect of undercapitalization in West Marin. They provide homeowners—both long-term residents looking to increase their income and new buyers—the opportunity to capitalize on uncaptured rent. The creation of the desirable landscape—or “recreational space” (Darling 2005)—was key to this aspect of undercapitalization, as earlier sections of this chapter describe: the presence of tourists and vacationers looking for lodging meant that properties that were previously rented year-round to workers or local residents could be rented for more money on a short-term basis to visitors.

The ease with which a home owner can rent their house to vacationers—for a night, a weekend, a week, or longer, but with no further commitment—has made home availability and affordability exponentially more difficult in communities where Airbnb and other vacation rentals are popular. Short-term rentals have the potential to affect the housing market in two interconnected ways, as described by Dayne Lee in his analysis of the short-term rental market in Los Angeles (2016). The first Lee calls “simple conversion,” in which “any housing unit that was previously occupied by a city resident, but is now listed on Airbnb year round, is a unit that has been removed from the rental market...” This means rents go up throughout the city, as short-term rentals garner more per night than long-term rentals, and conversion reduces the supply of affordable rentals. The second mechanism Lee describes as “hotelization”: if a property owner (or leaseholder) can rent a room on Airbnb for less than the price of a hotel room, but still earn more than he or she would as a long-term rental, the incentive to rent units to vacationers instead of residents is “overpowering” (Lee 230).

“The pressure to maximize rents” is a fundamental dimension of gentrification, but unlike in urban areas, here “real estate” is not remodeled or torn down as much as put to use in a new way. Short-term rentals removed housing from the available housing stock, aggravating the scarcity created by land protection and zoning regulations.

The wage gap: wage inequality and the rent gap

...the rent gap represents the incentive for the eviction of low-wage renters in order to tap into the rental profits of

*high-wage residents and inflate the rental market rate.
Paying close attention to the rent gap also exposes the role
of wage inequality in contributing to gentrification (Phillips
et al. 2014, 12)*

One reason the housing crisis is felt so acutely in West Marin is the tourist- and agricultural-based service economy. Wages in West Marin do not pay for housing in West Marin; home prices depend on people who do not work in West Marin—and who earn more than those who do. As a county, Marin has notoriously high incomes, since many residents commute to jobs in San Francisco. But 38 percent of Marin households are categorized as “extremely low,” “very low,” or “low income.”⁵⁵ The classifications themselves are relative to the very high income of the rest of the county. Not many places consider over \$100,000 to be low income, but for a family of four in the Bay Area, a six-figure incomes means they are just getting by. First 5 Marin, Children and Families Commission, recently calculated that a family of four needs to earn \$102,223 per year just to makes ends meet. The hypothetical family of four has an infant and a preschooler; they will pay \$6018 per month for housing and childcare. That means they would have to earn \$8,519 per month, or \$24.50 per hour, per adult.⁵⁶ The report finds that in the county as a whole, more than one third of the families do not earn enough to make ends meet (First 5 Marin 2017).

Within the county, West Marin has some of the lowest median personal earnings. (Again highlighting the fact that the wealth in the housing market comes from outside of the community.) The census tract that encompasses Point Reyes Station, Nicasio, Tomales, and Dillon Beach has a median income of \$32,280. Bolinas and Stinson Beach were slightly lower, at \$31,766, and Olema and Inverness slightly higher, at \$33,037. The median personal income in all of West Marin in 2012 was \$32,000. At the other end of the spectrum, the median personal income in Tiburon is \$80,595; in Mill Valley it is \$75,808; in Ross, \$64,378. Latino earnings countywide average just under \$23,800, whereas the median personal income for whites countywide is \$51,000 (Burd-Sharps and Lewis 2012).

Jobs in West Marin don’t pay salaries that can afford West Marin home prices. One woman who works in social services told me that even though workers generally earn more than minimum wage, it’s not enough. “I don’t think anyone pays minimum wage in the area, I have to be honest. They pay above. But people are making \$12 an hour. Their rents are \$3000. No one can afford the rents compared to the incomes—it’s a huge gap” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ There is an even greater proportion of very low- and low-income households among renters. It was estimated in 2010 that 57% of all renters in Marin County were in the extremely low, very low, and low income categories (Community Development Agency 2015, II-11)

⁵⁶ The report calculates childcare for an infant at \$20,000 per year and for a preschooler at \$16,000 per year. Monthly rent for a 2-bedroom averages \$3018; to qualify to buy a single-family home in Marin, a family would need to earn \$260,000 per year.

⁵⁷ In 2015, when I conducted this interview, minimum wage in Marin County followed the California minimum wage, which was \$9 per hour.

The following table shows average hourly wage, average annual income, what would be an affordable rent for that income, and the difference between that and actual rents in the Bay Area. The wages and rents are not specific to Marin, but reflect the type of service job available in West Marin and provide an idea of the wage gap West Marin residents encounter.

Table 3: Bay Area Wages and Affordable Rents⁵⁸

Very low income: less than 50% of median	Average hourly wage	Average annual income	Affordable rent and utilities	Average rent gap⁵⁹
Dishwashers	\$10.87	\$22,610	\$565.24	(- \$1,177.76)
Retail Salespersons	\$13.67	\$28,434	\$710.84	(- \$1,032.16)
Grounds Maintenance Workers	\$15.83	\$32,926	\$823.16	(- \$919.84)
Couriers and Messengers	\$16.89	\$35,131	\$878.28	(- \$864.72)
Medical Assistants	\$20.38	\$42,390	\$1,059.76	(- \$683.24)
Low income: 50-80% of median	Hourly wage	Annual income	Affordable rent + utilities	Average rent gap
Construction Laborers	\$22.99	\$47,819	\$1,195.48	(- \$547.52)
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	\$24.23	\$50,398	\$1,259.96	(- \$483.04)
Landscaping/Grounds-keeping Supervisors	\$28.18	\$58,614	\$1,465.36	(- \$277.64)
Carpenters	\$30.12	\$62,650	\$1,566.24	(- \$176.76)
Legal Secretaries	\$32.30	\$67,184	\$1,679.60	(- \$63.40)
Moderate income: 80-100% of median	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Affordable Rent + Utilities	Average rent gap
Civil Engineering Technicians	\$35.05	\$72,904	\$1,822.60	\$79.60
Electricians	\$39.04	\$81,203	\$2,030.08	\$287.08
Microbiologists	\$41.63	\$86,590	\$2,164.76	\$421.76
Firefighters	\$44.21	\$91,957	\$2,298.92	\$555.92

⁵⁸ From the California Employment Development Department 2013 (Q1) Occupation Profiles, cited in the Marin County Housing Element (Community Development Agency 2015).

⁵⁹ Average rent gap in this instance refers to the difference between monthly earnings (for a two-income household) and monthly rent (what I also refer to as the wage gap in this chapter), rather than to the rent gap as I discuss it in Chapter 1—the difference between capitalized and potential ground rent for a piece of land.

In contrast, the average salary of a professional in the tech sector is far higher. Not only are tech salaries high across the sector, but also salaries in San Francisco are far higher than the national average. Average San Francisco salaries for experienced data scientists, network security engineers, and big data engineers start at \$162,000, \$161,700, and \$189,000, respectively (Gaus 2016). In 2016, Airbnb topped the list of tech firms in compensation: a software engineer earned an average of \$312,000 per year, including of base salary, annual equity, annual bonus, and signing bonus. At Uber, annual compensation for a software engineer was \$292,000; Twitter \$292,000; Facebook \$285,000; Snapchat \$252,000; Google \$232,000; Microsoft \$222,000; Apple \$208,000; and Amazon \$203,000 (Efrati and Schulz 2016).

In urban areas, gentrifiers invest in undercapitalized real estate, making the neighborhood out-of-reach economically for those who live there. In West Marin, or any area with fewer employment opportunities, the relationship between location and wage changes the community in different ways: those who buy up undercapitalized properties often don't become full-time residents, which creates a different set of concerns for the community (see Chapter 6).

Conclusion

This chapter begins to explore the relationship between land protection and gentrification, as it is expressed through access to housing. A historical perspective on the development of West Marin shows that it has long been a retreat for San Francisco gentry. The conditions have changed over time, with the creation of the national seashore and other protected land. This desirable landscape is the first step in a process of gentrification, as it draws visitors and new residents and lays the foundation for a recreation-based tourist economy. While the landscape is different, the fundamental economic processes are similar to those in urban gentrification.

The transformation in the West Marin housing market demonstrates the regional interconnections: gentrification in West Marin, rather than a separate phenomenon, is part of regional processes of economic and social transformation and gentrification. West Marin gentrifiers also demonstrate Lees' description of super-gentrification (2006), those urbanites who—while transforming urban housing markets—are also expanding the metropolitan housing market by buying second and third homes in surrounding areas.

Two attributes of West Marin—proximity to the multinational tech economy of the Bay Area and an expanding tourist economy—make West Marin a location ripe for the rent gap (as Smith uses it to describe the difference between actual and potential ground rent on a piece of land) and exposes how the wage gap (as Table 4 documents) works in gentrification as well.

As the next chapters show, gentrification in West Marin has facets beyond the housing market, including the transformation of the agricultural economy and the ascendancy of tourism in economic importance, but regional demographic and economic shifts are integral to both of those changes.

Chapter 5. Land conservation, Point Reyes National Seashore, and housing supply

In the previous chapter I describe the evolution of the desirable landscape and show that while land conservation and housing affordability are related, it is not mere proximity that makes housing less affordable—as popular media might lead you to believe—but rather material processes of undercapitalization. Another aspect of land conservation that affects housing supply involves the protecting agency. In West Marin, Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) has distinctly shaped the area, including housing availability and affordability—not simply because the land is protected, but because of the particularities of the acquisition and protection process and the evolution of park policies and regulations. In this chapter, I describe the preservation process of Point Reyes National Seashore and how that process and National Park Service (NPS) policies have affected access to housing in West Marin. I show that the ownership regime that the National Park Service established on what had been privately owned ranchlands, as well as the NPS cultural resource management policies have had lasting consequences for West Marin communities. Today, in a gentrifying community facing a housing crisis, the loss of housing due to park policies creates greater stress and further limits opportunities for local workers to live in near their work.

Point Reyes Peninsula

In the years before the national seashore was established, the Point Reyes peninsula remained a rugged and isolated place, despite years of dairy ranching and commercial exchange between Point Reyes and the greater Bay Area. In the first half of the twentieth century, the northern section of the peninsula was mostly dairy ranches, the majority acquired in the 1930s by families that had been tenant farmers under the previous owners. Another family ran a commercial oyster farm in Drakes Estero. Some land was leased to Japanese and Italian immigrant farmers to grow peas and artichokes. A lighthouse, a lifeboat station, and fish docks also operated on the point. In the 1930s, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and America Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) established overseas receiving stations on the peninsula (Livingston 1993).

The southern section of the Point Reyes Peninsula was steeper and less accessible, and thus not as good grazing land. After World War II, some owners converted dairy ranches to beef ranches, which were less labor intensive. (One owner was real estate professional Leland Murphy.) Along with grazing, a patchwork of other land uses occupied the southern peninsula, including a hunting lodge, military bunkers, and vegetable farms.

Some land on the peninsula had been set aside for public use long before Point Reyes National Seashore was established. Drakes Beach was inaugurated in 1938, when locals (concerned about the RCA and AT&T acquisitions that restricted public access) bought a hunting preserve near Drakes Beach and turned it over to the county for public use (Mason 158). In 1942, Margaret McClure gave 2.9 acres of her Pierce Point property, at the far northern reaches of the peninsula, to the county as a public beach (*Ibid.*) Shell Beach was set aside in the 1940s and later expanded into Tomales Bay State Park (*Ibid.*; Inverness Ridge Communities Plan 1983).

A few ranchers had sold timber rights on Inverness Ridge, and real estate speculators had purchased one of the ranches near Limantour Beach with ideas of building a recreational community, but no developer had had much success in attracting interest in the peninsula. When talk of a national seashore surfaced in Congress in the 1950s, West Marin was still primarily an agricultural landscape. In 1960, 15 dairy ranches covered 19,000 acres of the peninsula, with 7000 cows. Ten beef ranches operated on 23,000 acres, with 3500 beef cattle. The ranches represented 20 percent of Marin County's dairy cows and 90 percent of the county's beef cows (Watt 2017, as cited in U.S. Congress, Senate Hearings 1961).

A national seashore established on private land⁶⁰

Relatively few national parks in the United States have been established on privately owned lands (Fairfax et al. 2005). When the National Park Service was created in 1916, most parks were established on land that was already federally owned or in the public domain—or dispossessed. New acquisitions of privately owned lands usually came in the form of donations from wealthy landowners or state-condemned land, but outright purchase of private land was unusual.

An NPS survey in 1935 recommended that the Point Reyes peninsula be preserved as a park, but the government took no action, in part because it considered the peninsula's privately owned land to be a complication (Watt 2017). Over two decades later, when a national seashore at Point Reyes was officially proposed to Congress, the proposal held greater possibility, as the NPS was exploring new acquisition strategies for private land and considering different property regimes once those parks were established.

Environmental historian Laura Watt describes the convoluted steps in the process of establishing the seashore (2017). The first proposal for a national seashore at Point Reyes, in 1959, recommended a park of between 28,000 and 35,000 acres, but did not specify the boundaries. Just one year later, in 1960, another bill proposed a 35,000-acre protected area, with the ranches on the point outside the boundary. And shortly thereafter, by the 1960 Congressional hearing, the NPS had made dramatic changes to the proposal: the proposed seashore would encompass 53,000 acres and most of the active dairy ranches would be within the boundaries of the park, in what was called a “pastoral zone.” Ranchers would be able to continue their operations, either by leasing back the land or via a system of easements. The NPS stated that it preferred that the government purchase the land and lease it back to the ranchers, giving the park service more control over land use than other arrangements, though it was not determined at that point what shape the ownership regime would take. This proposal situated four of the largest dairies on the peninsula in the “public use zone”; they would be closed down to make the land available for public recreation. Closing these ranches would reduce the number of cattle on the peninsula by about half (Watt 2017).

⁶⁰ The narrative in this section focuses on the preservation of Point Reyes National Seashore, but an additional 80,000 acres of Marin are under protection of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), also a federal entity, established after the seashore, in 1973. The GGNRA is mostly in southern Marin, but it also extends north up the Olema Valley and along Bolinas Ridge. PRNS manages GGNRA land in the Olema Valley, which includes several ranches. Some state park and Open Space District land also counts among the protected land in West Marin.

These changes to the seashore proposal were made with little forewarning and without including ranchers in the discussions. Ranchers were particularly uneasy about the changes because the closure of dairies on the point would have consequences for more than just Point Reyes dairies: it could affect the dairy industry throughout West Marin. Other revisions to the proposal followed, including eliminating the possibility of easements that would allow ranchers to continue operating. With each revision, ranchers and other community members felt increasingly left out of the negotiations and their support for the process and for the NPS eroded (Watt 2017).

Meanwhile, in Congress, quite distinct from the lack of local support for the seashore, there was a growing sense of urgency about the seashore. The Bay Area was growing rapidly in the postwar housing boom and suburbanization was reaching new frontiers. The “narrative of development overwhelmingly drove Washington-based policy-makers’ attempts to establish a national park,” Laura Watt argues, but it was not an accurate assessment of what was really happening 3000 miles from the halls of Congress. The assumption that development was an imminent threat for the Point Reyes peninsula “overlooked not only the reality of the local economy, but also the traditional patterns of land sales in West Marin” (Watt 2017). While Marin County was growing quickly, and county planners had in mind a grand expansion of infrastructure and demographics, it appears that the actual threat to West Marin—particularly to the Point Reyes Peninsula—was not so extreme. In 1964, an appraiser noted that the population increase in Marin County as a whole between 1950 and 1960 “barely affected” West Marin, where the population was “almost static” in that time period and building activity was minor (Watt 2001, 133).

More accurate was that the pressure to establish transportation networks and residential development in West Marin came *after* the authorization of the seashore, as historian John Hart describes. As I describe in Chapter 2, the Countywide Plan drawn up in the 1960s envisioned sprawling suburban development and transportation networks throughout West Marin: “As visitors poured out to the newly accessible beaches, woods, and headlands . . . the Marin County Board of Supervisors asked the state Division of Highways to get moving on the proposed freeway from San Rafael in the urban belt across the hills to Point Reyes Station, now at the park’s front door. . . . Meanwhile, the supervisors set planners of their own at work on a first blueprint for the development of the countryside adjacent to the new park” (Hart 1991, 10).

As for subdivision on the Point Reyes peninsula, Representative Clem Miller, who was a proponent of the seashore, recognized that the increase in subdivisions within the proposed seashore boundaries had come about after he proposed the initial legislation in 1959, “stimulated by the fact that the area is being considered for protection and development as a national seashore” (quoted in Watt 2017). Ranchers testified at the Congressional hearings that subdivision within what would be the boundaries of the park was not the threat that the park service would have Congress believe: Joseph Mendoza of B Ranch said, “this word subdivision, this scare you heard of subdivision this morning is certainly not the case here. These ranches have been in the same ownership for years and years and they are all family operations” (Watt 2017). The ranchers argued both that their operations, on the peninsula since the 1800s, were what had saved the land from being developed previously, and that they had no interest in giving up ranching—and no one

other than ranching families had been interested in living on the foggy, isolated moors of Point Reyes.⁶¹

Despite local resistance, in 1962, Congress passed legislation that established Point Reyes National Seashore. The plan for the seashore was modeled on the recently acquired Cape Cod National Seashore. It allowed for the ranches in the pastoral zone to remain in private ownership and it seemed to ensure the continuance of dairying on Point Reyes. In fact, by then, some of the ranchers had become convinced that the park was “the one real alternative to subdivision” and that “the ranchers who sold would be able to stay on their land (Hart 1991, 45-46).

The bill that established PRNS was only the first step, however, and in the process of acquiring the land, the NPS ran into financial problems. For the next several years, the NPS struggled to come up with the funds. It became clear very soon after Congress signed the bill that the \$14 million (\$260 per acre) provided in the bill would not be sufficient. For the first parcel it bought, in 1963, the NPS paid about \$726 an acre.⁶² The parcel was in the pastoral zone, an area the government hadn’t planned to acquire, which stretched the budget even thinner. The NPS went on to use up most of the authorized budget by acquiring non-contiguous parcels.⁶³ By paying so much more than estimated for their first purchase, the NPS aggravated the shortfall: “fair market value for all other ranches in the area [increased], meaning the NPS would be required to offer similar amounts to other landowners” (Watt 2017).

Aside from making it more difficult to come up with the funds to acquire the seashore, the high land prices raised property taxes for the ranches that remained, creating a financial burden that, according to Laura Watt, was enough to make ranchers more willing to consider selling their land—to the government or to a developer. High property taxes were putting in jeopardy two important ranches, as the families could not afford to keep them. In this context, ranchers felt they had few other options and began to consider selling to the NPS. “By the end of the 1960s the ranchers, assured that they would receive

⁶¹ The Point Reyes Peninsula was substantially more isolated than the ranches on the western shore of Tomales Bay, where the Marin Countywide Plan proposed development on a grand scale. Only one subdivision had been proposed before the seashore bill was introduced. In 1957, a developer tried to sell vacation homes at Limantour Beach, but they were not popular, because of the “howling 50-mile-an-hour foggy wind” that is typical along the Point Reyes coastline (Mason 1970). In 1958, when the seashore was first proposed, 95 percent of the peninsula belonged to just 25 ranches. Between 1958 and early 1962, the number of landowners on the peninsula increased from 62 to 396. It was clear that the proposal of the seashore had drawn attention to the area. For developers, investing in land that was slated to become a national seashore was a win-win situation—they would get the return on their money either way, whether from selling to the federal government or to homebuyers (Watt, quoted in Kimmey 2016e).

⁶² In 1960 and 1961, before the bill was passed, the NPS had estimated that acquisition would cost about \$200 per acre, but that the cost would increase if acquisition were delayed. A representative for the West Marin Property Owners Association had estimated an average price of \$700 per acre, according to actual sales figures for the past three years, but the NPS service stuck to their estimate of \$200 per acre (Watt 2017).

⁶³ It appears that park planners purposefully underestimated the cost, thinking that it was the only way they would get the bill through. They would return to Congress later to request more money (Watt 2017).

both good prices for the land and the right to remain there if they chose, were themselves asking Congress to appropriate the needed funds” (Hart 1991, 46).

After more than 10 years, President Nixon granted the money to finally complete the seashore purchase. There was a logic to this elaborate process of acquisition, argues Laura Watt: by overstating the threat of development, the NPS won greater support for the seashore. It then raised land prices by overpaying for initial purchases, pressuring the ranchers to sell their ranches; and, having won support, it expanded the boundaries of the park. The final boundaries of the seashore were not those that the 1962 bill established: the federal government ended up acquiring the ranches that were originally going to be in the pastoral zone (as it had attempted in the 1960 revision). The legislation allowed active ranching to continue on the Point Reyes Peninsula within park boundaries.⁶⁴ Thus, the seashore acquisition meant that most of the ranchers became tenants on their own land, as many of their families had been in the 1800s and early 1900s under the Shafers. While more complicated to manage, the park would have greater control over the landscape than if the ranches had been left out of the seashore, continuing to ranch on the periphery. Everything that had been presented at the Congressional hearings led the ranchers to believe that Congress intended for ranching to continue on the point, and that ranching and dairying were compatible with the national seashore (Hart 1991, Watt 2017).

The ownership regime established to deal with the acquisition of private land for a national park has had lasting consequences on the evolution of the seashore and the surrounding area. In the next section, I describe how NPS ownership and PRNS contracts and policies affect housing in West Marin today.

The National Park Service as landlord

Ranching families were allowed to continue their operations under a “Reservation of Use and Occupancy” (RUO). RUOs allow certain rights to ranchers, including the right to sublet grazing land to other ranchers or to sublet on-site housing. Most RUOs were established for to last between five and 50 years, depending on the individual ranch, according to Point Reyes National Seashore Communications and Outreach Director Melanie Gunn (personal communication, April 22, 2015).⁶⁵ Once expired, most RUOs become “lease permits,” which still allow ranching, but with fewer rights on the part of the rancher.⁶⁶ With a lease permit, ranchers can no longer sublet grazing land or housing.⁶⁷

As of 2016, only three Reservation of Use and Occupancy permits remained on park ranches; the rest had expired, many in recent years (M. Gunn, personal communication,

⁶⁴ Point Reyes was the first national park to do so.

⁶⁵ For some families, a 20-year lease seemed plenty long, given the unknowns entailed in the new relationship with the park service, and the question of whether or not their children would continue in ranching (B. McClure, meeting Oct. 25, 2016).

⁶⁶ Lease permits are granted for a shorter period of time, usually five to ten years.

⁶⁷ Lease permits have a more complicated history than I go into here, detailed by Laura Watt. Watt also points out that besides the limits on subletting, lease permits place limits on agricultural operations and may also “limit ranchers’ willingness and ability to criticize park management, out of concern that their specific permit terms could be changed” (2017).

April 22, 2015). When an RUO expires, the NPS assesses whether or not to issue a lease permit to allow the operations to continue. Some ranches (if still in hands of the original families who sold to the federal government) have been able to continue their ranching operations with lease permits. The principal difference between ranching with an RUO and ranching with a lease permit is that ranchers cannot provide housing to people who are not working for their ranch, because the lease permit doesn't allow subletting. In a place like West Marin, where so little housing is available for workers, this can be significant. In addition to the ranches' own workers, since many ranches provided housing for other community members (workers on other ranches or people who worked in jobs in town) many community members have lost housing when RUOs have shifted to lease permits. (See below for estimates about how much housing has been affected.)

In several recent transitions from RUO to lease permit, tenants have lost ranch housing. The original ranchers were renting homes to non-agricultural workers and leasing grazing land to other ranchers—all within their rights under the RUO. However, when the contract changed to a lease permit, they lost their right to rent the housing (though the grazing leases could continue) (M. Gunn, personal communication, April 22, 2015). Tenants on ranches that have closed after their RUO expired have also recently lost housing. The most well known case is that of Drakes Bay Oyster Company, which lost between five and six housing units when the oyster operation was shut down.

In many cases, the stories about how and why housing was lost are difficult to sort out. The park, the ranchers, and the workers may have conflicting stories. Melanie Gunn told me that the park considers its responsibility to be to the historic families—those who farmed or ranched the land when the park acquired it (M. Gunn, personal communication, April 22, 2015). The park mission, she reminded me, is to preserve cultural and natural resources, not to provide housing. The rationale for the regulations on residential subletting is that the NPS wants a direct relationship with the person who owns the home and with whoever is living on the property, in part because it doesn't want people to be able to make a profit off of the federal government.⁶⁸

But from the community's perspective, it's a "slap in the face" when the park cracks down on ranches that provide housing (Anonymous 12, personal communication, June 14, 2016). Because creating new housing in West Marin is so difficult, making better use of existing housing is often the best chance for increasing the housing stock, but by doing away with park housing, the NPS is removing existing housing. The loss of housing on ranches affects not just ranch workers, but also often other local workers, and often means displacement for a whole family. Family members of ranch workers often work in restaurants, markets, bakeries, landscaping companies, and other jobs in Inverness, Point Reyes Station, and Olema, and depend on access to affordable housing on ranches. In some cases, ranches provide inexpensive (though sometimes substandard, see below) housing for non-ranch workers or family members who could otherwise not live near their job in West Marin. After the Drakes Bay Oyster Company closed, some of the single workers found other local housing, but three families had to move out of West

⁶⁸ Laura Watt points out that this argument isn't consistent because concessionaries in national parks do make a profit off the federal government, yet there is no objection to their operation (L. Watt, personal communication, June 21, 2016).

