

THIS OLD STATE

JACK BETTS ON NORTH CAROLINA PEOPLE, POLITICS,
HISTORY, ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND BOOKS

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\$46,400 to live in Meck, more in Wake

How much money does it take to provide the basics for a family of four in Mecklenburg County -- and why does it cost more than \$5,400 less than in, say, Wake County, the state Capital? According to a new online calculator made available by the folks at the N.C. Budget & Tax Center in Raleigh, it costs a family of four \$46,402 a year just to pay for the basic level of housing, food childcare, health care, transportation, other necessities and taxes in Mecklenburg County.

In Wake County, by comparison, it costs \$51,856 a year -- primarily because housing costs, child care costs and taxes are significantly higher.

The online calculator, [available here](#) and an accompanying explanation of the center's research on a living income standard for low-income citizens -- "Making Ends Meet on Low Wages," by John Quintero with Meg Gray and Jack Schofield, [linked here](#) constitute a fascinating look at what's happening to working families in this state. About one-third of them earn low incomes, the center reports.

The living income calculator provides information on the cost of basic living expenses for all 100 counties, and for families sizes from one parent and one child to two parents and up to three children.

The calculator also notes what a worker needs to earn to provide the basics. For a family of four in Mecklenburg, it's \$22.31 per hour. In Wake, it's \$24.93.

The calculator and report are sure to stir up conversation and debate -- exactly the sort of thing the Center aims to do in its work on a host of social issues. It's worth a look, and some thought.

POSTED BY JACK BETTS AT 11:37 AM  