Building Marin County
Marin Builders Association
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Report Highlights

- Construction remains a meaningful component of Marin County's economy. As of December 2025, the construction industry represents approximately **10,000 workers**, representing about **9 percent of total nonfarm employment** and the largest share of the county's goods-producing sector. 10,000 total workers are inclusive of government workers that work in construction related roles and construction materials supply.
- The construction industry in Marin County is characterized by a broad base of employers. In **2024 Q3**, there were **over 1,122 private construction establishments**, including general contractors, specialty trade contractors, and firms serving both local and regional markets.
- Specialty trade contractors account for the largest share of construction employment, representing **nearly half of all construction jobs** in the county. This reflects the importance of subcontracted trades in residential and nonresidential construction activity.
- Construction wages in Marin County are consistently higher than statewide medians. Across nearly all major trades occupations, Marin County workers earn more at the **25th, median, and 75th percentiles** than their California counterparts, indicating strong earning potential at multiple skill levels.
- Construction activity generates broad economic impacts beyond direct employment. Spending by construction firms and workers supports a wide range of local industries, including retail, wholesale trade, professional services, healthcare, and transportation, reinforcing construction's role as a foundational sector of the local economy.

Report Considerations

- Marin County's construction workforce faces ongoing challenges related to aging workers and skilled labor shortages. Workforce development and training programs remain critical as retirements increase and fewer young workers enter the trades without targeted pathways.
- Permitting activity and housing production remain constrained relative to long-term housing goals. While construction supports jobs, incomes, and tax revenues, lower-than-

needed permit volumes continue to limit the scale of economic and housing benefits that could otherwise be realized.
- Continued investment in permitting efficiency, compliance, and workforce development will be central to sustaining construction's economic contribution, improving housing production outcomes, and maintaining safety and quality standards across Marin County.
- Regional employment data from *Data USA* indicates that historically the **construction sector has been among the primary industries by establishment count** in Marin County's economy, with hundreds of firms engaged in construction-related work regionally and locally.

Economic Impacts

Construction incomes and employment continue to support many other industries in Marin County. Families supported by contractors and builders spend their income on groceries, housing, professional services, healthcare, dining, and other personal services, generating economic activity across the county. In addition, trades and construction businesses rely on a wide range of **local supply-chain businesses**, including wholesale suppliers, building materials retailers, equipment rental firms, professional services, and transportation providers.

According to the **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)**, Marin County had **over 1,120 private construction establishments in 2024**, reflecting a broad base of firms that purchase goods and services locally. These establishments include general contractors, specialty trade contractors, and firms engaged in residential, commercial, and infrastructure-related construction.

There are three primary categories of economic impacts generated by construction activity:

- **Direct impacts** include the employment, wages, and business income generated by construction firms and contractors operating in Marin County.
- **Indirect impacts** occur as construction firms purchase goods and services from other local industries, such as wholesale trade, professional services, transportation, insurance, and retail.
- **Induced impacts** result from household spending by workers whose jobs are supported directly or indirectly by construction activity.

Together, these impacts represent the overall **economic footprint of construction activity** in Marin County.

Supply-chain effects from construction activity extend into numerous sectors of the Marin County economy. Based on national and regional input-output relationships reported by the

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), construction activity is closely linked with industries such as retail trade, wholesale trade, healthcare services, financial services, food services, and real estate. These linkages mean that changes in construction activity tend to have ripple effects across a wide range of local businesses.

While detailed county-level estimates of total construction output, indirect and induced employment, and tax revenue impacts for 2025–2026 have not yet been publicly released by BEA or the Census Bureau, previous modeling consistently shows that construction generates **substantial multiplier effects** relative to its direct employment base. These multipliers reflect both the labor-intensive nature of construction and its reliance on locally purchased materials and services.

In addition to employment and business revenues, construction activity contributes to **state and local tax revenues** through income taxes, sales taxes on materials and household spending, property taxes on improved real estate, and fees associated with permitted construction activity. According to the **California Department of Tax and Fee Administration**, taxable sales related to building materials and construction-adjacent retail categories remain an important source of local and state revenue, although detailed county-specific construction tax impacts are not yet available for 2025–2026.

Finally, construction activity contributes indirectly to Marin County's long-term economic health by enabling housing production, renovation of aging housing stock, modernization of commercial and institutional facilities, and public infrastructure improvements. These outcomes support business formation, workforce retention, and quality of life for residents, further reinforcing the role of construction as a foundational sector of the county's economy.