Marin, uprooting their children from school (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

The condition of ranch worker housing throughout West Marin is a significant problem (See Chapter 8). Melanie Gunn told me that most park ranches are rumored to have better housing conditions than non-park ranches, though this has not been documented. One factor working against seashore ranches is that the ambiguity of park policies regarding upkeep and the uncertainties of lease permits reduce the incentive to invest in improvements to worker housing and can lead to deteriorating conditions. The NPS conducts annual inspections of ranches to ensure that housing meets minimal safety standards and it provides feedback to ranchers about what needs to be improved. Although ranchers are not required to implement improvements, they are “strongly encouraged” to do so, and most ranchers do (M. Gunn, personal communication, April 22, 2015). But who is responsible for making improvements to worker housing (and all ranch buildings) is ambiguous. Ranchers with lease permits own their machines and animals, but they lease the land and the buildings. They are expected to do routine upkeep, but the NPS pays for capital improvements—larger and more expensive projects. Laura Watt points out that the difference between the types of projects is often blurry: is a new roof a capital project or routine maintenance? (personal communication, June 21, 2016). The park doesn’t get involved on ranches with RUOs, but if the RUO is due to expire soon, housing conditions often decline (M. Gunn, personal communication, April 22, 2015). (Chapter 8 addresses in more detail ranchworker housing in West Marin as a whole; this section just addresses housing within the national seashore.)

Cultural resource management in Point Reyes National Seashore

In addition to the contracts between ranchers and the National Park Service, other NPS policies also affect housing availability on national seashore land—and surrounding West Marin. During the acquisition process and after the seashore was established, the park service paid little attention to the park’s cultural resources. But to the community, cultural resources—the built landscape, the remains of the dairies and the human history of the area—have importance both as history and as current residences for locals. Scholars have recounted the history and details of NPS policy regarding cultural resources (Livingston 1993, Sadin 2007, Watt 2017). My focus here is on the evolution of the policies that led to park service removal of physical structures and how they have affected housing availability in West Marin.

Before PRNS was established, both the NPS and conservationists attempted to downplay the presence of the working ranches and the dairy empire that they had created in the late 19th century. Both the NPS and conservationists “uniformly praised the peninsula’s ‘natural features’ and attributes... [but] the nature they alluded to did not include the imprint of human society” (Sadin 2007, 6). In the Congressional hearings on the acquisition, the NPS director described the area as “left so unaltered by the hand of man” (Wirth, quoted in Watt 2017).

The conservation community rallied support for the seashore with the slogan “An Island in Time,” and the Sierra Club and newly formed Point Reyes National Seashore Foundation produced a book by the same name, written by local environmental author Harold Gilliam. The phrase “island in time” referred to the peninsula’s unusual

geological history, as a hundred-square-mile piece of land that has travelled up the California coast over millions of years, which has maintained relatively isolated communities of flora and fauna and a different geology than the adjacent mainland. But Gilliam also used it to refer to the fact that Point Reyes had “escaped, thus far, the frenetic tides of human activity that elsewhere in the region have erased the evidence of history, the plant and animal life, the natural forms of the land” (Gilliam 1962, 13). The book so downplayed the presence of the dairies that Stewart Udall, in the foreword, described the human history of the peninsula as beginning with the Miwok and ending with the mystery of Sir Francis Drake’s landing (*Ibid.* 7-8). The book, the campaign, and the NPS policies that followed, did not recognize rich human history that has shaped both the landscape and the built environment of the Point Reyes Peninsula and surrounding area.

Once the national seashore was established, the park service began to remove historic structures, expressing a disdain for historic preservation that was not unusual in the NPS in the 1970s (Sadin 2007, 302). Paul Sadin’s administrative history of PRNS describes early cultural resource management policies: “According to Robert Barbee, one of the first park rangers to serve at Point Reyes, Superintendent Les Arnberger’s response to acquiring old decaying barns on properties during the land acquisition period at Point Reyes was ‘for God’s sakes let’s get rid of some of these old traps before the historians discover them.’ According to Barbee, they did just that: ‘We burned some of them down,’ he reported” (Sadin 2007, 301-302).

Park policies in the 1970s emphasized natural resources, and “advocated obliterating dilapidated old shacks in favor of returning the environment to some ‘natural’ state” (Sadin 2007, 303). Local conservation groups also advocated for parts of the peninsula to be returned to a ‘wilderness’ state (*Ibid.*). Superintendent John Sansing, “implemented or quietly endorsed practices that would make contemporary historic preservationists, scientists, and academics cringe even as they pleased environmentalists at the time who wished to see nature ‘restored’” (*Ibid.*). He was known for his “D-8 policy,” which referred to the Caterpillar tractor model he had his staff use to do away with structures on old ranches.

Environmental historian Laura Watt—using former PRNS historian Dewey Livingston’s calculations—estimates that the NPS had removed 170 structures from the park landscape by 1995. PRNS preserved a few ranch buildings, with interpretive signage, to represent the area’s history, but for the most part, it has downplayed or erased the ranching history, except in small doses. Most ranch buildings lack interpretive material, as do other historic uses of the landscape, like vegetable farms, a hunting lodge, and a commercial flower-growing operation (Watt 2017). By removing buildings and roads and by interpreting the ranches as historic resources rather than living cultural resources, the park emphasizes the working landscape as a piece of history rather than as a contemporary functioning landscape. In doing so, it downplays the longstanding importance of agriculture on the peninsula.

In addition, the policy of demolishing historically significant landmarks is important because it removes viable housing for the West Marin community. Many people in the

community feel that the housing crisis in West Marin has been aggravated by the loss of housing on NPS ranches in recent years.⁶⁹ Dairy rancher Albert Straus (his ranch is in Marshall, not on NPS land), is active in speaking out about the lack of housing for ranch and other local workers, and the repercussions for the community. With the help of Dewey Livingston, Straus documented the housing units lost on NPS and state park properties in the last 50 years. They tallied about 135 structures that had served as homes that the park service either removed or abandoned beyond repair.

Laura Watt describes in detail “the transformation of the Point Reyes and Olema Valley landscapes from the 1970s through the early 1990s, as many historic buildings and culturally significant places were gradually downplayed or removed—sometimes through neglect, but also often through direct intention” (Watt 2017). In some cases, instead of taking down housing, the NPS has reappropriated housing for park uses, sometimes housing for employees, but also for educational centers, artist retreats, and meeting spaces for community groups.⁷⁰ Some of these demolitions or conversions have been controversial; others have happened largely outside of the public eye.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I emphasize that the particular history and practices of the NPS are central in shaping the relationship between land conservation and housing availability. In this case, the acquisition of private land and the subsequent ownership regime meant a return to tenancy for many ranchers and a loss of control over their land and operations, including over decisions about housing for workers. In addition, practices regarding historic preservation have contributed to the diminishment of the housing supply in West Marin.

Removing housing affects the community in other ways as well. By making it more difficult for workers in the agricultural sector (including technicians, machinists, retail suppliers, etc.) to afford housing and live near their work, it reduces the critical mass necessary to keep agriculture viable. At a time when West Marin is struggling to remain a vibrant, functioning community and to seek economic foundations other than tourism, turning former home sites into cultural or historic sites further decreases the living vibrancy of the community, emphasizing it as a viewing site for tourists.

⁶⁹ Relationships between individual ranches and the park vary, and many ranchers describe a good relationship with the park.

⁷⁰ NPS holdings include GGNRA land in the Olema Valley, which PRNS administers.

Chapter 6. “Community character” and opposition to development

The previous two chapters have explored aspects of the relationship between land conservation, gentrification, and housing availability. This chapter examines another facet: the formal and informal ways in which West Marin residents themselves regulate development in this desirable landscape. In doing so, this chapter shows how identity and community vision intertwine as residents of West Marin reconcile the need for housing and the changes due to gentrification with their perception of what their community is. In some cases, opposition to development is obscured behind zoning regulations and infrastructure concerns. Sometimes it is couched as a protecting the community character. And others, it is expressed as overt opposition to development.

West Marin, compared to the rest of Marin County, is considered less resistant and more concerned about affordable housing for the community (see Chapter 2). According to the Marin County Housing Element, “the West Marin community has consistently advocated for affordable housing in the western part of the County and has generally supported policies that promote agricultural and affordable workforce housing” (2015, IV-19). It cites two affordable housing developments in Bolinas as well as two in Point Reyes Station—Walnut Place and Point Reyes Affordable Homes.⁷¹ But the community support for increasing the housing supply and creating affordable housing is more complex than the Housing Element would make it appear.

Defending community: zoning and community plans

Zoning density is ubiquitous as a method to control development in cities and suburbs across the United States (Hirt 2014); it is a primary way in which communities express preferences regarding development and housing. In order to guide decisions toward their social and aesthetic view, residents in a desirable landscape use “land-use policy as a bulwark against unwanted landscape change and its associated social transformations,” as scholar Laura Barraclough describes in her study of development in the San Fernando Valley (2011, 218). A senior planner in Marin County told me that while some see county regulations as an obstacle to development in West Marin, the county, in contrast, sees their regulations as simply reflecting the preferences of the residents (Anonymous 13, personal communication, May 8, 2017).

In West Marin, the overabundance of single-family homes and the lack of multi-family units (see Chapter 4) are in large part the result of zoning density ordinances. Low-density zoning constrains the development of multi-family housing, which means that there is less housing per acre in West Marin. It also means that subsidies for low-income housing aren’t available. According to the Local Coastal Program for the Point Reyes area, “[t]he low densities, the small scale of housing development, and very high land and construction costs effectively preclude high density projects which would be eligible for housing subsidies and which could be made available to lower income groups” (LCP 1981, 195).

⁷¹ Walnut Place, a two-story complex built in 1986, provides 25 apartments for low-income seniors, and the Point Reyes Affordable Homes, built in 2005, provides 27 duplexes for low-income families.

In addition to zoning density, counties use zoning districts to keep development to a minimum. In the 1970s and 1980s, Marin County instituted “planned zoning districts,” in addition to the existing “conventional zoning districts.” Most of West Marin is a planned zoning district. Planned zoning substantially changed the possibilities for development by allowing the community greater input into the permit process for new developments and for many modifications to existing buildings. Whereas conventional zoning districts have specific standards that govern setbacks, height, and lot size, among other things, planned districts do not; development applications are “discretionary,” which means that applications undergo a process called “design review” before being approved or denied a building permit (Community Development Agency 2015, III-12).

The purpose of design review, according to a senior planner for the county, is to ensure that physical changes to the landscape are compatible with surrounding properties, that they suit the site, and that they are appropriate for the community (Anonymous 13, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Planning commission member Wade Holland explained it this way: “We look at each lot and each proposal on a case-by-case basis” to see if it is appropriate on the property (personal communication, February 24, 2015). Design review means that new developments must meet the approval of the community in addition to complying with the standards set by the county (and Coastal Act, depending on location).⁷²

Local community plans in general are another way in which community preference is translated into regulation. Each town generates a community plan that describes land use and development guidelines specific to the locality.⁷³ The standards laid out in the community plan help to evaluate the discretionary planning applications. Laura Barraclough describes this type of discretionary land use policies, in which residents can express and exert preferences “legitimately” as a “way of affirming and reinforcing one’s identity and status in the face of potential social change, but in ways that are socially acceptable and politically compelling” (2011, 221).

Since the early 1980s, two primary concerns of community plans in the coastal zone have been lack of affordable housing and changes in community character. The plans, however, expose the tension between the idea of affordable housing for the community and the resistance to change. The 1983 Inverness Ridge Communities Plan aimed to “retain and maintain the established characters of neighborhood components located within the Planning Area,” while “provid[ing] reasonable opportunities for further residential and commercial development” (v). The plan noted that incomes in the planning area were lower than in the county as a whole, and cited an “ever-increasing shortfall of moderately priced housing units throughout Marin County” (63).

The authors of the 1987 East Shore Community Plan, which encompasses the land along Tomales Bay, were concerned that “[p]ressures for change resulting from proposed land development programs may dramatically alter the East Shore community’s way of life.” The plan’s goals were to allow “a moderate amount of new development...that is small-

⁷² Buildings in the coastal zone must also attain separate approval from the Coastal Commission, though standards may be similar to county standards.

⁷³ Community plans must be consistent with the Marin Countywide Plan as well as the Coastal Act.

scale, of similar intensity to existing development, and primarily local-serving...” Any new development, it recommended, should not rely on local water sources, and any infrastructure put in place to serve new development should not encourage further development. The plan called for a “range of housing types and prices suitable for residents of all income levels, employment pursuits and lifestyles” and noted that since the cost of land and development “favor[s] development of expensive homes for wealthier homeowners,” the planning area should try to develop or rehabilitate lower cost housing (East Shore Planning Area 1987, 26). It also noted that “more job opportunities in the Planning Area would minimize journey-to-work trips... It is not desirable that the area become a bedroom community or resort community” (*Ibid.*)

Much of the focus of the Point Reyes Station Community Plan, updated in 2001, was on preserving the “rural character” of the town. One of the primary goals of the plan was to “create additional affordable housing for people employed locally” (3). Residents “expressed the concern that unless affordable housing can be expanded, the rural character of the community, as a place of residence for persons engaged in agricultural, commercial and other locally based pursuits,” would not be maintained. Compared to other towns in West Marin, Point Reyes Station had the most potential for development, as its village boundaries are not as limited and its zoning designations and vacant land presented some possibilities for new building. The plan encouraged development of affordable housing, as long as it met several requirements: be of appropriate scale for the community; house people already employed locally; not overburden local public services; include at least 25 percent rentals; and bring age and occupational diversity to the community.

In this case, affordable housing would actually preserve the rural character, according to the plan, but only if it were to meet those conditions. But the plan didn’t foresee that happening. It went on to say that no “obvious solutions are at hand. To create additional affordable housing, the community may have to accept certain trade-offs, such as increased density and immediate, significant growth, both factors that may be necessary to achieve economies of scale in new, multi-unit residential development” (28). The trade-offs threatened to compromise some residents’ vision of their community—the “community character” that the plan referred to.⁷⁴

Opposition to development reveals itself in other ways as well that can be mistaken for impartial concerns. “People fight anything related to density,” one interviewee told me, and referred to the conflict over a sewer system in Point Reyes Station as a prime example. Point Reyes Station has considered installing a community sewer—rather than the existing septic systems—since the 1950s. It became a controversial issue in the 1970s, when the Coast Guard proposed installation of a community sewer that would serve both a housing complex for Coast Guard employees and the downtown area. The sewer would have increased potential densities, allowing the town to grow.⁷⁵ Many old-

⁷⁴ Laura Barraclough discusses the ways in which claims about “protecting rurality”—the rural landscape and way of life—are used in the San Fernando Valley, a less controversial way to protect privilege and prevent social change (2011). Appeals to the need to protect the suburban and rural character of neighborhoods in East Marin are familiar in affordable housing debates.

⁷⁵ The Local Coastal Program in 1981 identified a sewer as changing the possible density of the town.

timers considered growth a positive thing, and supported the sewer.⁷⁶ But the recently arrived hippies were more interested in preserving the town as it was than in letting it grow. One resident told me that the sewer issue became a conflict between two generations of residents over what the town should look like (D. Livingston, personal communication, May 8, 2017). It came up for a vote again in the 1990s, and again, the community did not approve funding for its share of a joint project with the Coast Guard (Point Reyes Station Community Plan 2001, 56).

Since then, the conflict has evolved more into where to put a sewer, as no one can agree on an acceptable location, either due to environmental concerns (i.e., next to the creek) or resident preferences (i.e., in a neighborhood), and where the treated water would go (D. Livingston, personal communication, May 8, 2017; Anonymous 1, personal communication, December 14, 2015). Discrediting the concerns about density, one resident told me that the assumption that sewers are more modern and more appropriate to high-density development is incorrect, because the septic systems work very well for Point Reyes Station (Anonymous 5, personal communication, March 14, 2016). One resident recalled the “battles over a sewage plant in Point Reyes” in an opinion piece in the local paper. His opposition, he asserts, was based on the location of the proposed sewage plant “right on top of the San Andreas fault” and on the fact that “it would catastrophically change the character of our town”—familiar language in the affordable housing debates (Vacha 2018).

Community character, resident identity, and opposition to development

For many residents, their identity is tied up with the appearance of the landscape. Keeping the landscape the way it is appears to be a “way of affirming and reinforcing one’s identity and status in the face of potential social change” (Barraclough 2011, 221). Residents associate landscape change with demographic change (*Ibid.*), so any change in the physical landscape challenges personal and community identity. As in other places, people in West Marin tend to associate landscape change with demographic change (Barraclough 2011, 221). Barraclough describes a parallel case in Shadow Hills, a rural enclave in the San Fernando Valley, in which any development that is out-of-character for the community can challenge residents’ identity. Shadow Hills residents oppose all kinds of development, in large part because it contrasts with the belief system and worldview that they feel characterizes them. Suburban tract-homes “represent the incursions of monotonous suburbia, which...they associate with an unwanted set of values, morals, and behaviors.” At the same time, they oppose large country estates, because they do not believe that “the architectural aesthetic...with the social class connotations of a landed and moneyed elite properly reflects who they are and what they hold to be important” (*Ibid.*, 218).

In comparison to East Marin, opposition to development seems muted in West Marin, but West Marin residents also respond with vehemence to potential development—and their opposition to large new developments or remodels is as strong as it is to increased density and affordable housing. An employee of the planning department told me that in West

⁷⁶ Toby Giacomini, who later sold his land to EAH in order to build Point Reyes Affordable Homes (see below), was an influential landowner in town and a big supporter of the sewer.

Marin there is a great “fear of change, fear of newcomers, of wealth. Fear” (Anonymous 13, personal communication, May 8, 2017).

Community reaction to affordable housing

One resident I spoke with commented that most people “would deny they were against affordable housing, but they don’t want an affordable housing project” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). Several of my interviewees pointed out this contradiction in the community—people want affordable housing but don’t want new development. One expression of this resistance happened in the early 2000s. Some community members were concerned about community diversity and the lack of available housing. They facilitated the purchase, by EAH Housing (a non-profit affordable housing organization), of a vacant lot in Point Reyes Station; the plan was for a multi-unit affordable housing complex.

But residents began to object to the idea of an affordable housing complex in town. Wade Holland recalls Point Reyes Station residents claiming that it would “ruin their town.” He remembers people arguing that “We can’t support that many extra people in town... All those people up there are going to drive into town and take up all the parking places” (personal communication, February 24, 2015). He recounted that the seat of the opposition to Point Reyes Affordable Housing were people who came to West Marin in the late ’60, early ’70s—“The hippie group...they wanted to close the door after they got here” (*Ibid.*)

The plans became so contentious that a referendum was called. On a warm day, 1100 people from Point Reyes Station and surrounding towns of Inverness, Inverness Park, Olema, and Marshall gathered at the Red Barn (Anonymous 5, personal communication, March 14, 2016), “and we lined up and we voted” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). The voters approved the construction, but residents of Point Reyes Station maintained that the majority of the support came from Inverness, which would not have to live with a housing complex “looming over the hill above” town, they complained. So another referendum was called, this time limited to Point Reyes Station voters. The second referendum also won a majority.

After a long approval process with the county, Point Reyes Affordable Housing (PRAH) was built in 2005, providing 26 low-income rentals and eight moderate-income home ownership units. EAH received between 200 and 300 applications. The initial agreement with the community had provided for local preference from West Marin or the North Bay in the first round of leasing. One of my interviewees, the current manager for the PRAH homes, told me that “a few poster-child people were identified in the community”—like the local handyman who had been displaced several times (M. Switzer, September 24, 2015).⁷⁷ But HUD does not allow restricting units to local residents and put the county on probation for unfair housing practices.

⁷⁷ Several people mentioned the community sense that the local handyman who needed housing should get preferential treatment. Some objected to the idea that he would be more entitled to housing simply because he had lived there for many years. Others mentioned it as in, “what would happen to this community if the workers who we have depended on for years could not live here?”

The complex still engenders some controversy today. Wade Holland said, “I can tell you people in town who look around Point Reyes Station and say, ‘See what [PRAH] did to the town!’” (personal communication, February 24, 2015). Many people I spoke with mentioned a small but vocal minority that expresses strong opinions about how the community “should be.” Even whether or not building the complex was controversial engenders some dispute today. A few of my interviewees readily described the above debate over PRAH, while others emphasized that 70 percent of the voters approved of the housing complex; the opposition was very local and very public, but did not represent the majority.

Several people I spoke with indicated that the controversies were over certain aspects of the project and how the project was carried out, rather than representative of opposition to affordable housing in general. More than one interviewee said that residents were concerned that the housing would go to people from elsewhere, rather than to existing community members (Anonymous 5, personal communication, March 24, 2016; M. Switzer, personal communication, September 24, 2015). Similarly, another interviewee told me that whether or not EAH should take HUD money (which meant that they couldn’t restrict the units to local workers) was contentious (M. Dowie, personal communication, April 4, 2016). Another person I spoke with agreed that there was a little bit of everything—questions about the process, opposition to low-income housing, and opposition to development in general rather than specifically to affordable housing—but that there was clear community resistance to the project as a whole (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). Some community members still harbor resentment about the project; a 2018 opinion piece in the local paper expressed long-held regrets about not taking “a more active stand against the so-called affordable housing project...right behind town” (Vacha 2018).

Wealth and development

It is not just affordable housing that provokes community reaction, but the entrance of excessive wealth into the community prompts as strong a response from residents (as Barraclough also describes in Shadow Hills). In 2008, Tim Westergren, co-founder of Pandora, and his wife Smita Singh, bought a 16.9-acre parcel in Inverness Park. In 2014, the Westergrens revealed their plans for a 5494-square foot home, as well as numerous other structures, totaling almost 9000 square feet in all. In November 2014, the *Point Reyes Light* published a letter by neighbors outlining their apprehensions about the project. The size of the project, including the numerous bedrooms and 14 bathrooms, led neighbors to believe that it might be used as a retreat center. They were also concerned about the size of the proposed second unit, the proposed removal of 46 trees, and the potential water use—the plans included a 16,000-gallon swimming pool (Stein et al. 2014). Residents packed into a meeting at the Inverness Yacht Club in December of 2014, in which they voiced their concerns. Soon after, they launched a website with a petition against the project.

The owners had said that they intended to use the home as a vacation and weekend home until they retire and that they need the additional bedrooms and bathrooms for visits from their extended family. They said they planned to rent the second unit to a local family with a child who would act as caretakers, “but critics said they want assurance—such as

in the form of a deed restriction—that it would remain affordable housing in perpetuity” (Kimmey 2014).

After speaking with the Westergrens about their plans, some neighbors came around to support the project; they understood the conflict as one of philosophical differences about “the kinds of homes we should have in our neighborhood,” recognizing that who has the right to “dictate the size of a home or the income of a family” is a sticky issue (Kimmey 2014).

The Westergrens were going to resubmit their plans to the county to appease some of the objections, but the extensions they had requested ran out and they didn’t have the documentation ready. By spring of 2015, the owners had withdrawn the application for Hidden Dragon (Kimmey 2015). By then, another large home on Inverness Ridge had captured the indignation of the community.

In spring of 2013, San Francisco socialites Trevor and Alexis Traina bought a 6-acre property at the top of Vision Road on Inverness Ridge. They paid \$900,000 for the property, which had belonged to the family of Howard and Cecil Waite. Using wood from nearby bishop pines, Howard Waite constructed four whimsical cabins in the 1960s and ‘70s on the property. His work is considered an unwitting inspiration for the “green” or handmade architectural movement. Waite moved in 1997, and his grandson, Rufus Blunk, managed the property until the family decided to sell.

When the Trainas first bought the Waite property, they hired celebrity interior designer Ken Fulk to create a “summer compound in Inverness...with an old-time fishing-camp theme” (Zinko 2014). They were soon red-tagged by the county because they had started work before securing a permit from the Coastal Commission (Evans 2016c).

One community member I spoke with in early 2015 pointed to the Traina’s purchase of the property and plans for the “pseudo fishing town” as a poster child for the extreme wealth entering the community. It is “a fantasy environment for the ultra rich,” he told me, “people with more money than they know what to do with” (D. Livingston, personal communication, February 4, 2015). Conversations with other residents and opinion pieces and articles in the local newspaper, made it apparent that the sale struck many in the community in the same way. For the next two years, Moonrise Kingdom, as it became known (after the name of the Traina’s LLC that purchased it), was a source of division in the community.

