



**Breathing room** Kristina and Grayson Dove, with their 9-month-old twins, Bodhi and Phoenix, and dog, Monte, outside their new home in the San Francisco suburbs. Photo courtesy of Kristina Dove.

# Goodbye, city life! As cities lose luster, residents flee to suburbs

From their two-bedroom condo in a high-rise residential tower in downtown San Francisco, Kristina and Grayson Dove enjoyed all the Golden Gate City had to offer. Great restaurants, nightlife, theater, music and art events lay just outside their door. Kristina's office was an easy, one BART stop away.

Then came March of 2020. The pandemic sent employees home to work remotely. The city rolled up its sidewalks and pulled the shades.

Kristina, an event and food director for Twitter, began working out of her bedroom. "I didn't leave the room all day."

In June, she had twins, which took over the second bedroom. Her husband, a biotech auctioneer, began taking calls in the living room.

Without a yard or even a balcony, they rarely went outside. The dazzle of city life faded.

"Once COVID hit, the luster of the city was really gone," Kristina said.

Kristina and Grayson Dove are in their 30s and have been married four years. They both grew up in big cities. She's from New York and he's from the Bay Area. The city felt like home to them. Until it didn't.

"We saw an influx of petty

crime and a loss of the culture that made the city so great," she said. "Homeless encampments were growing because of the downturn in business. I no longer felt safe or welcome. All the things that kept us here — the restaurants, nightlife, art scene, music — were gone. The city became a ghost town."

That change, the need for space and the fact that she no longer had to commute to work led the Doves to do what many families across America — those upended by the pandemic, and re-evaluating their lives — have done: They left the city for suburbia.



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In December, the Doves moved 18 miles north to a five-bedroom, 4,800-square foot, two-story house on a near-acre in Kentfield, California,

which is in Marin County.

Their real estate agent, Tracy McLaughlin, helped them find what McLaughlin says more and more clients want today: "They were looking to get out of the city. They wanted walkability, a family home that was nice but not showy. They wanted a pool, a nice neighborhood and good schools."

Now, besides the couple's bedroom, the boys have a bedroom, Kristina and Grayson each has an office and they have a guest room. And that's just inside.

"Before we had no outdoor

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