State & Local Tax Impacts — Marin County

summarizes state and local tax impacts associated with construction activity in Marin County, including sales and use taxes, property tax base growth, and locally dedicated tax measures that support public services and infrastructure. Because construction-specific tax revenues are not separately reported at the county level, the figure relies on total taxable sales trends, property assessment roll data, and effective property tax rates to illustrate how construction activity contributes to public revenues. The updated figure reflects the most recent data available through late 2024 and early 2025.

Concerns

One of the ongoing concerns the Marin Builders Association continues to address with Marin's cities and the County of Marin is the cost, complexity, and duration of permitting processes. When permitting costs rise or approvals take too long, construction activity, jobs, and incomes are put at risk, not only within the trades but across the broader county economy supported by construction activity. Based on prior economic impact modeling, the loss or delay of a single $1 million construction project can result in over $1.3 million in lost economic output countywide and the loss of multiple supported jobs through supply chains and household spending. Lengthy or uncertain permitting timelines also increase the likelihood that work is delayed, downsized, or moved outside the county.

Unpermitted work remains a concern in Marin County, particularly in a high-cost housing market where compliance costs can discourage formal permitting. Expanding the share of construction activity that is fully permitted and code-compliant is critical for public safety and for maximizing economic benefits to the local economy. The most recent U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits data show that Marin County continues to issue a relatively low volume of residential building permits, reflecting ongoing constraints on permitted construction activity. Prior analysis indicates that for every $1 million in permitted construction, local businesses generate substantial additional revenue and personal income for Marin County workers. Increasing the share of work completed under pulled permits—through streamlined processes and fee structures—can therefore increase permit fee revenue, improve safety outcomes, and support greater personal income and job stability for local contractors and trades workers.

Summary

Marin County's construction industry remains a meaningful and stabilizing component of the local economy, supporting thousands of jobs, hundreds of businesses, and significant downstream economic activity. While overall permitting activity and housing production remain below levels needed to meet long-term Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals, construction continues to generate important economic benefits through direct employment, supply-chain purchasing, household spending, and contributions to the local tax base. Ongoing permitting reforms, including digital systems and the Permit Improvement Program, are intended to reduce barriers to compliant construction and support future activity.

Wage and workforce data underscore the economic value of construction jobs in Marin County. Trades occupations consistently earn higher wages than statewide medians at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles, reflecting both the specialized skill requirements of the industry and the county's high-cost labor market. At the same time, Marin County remains less ethnically diverse than California overall, with lower shares of Hispanic, Asian, and Black residents—an important consideration for workforce development and industry outreach efforts. Together, the findings show that construction plays a foundational role in Marin's economy by supporting well-paid jobs, enabling housing and infrastructure investment, and generating ripple effects across multiple sectors, even as permitting constraints and housing production shortfalls continue to shape the pace and scale of future growth.

Data Sources

This report draws on publicly available federal, state, regional, and local data sources to describe construction activity, employment, wages, housing production, demographics, and related economic impacts in Marin County.

Notes:

Economic impact estimates for construction—such as total output, indirect and induced employment, and tax revenue multipliers—are not yet publicly released at the county level for 2025–2026. As a result, current impact discussions rely on established economic relationships and prior modeling rather than new county-specific multipliers.

- *Employment, establishment counts, and wage data are primarily sourced from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), including the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) and Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). (https://www.bls.gov)*
- *County and statewide labor force statistics, unemployment rates, and goods-producing employment figures are drawn from the California Employment Development Department (EDD), Labor Market Information Division. (https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov)*
- *Supplemental historical industry and establishment data were reviewed using Data USA, which aggregates Census, BLS, and BEA datasets. (https://datausa.io)*
- *Additional QCEW employment extracts and historical payroll job tables were accessed via Beautify Data. (https://www.beautifydata.com)*
- *Construction permitting activity, housing production counts, assessed property values, and development pipeline information are based on data from the Marin County Community Development Agency. (https://www.marincounty.org/depts/cda)*
- *Fiscal and assessed valuation data were sourced from the Marin County Department of Finance and the Marin County Assessor's Office. (https://www.marincounty.org)*
- *Housing policy requirements, Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) targets, and housing element guidance are sourced from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). (https://www.hcd.ca.gov)*
- *Sales tax context, taxable sales reporting, and construction-adjacent retail trends are drawn from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA). (https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov)*
- *Transportation-related tax measures and infrastructure funding context are sourced from the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). (https://www.tam.ca.gov)*

- *Population characteristics and diversity statistics for Marin County and California are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, including the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates and Census QuickFacts. (https://www.census.gov)*
- *Broader economic structure, industry linkages, and construction multiplier context reference national and regional input-output relationships published by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). (https://www.bea.gov)*