After the county put a stop to their remodel, the Trainas revised their plans for the property. “After getting to know members of the Waite family, researching the property and talking with experts, we came to learn that the property is a treasure trove of some of the most influential architecture in the Bay Area, and it is almost frozen in time,” they wrote in a piece published in the local newspaper (Traina 2017). Their revised plans included repairing and reconstructing Howard Waite’s structures, and adding a new 4481 square-foot home. The total footprint of their proposed development, including the existing structures they proposed to legalize, came to 8544 square feet (Kimmey 2016a).

Howard Waite’s grandson, Rufus Blunk, initially told the *Light* that he had wanted to “try to get partners to help save [the property] in a style that would be in keeping with the community” (Point Reyes Light 2014). But other family members wanted to sell it,

apparently because they needed the money. In 2016, after the Trainas' plans for the Waite cabins had evolved from imposed fishing camp theme into repairing and reconstructing Waite's structures, Blunk saw their ownership differently; he told the local newspaper that he thought the Trainas were in fact interested in preserving the historical legacy of the property, "and if they could be a part of the community, that would be the best situation. It'd be nice if somehow the folks who don't have a lot of money could benefit from the wealth in the hills" (Evans 2016c).

Other members of the community didn't see it the same way. The Inverness Association is a local organization that defines its purposes as "to protect and advance the rights and interests of residents of the Inverness area" (Inverness Association, n.d.). The association expressed concern right away about the size of the proposed development, but the county approved the plans the Trainas submitted, with a few qualifications—including reducing the height of one of Waite's constructions (known as the Windmill), cutting fewer trees, and only using native plants in the landscaping.

The Inverness Association made repeated appeals to the county's approval of the plans. The association focused on the size of Moonrise Kingdom, as "out of scale with the neighborhood," arguing that the average property in the neighborhood is 1595 square feet and the largest is 5477 square feet (in contrast to the proposed 8544 square feet of Moonrise Kingdom). The county responded that square footage in the assessor's records is often inaccurate, as it doesn't include accessory dwellings. The Trainas pointed out that two nearby properties have a total footprint of 7000 square feet, and that over 5000 square feet of the development already exists.

In addition to size, the Inverness Association's appeals focused on the height of the "Windmill," and the fact that it is not "clustered with the new residence"; it also claimed that the plan does not "go far enough to avoid harming birds, specifically the northern spotted owl" (Kimmey 2016c). The association also took on a complicated question of zoning. One of the parcels (the development spans two parcels) has an anomalous zoning classification; the association argued it was probably intended to be open space, which would prohibit residential development.

In public hearings regarding the repeated appeals, as well as in open letters to the local newspaper, supporters and non-supporters sparred over whether the proposed Moonrise Kingdom belonged in the community. An immediate neighbor—whose property has multiple structures and a total of seven bathrooms and eight bedrooms—and good friend of the Waite family voiced her support for the project, saying that "none of [the Waites] would have wanted to see it developed into a 'McMansion,' and that is absolutely not what is happening" (Guth 2017a). On the contrary, Inverness Association board members and others who opposed the development repeatedly used rhetoric that it was "out-of-character" with the community. But it was unclear what character it did not complement. Two community members who supported the project pointed out in the *Light* that "because it's Howard's style that's being saved and replicated, the community character argument is hard to make" (Holland and Elliot 2017). What it referred to, they argued, was not that the development was out-of-line with the community character, but rather that the applicants were not who the community imagined should join them. The opinion piece went on to say, "We reject the notion that who the applicants are is relevant. Each project must be evaluated solely on its merits and its compliance with codes and objective

standards, not on opinions about “these people” and whether or not their values are the same as ours” (*Ibid.*).

A county planner on the project commented that no one had objected to the Waites’ unpermitted development before. He told the *Light*: “This project is something of an enigma, in that Mr. Waite must have been an incredibly respected member of the community. He’s up there at the top of Vision Road for, it seems, like decades, just sawing away and pounding nails, building structures all the way up to 5,000 square feet of building area. And never once did the county receive a letter saying, ‘Hey, this is a violation of everything we hold dear.’ ... Never heard a peep” (Kimmey 2016b).

Fertile ironies envelop the Moonrise Kingdom project and community resistance to it. The struggle over Moonrise Kingdom was in many ways a struggle about who gets to decide—and preserve—the “essence” of a community. That there is a community essence seemed to be accepted by most. The Trainas, for their part, wanted to convey their project as preserving “the very essence of Inverness circa 1960”—the “ideas and visions inspired by bold friendships, daring creativity, brazen spirit and an audacious point of view” that the Waite property reflects.⁷⁸ They felt rejected because of their wealth—but money was essential to restore Waite’s structures. As two immediate neighbors, and supporters of the project, brought up at one of the hearings, the Trainas have the necessary finances to restore the architectural heritage of Waite’s property. This incongruity—of the wealthy socialites fighting to preserve a property that represents the “essence” of the do-it-yourself, hippie free spirit—underlies the project.

The Trainas perceived this paradox: “There is no small amount of irony that we are the ones trying to preserve what independent experts have told us are architecturally significant, as well as locally beloved, structures, and the so-called Inverness Association are the people advocating for the destruction of these valuable buildings.”⁷⁹ Trevor Traina went on to say, “How this dynamic occurred is puzzling to me,” but relates it to being wealthy non-locals: “We see the not-so-subtle digs at the wealthy people from out of town coming to Inverness” (Kimmey 2016b).

But the situation evoked even greater irony than what the Trainas pointed out. Inverness in the 1960s was actually far more conservative than the image the Trainas portray. But it does sound much like the spirit that drew many of the hippies and back-to-the-landers to West Marin in the 1960s and ‘70s. Many of them are those who now resist the Trainas’ entrance into the community. The Trainas claim they want to preserve an “essence” of

⁷⁸ Architectural expert and consultant on the project Richard Olsen described the Waite property this way. He also told the *Point Reyes Light* that one of Waite’s cabins “perfectly captures the zeitgeist of the environmentally focused revolt culture that erupted in the state in the 1960s” (Guth 2017). He also commented that the Trainas’ desire to “painstakingly restore and adapt themselves to this funky little building, with all its Waite idiosyncrasies literally built into its every nook, is frankly as unexpected as it is laudable” (Guth 2017).

⁷⁹ In one of the appeals, the Inverness Association suggested that the Trainas removed the iconic Windmill as a way to reduce the overall footprint and eliminate the “unacceptable impact to the viewshed” (quoted in Kimmey 2016b).

community that residents feel their presence threatens. Despite the historical significance of the property, who decides to what extent it represents the community?

After the Planning Commission denied their appeals, the Inverness Association appealed the plans to the Board of Supervisors. In August of 2017, Marin County supervisor for the district helped forge an agreement. Dennis Rodoni proposed that the new home be halved in size—to under 2000 square feet—that one structure be considered for use as a rental by a caretaker, and the windmill tower (allowed by the Planning Commission to maintain its current height due to testimony from a UC Berkeley professor of architecture) be “blended into the surroundings to reduce its visual impact” (Guth 2017b). Supervisor Rodoni also used phrases like “protect the character of this community” in his defense of the agreement. The county continued to argue that the size was not out of character with other nearby residences and recommended that the board maintain the Planning Commission’s approval. The board approved the revised plans.

Speakers at this last hearing were divided: some were concerned about the precedent this would set for other projects in the area. But those who supported the project characterized the appeals by the Inverness Association as “mean-spirited” and said the association “had alienated community members.” One called the appeal “a sham,” saying that it had “nothing to do with the details of the property... The association claims to be politically progressive and open, but has instead expressed clear animosity toward the wealthy and the prominent... It has turned Inverness into an intolerant and unwelcoming place.” A resident of Point Reyes Station said that the association represented a vocal minority and that it does not speak for the community; he said the association “created an atmosphere of fear, where people in support of the project are afraid to speak out against the ardent objectors” (Guth 2017b). One Inverness resident described residents as deciding that some “...people who want to do something aren’t the ‘right people’...they’re too rich and they’ll change the fabric of the community...” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

The three mini-case studies I describe above—affordable housing in Point Reyes Station and two developments proposed by wealthy San Francisco families on Inverness Ridge—all reveal how intimately intertwined identity and the physical landscape are. Change, of any income level, stirs up fears of losing something—some past identity or essence that community members imagine existed.

Moving in time⁸⁰

Keeping the landscape as it is reveals in part a desire to “fix” the identity of the community in time and space—maintain a certain type of residents, who earn a certain amount, live a certain way, have a certain aesthetic. When communities are undergoing demographic and socioeconomic changes, as West Marin is, residents’ desire to fix the identity becomes stronger. But as Doreen Massey describes,

⁸⁰ “The life of country and city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions” (Williams 1973, 7-8).

...the identities of place are inevitably unfixed. They are unfixed in part precisely because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing.... Moreover, that fixity has always been so. The past was no more static than is the present. Places cannot 'really' be characterized by the recourse to some essential, internalized moment (Massey 1994, 169).

“I spend an inordinate amount of time trying to keep the rest of the world out and keep [Inverness] from turning into over the hill [East Marin],” one Inverness resident told me (Anonymous 6, personal communication, April 13, 2016). In her role on the Board of Directors of the Inverness Association (a local organization that defines its purposes as “to protect and advance the rights and interests of residents of the Inverness area”⁸¹), she reviewed plans for remodels and new buildings in Inverness. The standards for approval, rather than based only on county and Coastal Commission regulations, are also based on ideas of how the community should look: “I always carry my own set of village rules. It isn’t just about the law.”

But the “rules” people have in their head about what the community should look like are usually based on what it was like when they arrived. “It’s typically said that ‘we want to keep the town the way it’s always been, which is the way it was the day I moved in’,” one Inverness resident told me (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). It is a familiar story in rural communities: as new residents move in, they seem to believe that the town was always the way it was when they arrived. Several studies suggest that they seek to preserve their vision by restricting further access (Abrams and Gosnell 2012, Kondo et al. 2012, Barraclough 2011). One author describes new migrants to Western resort towns: “once settled, they would just as soon close the door on any more like themselves” (Ringholz 1992, 113). In Jackson Hole, the executive director of an organization that advocated for responsible growth says that people make an emotional connection to the town when it was “in a certain condition.” He went on to say that “when that condition changed, that was a loss. So there’s sort of gut-level, understandable, and reasonable resistance to change” (Ringholz 1992, 154). In a rural San Fernando Valley neighborhood, a resident describes it as: “If people move into the neighborhood, they don’t want it to change from the way they moved in; that’s why they bought their house” (Barraclough 2011, 219).

People I spoke with and writings by Point Reyes residents describe the same perspective—that to each resident, *their* beginning in a place is the beginning *of* the place.

I know a person who bemoans change in town and the visitors who flock here. This person’s house wasn’t even built when another friend up the road first moved in. There are old-timers who were here before both of them; from

⁸¹ From the Inverness Association website. <https://www.invernessassociation.org/history>

their standpoint, the first to move in was a hippie, the other gentry, and both took some getting used to” (Rowe 2010a).

Many of the same residents who most fight change in the community were considered unwanted new arrivals by existing residents when they moved to West Marin. As I describe in other chapters, most members of the now established community came in the 1960s and ‘70s as part of the counterculture, and they brought changes in community composition and community dynamics. The long-standing community “resisted their arrival because they would change the character of the community,” said Wade Holland, who arrived in the 1970s (personal communication, February 24, 2015). He recalls a sign that said “Hippies Take a Bath and Go Home!”⁸² A newspaper article in the *Point Reyes Light* from May 1967 was titled, “Hippies Topic of Meeting,” and describes a meeting at St. Columba’s Church in Inverness, attended by “nearly 50 citizens and 18 resource people from the County of Marin public service offices and others...” all concerned with “the problems inherent in large groups of people invading Inverness and West Marin this summer.” A later issue of the local newspaper reflected back on that time, noting that “[t]he ‘hippies’ over time would enhance the coast’s art scene but would also spark debates over marijuana growing and nude sunbathing. In addition, ...the initial relations between West Marin’s traditional cowboy culture and its newly arrived counterculture were sometimes hostile” (*Point Reyes Light*, date unknown).

Nevertheless, over time, the vision of who and what the community is has been shaped and defined in large part by “the hippie establishment”—those who arrived in the 1960s and 70s and transformed the community, to the consternation of the existing residents. One of my interviewees was part of the community transformation that began in the 1960s. “They were right,” he told me, “we did change the character of the community. We brought the Dance Palace [community center], we brought the [health] clinic, we brought the radio station. All these things that we brought with us or created after we got here made a fundamental change in this community. So it was true” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). Another Point Reyes Station resident noted in 2010 that those changes mobilized by the generation that arrived in the 1960s and ‘70s, including the community center and the health clinic “and other civic institutions...are warp and woof of the community today” (Rowe 2010a). He sees change as not only inevitable, but healthy: “The one thing we can say for certain is that the town will be different in 30 years, just as it is different now than 30 years ago... That process will continue, and this is not necessarily to be regretted.” He points out that a stationary history is not just unrealistic, but it is undesirable as well: “I have seen pictures [of Point Reyes Station] from the early 1900s of locomotives coming down the middle of Main Street and the entire northeast side devoted to a railroad yard. That’s not a past that anyone I know wants to go back to” (Rowe 2010a).

⁸² The *Point Reyes Light* describes a sign at the entrance to Inverness in 1967 that read “Attention Beatniks: All Beatniks Entering Inverness Must Take Baths. Your Smell is Overcoming.”

Conclusion

This chapter and the previous two have explored different aspects of the relationship between land conservation, gentrification, and housing. In this chapter I examined the role of community preference in a desirable landscape, exploring the formal and informal ways in which West Marin residents regulate development. Residents try to reconcile the need for housing and the changes due to gentrification with their vision of what their community is and their own identity as community members. Resistance to development takes many forms: zoning regulations and infrastructure concerns can function as a smokescreen for opposition. In many cases, residents use claims about community character as a line of defense against change. Other residents express more overt opposition to what they foresee as negative changes in the community.

The next chapter examines the evolution of agriculture in West Marin, particularly after the county and state protections of agricultural land significantly changed the future of agriculture in the county. With the flourishing of agriculture, the attractions of West Marin have shifted; the tourist economy has expanded and transformed, as the wealth of the gentrifying Bay Area region further penetrates the community.

Chapter 7. Cultivating gentrification: the role of agriculture in gentrification in West Marin

Shortly after the preservation of Point Reyes National Seashore catalyzed the transformation of West Marin into an amenity area, preservation of the agricultural landscape put in motion a revitalization of the agricultural sector. Productive local agriculture has created a consumptive appeal that has been key in shaping gentrification dynamics in West Marin. Agriculture has become a principal amenity, as the productive landscape—and its products—is romanticized and consumed by visitors and amenity migrants as much as the scenic vistas, beaches, kayaking, and hiking opportunities in the national seashore.

While more subtle than in other areas (like the Napa and Sonoma counties wine country) the allure of elite food production and consumption has nevertheless accentuated gentrification in West Marin, reshaping the community, attracting more and more tourists and second-home owners, and making homes less affordable and less available for working community members, including those needed to support the agricultural economy itself. The preservation of agriculture through diversification demonstrates the complex relationship between agriculture and rural gentrification. West Marin's historical, political, and cultural circumstances make the persistence of agriculture—and its attraction—unsurprising, but it reveals important relationships between rurality and gentrification, contradictory on the surface.

This chapter explores how and why agriculture persists in West Marin and the complicated and contradictory ways in which gentrification has come to challenge agriculture. It revolves around two central contradictions: 1.) West Marin's scenic recreation landscape is also a productive agrarian landscape; but in order to be attractive to the tourist economy it draws, agricultural labor is idealized and the dirty work is largely invisible; 2.) While agricultural production has fortified the agricultural community on the one hand, its very success plays a role in rising housing and land costs, making it difficult for those who serve the agricultural community to live there and for new agriculturalists to begin operations in West Marin.

My theoretical approach in this chapter responds to a literature that is often referred to as “rural landscapes in transition.” In many parts of the United States—and internationally—rural agricultural areas are losing population as young people escape the long hours and hard work that agricultural jobs require. Rural areas with natural amenities like mountains or other recreational opportunities, on the other hand, are gaining population, as urbanites looking for a rural lifestyle move in. But few of these in-migrants are looking to enter agriculture as a profession; they are usually either retirees or have a job that allows telecommuting or some other flexible arrangement (Riebsame et al. 1996, Nelson et al. 2009). These migrations, in combination with other changes in extractive economies mean that the rural economies and communities that have long-dominated these areas are changing.

The literature on rural areas in transition refers to landscapes that are valued for the ecosystem services and amenities they yield and the aesthetics and cultural history they preserve. These landscapes are called “post-productive” (McCarthy 2005), indicating that their value no longer lies in the commodities they produce. Scholars often consider the

post-productive aspect of the landscape to be a key step in the process of gentrification of rural areas (Halfacree and Boyle 1998; McCarthy 2005, 2008; Phillips 1993, 2004). McCarthy describes the globalizing countryside as “clearly a post-productivist one, with consumption-orientated uses for elites being the major commodities it produces” (2008, 129). Phillips (2004) has argued for understanding rural gentrification as a revalorization of landscapes that have become unproductive or marginal to agrarian capital. Amenity migration, in which “consumption-oriented” elites move to the countryside, is equated with “urbanization of the rural” and is often part of the process of “American-style exurban and suburban development” (McCarthy 2008).

Several omissions in the literature on transitioning rural landscapes create a misperception of these places. Most studies evade examining the class transformations that are inherent in the social and economic transitions these rural areas experience; they focus on the out-migrations of rural young people and in-migrations of retirees or high-earning professionals, but overlook the simultaneous in-flow of workers. In addition, the term “post-productive landscape” doesn’t acknowledge the work that goes into these landscapes—or that they are productive while they may be consumed at the same time.

West Marin, however, presents an alternative vision of transitioning landscapes, by showing that a landscape of consumption is simultaneously one of production *and* that productive landscapes can be a critical piece of gentrifying rural areas.⁸³ In addition, there is not a fixed chronology to the gentrification process of agriculture into sprawl: in this case, sprawl staved off was a first step in the process of gentrification; and rather than disappearing, agriculture has nurtured gentrification—and vice versa.

I begin this chapter by discussing two broader cultural and socio-economic shifts that set the conditions for the persistence of West Marin agriculture: the changing perceptions of ideal landscapes and the growth of the foodie movement. The rest of the chapter is divided into three sections: the first examines the historical and regulatory landscape of West Marin, as well as the process of diversification of ranching operations that led to the “agricultural renaissance.” The second section explores the effects of the transition to value-added agriculture on the community and the landscape. And the third section begins to question the relationship between gentrified agriculture and agricultural workers, which I more fully develop in the following chapter.

The cultural and socio-economic context: idealized landscapes and the Bay Area foodie culture

Two things set the conditions for West Marin agriculture to flourish, despite a regional conversion of rural landscapes to sprawl and a trend away from productive agriculture in gentrifying areas. The first is a broad cultural shift in the perception of ideal landscapes;

⁸³ In this chapter I focus on the idea that a gentrifying landscape can also be a “productive landscape” in the sense that the literature I cite uses this term. I discuss the fallacy of the very idea of the post-productive landscape in the next chapter: agriculture and extractive uses (logging, mining, etc. of the “Old West”) are not the only “productive” uses of the landscape. Recreation, second-homes, and tourism create working landscapes as well, in that they require labor and an extensive working class to support the leisure activities of the elite.

the other is the “foodie” culture of the Bay Area and the economic potential of consumers to buy elite food.

Changing perceptions of idealized landscapes

In contrast to the conservation movement that fought to preserve the “untrammelled wilderness” of the Point Reyes seashore, preserving agriculture in West Marin has meant protecting “working landscapes.” While Marin conservationists initially garnered public support for parks, protecting open space—land not worthy of park protection—and especially working landscapes was something else: “It require[d] convincing park ‘purists’ that slightly trammelled peri-urban lands merit federal protection. Similarly, maintaining working landscapes requires convincing wilderness advocates to accept farms and other cultural features as resources rather than blights to be expunged from protected landscapes” (Fairfax et al. 2012, 94).

The ranchers and conservationists aspiring to protect agricultural landscapes had a cultural shift on their side. The pervasive vision of natural places has long been of places untouched by humans, unaltered by human interference. Art history is full of images of nature without people, from classical Greece to eighteenth-century England (Neumann 2002). Roderick Neumann explores the consequences of the European ideal of pristine wilderness for a national park in Tanzania; he explains that “[n]ineteenth-century American romantic constructions of the ‘wilderness’ drew heavily from the English aesthetic tradition of sublime nature,” which was based in “awe-inspiring vastness and grandeur” (Neumann 16). This vision of nature, Neumann argues, “eventually played a leading role in the development of the national park and wilderness ideals in the United States” (Neumann 16).

Over the past several decades, the conservation movement has expanded its understanding of ideal landscapes: the focus on “wilderness” has given way to encompass appreciation of pastoral, agricultural landscapes. Point Reyes National Seashore demonstrates this shift, which harkens back to an earlier idealization of the countryside, in contrast with the perceived foulness of urban places. In the 19th century, agrarian lands were synonymous with “virtuous” lands” (Tuan 1974, 193); the countryside conjured visions of “quiet, ...innocence, [and] simple plenty” (Williams 1973, 23). The vision of the rural took on moral implications: it became an alternative to the evils of the city that were associated with “ambition, disturbance, and war” (Williams 1973, 24). As the eastern United States industrialized, the ideology of the virtuous agrarian became important in shaping the nonurban West. Thomas Jefferson—inspired by John Locke’s beliefs in the ‘improvement’ of wild lands through individual labor—elevated the attainment of human virtues through agrarianism to “a political program” in his settlement and land use policies (Hargrove 1980).

Ironically, however, even as rural, agricultural landscapes became valued as places to preserve, the work entailed in maintaining the landscape is often not acknowledged: the land is not “worked” but simply *is* (as I discuss in the final section of this chapter). In art and literature as well, pastoral landscapes exclude humans just as the majestic wild landscapes. Nevertheless, the shift toward appreciation of agricultural landscapes made possible the preservation of the land around Point Reyes National Seashore—the great bulk of West Marin—which is protected not for recreation, but for agriculture.

The Bay Area foodie culture

At about the same time that ranchers and conservationists were working to protect agricultural landscapes in Marin, two other things were happening. One was that a new type of eating and relationship to food was taking hold in the Bay Area, which would become known as California Cuisine. Defined in part by “preoccupation with food” and in part by a culture of “politically engaged, regional cuisine,” California Cuisine was the cornerstone of innovative Bay Area restaurants that were developing menus based on a regional cuisine of fresh, local, and seasonal ingredients (Fairfax et al. 2012). Quality local ingredients, however, were hard to come by and restaurants had a shortage of sourcing options.

At the same time, alternative growers were seeking distribution networks that would make their businesses viable. Two of those early alternative growers were West Marin innovators Bill Niman and Warren Weber. They “were looking for ranch management techniques that could preserve the soil as well as products that emphasized the place and the producer, not a low price” (Fairfax et al. 2012, 102). But there was no distribution network in place. Bill Niman arrived in Bolinas in the 1960s to teach school, but soon was inspired by the back-to-the-landers to run cattle on a small parcel of land. He became acquainted with the Stewarts, a long-time ranching family whose land had recently become part of the national seashore, and learned from them about the meat business. By the 1970s, he had a small-scale business selling pasture-raised meat. Alice Waters of Chez Panisse began buying the meat and putting the Niman name on the menu (*Ibid.*). Warren and Marion Weber, also back-to-the-landers, began farming in Bolinas “with five acres and a horse-drawn plow” (103). The Webers “established the groundwork for local farms that came after” and “worked with Alice Waters and other Bay Area chefs to develop produce choices, benefiting other coastal food producers” (Bounty 2016).

Over time, farmers markets and high-end restaurants provided a ready, local market for emerging organic and value-added producers in West Marin. The Bay Area alternative food scene was more than just a cultural shift in people’s relationship to food; there was another critical condition that allowed the alternative food movement to flourish: high incomes and the sensibilities of the Bay Area residents (concern about climate change, toxins, pesticides, health, etc.). The Bay Area provided a concentration of highly educated people with high incomes who were both concerned about personal and environmental health and able to afford high-end food products. In other words, the gentrifying Bay Area region supplied the perfect market for organic produce, grass-fed meats, pasture-raised chickens and eggs, and specialty cheeses. It also provided a base of people interested in farm tours and events.

These broader cultural shifts set the stage for the flourishing of agriculture in Marin. The rest of this chapter explores why agriculture has not become marginal in West Marin, as in many other gentrifying rural areas—and what that means for agriculture and for the community.

How agriculture has cultivated gentrification

Beaches and redwoods aren’t the only thing drawing crowds to West Marin these days. Foodies from around the country are flocking to the pristine landscape around Point

Reyes National Seashore to savor the local bounty—from grass-fed meats to award-winning farmstead cheese and everything in between (Pavone 2013, 47).

