

We Don't Want To Be the Next Silicon Valley

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As our community continues to evolve and transform from a gaming and tourism economy to one driven by advanced manufacturing and technology, we are beginning to hear some comparisons to other places like Silicon Valley, “Reno Is Starting to Look More Like Silicon Valley,” Bloomberg June 22, 2017. While comparisons like this are intended to be a compliment and a lofty goal that many other communities often tout, it is not what we want, and in my view, not an aspiration that we should have. We should be committed to being the best version of ourselves, a community on the rise with sustained growth in quality jobs, an amazing outdoor environment and quality of life to enjoy, with a special Reno-Sparks culture that has transformed our region into a “hip” place to be. We don't want to be the next Silicon Valley for many reasons.

Silicon Valley and Northern California have so many great things going for it. It is a one of a kind petri dish of innovation, and the list of reasons to be there is long, often led by the belief that it is “the place” you must be, to be an entrepreneur and grow the next great company. After all, it is the home of Facebook, Apple, Netflix, and Google (FANG) and leads the world in equity investments into venture-backed companies. But is it really the place you want to live or raise a family?

There are so many challenges that come with living in the Bay Area. The ones that top the list are: traffic, costs of everything, especially housing, crime, taxes, an oppressive, anti-business government, and what seems like a fixation on wealth building - rather than life building. Everyone there appears so stressed out, and while many are making a great deal of money and some are even changing the world, are they enjoying their life? For many, family time is replaced by commute time; or the challenges of getting to the office, often get in the way of enjoying time with family and friends.



So why would we want to aspire to be that? I think most of us in Reno-Sparks know that the life-work balance we enjoy here is unique in many ways. We have always been a great place to live, but now with the incredible new companies coming to our region and the exciting new entrepreneurial growth, we are seeing higher paying jobs while attracting the talent we need to grow in a responsible and healthy way. Yes, there are challenges associated with this growth, but the glass is more than half full, not half empty.

On the road to becoming the next great city we should continue to build on our many special strengths, embrace the opportunity to harness the energy created by our growth and stay true to our values and roots that built the solid foundation we now enjoy. We don't want to be the next Silicon Valley. We want to be the best we can be, given our unique resources, our small town feel and our wonderful work-life balance. Someday, I am sure we will hear another community say that, "they want to be the next Reno!"