Food and gentrification are intertwined. Food-related industries are often a precursor to neighborhood gentrification (Fairfax et al. 2012). Though these often-innovative new industries may be part of the alternative food movement, devoted to social responsibility as well as delicious food, they are also seeking “cheap space, capital, markets, inspiration, and raw materials.” Their presence in undercapitalized neighborhoods magnifies disparity and differential access (178). Not far from West Marin, for example, in urban Oakland, “[g]entrification ... has transformed the area... around Jack London Square into a showcase of high-end, shiny lofts and small and mid-sized food-based enterprises.” But it has not improved access to healthy, affordable, and appropriate food for nearby residents (Fairfax et al. 2012). Like food processing and distribution, urban agriculture also plays an ambiguous role: Geographer Nathan McClintock, in his study of urban agriculture in Oakland, reflects that “[m]any community activists worry about urban agriculture’s role as a spearhead of gentrification” (2011). New restaurants, cafes, and markets are also signs of a gentrifying urban neighborhood, with prices far above what long-time residents can afford.

Yet food growing and processing in agricultural areas and their role in gentrification has not been studied. While the political economic processes in relation to food and gentrification are different in urban locations than in West Marin, the common denominator is consumptive interest in organic and locally grown and sourced food and a ready market for it. In this section I examine the history of agriculture in West Marin as well as the institutional environment that has kept agriculture central to the area.

If, as the literature claims, the gentrification process in rural landscapes involves “revalorization of resources and spaces that have become seen as unproductive or marginal to agrarian capital” (Phillips 2004), West Marin is unusual in that it has not become irrelevant as an agricultural center. While socio-economic conditions and cultural trends nurtured the transformation of West Marin, the resilience of the agricultural sector in West Marin is firmly rooted in the (public and private) institutions that govern the landscape: land protection measures in West Marin that disallowed development provided few options other than agriculture.

History and characteristics of agriculture in Marin

West Marin’s agricultural products have brought the area notoriety since the 1800s. Many immigrants who arrived to make their fortune in the Gold Rush discovered that ranching would be more profitable than mining, as demand for local products grew with the great influx of forty-niners to San Francisco. Irish, Swiss-Italian, and Portuguese immigrants found their way to West Marin, where they ran dairy ranches (mostly owned by the San Francisco-based Shafter brothers). Ranchers also grew potatoes, fruits, and grains and shipped them out of ports at Bolinas and Tomales, but butter and cheese were the primary products. West Marin was the most productive dairy land in the state, due to the combination of year-round grasses and cool maritime temperatures, which allowed cows to graze without shelter and butter to be made without refrigeration. Point Reyes butter was renowned for its superior quality, supposedly due to the rich grasses nurtured

by the thick coastal fogs. And since refrigerated transportation did not exist, dairy ranches benefited from the proximity of San Francisco markets. Marin County was the state's top dairy producer from the 1850s to the early 1900s. The dairies began to lose their competitive advantage when refrigeration became common and local production was no longer essential.

Marin's climate and landscape set the parameters for the distinguishing characteristics of the agricultural sector. Grazing cattle is "pretty much all you can do" in Marin (D. Lewis, personal communication, May 11, 2016). The coastal climate of moist, foggy summers and mild winters nurtures rich grasses, but water is not abundant and the thin soils and rolling hills do not favor row cropping. There are relatively few areas of fertile bottomlands, except in the southern reaches of West Marin, near Bolinas Lagoon, where the creek that runs through the Olema Valley deposited deep alluvial soil, prime for farm land.⁸⁴

Protecting agricultural land in and around the seashore

The Bay Area's experience in land protection, dating back more than a hundred years, anchors the district both symbolically and more concretely in possibilities for creative feed production and processing. (Fairfax et al. 2012, 91)

Before the national seashore, some small pockets of land were protected in West Marin (Tomales Bay State Park was established in 1952), but beyond town boundaries, most of the land was privately owned ranchland. The acquisition process of the seashore lasted over ten years, and the National Park Service proposed several strategies.⁸⁵ Maintaining agriculture did not appear to be a priority for the park service. Proposals initially planned to acquire less acreage and leave the functioning dairy ranches out of the boundaries of the seashore. After numerous proposals and accompanying hearings in Congress, ranchers acquiesced to a plan in which the NPS purchased the land and leased it back to those ranchers who wanted to continue their operations.

Many ranchers on the point were uncomfortable with the idea of being bought and then leasing back their operations. "A representative of the Marin County Farm Bureau asked, 'If the ranches are to be leased back, then why acquire them at all?'"⁸⁶ Ranchers had concerns that continue today: many were afraid that "agriculture would sooner or later be pushed off of publicly owned lands," despite the fact that the bill to acquire the seashore allowed the ranching operations to continue (Watt 2017). The effect that the park would have on the broader ranching community in West Marin was also troubling: "Officials and residents of West Marin worried about impacts to the local economy, particularly

⁸⁴ Historically, however, farming was more prominent in West Marin than it is today. Apart from the Olema Valley, there were vegetable farms on the Point Reyes Peninsula.

⁸⁵ I discuss parts of the National Park Service acquisition of the seashore in Chapter 5; here I focus on the maintenance of agriculture in the national seashore.

⁸⁶ Testimony from Ed Rennington, U.S. Congress, Senate Hearings 1960, at 186. Cited in Watt 2017.

from removing so many dairies. Any given dairy industry requires a kind of “critical mass” (Watt 2017).

To survive, an agricultural industry needs to have a certain number of participants, a certain acreage, a certain amount of product. If it falls below these thresholds, it will no longer be able to support the complex network of services on which it in turn depends. Providers of many types—for instance feed suppliers, livestock veterinarians, credit establishments, creameries—all need to maintain a certain volume of business and competition lessens. Monopolies appear and process rise. If the shrinkage continues, services start to disappear altogether (Hart 1991, 54).

The fear was that if the number of dairies in the area “fell below that critical level, all West Marin dairies could be driven out of business by increased costs. The Point Reyes proposal could potentially affect ranchers well beyond its borders” (Watt 2017). Leases with the National Park Service varied from between five and 40 years. Some families were hesitant to sign on for too long, not knowing what to expect from their new situation with a new landowner.

Despite these concerns, at the time, the ranchers whose land was within the national park were confident about the future of their operations *because* they were in the national park: “...Boyd Stewart in Olema pointed out that his ranch was secure because they had sold their land to the newly formed park, Point Reyes Seashore, and thus felt assured of a future for ranching” (Bounty 2016).

Neither the ranchers nor the National Park Service foresaw that the acquisition of private land for a national park, and the way in which it was done, could create serious complications down the road. Despite allowing ranching to continue in the national seashore, working ranches have diminished in number since the seashore was acquired. Today, about 17,000 acres of the peninsula are grazed, only 40 percent of the land that was grazed when NPS established the seashore.⁸⁷

Beyond the national seashore, the fate of the ranchland on the east side of Tomales Bay depended on the Marin County General Plan that was being debated in the early 1970s. Initial versions of the plan advocated for extensive development; many ranchers looked forward to the day when they could cash in on their land by selling it to developers. “Ranchers thought agriculture was finished, their ship had come in, they would sell to developers and get their long-term investment back,” then-supervisor Gary Giacomini told me (personal communication, February 25, 2015). When a new Board of Supervisors revised the county position and proposed what was called A-60 zoning (see Chapter 1 for

⁸⁷ As Laura Watt (2017) notes, it is hard to know the exact causes of the decrease. Ranching has decreased in general in West Marin since the 1950s.

further discussion of the plan), the expected trajectory of West Marin changed forever: A-60 zoning turned out to be the key to keeping agriculture in West Marin.⁸⁸

A-60 zoning allowed only one residence per 60 acres, effectively prohibiting the subdivision of West Marin ranches. Ranching families, many of whom had become resigned to the idea of losing their ranches—and had begun to dream of cash windfalls from selling their land to developers—did not initially welcome the new zoning (Hart 1991). “[The ranchers] fought it because they thought it was going to take away their intrinsic value [of the land]. I don’t blame them,” Gary Giacomini, champion of the plan, told me, “I would have fought it too, if I was a rancher. But we, the county, assumed that it would in fact lower property values on these ranches, [...] the argument was—how much?” (personal communication, February 25, 2015).

The new zoning, in fact, had the opposite effect: with the land protected from development, its value began to increase. Giacomini said, “A funny thing happened after a couple years: these ranchers found there was a lot of value in A-60 land. To their shock they could sell this land for a lot of money” (personal communication, February 25, 2015).

The zoning took several years to implement, and it was tested in court by a series of lawsuits that claimed that it amounted to a “takings” by the county. But the Supreme Court ultimately validated the right of the county to implement A-60 zoning. The effect on the landscape would be “dramatic,” “because the zoning at the time allowed five units per acre. So then when we would rezone it, they would get one for each 60 acres” (G. Giacomini, personal communication, February 25, 2015). West Marin went from having 1.2 million potential building sites to having 3000, and most of those were nestled into existing communities (*Ibid.*).

While A-60 zoning was successful in limiting development in the rural areas of the county and confining it to what the General Plan had designated as the city corridor, the problem with zoning as a means to keep development at bay was that the Board of Supervisors could vote to overturn it. With a change in composition of the Board of Supervisors, “[any] Tuesday, with a three to two vote, the zoning can change” (G. Giacomini, personal communication, February 25, 2015). The county needed a more permanent way to assure that West Marin would not be subdivided.

In 1972, a voter initiative established the California Coastal Commission, an agency that would work in conjunction with local governments (via Local Coastal Programs) in the Coastal Zone to decide land use classifications, and development policies.⁸⁹ In 1976, the

⁸⁸ Laura Watt (2017) recounts the origin of the idea of A-60 zoning as being with George Hartzog, who asked the Board of Supervisors in 1966 “to re-zone all of West Marin as agricultural lands, thus avoiding the problems of both subdivision and escalating property taxes.” In 1965, California had passed the Agricultural Land Conservation Act, or Williamson Act, under which land can be taxed at a rate that reflects agricultural value rather than market—or development—value if the landowner agrees to a 10-year restriction on development.

⁸⁹ The Coastal Zone can extend up to several miles from the coastal line in rural areas. In Marin, the Coastal Zone encompasses about 82,168 acres, about 33,913 of which managed by the National Park Service (Community Development Agency 2012).

legislature enacted the California Coastal Act. The Local Coastal Plan in West Marin “modestly strengthened A-60 zoning; it required clustering of any residential development that might occur and set up standards testing all other proposed uses for their effect on agriculture. But it left the basic density intact” (Hart 1991, 92). So even with A-60 zoning and the Coastal Act, it was uncertain how secure the future of the ranchlands was. “So the only way to protect it forever was to buy all the development rights on these ranches” (G. Giacomini, personal communication, February 25, 2015).

The solution came in the form of an agricultural land trust. In 1980, West Marin rancher Ellen Straus and biologist/activist Phyllis Faber formed Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), the first agricultural land trust in the nation, with the support of a coalition of other ranchers and environmentalists (Hart 1991). Phyllis Faber remembers that “[a]t that time For Sale signs were appearing on several ranches along the edge of Tomales Bay from Point Reyes Station to Marshall, the result of commercial land investors that were acquiring ranches that had views across the bay of the newly formed Point Reyes Seashore. They had grand dreams of motels or hotels” (Bounty 2016). The goal of MALT was to “secure the future for farmers who wanted to stay on their land” by protecting the land from subdivision. Ranchers voluntarily sell an easement to MALT, which restricts development rights and, at the same time, the money from the sale provides ranchers with the capital to invest in their operation and continue ranching.

Strong institutional support for agriculture

Once the land was protected (both by state regulations and voluntary easements), the challenge was to protect and stimulate agriculture itself. After the county implemented A-60 zoning, “[r]anchers had to stay in agriculture. [They had] no other alternative” (G. Giacomini, personal communication, February 25, 2015). With the threat of development off the table, ranchers found they had a new problem: how could they keep their operations viable in the face of competition from large scale farms and ranches (in the Central Valley), water shortages, and contamination scares—and without the option of selling to a developer and getting out of the difficult business of agriculture? This section describes the extensive initial support the county provided to the ranchers in order to keep their operations viable.

Before the 1973 countywide plan was voted on, the Marin Board of Supervisors commissioned two studies to assess whether the partnership between the ranchers and conservationists presented a viable future for the county. *Can the Last Place Last?* (1971) and *The Viability of Agriculture in Marin* (1973) both “demonstrated that several things—proximity to San Francisco markets, Williamson Act protections, and strong community support—could offset high land and production costs to sustain a ranching economy in the coastal pastures” (Fairfax et al. 2012, 97). But the county also recognized that protecting the land put ranchers in a difficult position. After voting in A-60 zoning, the county took on the role of supporting agriculture and, over time, became a devoted partner to ranchers.

The first challenge came in 1973, when the California State Water Resources Control Board decided the time had come to control pollution from dairies. Runoff from the

dairies was going into West Marin creeks and eventually into Tomales Bay. Apart from the wildlife the bay supported, two oyster farms also operated in the bay; every winter, water pollution impeded the harvest for several months. The state water board wanted farmers to build drainage systems and ponds to collect the runoff during the rainy season, store it, and then use it to spray on fields in dry periods, when it would function as fertilizer. But the timetable and the cost of the proposed requirements would put many dairies out of business (Hart 1991). The county supported the ranchers by helping to hire an engineer to determine what systems were needed to meet the requirements and what their cost would be. The county also made grants to the ranchers to help pay for up to 25 percent of the cost of the systems—“a move that saved many dairies” (Grossi 2015).

The county continued to come to the aid of the ranches to keep their operations afloat in subsequent challenges as well. During the drought in the mid-1970s, the Board of Supervisors voted to transport water in hauling trucks from Mendocino County to the ranches for two years (G. Giacomini, personal communication, February 25, 2015). The next obstacle ranchers faced were decreasing milk prices: “...when milk prices did not keep up with rapidly increasing costs, the coalition testified at milk price hearings in Sacramento to support a price increase, even though it would impact every consumer in the County—an unprecedented show of support” (Grossi 2015). By supporting the ranchers to such an extent, according to Gary Giacomini, “over time, we [the county officials/BOS] developed a cohesive relationship with the ranchers...” (personal communication, February 25, 2015). The next section describes how county support evolved over time and shaped both the evolution of agriculture as well as the evolution of West Marin communities.

Keeping it viable: Diversification with the help of the county and UCCE

Support from the county immediately after land protection helped the ranches through rocky times, but the next step was keeping them viable financially in the long term. Ranches were holding on, some doing better than others, depending on their amount of pasture, water, and herd size, among other things (E. Rilla, personal communication January 25, 2017). But as the commitment to ranching sunk in, and ranchers faced fluctuating milk and beef prices and competition from industrial-scale ranches, they also faced a host of environmental challenges. In 1988, University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) hired Ellie Rilla as Marin (and Sonoma) County advisor and director. Rilla’s early work focused on helping ranchers with water quality concerns stemming from non-point source pollution in Tomales Bay, with pesticide-free methods for weed control, and with how to keep coyotes from damaging their herds. She worked with ranchers to help them access the information they needed to keep their operations going. When Monsanto tried to push Bovine Growth Hormone (BST) on West Marin ranchers, she convened a workshop with a panel of experts so that ranchers could make an informed decision. Ranchers not only decided that they didn’t need BST, but also realized that their rejection of it could be a marketing tool, and they created BST-free county labels to sell their milk.

The early 1990s was a time of transition. “Marin’s agricultural identity was largely seen as a thing of the past. Few eastern Marin residents even knew their county produced meat, milk and produce—let alone where to get it” (Charles 2015). Though a few organic

growers in West Marin had made a name for themselves, local food was not yet in such demand. Land prices were rising, stricter water quality regulations were pressuring ranchers, and they continued to struggle with fluctuating milk and beef prices on the commodity market and the disadvantages of being a small family farm competing with industrial scale ranches. West Marin ranches have a geographic advantage of prime natural pasture, but they were losing that competitive advantage by selling in the conventional commodity markets. Local beef operations were selling their beef at auction in the Midwest at the going price; dairies were selling milk to the same creameries as other milk producers, on the commodity milk market. But in fact, their operations were quite different. Ranchers needed a product that was more profitable than conventional milk or beef and they also needed to entice younger generations to stay on the ranch. It was in this environment that ranchers in West Marin began to transition their operations to organic and grass-fed.

University of California Cooperative Extension held the first Marin County Agricultural Summit in 1997, intended to create a vision for agriculture in the county and outline ways to realize it. A new agricultural commissioner, Stacey Carlsen, had come on in 1995, and Steve Kinsey took over from Gary Giacomini as supervisor for District 4, which included West Marin. Kinsey “took up the cause of the agricultural community,” (Seidman 2008) and the county and UCCE continued to work together to strengthen agriculture, primarily through diversification strategies. An employee of UCCE told me that the county was “absolutely committed to having a thriving rural economy” and the rural economy “rests on agriculture being viable” (Anonymous 3, personal communication). In addition, “keeping the farming community viable was not only good for the local economy, but an inexpensive way to keep vast tracts of Marin in productive open space, on the tax roll, and contributing to the economy” (Grossi 2015).

Ellie Rilla, in her position at UCCE, became the force behind diversification in West Marin. She used her position as advisor to inform ranchers of the options, rather than to plug diversification, because she wanted them to come to the decision to change their operation on their own. “Diversification was obvious to me from the very beginning, but this was a conservative community, and it has to ultimately be their idea” (E. Rilla, personal communication, January 11, 2017). Diversification—the emergence of alternative producers, processors, and farmers—was a contentious and complex process. What happened on the ground, as Fairfax et al. describe it, was “less serene than its pastoral setting might imply” (Fairfax et al. 2012).

In 1998, Rilla began holding diversification workshops, with the idea of bringing the three (broadly defined) types of producers into conversation with each other: the traditional rancher, the new farmer/rancher, and the super wealthy. Rilla estimates she held nearly 100 diversification workshops, and over the years, they led to new relationships and new ways to make diversification work. For example, those who needed land hooked up with ranchers who had land to lease, and people learned about what worked and what didn’t work for their neighbors. Rilla remembers being struck by how many ranchers attended these workshops with their daughters; by then, many children had returned from college, and succession was coming onto the radar. Diversification took several forms, including organic milk, grass-fed beef, cheese, organic vegetables, and agritourism (E. Rilla, personal conversation, January 11, 2017).

Organics and grass-fed

The proximity of the Bay Area is a big reason why organic producers make it. People will pay the prices. \$10 to \$12 for a dozen pasture-raised eggs. There's a market for it (B. Groverman, personal communication, April 27, 2016).

Organic milk production and grass-fed beef would bring more money per cow and would also allow ranches to reduce herd sizes, which was sometimes necessary to meet clean water requirements. For many of the ranches that had been around for generations, the transition to organic and grass-fed products was relatively easy, enabled, in part, by the preexisting quality of the land. Their operations were already pasture-based, and many had not used pesticides on their pastures (at least for several years); so while they had run conventional operations, the conversion “didn’t mean drastic changes in operations, in what happened on the ranch, but rather mostly in branding and in where the product goes after it leaves the ranch,” according to a UCCE employee I spoke with (Anonymous 3, personal communication, March 10, 2016). In some cases it simply leveraged what ranchers were already doing (Anonymous 15, personal communication, July 13, 2016).⁹⁰

The first dairy operation to “go organic” was the Straus Family Farm. Albert Straus, son of rancher and MALT founder Ellen Straus and her husband Bill, left the family ranch to study Dairy Science at San Luis Obispo. When Straus returned in 1977 “the co-ops and the regional processors were selling milk at a price that didn’t cover the cost of production. Feed and all these other costs kept going up and up year after year, and the price of milk essentially stayed stagnant for decades” (Collins 2016). Straus came back with innovative ideas for how to keep the farm going. The family had already stopped using herbicides on the fields in the mid-1970s. Albert Straus implemented new practices throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s: a no-till method of planting that prevented soil erosion and reduced fuel consumption, no chemical fertilizers, inventive sources for cow feed (to utilize food waste), and a manure wastewater pond system.

These innovations, however, “didn’t improve the market position for the Strauses’ milk – if anything, they raised their production costs,” so Straus decided that “if he wanted to continue farming, and to treat his land and animals the way he wanted them treated, a radical step was necessary: he announced he was converting the dairy farm to 100 percent organic production” (Collins 2016). In 1994 the dairy became certified as the first organic dairy west of the Mississippi River. Albert Straus founded the Straus Family Creamery and began bottling organic milk, which could then be sold on an alternative market.

As UC Cooperative Extension was working with ranchers on diversification strategies, organic farming was growing. By 2001, the annual crop report noted that there had been “a steady move towards organic production” of products including apples, berries,

⁹⁰ For one rancher I interviewed, the main change for his operation was the feed they purchased. Organic regulations also require more days in the pasture, so they reduced their herd—which was feasible because with the price of organic milk significantly higher than conventional, they didn’t have to produce as much in order to stay profitable (Anonymous 15, personal communication, July 16, 2013).

broccoli, carrots, lettuce and other leafy greens, cucumbers, cut flowers, dairy products, herbs, lemons, milk, olives, onions, pasture, potatoes, tomatoes, and more. Local organic producers (mostly growers at the time) came together to form the West Marin Growers Group, an informal effort—“a kind of a farmer’s support group”—that eventually became the nonprofit organization Marin Organic. The local community of growers, processors, and consumers inspired agricultural commissioner Stacey Carlsen to develop an organic inspection program, which made possible a Marin Organic Certified Agriculture label; it was one of the first county programs for certified organic agriculture in California (Carlsen 2001).

In the 15 years that Marin Organic was in existence, certified organic farmland increased from less than 1,000 to over 40,000 acres, and all row crop farmers in Marin and all but three dairies are certified. Marin Organic attracted attention to Marin agriculture from around the Bay Area, the country, and even internationally. In 2005, Prince Charles visited the farmers market in Point Reyes and toured local farms. “The prince coming to Marin put an international light on farming in Marin County, said Albert Straus. ‘That was a highlight’” (Charles 2015). Perhaps more sensational than anything, the prince’s visit, nevertheless, indicated something about where agriculture was going.

Cheese

Another turning point in the transition of agriculture in West Marin was the reintroduction of cheesemaking to the local economy. Soon after Albert Straus converted his family dairy to an organic operation, future founders of Cowgirl Creamery Peggy Smith and Sue Conley left jobs in the foodie world of Berkeley and moved to Point Reyes. In a video produced by UCCE, the Cowgirls recall how they got started: “One of the things that really inspired us to make cheese was Ellen Straus. She said that unless we have a marketing component to our agricultural community we cannot survive. So I thought, well, we could do this store here, and we could make cheese, and we could get people who come to Point Reyes—because we have 2 million visitors a year who come to the national park. If they could see that cheese is being made, that cows are on the hill, that would really get that marketing program started” (Bounty 2016). So Smith and Conley did just that—first they opened Tomales Bay Foods, a store in Point Reyes Station that sold high-end foods produced in West Marin. After learning about cheesemaking in Europe, they came back in 1997 ready to begin Cowgirl Creamery, using Straus organic milk.

Marin County, for all its support of agriculture, was suspicious of food processing, and it was hard for Cowgirl Creamery to get the permits to start their business in Point Reyes Station. Competing food vendors and people concerned about increasing visitors to the small town also opposed the plans for a creamery (Fairfax et al. 2012). But once the creamery overcame those obstacles, they became the best-known cheese producer in West Marin; in addition, Cowgirl Creamery played a key role in helping others get started in cheesemaking. UCCE and Cowgirl Creamery teamed up to give workshops on cheesemaking to dairy ranchers who were interested in trying it as a diversification strategy. The transition to cheesemaking was part of a well-designed plan to help ranches stay profitable. Because of the history of cheesemaking in Marin, as well as the obvious choice as a value-added product for milk dairies, cheesemaking became a key

diversification strategy, according to UCCE director David Lewis (personal communication, May 11, 2016).

Aquaculture

Like the dairy ranches, aquaculture has been an important part of West Marin's agricultural economy since the late 1800s, when oysters were first planted in Tomales Bay. And as the rich grasses on the rolling coastal hills do for livestock, the 15-mile-long bay—the major geographic feature that separates Point Reyes from the mainland (and the course of the San Andreas Fault)—provides a prime habitat for oysters. The bay is protected from the force of the Pacific Ocean, while at the same time benefitting from access to the “cold, clean, nutrient rich salt water” (Carlsen 2011).

Aquaculture and livestock production are not easy neighbors, and maintaining water quality in Tomales Bay, surrounded by ranches, has been a challenge for the dairies. It has spurred change in some ranching operations, which were motivated to reduce their herd and look for diversification options in part because of water quality regulations.

Agritourism

In Marin, you can watch cheese being made, taste and purchase wonderful artisan and farmstead cheeses, harvest apples, and pet sheep on MALT preserved ranches (Rilla 2012).

In addition to producing a value-added product like cheese or grass-fed beef, ranches began to realize that their operations themselves were an attraction. With the nearby market for interest in locally produced food, many farms and ranches in West Marin began to see agritourism as “a potentially profitable diversification strategy” (Rilla 2012). As they did with organics, grass-fed beef, and cheese, Marin County and UCCE worked with farms and ranches to help them develop and market agricultural tourism operations.⁹¹

Farm visits began as a source of revenue for ranches, as well as a way to educate people about where their food comes from and how it is grown. The coordinator of farm tours and casual lunches at one grass-fed beef ranch told me that the ranch started the tours with the idea of connecting with customers and educating them about the ranch and its practices, like rotational grazing. Most people who attended were from the Bay Area rather than out-of-town; many were customers from the farmers' markets where the ranch sold their products who wanted to learn more about where the meat came from (E. Wigg, personal communication, February 10, 2016).

As of 2012, four oyster producers offered on-site purchase and picnicking, and nine dairies, seven fruit and vegetable producers, and five livestock operations in West Marin offered tours. Over time, some ranches began more high-end agritourism operations, with dinners and events in which chefs create pricey meals and visitors come for elaborate

⁹¹ UCCE defines agritourism as “any income-generating activity conducted on a working farm or ranch for the enjoyment and education of visitors” including “the interpretation of the natural, cultural, historical, and environmental assets of the land and the people working on it” (George and Rilla 2008).

tastings of food that is produced on the ranch. More than just educating people about where their food comes from, this type of agritourism has become more “culinary education,” as someone I spoke with at the Marin Convention and Visitors Bureau described it (G. Marr-Hiemstra, personal communication, May 23, 2016). Once such operation, Point Reyes Farmstead’s The Fork, opened in 2012. The dairy ranch-turned-organic cheesemaker converted one of their barns into a culinary center, offering “farm tours, culinary classes and focused tastings and with a state-of-the-art kitchen, indoor dining room and scenic outdoor patio.” Guests—private parties or corporate events—can request “a hands-on cooking class, a demo-style cooking class, farm tours and tastings,” all customized to fit their needs (Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company website). Many ranches offer their converted barns and coveted vistas for private events—farm-to-table dinners, weddings, and corporate events.

As ranchers began to realize that diversification had created a market for products, rather than for commodities, and that people were coming to West Marin for these products, ranches began to restructure their operations to do on-ranch sales and ranch tours, as another way to bring in extra income. Several vocal townspeople opposed the new direction (E. Rilla, personal communication, January 11, 2017). Ellie Rilla, the UCCE director, became an expert in agritourism, and worked with ranches to make their operations both educational and to bring in extra income. “It was obvious that people were coming to town to buy foodie products—why shouldn’t ranchers be able to take advantage of that clientele to improve their business?” asks Rilla rhetorically.

Evolution

Early diversification efforts opened the door to more multi-generational ranching families and newcomers who tried new ways of producing and marketing agricultural products. “There’s a sort of snowball effect,” Ellie Rilla noted: “Confidence, enthusiasm and willingness to take new risks in new markets comes when you see other Marin producers trying and succeeding” (Prado 2012). Many ranchers became motivated to try new things by watching other ranchers in their community.

In many cases, a new generation left the ranch to study and came back wanting to do something different. “Initially motivated by their own personal values and a desire to stay on the land or to farm their own piece of ground off the conventional grid, growers came back to the region, or came back to family land, or worked with and against their parents to push family operations in new and sustainable directions” (Fairfax et al. 2012, 102). Concerns shifted over time: Ranchers became more interested in keeping the next generation around, and in riding the ups and downs inherent in ranching. Ranch diversification responded to a need to find financial stability for ranches and was a way to get through hard times—droughts or rising costs of fuel and feed. A good strawberry crop, for example, can offset low grass yield one year.

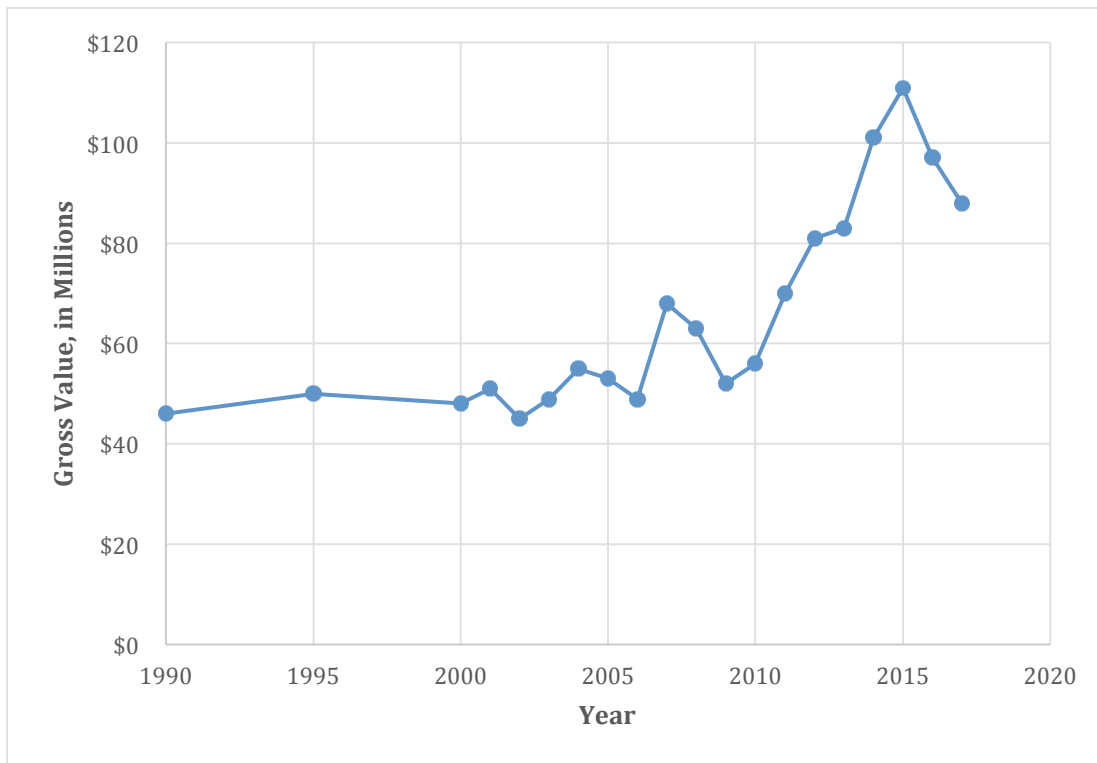
The transition to organic production, value-added products, grass-fed beef, and agritourism were all part of a keeping agriculture viable in West Marin. They came about not so much out of a desire to change, but from a lack of alternatives. The main concern was keeping ranchers on the land and making their operations viable. “The alternative was inaction, but letting dairying die wasn’t an option,” said a UCCE employee.

Multigenerational family ranches have stayed in business and newcomers have joined them. But diversification has not come without consequences, probably unforeseen, but from our vantage point today, “[w]e have the benefit of hindsight with which to judge the consequences” (Anonymous 3, personal communication).

“Agricultural renaissance”: what does agriculture have to do with gentrification?

West Marin ranchers and farmers found a ready and proximate market in the Bay Area for organic arugula, goat cheese, grass-fed beef, pasture-raised chickens, and other artisan-produced food. The appeal of locally produced food was increasing and the alternative food movement—in the Bay Area and nationwide—was expanding. “A renewed interest in food, its origins and methods of production, the explosion in farmers’ markets, organic production, sustainability, and nutrition have come together as a perfect storm to launch local agriculture on a path to prosperity” (Grossi 2015).

Figure 2: Agricultural Production in Marin County: 1990-2017



As a result, the value of agricultural production in Marin began to steadily rise, primarily due to increased acreage, value of crops, and organic production (Kimmey 2014).⁹² Growth started to tick upwards in the 1990s, from about \$41,000,000 to a high of about

⁹² Nationwide too: Despite the decrease in overall acreage, the value of crops and livestock has increased over the past five years, according to the 2014 agricultural census. The market values of crops, livestock, and total agricultural products were all at record highs in 2012, 33 percent higher than in 2007 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012).

\$55,000,000 in 1997. Production value decreased back to about \$48,000,000 in 2000, and then began to climb again throughout the 2000s (with some fluctuations). By 2011, the total value of agricultural production was at a record high of \$70,000,000, an increase of 24.7 percent from 2010, and since then has continued to set new highs each year. In 2015, gross value was about \$111,000,000, 10 percent higher than in 2014 (Carlsen 2015).⁹³

Organic production accounts for over half of the value of agricultural production in Marin County. Registered organic producers totaled 65 in 2016 (the most recent year reporting is available). Over 46,000 acres were in organic production, the vast majority of which were pasture (less than 400 acres in farmland). Organic ranchers and farmers produced a total gross value of approximately \$66,123,269 (Carlsen 2016). In 1997, there was no organic pastureland, and just 312 acres of organic row crops. Just since 2010, the total acreage has increased by 26,712 acres, and the total value by \$48,334,520. The number of producers, however, has fluctuated, but decreased in general since 2010. In 2002, there were only two local cheesemakers and no organic and grass-fed beef producers. Today there are nine cheesemakers and 20 organic/grass-beef beef livestock operations (UCCE annual report 2012). And revealing the popularity of farmers markets as a distribution center, between 2002 and 2012, the amount of locally produced products sold directly to consumers annually doubled from \$600,000 to \$1.2 million (*Ibid.*). Livestock and livestock products still comprise the bulk of production and gross value in Marin County.

What began as a way to diversify ranching operations in order to stay in business morphed into a local economy of elite food. Premium cheese, olive oil, grass fed beef, organic milk, and organic crops are all in high demand by near-by foodies in the Bay Area who want the best quality and often “food-brands”—both in their refrigerators and on their restaurant tables. Hog Island Oysters, Cowgirl Creamery cheeses, Marin Sun meats, Star Route Farm greens, to name a few, are all familiar names for Bay Area foodies. Not only individual consumers but restaurants as well seek food sourced from now well-known West Marin farms and ranches. “None of us would have predicted in 1980 that new markets for organic, grass-fed, and artisan would play such a huge role in Marin” (Grossi 2015).

But while on the face of it, the local, organic agricultural movement in West Marin appears to be an idyllic story of family farms that have found a way to stay on the land or newcomers devoted to bringing good food to urban folk, the process is more complex than it appears. By transforming itself to stay viable, agriculture has created an elite culture of food that contributes to the gentrification of West Marin, as it draws an elite customer base. High-end food products play the role in Marin that wine does in Napa and Sonoma counties: “Premium wine fits into a wide pattern of consumer culture in the Bay Area, and local consumption has been pivotal to the winemaker’s success” (Walker 2007, 187). Whereas wine used to stand alone as a status symbol for the elite, cheese and other West Marin-sourced goods, while not reaching the prices nor the cachet of wine, are gaining ground. This is clear both in the “city”—the restaurants and farmers markets of

⁹³ The Marin County Crop Report represents gross returns to the producer. It does not show net profit.

San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley—as well as at the Point Reyes Station farmers market and West Marin restaurants that tourists flock to.

What does gentrification have to do with agriculture?: how gentrification is reshaping agriculture

Paradoxically, while Marin has experienced an “agricultural renaissance,” agriculture is losing ground in many ways. While profits are high and a certain cohort of young people is keenly interested in food production, by other standards, agriculture is suffering. Farmers and ranchers are getting older, acreage in agriculture is decreasing, and there is little diversity of landholders and products—the long-time ranching families or moneyed new owners predominate and the products are increasingly exclusive. Newcomers looking to diversify agricultural production have a hard time breaking in. Some members of the community are concerned that the future of agriculture is uncertain.

Not all of the difficulties agriculture faces can be attributed to gentrification in West Marin. The increasing age of farmers and the decline in the acreage of farmland and numbers of farms are national trends, and high land prices in many places make agriculture difficult. In this section I explore the intersection of gentrification—rising land and housing prices and a community increasingly dominated by second-home owners—with other characteristics of the agriculture in West Marin and how they come together to affect the future of agriculture.

Ranch ownership turnover

Ranch ownership turnover is a moment that can accelerate gentrification in a rural area: new owners contribute to a change in the socio-economics and community composition of the area; they may change land use; housing for workers and their families may be lost. In Marin, however, ownership change of ranches is infrequent. When ranches do change hands, state and county regulations about keeping land in agriculture have kept new owners from turning properties into trophy ranches or estate properties, as they have done in many other rural areas.

Turnover of agricultural lands in Marin is minimal (S. Tavares-Buhler, personal communication, March 31, 2016), because most ranches are passed down through families. Marin is unusual, says David Lewis, UCCE director, because “[w]e are into the fourth and fifth generation of ranchers.”⁹⁴ Ranch succession became a key focus of diversification in the 1990s and 2000s, and ranchers tried to figure out how to keep the ranch in the family and make it a viable enterprise for their children. But what does happen in West Marin when ranches are sold? MALT properties provide a glimpse into what ownership change looks like in Marin County.⁹⁵ MALT has easements on roughly half of the privately owned agricultural land in Marin County—78 properties in all. Only 11 MALT properties have changed hands since the land trust has been in existence (over

⁹⁴ The 2012 Census found that the majority of operations in Marin are third- to fifth-generation family-owned.

⁹⁵ MALT properties may skew towards longtime families that don’t change hands, because they may be more likely to put an easement on their ranch. But nevertheless, MALT ranches comprise a large portion of the land, so in that way are important in understanding ownership turnover.

35 years). Most of those have gone to the next generation of the same family or to other local long-time ranching families. Of the 78 properties that have MALT easements, only 10 owners are not from multi-generational ranching families (among those are the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in San Geronimo Valley and George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch Corporation). (See map, page vi.)

The properties that are not selling to local ranching families, according to real estate agents, are going to buyers who have made money elsewhere (often in Silicon Valley), and who have chosen the lifestyle of ranching. The price of land, the proximity to San Francisco and Silicon Valley, and the desirability of the area mean that most buyers of ranches in West Marin (if not long-time ranching families) are people who made their money in another profession. As the appeal of West Marin grows, along with the price of land, the protected open space and the increasing cachet of the agricultural sector and foodie economy draws a more upscale cadre of visitors and people interested in (and fueling the market for) high-end properties. Some buyers in the market for ranch properties are looking for their second, third, and fourth properties (B. Groverman, personal communication April 26, 2016).

Estate properties

In the early 2000s, as the fear of subdivision of agricultural lands eased, that of “‘mega-ranchettes’: recreational farms not of sixty acres but of four hundred or five or even six hundred acres” took hold (Hart 1991). “Such vast rural estates might not clutter the landscape as the small ones do, but they would weaken agriculture in some of the same ways” (*Ibid.* 120). While A-60 zoning and MALT easements kept development at bay, and the Coastal Act required that the land be used for agriculture, “[a]spirng country squires and dot.com millionaires were not daunted by the sixty-acre minimum” (Fairfax et al. 2012, 100). The possibility existed for trophy homes—mansions on large expanses of open space, with no agricultural use—to sprout up among the working ranches.

In 2003, Marin County commissioned a report on the impact of large estates on agricultural viability. While it found that the county had been successful in “removing much of the speculative value increases” and possibility of residential subdivisions through “consistent application of large lot sizes and agricultural use zoning,” it also found that “[w]hat was not anticipated 30 years ago was that some landowners or buyers would use large agriculturally zoned parcels essentially for estate development. High-value residential development keeps the large acreage intact, but it undermines the economics and the ‘will’ to maintain agricultural use” (Strong Associates 2003).

In the early 2000s, several proposals had West Marin residents concerned about agricultural land being converted to recreation sites for the wealthy. Marin County Planning Commission member Wade Holland described, “a number of high-profile attempts beginning about 15 years ago [2000] by mega wealthy folks to acquire ag-zoned parcels in the Coastal Zone and develop them for principally residential use” (personal communication, February 24, 2015). In one case, “The Pritzker family, who owns the Hyatt Hotel chain, won approval for a development including three houses of 8000, 4000 and 3500 square feet—each with two kitchens (perhaps to be turned into duplexes at a later date?), a worker’s unit of 800 square feet, a pool house, barns, maintenance buildings, and multiple accessory structures” (Belsky 2003). Beyond the immediate

concern about size, another was that the property would be forever removed from agriculture.

As trophy homes and open space for open space's-sake came into vogue, land protection began to aim to protect agriculture more specifically; regulations evolved along with the new socio-economic context. Both the Coastal Commission and the Marin Planning Commission have strict standards (though also subject to commission composition) in requiring land to be used for agriculture (W. Holland, personal communication, July 15, 2016). "The word got out," Holland wrote me in an email, "among that sort of money (Silicon Valley wealth, in particular) that it was a waste of time and money to pursue such ventures in Marin County because the County simply was not going to allow coastal ag parcels to be repurposed for essentially residential use" (W. Holland, personal communication, July 15, 2016). There were also attempts "in the old days," to get a faux agricultural operation passed, but the planning commission is so strict on the definition of agriculture that people no longer try: "two llamas and a goat do not an agricultural operation make" (W. Holland, personal communication April 28, 2016). Not a single proposal to develop agriculturally zoned parcels for residential use was successful. "We actually haven't seen for quite a few years now any attempts at all to build large homes on ag parcels in the Coastal Zone, so I don't think we regard such development as much of a threat any longer." People stopped trying, Holland wrote, "because the County was so diligent in fighting the early attempts to exploit the landscape for such projects" (personal communication, July 15, 2016.)

Estate buyers typically look for privacy, views, and proximity to San Francisco, all of which West Marin potentially offers (B. Groverman, personal communication, April 27, 2016). These buyers have not disappeared from the market for ranches in West Marin, according to the real estate appraisers and agents I spoke with, but most have realized that their dream home and/or lifestyle will not be permitted in West Marin. "I can count estate-type owners on one hand, with maybe a couple fingers on the other" (D. Lewis, personal communication, May 11, 2016). Marin's zoning regulations discourage estate buyers from considering land in Marin County, and pushes them to Sonoma or Napa counties, where regulations are not so strict (B. Groverman, personal communication, April 27, 2016). "It's much harder to get things approved in Marin. The county feels they own the land even if someone holds the title, and they don't want it developed" (*Ibid.*).

Buyers of large properties in Marin, who are not themselves involved in agriculture, usually end up leasing their land back to a rancher whose animals will graze the land, thus keeping it in agricultural use according to county regulations. But Marin also attracts wealthy buyers who want to start some kind of agricultural operation, but aren't looking to do traditional dairying or cattle grazing. One appraiser told me that wealthy buyers who are interested in high-end agriculture are "creeping into Marin County"—people are raising sheep or goats, making high-end organic cheese, or growing organic row crops.

The regulations about agricultural use moderate the popularity of Marin for "buyers of hillside homesites," as one agent described estate buyers. Napa and Sonoma counties, for example, are another market altogether from that of West Marin. Sonoma and Napa have far more estate buyers, as well as fewer regulations regarding agricultural use—and higher land prices. In West Marin, real estate agents began to notice an increase in agricultural land prices in the 1990s, as the area became more desirable, but especially

since the early 2000s (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 10, 2016). One agent tied it to the entrance of money from Silicon Valley (B. Groverman, personal communication, April 27, 2016). But Napa and Sonoma county vineyard land sells for far higher than ranchland in Marin—about \$100,000 per acre, according to the agents I spoke with.⁹⁶

The greater prevalence of estate buyers in Napa likely has to do with the crops as well. The appeal of wine growing is limited in Marin because the shortage of water makes growing grapes difficult. And meat and cheese don't have the cultural cachet that wine does. The cultures of vintnering and ranching are different and attract different types of buyers: the hard work of ranching only appeals to the most dedicated, as one appraiser said (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 10, 2016).

Ranching with money

So rather than “ranching for money,” says a Cooperative Extension staff person, there is a shift to “ranching *with* money” (Anonymous 3, personal communication, March 10, 2016). Many people I talked to confirmed this change. What it means, however, for ranching and for the community, is not straightforward. One newer buyer I spoke with bought a ranch in the early 2000s from one of the Swiss-Italian “founding” families of the area, initially planning to lease the land back to the previous owners. She and her husband had owned a weekend home along Tomales Bay since 1993. They had a community of friends among the other weekenders and full time residents and over time had become friends with prominent families in the ranching community. When they acquired a “nest egg” from some successful biotech business enterprises, they began to look at land to build a house and eventually retire to. But, as she told me, her “love affair with the ranch as a beautiful spot quickly turned into wanting to be active ranchers.” She began a new life as a rancher and cheesemaker, committed to the agricultural community. After retiring from cheesemaking in 2017, she joined the MALT Board of Directors (Anonymous 7, personal communication, October 13, 2016).

This same newer buyer pointed out that there is “quite a good record in this community of what you could call gentrification becoming conversion”—that is, new owners without the intention of getting involved in ranching, who end up becoming committed ranchers. She says is proud of and committed to being a rancher in West Marin, rather than “just some patrician person who just owns some land” (Anonymous 7, personal communication, October 13, 2016). She described another wealthy couple who “built a beautiful home in place of an old dilapidated house,” but who were “committed to agriculture and to maintaining the land in agriculture.” Nan McEvoy, of the olive oil-producing McEvoy Ranch, for example, also bought her land as a country estate, a retreat for her grandchildren, with no intention of getting involved in agriculture; but she now has an active, diversified ranch and employs many people in agriculture.⁹⁷ Two interviewees told me about a ranch in Nicasio, bought with biotech money, whose owners

⁹⁶ One agent told me that while hobby vineyard owners in Napa may complain that “we’re barely making it,” they’re driving \$150,000 cars and bought land for \$100,000/acre, “they’re not really scraping by” (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 10, 2016).

⁹⁷ McEvoy Ranch is not technically in West Marin; it is just over the county line in Petaluma.

initially intended to remove grazing and return the land to its “natural state.”⁹⁸ But after a few years there, they became devotees of grazing for land health and now let a local rancher use their land for grazing; one person described them as “pillars of the agricultural community” (*Ibid.*). Conversion, as the above rancher put it, nevertheless entails an upgrading of the ranch operation to value-added, and further entrance to the elite economy of local food products.

Barriers to entry

Despite continuity of ownership and agricultural production West Marin agriculture faces obstacles. One interviewee, after describing to me that non-ag buyers are no longer a problem in West Marin, concluded that “The bigger threat today is the long-term economic viability of agriculture” (W. Holland, personal communication, July 15, 2016). Even after the efforts at diversification and the “agricultural renaissance,” ranchers and farmers today still face the problem of viability; the agricultural community faces the problem of economy of scale; and the community as a whole faces the problem of lack of housing, services, and support for a diverse, vibrant community.

The success of diversification among multigenerational ranchers is partly reflected in the family continuity of West Marin ranches. But many people feel that agriculture in West Marin, still primarily dairy and beef ranching, is not diverse enough. Do we really want 80 percent of West Marin to be beef and dairy ranches?, one person asked me rhetorically.⁹⁹ He and others, particularly those who are finding innovative ways to do other types of agriculture, believe that West Marin needs a more diversified food system.

Why is diversification important? For one, says Arron Wilder, founder of Table Top Farms in Point Reyes Station, it is a primary way for smaller farmers to minimize risk. Diversification increases the resilience of a farm by reducing dependence on a sole product. In West Marin, it’s also a “way in” for new farmers: when established ranches diversify by leasing land to small farmers for other crops, or pasture-raised eggs, for example, it provides an opportunity to access land they would be unlikely to otherwise.

There are few other ways for new ranchers or farmers to get a start (unless, like I discuss above, they have plenty of money). Ranches, when they do turn over, are not selling to a young generation of new farmers interested in continuing the diversification of agriculture in West Marin, in large part because land and housing costs are prohibitive. Those new agriculturalists exist, but they are either establishing new operations on their family ranch, or they are scraping together small pieces of leased or loaned land to eek out a living.

Arron Wilder has been unusually lucky in gleaning small pieces of land for his farm, and has established a successful business through leasing several plots. He grew up in the urban Bay Area, but after working on a farm in Wisconsin in college, switched career paths from doctor to soil scientist. He first lived in West Marin in 2002 and made connections with people in the community. When he decided to come back a few years

⁹⁸ Both interviewees preferred that the ranch owners remain anonymous.

⁹⁹ In 2016, livestock and livestock products—milk and wool—comprised 77 percent of all earnings in Marin County agriculture (Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures 2016).

later, he had a series of serendipitous offers for housing and land. He continued working full time as a soil scientist, commuting nearly an hour each way, and working on the farm mornings and evenings. Gradually, more people offered use of their land: a neighbor with a lot of land just wanted to see it used, and was happy to have Wilder farm it, free of charge. Another landowner was enthused about having access to fresh vegetables and offered his land, also free. Another landowner found that his costs for mowing and upkeep of his land would be so high that he offered it to Wilder for a nominal amount. So after about three years, Wilder was able to eek out enough of a living from the farm to quit his job. By 2017, he was farming 11 acres spread over several different plots.

Arron Wilder has been successful in overcoming a huge barrier for the younger generation of would-be farmers in West Marin—lack of access to land. Several people expressed to me in various ways: “In Marin, you have to be born into it [ranching or farming] or have money to buy land” (Anonymous 3, personal communication, March 10, 2016). The high price of land and the scarce availability make it harder to get into the business than ever before, and aspiring farmers are struggling more than in past decades.

Land is hard to come by for several reasons: environmental conditions dispose the land to grazing rather than row cropping. Water is generally scarce, and the rolling hills that are ideal for grazing don’t provide many bottomlands for farming. Even though row cropping doesn’t need a lot of acreage, available land tends to be large ranch parcels for grazing rather than small plots for vegetable growing (D. Lewis, personal communication, December 4, 2015). There are about nine organically certified farms in—or near—West Marin (two of the biggest are just over the county line in Sonoma County). The others, except two, are in Bolinas, where the alluvial plain of the Olema Valley provides fertile lowlands for row cropping and grazing is less common. Because land of their own is hard to come by, most row croppers, like Wilder, lease small parcels from ranchers or other landowners. In many cases, there is benefit for both—for example, of income, or maintenance of unused land.

Cognizant of the mutual benefit to landowners and farmers, Arron Wilder organized a meeting called “Diversification of Agriculture in West Marin, Present and Future.” He wanted to encourage communication between the established agricultural community and newer farmers, and he also wanted to help make practical connections: find landowners who would be willing to lease a plot of land to a small farmer who would, along with cultivating vegetables, care for the land and provide a small income for the landowner.

About one-third of the attendees were government agencies like UC Cooperative Extension or non-profits like MALT. Another third were younger people who were interested in farming, and another third were established farmers who had inherited land or bought land and had been farming for some time. Wilder says attendees were inspired by the meeting and wanted to create a physical space where a cohesive group of farmers and ranchers in West Marin could meet. A loose group of farmers are working on creating a Farmer’s Guild in Marin, but few farmers have time to organize it: “Everyone thought it was really cool, let’s do it again. That didn’t happen because we’re all busy farming” (A. Wilder, personal communication, January 31, 2017).

In the meeting, Wilder floated the idea of linking up new farmers with established ranchers and farmers—a “win-win” situation for all, he called it, because for the

landowner, it would provide income and fulfill requirements regarding keeping land in agriculture, and it would simultaneously provide land for farmers who need it. Wilder says that MALT expressed interest in the idea and has encouraged diversifying ranches in this way by getting word out to landowners and writing about it in their online newsletter. But MALT hasn't done what he was hoping, which was to create a designated position that would pair up unused land and resources with those who need them. He understands that isn't MALT's mission and that the organization doesn't want to become an intermediary between landowners and farmers. "If I were to go to MALT's offices and say, can you help me find land, I'm sure they would, but they don't have a system in place that can help me." And they don't want to, he realizes. "We were trying to get them to be more than they are, and they were unwilling to do that" (A. Wilder, personal communication, January 31, 2017).

An advocate for young farmers I spoke with was less understanding: he feels that the established agricultural community should put more effort into helping young farmers and encouraging diversification: "There is a lot of talk about agricultural preservation, preserving a way of life as very important, but we don't talk much about [agricultural] stimulation. Young farmers have no access to the opportunities that agricultural preservation allows" (E. Wigg, personal communication, February 10, 2016).

Another person I spoke with described a cultural clash between young farmers and long-standing ranchers and farmers. She is an advocate for the new generation of farmers, but she described a sense of entitlement on their part, that since older generations benefitted from cheap land, newcomers have a right to the land too—or they should be able to come by land easily. "Landowners don't like that" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

Access to land is foremost, but is not the only obstacle for newcomers to agriculture in West Marin. The Farmer's Guild, an organization formed to support young farmers, conducts an annual survey of young farmers. For several years, respondents said that the number one obstacle to farming in Marin was access to land—until 2016, when access to housing replaced land as the primary impediment. "Housing is one of the main things that's preventing people from getting into farming" (A. Wilder, personal communication). In addition to running Table Top Farm, Arron Wilder teaches a class in organic farming at College of Marin. One of the most important discussions in the class is what to do about housing. He believes that putting a small house or yurt on a plot of land would be an easy solution, but the Coastal Act and county codes prohibit it.

Agricultural viability

The lack of affordable housing is not just a barrier to entry for aspiring farmers, but affects the viability of the agricultural community as a whole, and could potentially change the future of agriculture in West Marin. Agricultural laborers and people who work in businesses that serve the agricultural community—feed suppliers, feed mill workers, milk haulers and testers, equipment suppliers, veterinarians, etc.—have few housing options. Towns like Marshall that used to provide housing for the agricultural community have largely been converted to second homes or vacation rentals. Albert Straus, owner and operator of Straus Family Creamery has been outspoken about the need for housing for workers, and the idea of encouraging businesses to purchase units

and provide them to their workers for no charge. Straus Family Creamery has bought several homes in Tomales for their workers.

The makeup of the community—in large part a result of housing market trends—affects agricultural viability in another way as well. Local organic farms, whose marketing options are limited, depend on a local community of customers. Small farms don't have the distribution capacity or acreage to sell large quantities. Limited plot sizes and limited water means that few farms can produce enough to sell to a distributor—or to make deliveries, for example to San Francisco, viable. But in a community increasingly composed of second-home owners and vacation renters, it's not realistic to sell just to the community. Arron Wilder finds that despite voiced support by residents for local, organic agriculture, developing his business has been a challenge, because most people buy their groceries “over the hill.” Wilder sells vegetables directly to the community via a CSA and two honor-system farmstands, but even though his prices are lower than at the local supermarket and markets over the hill, he estimates that about one percent of West Marin's population shops at the farmstand and one percent participates in his CSA. “People aren't following through on their values,” he says. “That's not a judgment, that's just a fact. American convenience and laziness take over.” Wilder says he has frank conversations about their choices with people all the time. “I don't blame them. I might have had the same limitations on time. But it's still a personal choice.” Without the support of a local community comprised of full-time families making enough money to eat healthy, locally produced food, only a few small farmers will be able to make a go of it in West Marin (A. Wilder, personal communication, January 17, 2017).

Wilder takes steps to create the community that could support him. “One of the things I've really strived to have is a business model that can support one other fulltime employee,” even though it could be more of a seasonal position, because it is good for the local community to have a steady worker. “It might not make as much economic sense, but it's good to have someone with a face and a voice in the community. I want someone to feel dignified in their work and happy and proud about what they do” (*Ibid.*).

High-end agricultural products—local cheese, grass-fed beef, organic milk products—unlike the produce grown locally by small farmers, are not dependent on local consumers to buy their product, but rather depend on both a regional (or national) market as well as local tourists, rather than the local community.

The concerns about viability of the agricultural community and barriers to entry also have to do with the way that agricultural land has been protected. Several people I spoke with described the efforts to preserve agricultural land and operations as not having preserved the agricultural community at large. In different ways, people expressed frustration with the concern for the landscape rather than for the needs of the local community. The county, UC Cooperative Extension, and the agricultural land trust have put a lot of effort into keeping ranching families on their land, but little effort into maintaining the health and viability of the agricultural community at large.

Marin Agricultural Land Trust preserves large parcels of agricultural land. The larger the better—because large parcels are desirable for preventing subdivision, preserving

existing ranches, and protecting the viewscape.¹⁰⁰ Preserving rolling hills with cattle grazing is far more picturesque than preserving a landscape of row cropping, not to mention worker housing or the dirty work of agriculture.¹⁰¹ MALT has been successful in getting the financial support of donors from outside of West Marin, including from East Marin, San Francisco, and beyond.

But the idea that so much money and effort goes into protecting the viewshed, while very little goes into helping the people in the community is troubling for many people. According to one person I spoke with, closely involved in creating affordable housing for community members, someone familiar with MALT told her that people who support MALT often don't live nearby and they "don't give a damn about who's working in town." When they visit, "[t]hey want to see the viewshed, that's why they support MALT" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Another resident told me, partly by way of justifying the differential access to housing for the Latino community, "We have never been a people-saving community. We've been a land-saving community" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, April 13, 2016). The Executive Director of the Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM), Kim Thompson, made a subtle appeal to support CLAM's efforts on housing by alluding to the support MALT receives for land preservation: she called CLAM a complement to MALT, with the same values of acquiring and holding land in the community (Marin County Board of Supervisors 2015).

Several people I spoke with described the efforts at preserving agricultural land and operations as not having preserved the agricultural community that is the foundation of those operations. "We've done a good job of preserving the land, but we've not kept the community intact," said Albert Straus, whose family has run a dairy in Marshall since the early 1940s, and whose mother, Ellen Straus, was one of the founders of MALT. "We're in danger of becoming extinct as communities" (Evans 2016a).

What MALT has done, apart from saving agricultural land, is keep multigenerational families in ranching and help them improve their bottom line. Despite the barriers to entry, for those already in the business, agriculture in West Marin is in a better place today than a decade—or two—ago: conversion to value-added production has improved the financial position of multigenerational family farms. Even for those who have remained conventional, prices of beef and dairy are better than in past decades. Ranching families are better off, partly because of the help of MALT acreage, according to a UCCE employee (Anonymous 3, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

The concern about agriculture in the long-run is that future viability doesn't just depend on individual ranches being economically viable, but on a critical mass, an economy of scale. Housing, as I describe above—for agricultural workers, small farm owners, and for workers in agricultural services and processing—is critical to agriculture's future.

¹⁰⁰ MALT easements, until recently, did not require that land be kept in agriculture, simply that it not be developed.

¹⁰¹ This vision, described to me by interviewees as a landscape preservation or preservation of the viewshed rather than agricultural preservation, is very much in line with the vision of the picturesque landscape, sans humans, sans work, that I describe in other sections of this chapter.

Another erosion of the agricultural sector, Albert Straus points out, is that the local high school, Tomales High, no longer teaches the business, technical, and agricultural skills young people would need to keep the agricultural community going (Straus 2015).

Another significant concern about critical mass centers on the ranches in Point Reyes National Seashore, whose future is uncertain, not because of their economic viability but because of a lawsuit regarding agriculture in the park. Ranches in the park are a vital part of the West Marin agricultural community: “If we lose those ranches we lose 25 percent of our community,” which is 25 percent of business for agricultural services (Anonymous 7, personal communication, October 13, 2016). In some sectors, there is a strong sense that the national seashore wants to do away with agriculture (L. Watt, personal communication, June 21, 2016; B. Groverman, personal communication, April 27, 2016). The president of the West Marin Chamber of Commerce commented to me that “agriculture is a diminishing sector” and that pressures from the seashore (and economies of scale) and water quality issues will likely make agriculture eventually unviable in West Marin (R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016).

In 1950, there were approximately 200 dairies in Marin County. By 1960, there were only about 150; by 1972 there were fewer than 100; and in 1989, they had dropped to just 52 (Hart 1991). And even with the “agricultural renaissance,” the number of dairies in Marin had dropped to 27 by 2012. Agricultural operations in general totaled 323 in 2012, including beef and dairy ranches, vegetable growers, wine grapes, nurseries, etc. The overall number had increased since the 2007 agricultural census (up 27 percent, from 255 in 2007), showing more diversity of operations, but the average size had decreased. In 2012 it was 529 acres, down from 777 acres in 2002 and from 827 acres in 1997 (Rilla and Bush 2003).¹⁰²

Agriculture-related tourism

Agriculture-related tourism has expanded since agritourism began as a way to diversify and maintain farm and ranch operations. Park visitation numbers have not increased beyond the highs of the 1990s, but tourism has increased.¹⁰³ In recent years, in addition to recreation in the national seashore and surrounding state park beaches,¹⁰⁴ agriculture and the local food economy have become a significant attraction for day-trippers and overnighters. Agriculture provides a scenic landscape and a tasty product that caters to a proximate public with interest in food and with cash to spend.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Nationally, the acreage in agriculture is declining (922 million to 915 million acres) and medium-sized farms are decreasing in number, but individual farms are getting larger (from 418 to 434 acres on average) (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015). The average age of farmers is increasing nationwide, as in Marin, where the average farmer is nearly 60 years old (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2012).

¹⁰³ The Marin Convention and Visitors Bureau noticed an uptick beginning in about 2008 and increasing as the economic recession receded. Businesses in West Marin were seeing an influx of guests, and contacted the Visitors Bureau for help in managing marketing and promotions so that they could focus on their guests (G. Marr-Hiemstra, personal communication, May 23, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Beaches in Tomales Bay State Park are very popular picnicking and bathing spots, as well as lanch sites for kayakers on Tomales Bay.

¹⁰⁵ Many people I spoke with downplayed the role that agriculture could have in tourism, especially in comparison to the national seashore. It is difficult to discern exactly the relationship between tourism and

More and more, agricultural operations integrate value-added products into the tourist market. “Ag sees that there are natural partnerships [with tourism],” Rob Eyster of the Marin Economic Forum told me, and they are “100 percent looking at the wine industry as a model because it’s been so successful in Sonoma and Napa counties” (R. Eyster, personal communication, November 10, 2015). Point Reyes Station, with the farmers’ market, Toby’s Feed Barn, Cowgirl Creamery, and several restaurants, functions as a showcase for agricultural products. Many restaurants and delis have also transitioned their offerings and their prices along with “the foodie thing,” as one interviewee put it—“five bucks for a basket of figs, 20 bucks for a roast chicken” (R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016).

The agricultural sector has put West Marin on the foodie circuit. Tourism in West Marin has begun to cater to a brand of tourist who looks for a combination of food and fun—eating and recreating. People are increasingly combining a trip to Point Reyes National Seashore with a visit to some of the food attractions in the area. “It’s the *VIA* model,” says David Lewis, director of UCCE (personal communication, May 11, 2016). *VIA* is the magazine for AAA car insurance that promotes trendy or up-and-coming places for road-trips. The brief, bubbly stories usually include a short hike or nature activity, some type of shopping, and several food attractions.

Other publications—like *Sunset Magazine*, the *New York Times* travel section, and numerous web-based guides that provide tips for discerning eaters—also encourage this style of tourism. The author of an article in the *Times*, titled “My West Coast Martha’s Vineyard,” described her dinner at Sir and Star restaurant in Olema, where all ingredients are farmed, fished, or foraged “within arm’s reach.” She asked rhetorically, “Did we really just skip kayaking under the stars for dinner rolls?” (Levin 2013b).¹⁰⁶ Coverage of West Marin in these publications now gives at least as much space to food as to recreation. Even the trip ideas page for the Point Reyes area on the Marin Convention and Visitors Bureau website is primarily comprised of food-oriented activities.

As the popularity of foodie tourism grows, the options have expanded as well. West Marin Food and Farm Tours, offers “culinary adventures” in the Point Reyes area, taking van-loads of visitors to farms and ranches: “Enjoy exclusive tastings of the best cheese, wine, oysters, grass-fed meats, breads, produce and more. Travel like an insider and discover what makes West Marin so unique—the food, the farms, the people, the scenery, and the fascinating natural and cultural history” (West Marin Food and Farm Tours 2018). A local resident created the Cheese Trail Map, a map of cheese producers in Marin, Sonoma, and Napa that has successfully boosted visitation to cheese makers in Marin (G. Marr-Hiemstra, personal communication, May 23, 2016).

Even the land protection engine MALT taps into the popularity of the farm-to-table idea and the Bay Area foodie scene. MALT offers ranch tours of “celebrated establishments,” “otherwise off-limits to the public,” often culminating in a dinner cooked by well-known Bay Area chefs (Rebmann 2013). According to a website for visitors to California who

agriculture, and while it is clear that on-site visits and tours of ranches alone are not responsible for the increase in tourist traffic, I argue that it is the cachet of local food that draws many young Bay Area urbanites with extra money to spend.

¹⁰⁶ The author also advises readers: “For lodging, the home rental site VRBO.com is the way to go.”

are looking for farm-to-table events, MALT fundraisers are a “coveted experience.” “A day with MALT might mean a burrata cheese-making workshop with SF Milkmaid Louella Hill, an Italian Harvest dinner at Moore Ranch in Nicasio, moving cattle across the pastures at grass-fed beef ranch Stemple Creek, or a field-to-fork supper at Fresh Run Farms in Bolinas showcasing the culinary talents of chef Sarah Hodge from Cowgirl Creamery” (Visit California).

Targeting a young and hip demographic, a web-based restaurant guide recommends that visitors eat their way through West Marin: “Screw Napa. Screw Half Moon Bay or Tahoe. For your money, Point Reyes is the ultimate Bay Area day trip” (Silcox 2018). Zagat Weekend Planner recommends four stops on the “Point Reyes Oyster Trail,” only one of which includes an oyster company; the idea is a day of eating in West Marin (Copperman 2015). In fact, the oyster farms on Tomales Bay may draw the most visitors to the area, as their on-site visitors are integral to their business. Tomales Bay and Hog Island oyster companies sell to wholesale dealers and Hog Island has a retail outlet in San Francisco, but both sell directly to consumers, on the shore of Tomales Bay. The oyster companies are “completely dependent on visitors. The aquaculture aspect of agriculture has had much more visitor impact” than ranch visits (E. Rilla, personal communication, January 25, 2017). “People from all parts of the Bay area drive many miles over a narrow winding road to buy oysters harvested directly from the beds. Weekend tourists and sportsmen are also customers. The strong consumer desire for fresh shellfish is the principal reason for the success of this marketing aquaculture market arrangement” (Carlsen 2011).

Agriculture-related tourism has transformed the tourist sector in West Marin. Visitors don’t just come to enjoy the seashore and happen upon good food, but rather, an increasing segment of the visitors are coming simply to enjoy the cachet of local food in a scenic landscape. After Labor Day 2015, the local paper published an article describing overflowing parking lots and long lines of cars. The owner of Inverness Park Market “said he’d never seen such traffic in 35 years of owning his store.” The Bear Valley Visitor Center at Point Reyes National Seashore, however, recorded slightly lower numbers than Labor Day weekend the year before, indicating that people weren’t just streaming to West Marin to visit the seashore. One visitor from San Francisco, who described the area as “a little off the beaten path,” came just to spend the day picnicking at Tomales Bay Oyster Company (Evans 2015b).

As foodie tourism becomes more and more a part of the tourist economy of West Marin, communities face new challenges. The expansion of tourism in general increases the number of service workers who need housing in the area, while drawing visitors and even second-home owners who occupy the existing housing, driving up rents, as Chapter 4 discusses. Foodie tourism also draws a demographic of people with money to spare, as eating the locally grown and produced food in West Marin puts a significant dent in the pocketbook. And, while agriculture fosters this tourism, it is also increasingly challenged by it, as agricultural workers lack access to housing and access to basic food staples, as Chapter 8 discusses.

Where are the workers in gentrified agriculture?

When we take time to savor the flavors, textures, and aromas of our food we begin to appreciate the hard work that has brought it from field to fork —Karen Pavone, Farmista's Feast

Even while the image of the idealized landscape shifted from one of wilderness to one of pastoral landscapes (see above), the “working” aspect of the agricultural landscape remained hidden, or sanitized. Like the depictions of sublime nature, which “frame” nature so that “the observer is placed safely outside of the landscape,” the portrayals of pastoral nature “pictorialize” nature by removing humans (Neumann 2002, 17).

Geographer Don Mitchell writes that “Raymond Williams... was at pains to point out [that] one of the purposes of landscape is to make a scene appear unworked, to make it appear fully natural. So landscape is both a work and an erasure of work.” He goes on to say that “To ignore the work that makes landscape, it seems to me, is thus to ignore a lot of what landscape *is*” (Mitchell 1996, 6).¹⁰⁷

In West Marin ranch and farm publicity, tours, websites about local farming and culinary attractions, the hard work of ranching families and farmer owners is recognized, lauded, and idealized, but the wage laborers are rarely, if ever, mentioned. Farmista's Feast is a website written by a self-described “passionate advocate for sustainable agriculture, artisan food producers, and craft beverage makers in Marin & Sonoma counties.” The author posts recipes, articles about heirloom vegetables, and local farmers markets, as well as stories about local artisan cheesemakers, cidermakers, and ranchers. She describes the people she writes about as:

“...farmers [who] are passionate and committed in everything they do. Many come from families that have worked the land for generations; others have left traditional careers in search of a simpler, more authentic existence. All of them feel a connection to the earth that threads to their core. I have tremendous respect for these unsung heroes who quietly dedicate their lives to caring for the land and its bounty” (Pavone).

Similarly, West Marin Food and Farm Tours owner describes “the incredible success story” of West Marin ranches, “all still family farms,” and hopes her tours will help

¹⁰⁷ The presence of the national seashore adds another layer of complexity. Neumann argues that both the sublime and the pastoral have formed the “aesthetic basis for the national park ideal,” in that that have both been “framed” and “transformed... into picturesque scenery” (Neumann 16). “Likewise,” he goes on to write, “surveying, bounding, and legally designating a ‘wild’ space makes it accessible for the pleasure and appreciation of world-weary urbanites” (*Ibid.*). But the national parks in the United States have not embraced working landscapes. The working landscape of Point Reyes National Seashore presents complications: “Public parks like Point Reyes that aim to *protect* working, lived-in landscapes, therefore, contain an inherent tension, between NPS staff supporting agricultural operations on the one hand and aiming to produce more natural-appearing, ‘unworked’ scenes for tourists and recreation users on the other. The NPS unconsciously disguises its own land management efforts by emphasizing natural resources and downplaying traces of local history” (Watt 2017).

people appreciate “how much work goes into food production” (Hill, n.d.). Hill’s blog announces an upcoming coffee table book. One page has a picture of a sheep rancher smiling as she walks behind a herd of sheep. Hill quotes the rancher as describing her favorite part of her “job” as “working in the cheese room, especially in the early morning while the ewes are being milked next door in the parlor” (Hill 2018). But there is no further mention of who was milking the ewes, or doing any of the other work involved in raising sheep and making cheese.

To contrast the picture painted above, I asked one rancher I spoke with to tell me about her employees. She described to me her first employee, a Mexican immigrant who lives in a manufactured home on the ranch with his wife and two adult sons—one who works in a restaurant in Olema and another who works at the Marshall store. “We learned [our animals] together,” she told me, of this employee, indicating how important he is to her operation. Once her operation was bigger, she had another full-time employee, an undocumented Mexican man who lived in a low-rent apartment in Petaluma with other day laborers. She described him as an “awesome worker”—he worked six days a week for four years, never missed a day and never arrived a minute late. He drove 30 minutes each way and sometimes worked a split shift (Anonymous 7, personal communication, October 20, 2016).¹⁰⁸

Employees like these, and their work, are not mentioned in the glossy spreads about the hard-working family rancher. Not only is wage labor rarely mentioned, but even the dirty work of the rancher/owner is rarely alluded to. At a public forum about ranching in Point Reyes, one rancher jokingly told the audience: “When my husband and I are in the barn at 11:30 at night and it’s windy and cold and we’re helping birth a calf, I say to him, ‘Is this the romantic part?’” (J. Grossi 2016).

One interviewee described to me a series of conversations, over the course of a year, that the community had about agricultural sustainability. He recounted that every time he indicated to the steering committee that workers—housing, pay, etc.—should be included in the conversation, they told him it was too controversial. “It was very frustrating. We all say Marin is the most progressive place in the world, but sustainability is on the back of the workers” (C. Porrata, personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Similarly, in 2009 a local bookstore made agriculture the focus of the “Geography of Hope” conference, an annual gathering that “explore[s] the relationship between people, land, and community through the voices of authors, environmentalists, farmers, and artists.” Though the theme was agriculture, the conference neglected to address workers. Before the symposium, someone anonymously put posters all over Point Reyes Station calling into question the sustainability of West Marin Farms. The posters were titled, “Whose Geography of Hope” and asked “what about farm labor?” It publicized that some farm laborers “live in broken down trailers with moldy walls, old wiring, and cesspools,” and that “nearly half the families coming to the Point Reyes Food Pantry are Latinos who work and live on local organic farms and dairies.” The poster went on to say:

¹⁰⁸ This rancher described to me at least three other employees to me as well, full- and part-time.

“Know the Hands That Feed You” the advertising goes ... Those hands are brown. They are the hands of campesinos...who dig the soil; birth, feed, and milk the cows; ...make the local artisan cheeses; and seed, harvest, shuck, and pack the shellfish for your gourmet feasts. These men, women, and children are not on the promotional posters. They are nowhere to be seen on the farm tours... (quoted in Fairfax 2012, 160).

As the 2009 Geography of Hope Conference did, popular literature tends to juxtapose smaller, local farms with factory farms, and suggest that in providing a healthier alternative for animals and consumers, they are also a more just alternative for workers (Kingsolver 2008; Pollan 2007, 2009). However, research has also exposed the dark side of local and organic agriculture (Guthman 2014, Gray 2014). A good deal of recent literature discusses food insecurity among agricultural workers (See Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Moos 2008). A subsection of the literature on locally produced and organic foods has begun to explore the exploitation of the workers who produce these “safer” “healthier” and “more sustainable” foods, and links the exploitation to their existence “in the shadows” (Gray 2014). A social worker in West Marin said to me, “When workers are invisible, you can do anything you want with them” (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016). The removal of the worker from the public face of gentrified agriculture facilitates invisibility of working conditions: housing, long commutes, complicated worker-employer relations, and difficult access to food are all “invisible” parts of the of the idyllic pastoral scenes and delicious local food that draw tourists and second-home owners to West Marin. Chapter 8 explores in more detail the working and housing conditions of agricultural workers in West Marin.

Conclusion

West Marin’s process of gentrification runs counter to assumptions in several respects. I begin this chapter by showing that post-productive landscapes, while not only a misnomer, are not the only gentrified rural landscapes: a gentrified rural landscape can be solidly based in productive agriculture. The assumption of post-productive rural landscapes also assumes a fixed chronology of gentrification, seen in much literature on rural gentrification, from working agricultural (or otherwise extractive) landscape to a landscape that tourists or amenity migrants “consume” for recreation or scenic value; it is often also a first step in the conversion of a landscape to sprawl. Not only does this not happen in West Marin, but West Marin shows that in fact protecting the land from development can put into motion the gentrification process. West Marin’s strong institutional framework initially protected the agricultural landscape and encouraged the viability of ranches; it also helped Marin avoid conversion of working ranches into estate properties, another common phenomenon in gentrifying rural areas.

Ironically, however, the shift in production put into motion by the institutions of land protection also changed the culture of West Marin in a way that may ultimately threaten the viability of agriculture: the area has become a “foodie” hub, sending products to the trendiest SF restaurants, and providing the costly “sustenance” for wealthy San Francisco and other parts of the Bay Area. Organic farming and locally produced food has brought increased recognition to the area, drawing more tourists and upping the cachet of West

Chapter 7

Marin. Agriculture has become a magnet for a culture of wealth and privilege that romanticizes food production.

While this chapter shows that a gentrified rural landscape can be solidly based in productive agriculture, it also shows how the image of working landscapes is reformatted for consumption and how “gentrified agriculture” can aggravate the difficulties of maintaining agricultural operations and thus have consequences for the persistence of agriculture.

The process of transformation of ranches to value-added also shows how ranchers themselves can be considered gentrifiers, as other research on gentrification in agricultural areas has also found (Sutherland 2018). Both the economic capital from land and ranch assets as well as the cultural capital attained through ranch diversification means that ranchers maintain a powerful position in rural areas, including in West Marin. As the next chapter explores, these power relations further play into the relationship of the rancher with the worker. In Chapter 8 I examine housing and working conditions of agricultural workers as part of the dual migration of wealth and labor into this gentrified agricultural and recreation economy.

Chapter 8. Dual migration

In West Marin, as other chapters describe, the most recent phase of gentrification reveals the links between global capital and wealth in the Bay Area and the money that is entering the housing market and supporting the local food economy in West Marin. Accompanying the flow of capital is the flow of labor; this chapter examines the labor flow over the past several decades, as low-wage immigrant workers have steadily arrived in West Marin to take jobs on the dairies, then in services. Dual migration refers to the simultaneous migration of working class and wealthy, but it also denotes several levels of migration, over time, and through space, both in and out of West Marin. In addition to low-wage workers, West Marin has experienced other in-migrations, from immigrants in the 1800s who ran dairy ranches to the wealthy urbanites who came to spend summers in Inverness, the counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 70s, and the more recent second-home owners.

Since the 1960s, the labor of Mexicans and their Mexican-American families has been critical to sustaining the agricultural and tourist economies in West Marin, and has transformed West Marin, in workforce, school population, and community presence. West Marin communities, in turn, have attempted to address the needs of Mexican immigrants with varying degrees of success (Anonymous 10, personal communication, June 24, 2014). This chapter explores how immigrants grapple with how much they left behind in coming to this country. It also explores the discrimination and other difficulties immigrants face in the West Marin community. While West Marin is no longer politically conservative, immigrants find that there is a significant gap in understanding between Latinos and non-Latinos. In addition to adjusting to cultural differences and difficulties with English, many immigrants and their families face bad housing conditions, are vulnerable to abuse at work, and struggle to put food on the table. As the housing market has become increasingly exclusive, it is nearly impossible for many to live close to their work.

The changes in the housing market over time have shifted labor flows; rather than in-migration of low-wage worker residents, there is a daily in- and out-migration in West Marin, as many—mostly Latino—workers commute from more affordable places like Petaluma and Santa Rosa to jobs in West Marin.

In telling the story of Mexican immigration to West Marin and Mexican presence in the community, this chapter aims to fill a key gap in the literature on amenity migration to scenic rural landscapes. Scholarly studies often overlook the simultaneous migration of laborers in areas of amenity migration. And residents and visitors to these areas are often unaware of implications of the changes around them. This dual migration, however, is integral to processes of gentrification.

Literature on the development of cities in the globalizing economy recognizes that urban gentrification processes “rely heavily on the presence of low-wage, low-skill, and often immigrant workers” (Nelson et al. 2014, 122; Sassen 2006; Ellis et al. 2008). Yet, globalization and gentrification literatures are not well linked (Lees et al. 2008) and scholars have devoted little attention to the connections between gentrification and global financial capital, hyper-mobility of global capital and workers, and the expansion and increased wealth of the upper classes (*Ibid.*).

In addition, the links between labor, migration, and ethnicity, while intrinsic to gentrification, are under-explored and under-theorized in the literature. While race and class are central axes of analysis in literature on urban gentrification (Lees et al. 2008, Smith 2002, Atkinson and Bridge 2005), most studies do not explore the dual migration of wealthy and working class (mostly immigrant) residents and their implications.

Further, “while many scholars have long recognized that cities, suburbs, and rural areas are mutually constitutive and dynamic categories, rather than discrete ontological or geographic entities” (McCarthy 2008, 130), the links between globalization and gentrification in rural areas are even less explored. Rural gentrification studies in particular rarely mention race or ethnicity, and class analysis centers on newcomers versus long-time residents (Nelson and Nelson 2010); most identify newcomers as “primarily white, middle-to-upper class citizens motivated by lifestyle preferences” (Ghose 2004, 530), without examining the accompanying migration necessary to support their lifestyle. Peter Nelson notes that “[l]iteratures on amenity migration and rural Latino population growth, unfortunately, treat these two phenomena as independent,” and, at the same time, “very little attention is paid to who is actually doing the work in many of these high amenity destinations” (Nelson et al. 2014).

A few recent studies are an exception to this: Nelson and Nelson (2010) and Nelson et al. (2010) have documented the linked migration of wealthy and working class (mostly Latinos) in rural amenity areas throughout the United States. They show that the in-migrants seeking rural amenities draw those places into “the web of globalization”: “gentrification in a diversity of contexts often depends on the arrival of immigrants to supply the necessary workforce to sectors stimulated by the spending of affluent mobile elites” (134).

In West Marin, the in-migration of Mexican workers has coincided with the changes in the agricultural sector over the past few decades, the establishment of the national seashore, the growth of the tourist economy—and the in-migration of second-home owners. West Marin is a prime place to examine the linked flows of workers and residents in a gentrifying landscape.

Mexican in-migration to West Marin

Mexican immigrants first came to work as low-wage milkers on the family-run dairy ranches. Camilo Hermosillo was the first Mexican migrant to settle in West Marin. He came to the United States with the Bracero program in 1952, but later returned to Mexico. In 1964, he made his way to the Marin/Sonoma border, where he found work on a dairy ranch. Hermosillo was from Jalostotitlán (Jalos), a town in the Mexican state of Jalisco with a tradition of migration to the United States.¹⁰⁹ He became the first in a long line of migrants to travel to West Marin from Jalos and surrounding villages.

Other single men from Jalos followed Camilo and found work on the dairy ranches as milkers. Point Reyes became the primary destination for the Mexicans immigrants from

¹⁰⁹ It is something of a rite of passage for young men from Jalostotitlán to migrate to the United States, and they have gone for decades to places throughout the United States (Anonymous 10, personal communication, June 24, 2014).

Jalostotitlán.¹¹⁰ The local newspaper estimated that by the early 1970s, the Spanish-speaking population in West Marin was 300 (*The Light on the Coast* 1986). By the early 1980s, it estimated, the Spanish-speaking population had tripled (*Ibid.*).

One immigrant who arrived in the 1980s told me that when she came, “only the people who worked on the farms were Latino. So it was very hard to see any Latinos working at the Palace Market [local grocery store] or at hotels.” Over time, two things changed: the young men who immigrated from Mexico began to bring their wives and girlfriends and start families in West Marin; and the need for more service workers grew as visitors to the area increased and the tourist economy expanded. Family members found work in West Marin towns, in restaurants, lodging, stores, housekeeping, and landscaping. Latino workers, one interviewee in his 80s told me, “replaced the local white boys...” (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015). The owner of a local restaurant told him that she “finally came to the realization that she couldn’t hire the local kids anymore, because they wouldn’t come to work if they had something better to do.” My interviewee raised two children in West Marin, but he went on to tell me that “a lot of the business people realized that if you wanted good, hard workers who show up on time reliably, don’t hire the kids who grew up here, because they’ve got a different work ethic” (*Ibid.*).

As children of Mexican immigrants have grown up in West Marin, fluent in English and with the opportunity to go to school and continue with higher education, second and third generation Mexican Americans have gone on to find jobs with the park service, in the schools and banks, pharmacies, and other professions. “Now you will see Latinos working in every corner of this area” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Separateness of Latino and Anglo communities

This is my experience working with this community for many years: I see three groups here: the ranchers, who are fairly conservative; the newcomers—hippies, and those who bought property after; and the Latinos. Among the Latinos, there are two groups: one that works on the ranches and another that works in the hotels and food services
(Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Several of my interviewees described the West Marin community as made up of three primary segments: ranchers, newer arrivals (hippies, ex-hippies, etc.), and Latinos. Many also commented on how segregated the community is. One non-Latino who came from California’s Central Valley, where there is a large Latino population and agricultural sector, commented that “this place is surprisingly segregated in its white and Latino life” (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015). A Mexican immigrant who arrived in the 1980s described her sense of the relations between ranchers and Latinos and newcomers and Latinos: “The ranchers, normally, don’t participate in any event—or

¹¹⁰ Bolinas, just south of Point Reyes, has a community of Mexicans from Sinaloa (Anonymous 10, personal communication, June 24, 2014).

haven't until now participated in any of the community events that I've coordinated or that I've seen. Not one rancher. I don't know if it is due to lack of communication or that they didn't know about the event, but not one rancher has attended any event." She described their sense of power as the boss, the employer, as pervading relationships and impeding social interactions. My interviewee went on to say that "with the community of newcomers and the hippie community, they accept more the [Latino] community" and support attempts to bring together Anglos and Latinos. "And then there are others who have been here for a long time...in Inverness or Point Reyes and they are the ones who support the most the Latino movement. Definitely, they are the most involved, or at least they are working so that there is more friendliness" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Tensions over class and ethnic background are often not explicitly stated, but are felt. A recent criticism from the Anglo establishment demonstrated the gulf between the communities. Ostensibly with the intention of being inclusive, many began to complain that Latinos do not participate as members of the Board of Directors for the numerous non-profits in West Marin (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016; C. Porrata, personal communication, March 24, 2016). The sentiment reveals a disconnect from the daily lives and experiences of Latinos living in West Marin. To the Latinos I spoke with, this is a myopic view of what integrating Latinos into the community might mean and is an unrealistic starting point for doing so (*Ibid.*). Many Latinos are commuting long distances or are working more than one job to afford a rental in West Marin. Many have children. Many, because of their level of education and facility with English, are not comfortable with the idea of being on a board with highly educated Anglos. Even Latinos who were born and grew up here, one interviewee told me, are often reticent to participate in the community, out of a sense of "fear of getting involved" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015). "They've gone to school here... And you wouldn't believe it, but there's an idea that 'I don't speak well.'" The sense of insecurity, she believes, is rooted in cultural and linguistic differences. "It's not that they don't speak well... Our Latino community uses a lot of Spanglish, our Anglo community doesn't. So that's the difference" (*Ibid.*). Another Latino resident from Puerto Rico told me that his experience has been quite different from most Mexican immigrants, in part because he hasn't had the difficulties of citizenship and documentation. He has been active in the Anglo and Latino communities and has served on many boards. Apart from most Latinos having other more immediate concerns, he told me, if people cared about Latinos, they would not want to put them in situations in which they wouldn't be comfortable (C. Porrata, personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Among white liberals, underlying prejudice emerges in other ways. One interviewee told me that she has been surprised how patronizing toward the Latino community the board members of an affordable housing group have been; she thinks they are unaware of how they sound (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015). Their comments reveal at best unfamiliarity with the Latino community, and in many cases, deeper discrimination and often defensiveness. Several non-Latinos expressed in interviews ignorance about the Latino community, and little idea of how to overcome what they see as a cultural gulf. One non-Latino told me that it's difficult to know who to approach within the Latino community and how to approach them. She said that it wasn't for lack

of trying that the two communities remain separate, “but there is a gulf there and people are unsure of how to reach across cultures.” For her, the Latino community is hard to reach, especially since she doesn’t speak Spanish. “The Latino community can be opaque,” she said. “I feel pretty unprepared. I often feel like it’s not even my place to try to reach across [the gulf] and work with an entire community who has a different background.” She went on to say, “A weeklong bootcamp on how to talk to people in other cultures would be good,” as a precursor to making an overture to the Latino community (Anonymous 4, personal communication, March 15, 2016). Another non-Latino I interviewed noted that “Hispanics are such a tight community,” organized around “nuts and bolts issues” like food and medical care. “They feel like they already have community and don’t need ours.” He went on to say that “Anglos” are seeking community, but don’t have the same cohesion as the Latino community in West Marin (Anonymous 1, personal communication, December 14, 2015).

The liberal façade of West Marin sometimes breaks down in the face of tense situations. A Mexican woman who has been here for over 30 years told me that she feels that the white community has little understanding of the Latino community and is quick to criticize cultural differences. On holidays like Mexican independence, or other celebrations, she says, “I’ve heard complaints about ‘a lot of noise.’ And that is true, it’s true. But they are cultural differences.” And while she says that a lack of understanding about Mexican history and Mexican culture is at the root of their complaints, she also wonders why they can’t, in the meantime, enjoy the celebration or even simply say, “OK, it’s one day, and I’m going to cover my ears...tolerance” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

The housing crisis is another situation in which underlying prejudices seep to the surface. One non-Latino resident, a renter who has had to move numerous times, expressed a deep-seated feeling of difference between herself and Latinos who also struggle to find and maintain affordable housing. She commented that Latino workers are most affected by high housing costs, but tried to justify the differential access to housing. She told me about three Latino men she works with who commute to their jobs in Point Reyes Station. Two come from San Rafael (about 40 minutes each way) and one from Tomales (about 30 minutes each way). They work hard and they need to feed their families, she said, but still, to her they seem different: “They’re just in a different realm. It’s just evident that there is a hierarchy,” she said (Anonymous 6, personal communication, April 13, 2016).

She linked belonging in the community, and perhaps also right to housing, to “rootedness.” She described to me her family’s history in Inverness. Her grandparents bought a house and retired there in 1962, and she spent her childhood summers there. She explained that she considers being rooted in place essential. When I asked her what that means for workers, who need to live in a place for practical reasons—like a reasonable commute to their job—but may or may not have generational ties, she responded that housing for workers is “complex because it has to do with race and class.” She went on to say that most people in West Marin don’t want to have a conversation about race and class (Anonymous 6, personal communication, April 13, 2016).

In keeping with the segregation of the community, discussions and community meetings about housing are largely segregated as well—either ranchworker housing for Latino families *or* housing for seniors *or* for long-time residents who can’t afford to stay. One

housing activist told me, “It’s rare out here to have a meeting where you feel like you’re in it together” (Anonymous 1, personal communication, December 14, 2015). A member of a group that addresses the problem of short-term rentals acknowledged to me that the group has not interacted with the Latino community. She was defensive about my inquiry, adding that the group was “not designed to solve the cultural problems of West Marin” (Anonymous 4, personal communication, March 15, 2016).

The discourse among non-Latinos suggests that they view the housing issue for Latinos is different than for “locals”—a vague term, mostly used to mean non-Latino residents who have lived here for many years. One person involved in affordable housing in West Marin described to me what she called a false distinction that people make when they talk about housing: people talk about those “who grew up here [who] are no longer able to have homes here” and “Latino families [who] are very much affected” by the housing crisis—as though they could not be the same. “But,” my interviewee emphasized, “those Latino families all grew up here,” so are as much locals as anyone else (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015). The assumption that the “locals” and “the kids who grew up here who can’t afford to stay” are only white, are mistaken. The local kids who can’t afford to stay are as likely to be second or third generation families of Mexicans who immigrated in the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. “But in terms of the way people talk, you will hear that distinction” (*Ibid.*).

The conversations about housing may be separate for other reasons as well. Evening meetings are difficult to attend for Latino families with long commutes and multiple jobs: commutes to Petaluma or Santa Rosa, childcare, two jobs or a job that doesn’t have a 9-to-5 schedule are all complications. Language may also be a barrier, as well as the separation that permeates the community in general. As one housing activist told me, the problem of housing for the two communities is often treated separately, “because we’re already thinking in a bifurcated way.” However, she went on to say, because many Latino families live on ranches, “it is slightly a separate issue because of the way land ownership and leasing and employment and housing are intermeshed on ranches” (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

Dual migration and the dual labor market

Segregation in the community is mirrored in the labor market. The vast majority of wage-laborers in the agricultural sector are Mexican immigrants with poor living and working conditions. Many live out-of-sight from tourists and other residents either on ranches or outside of West Marin. Less of a visible presence facilitates inadequate access to many necessities: decent housing, resources for labor disputes, and healthy food.

Housing

Housing for ranch workers is one of the main difficulties the Latino community in West Marin faces—and has been for several decades. The first generations of Mexican immigrants faced egregious conditions. In the 1980s, Mark Dowie, Inverness resident and investigative journalist, wrote an exposé for the San Francisco Examiner Magazine on the miserable conditions of ranchworker housing in West Marin. Housing for agricultural workers on the dairy ranches of West Marin was appalling: “On many, although not all the ranches, housing quality was pretty terrible...trailers mostly, some hooked up to water via a garden hose and with inadequate sewage disposal (M. Dowie, personal

communication, May 4, 2016).¹¹¹ It was common to see raw sewage around the houses. At that time, unlike on the dairy ranches today, “[w]orkers were charged rent for their housing, although they were paid minimum wages.” In addition, workers had little recourse to improve conditions; ranchers had agreed among themselves not to hire workers away from each other, making workers essentially indentured laborers (*Ibid.*).

Dowie reported that the priest at the Catholic Church in Olema, where many ranchworkers and their families were part of the congregation, tried to address the problem of housing conditions on the ranches. But when Dowie’s article got the attention of the archbishop in San Francisco, someone—one of the ranchers, Mark surmises—“got his ear” and convinced the archbishop to reverse his position. Instead of supporting improvements, the archbishop fired the priest. Housing conditions did get better, however. The state got wind of the problems and “raised hell,” according to Dowie. In some cases ranchers were forced into improving housing. In other cases, they did it on their own.

Despite the improvements, over three decades later, housing for ranch workers continues to be difficult to obtain, often in poor conditions, and puts workers in a vulnerable position. The problem is multifaceted—related to the high cost of housing in West Marin and the lack of availability, and compounded by substandard conditions and workers without documentation.¹¹² Today, most dairies provide on-site housing because ranches tend to be far from other housing options and milking hours are demanding: milkers usually have two shifts, one beginning at 3 or 4 a.m. and another beginning midday. Many ranch workers prefer to live on the ranches where they work rather than commute long distances to work (California Human Development Corporation 2008).¹¹³ But ranch housing may mean overcrowded units and substandard conditions. Often families squeeze into on-ranch housing so as not to separate the family, or because rents are so high for other units. This may mean long commutes to schools for children or employment for other family members. If ranch units are not big enough, ranch workers have to live apart from their families; spouses and children often move to Sonoma County to look for more affordable housing.

A “significant amount of [Marin] county’s rental housing stock is substandard, comprised of either legal nonconforming units or unpermitted units,” (California Human Development Corporation 2008, 6) and substandard conditions are particularly prevalent in ranch worker housing (Community Development Agency 2015). Many units are “under the radar”—in garages, barns, commercial spaces, or recreational vehicles (California Human Development Corporation 2008, 10). With housing so difficult to find, many residents don’t complain about substandard conditions or report them to the authorities, for fear of finding themselves with no housing at all. Agricultural workers, many of whose housing is tied to their work, can be even more reticent to complain, as

¹¹¹ Mark Dowie emphasizes that “then and now there were and are exemplary ranchers who provide good housing and pay decent wages to their workers” (personal communication, May 4, 2016).

¹¹² As I discuss in Chapter 2, the presence of PRNS and the complicated politics surrounding park priorities and housing policies also affect ranch worker housing.

¹¹³ Most dairy ranchers also prefer workers to live on-site because of the irregular hours.

they could find themselves without housing or work (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016; Bach 2012b). People often end up feeling grateful that they have housing, a social worker told me, since they aren't paying out-of-pocket—even though it may be in terrible condition. But the housing isn't "free," she points out. The cost of housing is reflected in the reduced salary of the workers (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016).

Worse than a sense of unwarranted gratefulness, though, is the vulnerability that worksite housing creates: if ranch workers lose their job, they lose their whole community. Several interviewees described having to leave the area because of a disagreement or dispute with a boss or co-worker in an on-site housing situation. Undocumented workers are especially vulnerable, and many agricultural workers in West Marin are undocumented immigrants or have family members who are undocumented. Even families who have been here many years are sometimes undocumented. One person told me: "I can tell you that there are families who have been living here 20 years and don't have their papers, and I think that ranches take advantage of those employees. Not all ranches. There are a few that are better, provide a decent place to live." The same person went on to tell me that ranchers "feel their power. 'I am the *patron* [boss].' That is well-defined" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Ranch housing doesn't just provide accommodation for agricultural workers; many Latinos who work in service jobs in town rely on the low-rent, if often substandard, housing that ranches provide. In some cases, one family member works on the ranch, but others work in town. In other cases, mobile homes on a ranch are rented to non-ranch workers, because the lack of housing is so severe for those in the Latino community.¹¹⁴

In addition to focusing on the needs of agricultural workers, one of my interviewees, a social worker, emphasizes that the focus in the housing crisis should be on finding housing for families. "Families are a dying breed in West Marin," she said, their children fill the schools, the parents are the teachers, the community activists, "the flavor of West Marin" (M. Niggle, 2016). Families are disproportionately affected because the availability of homes appropriate for families and multi-unit rentals is even more limited than other housing supply. "It's much easier to find a room rental than a house... Having a family increases the burden of finding housing" (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016). A single person can find a cottage or second unit or more easily share a rental space with others, but families have fewer options. Families often have to find another family or a single person to help them with the rent. "That is the nature of this area" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).¹¹⁵ Several Latinas testified at a Board of Supervisor's meeting about the difficulties of finding and maintaining a home for their families. One woman was evicted because her

¹¹⁴ Within in the national seashore, this is one of the things that leads to loss of housing when the nature of a NPS lease changes. See Chapter 5 for more detail.

¹¹⁵ In addition, many of the solutions proposed by the county to ease the housing crisis won't help families: second units are often too small to house families, or at least landlords say so. Just cause evictions wouldn't help families who live on ranches and don't have lease agreements. Under the Costa Hawkins Act, single-family homes are exempt from limitations on rent, so rent stabilization would have little effect in West Marin.

house was being sold. “Now I have no home. I have two children and I don’t know what I am going to do. That is my situation and it is the same as many people in Marin County. You find housing but they are \$3500 or \$4000 a month and we cannot afford them” (F. Gonzalez 2015). Another spoke to say that she has lived in Point Reyes Station for 19 years, “but I live with the stress that one month I can pay the rent, but I never know if I will make it for the next month” (M. Reynoso 2015).

Access to food

Low-income in-migrants and workers in West Marin struggle not only with housing more than other sectors of the community, but also with access to healthy and affordable food. The Marin Food Policy Council (2015) recently explored equitable access to food in Marin. West Marin was one of three areas in the county that the council identified as being difficult for residents to access healthy and affordable food. The size of West Marin (over 50 percent of the county in land mass) and the sparseness of the population make getting to the grocery store difficult because of travel time and the cost of gas. Low-income families have to shop less frequently (like once a month), which means that they have to purchase mostly packaged food. But offerings in West Marin are limited, the council found. Local markets stock food that is not well matched to the needs or incomes of families in West Marin: they carry few staples—and those that they do stock are expensive, because of the stores’ own costs. The council also found that the food sold in Point Reyes Station, Marshall, Inverness, and other West Marin towns, rather than serving locals, caters to a bifurcated tourist market: either people who are recreating in the area, usually camping or traveling along the coast in an RV, and looking for lower-priced, easy-to-prepare meals; or travelers or second-home owners who are looking for high-end foodie-type foods. The council also found an overabundance of alcohol, tobacco, and junk food in West Marin stores.

Another barrier to eating well for low-income families in West Marin is that many stores do not accept (or are not even aware of) food assistance programs. The council found that not all grocery stores in West Marin accept CalFresh (California’s version of SNAP, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).¹¹⁶ At the time of the study, no stores in West Marin accepted WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) (though several thought they did). Many low-income families rely on WIC and not being able to use it at any West Marin grocery stores also means longer drives to buy food (Anonymous 3, personal communication; Marin Food Policy Council 2015).

The barriers to access to healthy food in West Marin mean that while the ranch and farm workers are producing organic, grass-fed, high-quality foods, they are mostly unable to eat them or feed them to their families because they are cost prohibitive. While this difference between low-income and high-income migrants reflects the particulars of gentrification in West Marin, it is a widespread phenomenon among agricultural workers in locations all over the United States (Brown and Getz 2011).

¹¹⁶ In many cases, store owners said they accept CalFresh, but on further questioning they didn’t actually know what it was or the machine was broken and they could not accept it.

Worker abuse

Lack of documentation, housing, and difficult access to suitable food are not the only aspects of ranch workers' situation that makes them vulnerable. Research with agricultural workers in other places has found that "worker's disempowerment in the workplace is the most critical issue they face" (Gray 2014). Of the Hudson Valley, scholar Margaret Gray writes that "the farmer-worker relationship on small farms takes the form of a complicated paternalism," which she calls "the price of proximity" (*Ibid.*). People who provide social services to ranch workers in West Marin told me that worker-employee relations are a "huge problem."¹¹⁷ Many ranch workers in West Marin don't know what their rights are regarding workplace abuse. Most outsiders think that because the ranches are small, there would be fewer abuses, but one person I interviewed who works closely with the Latino agricultural worker community described "horror stories" from many of the ranches (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016). In many cases, she told me, it is the manager, or mayordomo, not the ranch owner, who is committing the abuse, and the ranch owner may be unaware of what is going on.

Several people I interviewed referred to abuse on ranches, but did not want to go into details. One person described to me a case that came to light in a worker empowerment workshop, on the condition that the ranch and people involved remain anonymous. Another person alluded to the same case, also on the condition of anonymity.

Finding our path

West Marin Social Services sponsors a program called *Abriendo Caminos*, or "Finding our path." The program is described as focusing on Latino leadership and involvement, with the aim of "engaging and empowering." One organizer told me that after several meetings, participants agreed that their focus should be on helping the Latino community with housing, labor issues, and education (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016). The group has been involved in trying to find ways for Latino families who have lost housing, many on ranches, find a way to stay in the area. In response to problems in the workplace, *Abriendo Caminos* also has begun training people to be community resources for labor rights. The group also helps parents speak up for their childrens' needs at school, negotiating language and cultural differences to have a voice in their education.

Abriendo Caminos also has the goal of bringing the Latino and Anglo communities together. It has hosted an annual meal for at least three years, called *La Mesa de las Abuelas* (Our Grandmothers' Table). Participants bring dishes that reflect their family heritage, and share food and conversation. One person explained that "we had the *Mesa de las Abuelas* so we could talk about our differences. Food unites us. We invited the two communities, [we spoke] about what West Marin brought us, the differences, what we have in common, the obstacles..." (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September

¹¹⁷ Because of the sensitivity of the problem and the scope of my research, I was not able to flesh out this aspect of worker vulnerability. I heard from ranching families about the long-term relationships they have with their workers on the ranch—how the workers' children babysit their own and the special connection they have from having lived together on the ranch over the years (Oct. 25, 2016). I was not able to talk to the workers to verify how their feelings compare.

25, 2015). She described one of the exchanges: “One man said that he learned [at the *Mesa de las Abuelas*] that immigrants don’t only gain something, but they also lose. They leave everything behind. ‘We always think, in our Anglo mind, that everybody comes to improve’ their lives, but they also lose a lot” (*Ibid.*).

Many immigrants speak of the emotional losses immigration entails. Soledad Gómez migrated from Jalostotitlán in the 1980s, but went first to Turlock, California (just south of Modesto). She married a man from Jalos who was also in California, and in 1994, when he found work on a ranch in Point Reyes, they moved with their three children. Soledad found work cleaning houses and businesses in Point Reyes Station; after a full day of work, she took English classes and attended meetings at the school to ensure that her children would receive an adequate education. Like many immigrants, she found living in the United States hard. “‘Her life in California wasn’t what she thought it would be,’ a friend said. It was difficult for her to accept her role as a housecleaner. ‘You leave behind a part of your life when you arrive here,’ Socorro Romo said. ‘The first few years are difficult for everyone’” (Flannick 2012).

A woman I interviewed told me, “I’ve been in this country for 35 years and I have not made up for what I left behind.” She finds that many non-Latinos don’t understand the loss that is involved in migration. “The white community is not going to be able to understand why we are here. Why we want to be part of this community” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Mexican and Mexican American outmigration

We rely so much for everything now on the Hispanic population. All the people who work in the stores are Hispanics and all the people who we rely on for services, and yet there’s a commute into West Marin on Petaluma-Point Reyes Road every morning. (W. Holland, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

One of the many roles West Marin Community Services plays is to help Latino families who have lost housing in West Marin find a place to live. One employee told me there is little she can do to help in most cases, except offer reassurance. “They’re looking for some moral support because they’re so stressed about it that they need to hear from someone that they’re going to be OK.” She told me that an income of about \$3000 per month or less is normal for a Latino family of two wage earners in West Marin. In Sonoma County, a two-bedroom apartment goes for about \$1800 to \$2100 per month, but there is nothing available in that price range in the Point Reyes area. As rents increase, she told me, “what I have seen is more people having to move out of the area” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

As in many areas with simultaneous amenity and low-income migrations, West Marin experiences a daily in-migration of service and agricultural workers. Nelson et al. (2014) found that in many cases dual migration involves long daily commutes, as migrants live far from their place of work, because amenity areas are not affordable to live. In West Marin, some daily in-migrants previously resided there and have left; others never lived in West Marin but commute to the service jobs that increase in number as the tourist economy expands. There are many more jobs in West Marin than there are homes, and

incomes for service workers are far below what one would need to afford West Marin rents, as Chapter 4 describes.

Many of the workers who came several decades ago for jobs on the dairy ranches eventually sought better opportunities or retired. But they had to move out of Marin County “to be able to sustain themselves... Most of us have moved to Sonoma,” but commute back to West Marin for work. “Most [Latinos] who were here in the ‘80s and ‘90s have moved but still work in the area” (Anonymous 2, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

Sometimes a combination of things leads to a move. “In our situation there were several reasons involved,” one interviewee who moved with her family to Sonoma County told me. The instigator was that her husband found a different job, so they lost their housing on the ranch where he had worked. But in addition, “...our oldest was turning 18” and he had decided to attend a community college in Sonoma County. “[B]ecause of the distance and our cultural values we thought that the best way to deal with this...was to move to where he would be closer to the schools.” Their son would live at home, and if they stayed in West Marin, he would have a nighttime commute between school and West Marin. “And on top of that we wanted a house.”

They had invested in a house in Petaluma in 1991 and had rented it out since then. “We took advantage of that we were working and we had housing...and we wanted to save as much as possible, but we couldn’t afford to buy locally.” My interviewee remembers that the cheapest properties in the Point Reyes area in the early 1990s were between \$400,000 and \$500,000, while in Sonoma County you could get a house for about \$130,000. Now my interviewee commutes 40 minutes each way every day to her job in Point Reyes Station. One of her children also commutes to West Marin for work. Her husband’s job involves travel throughout the area but usually in coastal Marin.¹¹⁸

Loss of on-ranch housing is a primary reason for a move out of the area. Some operations have downsized in their shift to organic production and have reduced the number of workers as well as their herd sizes (Bach 2012b). And as I describe above, not just agricultural workers are affected. When Drake’s Bay Oyster Farm went out of business, for example, five or six housing units were lost, but the closure affected many more people than just Drake’s Bay workers. Family members had jobs in nearby towns and their children went to the local schools. Other families have recently been evicted from other ranches (because of substandard housing conditions). Families have dispersed to Modesto, Rohnert Park, Petaluma, and Santa Rosa in order to find affordable housing, but in many cases, they commute back—30 minutes, one hour, or more—to West Marin, for jobs, school, church, or simply to be with their community at events or gatherings (Bach 2012b; Anonymous 2, personal communication).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ I have changed some of the details of this story because my interviewee preferred to remain anonymous.

¹¹⁹ Commuting back to where one has been displaced from for work, school, or community is not unusual in gentrifying areas (See Dirks and Katayama 2017).

Conclusion

Dual migration in amenity areas is a fundamental, but often overlooked, part of gentrification. In-migration of service workers is essential to the amenity economy, and creates not only a dual migration, but also a dual labor market, which in turn, further exacerbates the consequences of gentrification. As this chapter and chapter 4 explore, wages for service workers are far below those necessary to afford the rents and home prices in West Marin. Workers either are displaced as the tourist economy creates possibilities for higher rents, or can't move to West Marin from elsewhere to be close to their job. Examining dual migration also requires examining dynamics of race and class in amenity areas, often overlooked in studies of rural gentrification.

Chapter 9. Epilogue

The recreation-based economy began to draw visitors to West Marin, but the protection of agricultural land has evolved into a foodie-based tourism that has continued to draw visitors even as seashore visitation has leveled off. Residents complain of traffic and parking problems: “lines of cars that stretch for miles on busy holiday weekends, clogging roadways, blocking routes for emergency vehicles, and forcing closures of popular parking lots” (Evans 2016b). Some locals complain about not being able to park in town, which they describe as being overrun by tourists, especially on weekends. Tourism strains the community in other practical ways as well: after record-setting visitation numbers in 2013, the owner of a restaurant in Point Reyes Station complained that the quality of service suffered and the septic system was overrun by the unexpected influx of patrons (R. Cadiz, personal communication, November 14, 2016). A few years ago, the town built several public restrooms in the town park, rather than continuing to rely on one porta-potty in an empty lot and the goodwill of one or two business owners (as it used to). Visitor traffic has increased so much that “heavy visitor loads have pushed bathrooms to the limit... the bathroom is pumped once a week under normal conditions and twice during busy weekends, whereas five years ago it was pumped only twice the entire year (Evans 2016b).

The contradiction: tourism strains the community, but it is essential to the economy. Residents point out that the local economy depends on tourists. One person told me: “A lot of people who don’t work in the tourist sector or derive income from anything to do with it see tourists as interlopers because they take up space on the highway or parking in front of the post office” (personal communication, November 14, 2016). He emphasizes that merchants and restaurant owners need more than just locals in order to stay in business, and they know that. Others point out that the reverse is true too, because storeowners depend on full-time residents (Rowe 2010b).

The consequences of tourism go beyond inconvenience. Residents fear that not only will these practical strains related to tourism increase, but also that the loss of housing will become more acute with the Coastal Commission’s revisions to the Local Coastal Plan. Point Reyes Station has historically been the commercial hub of West Marin and the first LCP targeted it “for visitor-oriented commercial development” (LCP 1981, 37). Since then, residents have become increasingly concerned about an imbalance in the focus on services for visitors versus those that foster community (Kimmey 2015b). Attempting to ameliorate the imbalance, the town’s community plan specifically discouraged conversion of residences to commercial uses in the downtown area (Point Reyes Station Community Plan 2001, 13).¹²⁰ Yet the revision to the Local Coastal Plan, which is ongoing (and controversial) as of 2018, proposes to restrict residential uses in the commercial core of West Marin villages.¹²¹ For residents of Point Reyes Station, the

¹²⁰ The plan didn’t specifically refer to maintaining the housing supply, but rather worded the policy as a way to “preserve the residential character” of the town (PRSCP 2001, 13). (See below for discussion of resident preferences regarding housing.)

¹²¹ The revision overrules county proposals for exceptions to the residential use rule and for a less expansive commercial core. The Coastal Commission reasoned that discouraging conversion of residential

revisions to the LCP are another blow to an already restricted housing supply (Kimmey 2015b). Residents have complained that the Coastal Commission regulations were moving toward making West Marin “Disneylandish,” rather than responding to their concerns about the consequences of tourism on their town (Anonymous 12, personal communication, February 2, 2016).

The expansion of the tourist economy is fueling gentrification by making the housing market out-of-reach for low-wage workers—and for many middle-income people. Families and services workers are displaced as they lose housing—often because owners decide to convert their long-term rental into a vacation rental or sell to a new owner who converts the home to a vacation rental. Exclusionary displacement also occurs, as workers from elsewhere who are drawn to jobs in West Marin can’t find a place to live in West Marin. Towns struggle to maintain a local school population and to house critical workers like nurses, firefighters, teachers, and workers in the lodging, retail, food production and agricultural sectors. The economy of the area is based in visitor services, but, as one resident asked, who will serve the visitors? “Will they commute 40 miles one way?” (P. Elmore 2016). Who will keep the very tourist economy alive? How can a community that is dependent on tourism take care of those who support that economy—the workers? The 2007 CLAM (Community Land Trust Association of West Marin) survey of housing needs in the Tomales Bay area discussed the possibility that workers may end up looking for work elsewhere, rather than commuting to a low-paying service job. Since 2007, community members cite housing availability as having decreased dramatically. Workers who support the tourist economy and those who provide essential services for residents all can’t afford to live in West Marin.¹²² One of my interviewees told me: “Workers could just say, forget it, we’re looking for work elsewhere, rather than make the long drive, especially if the price of gas goes up” (M. Dowie, personal communication, April 4, 2016).

This is the crux of most residents’ concern: that the desirable landscape—recreation, scenic, and local food amenities—of West Marin has created a tourist economy that is inhibiting a healthy, vibrant, and diverse community. They are concerned about the loss of a diverse mix of residents—rather than the size of the home or the type of development—and about the ramifications of a community of mostly second- or third-homeowners who will either rent out their house as a short-term rental or leave it vacant, except for a weekend or vacation here and there.

Residents I spoke with who expressed distress about the claims that some community members make about “the way the community is,” also expressed concern about the future of West Marin. Rather than the loss of a particular “community character,” as Chapter 6 describes, these residents bemoan the loss of the set of social relations that keeps a place vibrant and unfixed, and nurtures further growth. In an interview with the local newspaper, a Marshall resident discussed what community means to him:

into commercial use could conflict with the provisions in the Coastal Act that prioritize visitor services over residential uses.

¹²² As of 2007, all Point Reyes Station firefighters (not including volunteers) lived outside of West Marin, some as far away as Redding (Veneski 2007).

“...Marshall was a real community back then [1970s and ‘80s], but that progressively declined.” When questioned about what he means by community, he responded:

It was the easy conversations we had, and the ability to ask for and get help from others. There were empty houses even then, but there were more people here, more full-time residents who with one line of work or another were able to exist. That is no longer true. The houses are empty. The cars belong mostly to tourists, except for the milk trucks, and fuel trucks, and water trucks, and the sewage trucks (P. Elmore, quoted in Kimmey 2016c).

The visceral consequence of gentrification in West Marin residents describe as the “hollowing out” of the community, or the Carmelization of West Marin (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015; P. Elmore 2016; Bach 2012a).¹²³ West Marin is “one of few real tangible rural interconnected coastal communities remaining” in California, one resident and housing activist told me. “This is a very unique nexus of people and relationships” (K. Thompson, personal communication, March 20, 2015). But the widespread sentiment in West Marin is that “community is disappearing” (P. Elmore 2016). The result of the loss of housing, the increased domination of the tourist economy, and the preciousness of the agricultural economy is the loss of an active community of people—the whole range of people who make up that community—who are invested in the daily life of this place.

¹²³ The “hollow” image echoes Solnit and Schwartzburg’s book on gentrification in San Francisco in first dot-com boom (2000).

Chapter 10. Conclusion

What's happening in West Marin might be easy to dismiss at first glance: it might look like big money buying vacation homes in an already privileged area, or an already tourist-based economy simply becoming more so, or the new generation of tech wealth spending money and enjoying the amenities of an amenity-rich place. It's not, one might think, like what is happening in San Francisco and Oakland, where neighborhoods are losing long-time residents because gentrifiers are buying run-down houses, opening coffee shops, pushing out long-time, low-income families of color, and changing the physical landscape as much as the demographics.

But dig a little deeper, and it is clear that the changes in West Marin are another important manifestation of Bay Area gentrification; they are a local expression of uneven development that seesaws across geographic scales. While Marin's history has created a markedly different demographic and physical landscape from the rest of the Bay Area, it has not escaped gentrification. Through examining the gentrification process in West Marin, this dissertation expands our understanding of the forms that gentrification can take. While West Marin has maintained a scenic physical landscape and productive agricultural sector, the continuity in its physical landscape conceals the extent of the socioeconomic transformations gentrification has brought: West Marin has not escaped the less visible consequences of vast income gulfs that are transforming Bay Area cities and suburbs. The key characteristics of gentrification are similar: rising home prices, the resulting housing crisis, changes in community composition, and the already vulnerable becoming even more vulnerable and bearing the biggest burden of gentrification.

While most visible on a local scale, gentrification is linked to processes of capital investment and socioeconomic transformation that are much broader. This understanding is what makes the regional context that this dissertation provides essential for studies of gentrification. Not only does gentrification in West Marin have similar characteristics to gentrification in the urban cores of the Bay Area, but it is itself a product of those same processes—and not just because of the ripple effect of wealth and people from the core. Indeed, land conservation and land-use regulations in rural or quasi-rural places like West Marin are largely products of urban areas. Likewise, without the socioeconomic changes in the Bay Area as a whole and the gentrification of the urban Bay Area, gentrification in West Marin would not look the way it does—from the tech wealth to the market for locally sourced and organic food. The transformation in the West Marin housing market also demonstrates the regional interconnections.

Yet gentrification in this scenic agricultural landscape articulates differently than in urban or rural amenity areas. The institutions and processes specific to West Marin contribute to rising home prices, not just the expanding tech economy and regional housing crisis in the Bay Area, but also the creation of Point Reyes National Seashore, the particular policies of the national park service, and the formal and informal ways that West Marin residents themselves regulate development.

Another important piece of gentrification in West Marin is the agricultural economy. Strong institutions have preserved Marin's agricultural landscape, and the agricultural economy has remained strong against the trend of sprawling suburban development and

decreasing farmland and agricultural economies nationwide. Rather than convert to sprawl, agricultural operations have found a way to tap into both the broader economy and social context of the Bay Area market. Long-time ranchers aim their products at an increasingly high-end clientele, both regionally and in the tourists to West Marin. Agricultural operations look for ever-more innovative ways to increase profits in order to stay in business and stay on the land—in a place where agricultural operations are mandated by the county. But at the same time, the future viability of agriculture is challenged by the socioeconomic transformation going on within and around it. West Marin's agricultural economy, rather than providing a bulwark against gentrification, has instead become part of it and fostered it.

West Marin also shows that in agriculture, gentrification can happen from within long-term ranching families, rather than as a consequence of in-migration. In other ways as well, gentrification involves a complex relationship with migration. In West Marin it means, to some extent, the disappearance rather than the influx of people, as in the vacant houses that are becoming more and more common in West Marin communities. Gentrification also involves dual migration, of low-wage workers as well as higher-income residents and visitors. This dual migration is twofold in more than one sense: it entails migration into and out of West Marin, as low-wage workers who cannot afford to live in Marin commute daily between work and home, often many miles away. Those most affected by gentrification, the already vulnerable—because of immigration status or language or income—have not disappeared but are increasingly less visible in the rural image that attracts monied tourists, fueling gentrification.

Finally, countering the general understanding of urban gentrification that pegs the process as a post-war phenomenon, this dissertation also shows that processes of gentrification have a long history in most places. In West Marin, stages of gentrification have shaped the area for over a century. The first gentrifiers in West Marin could be considered the San Francisco families who bought summer homes in the newly founded settlement of Inverness in the early 1900s. Several decades later, well-off summer-home owners in Inverness were also among the few “locals” who supported the plans for a national seashore at Point Reyes. The seashore was established and the desirable landscape that seashore preservation created put in motion another stage of gentrification. It laid the foundation for a tourist economy that increasingly needed workers, but at the same time began to displace locals, as the amenities of the area attracted tourists and second-home owners from the gentrifying urban centers of the Bay Area.

Gentrification in West Marin reveals the regional interconnections and local articulations of gentrification processes in a recreation and agricultural landscape on the fringe of the San Francisco Bay Area. It also reveals the characteristics of the current era of gentrification—of super, hyper, uber-gentrification. The current “wave” of gentrification in West Marin, as in many places, is not the first, but it is quicker and perhaps more dramatic, more drastic than previous ones. The particularities of how gentrification plays out in West Marin communities can inform larger debates about gentrification in the diverse landscapes where we see it taking place.

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Appendix

Appendix I: Informants

BG Bates, Real Estate Agent, West Marin

Ramon Cadiz, President, West Marin Chamber of Commerce

Mark Dowie, Investigative Journalist/historian, Inverness resident

Rob Eyster, Ex-President, Marin Economic Forum

Gary Giacomini, Ex Supervisor, District 4, West Marin

Bill Groverman, appraiser, Marin and Sonoma counties

Melanie Gunn, National Park Service Communications and Outreach director

Wade Holland, Planning Commission, Inverness Public Utility District, Inverness resident

David Lewis, Director, University of California Cooperative Extension, Marin

Dewey Livingston, Inverness resident, historian and author

Marshall Livingston, Point Reyes Station resident, member of Village Association

Gina Marr-Hiemstra, Marin Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Carlos Porrata, Board member of Marin Workforce Housing Trust, retired state park ranger

Marc Rand, formerly at Marin Community Foundation

Ellie Rilla, former director of Marin and Sonoma counties University of California Cooperative Extension, retired

Alicia Stevenson, Planner, Community Development Agency, Marin County

Albert Straus, Rancher, Marshall

Mark Switzer, Point Reyes Station resident, manager EAH Housing, Housing activist

Stephanie Tavares-Buhler, MALT

Kim Thompson, Executive Director, Community Land Trust of West Marin

Laura Watt, Environmental historian

Evan Wiig, Farmer's Guild Founder

Arron Wilder, Table Top Farms

Anonymous informants

Socioeconomic changes, housing, and community dynamics are controversial topics and West Marin is a small place. Different opinions can strain daily relationships with other community members, who one will inevitably see at the grocery store and the post office, and on the street. For this reason, many of my interviewees wanted to remain anonymous. I have described their position in the community to the extent that I can without

Appendix

compromising confidentiality. If nothing else, I identify them as a “resident” of one of the West Marin towns or “employee” of such-and-such agency.

Anonymous 1: West Marin resident, non-Latino

Anonymous 2: Ex-West Marin resident, Mexican immigrant

Anonymous 3: University of California Cooperative Extension employee

Anonymous 4: West Marin resident, non-Latino

Anonymous 5: West Marin resident, non-Latino

Anonymous 6: Inverness resident, non-Latino

Anonymous 7: Rancher

Anonymous 8: Realtor, specializing in West Marin

Anonymous 9: Housing activist, West Marin resident

Anonymous 10: Ex-West Marin resident, Mexican immigrant

Anonymous 11: Real estate appraiser

Anonymous 12: Bilingual social worker in West Marin

Anonymous 13: Senior planner in the Marin County Development Agency

Anonymous 14: National Park Service employee, Point Reyes National Seashore [not directly cited in the text]

Anonymous 15: Rancher, Point Reyes National Seashore

Appendix II: Countywide rental housing market survey 2015

In 2015, Marin County conducted a survey of the county's rental housing market. For decades, a good and growing portion of Marin's workforce has commuted from elsewhere to work in Marin (Marin Economic Commission 2007). The survey didn't turn up any surprises, but rather confirmed and put numbers to what the county already suspected from anecdotal information (A. Stevenson, personal communication, October 25, 2015). The county received more than 800 responses from renters. (Planners were surprised to also receive responses from landlords, which they included in the findings). The majority of renters (60%) responded that their rent has been raised in the past 12 months.¹ Not only are rents increasing, but 261 respondents (32%) spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs, and 382 (46%) spend 30 to 50 percent of their income on housing. In addition to being expensive, housing is insecure for many: 372 (45%) of respondents indicated that they have plans to move, due to the cost of rent, or concerns about rent increases and/or eviction. For 77 percent of respondents, the cost of monthly rent is the most significant challenge to renting in Marin; for 36 percent, the cost of rent deposits at move-in was most significant; and for 27 percent, concern about rent increases and/or eviction were the most significant (Stevenson and Crawford).

Based on the results, the Community Development Agency developed a series of potential responses to the housing crisis. Beginning in October of 2015, four monthly Board of Supervisors meetings were opened to public testimony, in order to solicit community input on possible solutions. In addition to revealing the great need for housing through residents' descriptions of their own experiences and effects on their community, the meetings also revealed some of the difficulties of finding solutions—not just because of landlord resistance to tenant protections, but because community needs are complex and the ways in which the communities are changing are complex—they must balance needs of tourism, workers, and great wealth disparities.

Appendix III: List of acronyms

BOS	Board of Supervisors
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
MALT	Marin Agricultural Land Trust
NPS	National Park Service
PRNS	Point Reyes National Seashore
PRAH	Point Reyes Affordable Housing
RUO	Reservation of Use and Occupancy
UCCE	University of California Cooperative Extension