identity crisis?

San Jose is a large, complex and multi-faceted city. Historically a colorful quilt of privately-owned farmland, San Jose transformed from its agricultural roots into the 10th largest city (by population) in the USA, and 3rd largest city in California following Los Angeles and San Diego.

The current landscape consists of multiple town centers, providing diverse destinations scattered throughout the area, but with no real focal point or connection between each main street.

Rapid rates of development have impacted the overall experience and design of this large city. The by-product is sprawl; a city made up of dozens of disconnected communities distributed amongst a landscape of 180 square miles.
At Joint Venture Silicon Valley, we see urban planning as a local issue in a regional framework – individual manifestations of common ideals.

A major priority for Joint Venture is to work with cities on the rejuvenation of State Highway 82 -- El Camino Real -- from Daly City (where it is called Mission Street) to San Jose (where it is The Alameda). The Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI) is led by a partnership of the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), Santa Clara Transportation Authority (VTA), San Mateo City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG), SAMCEDA (San Mateo Economic Development Association), and Joint Venture.

The vision of GBI is that “El Camino Real will achieve its full potential for residents to work, live, shop, and play, creating links between communities that promote walking and transit and an improved and meaningful quality of life.” Most importantly, the goals that our region’s cities set themselves have built a larger framework, the Guiding Principles, to which the overall initiative aspires:

1. Target housing and job growth in strategic areas along the corridor
2. Encourage compact mixed-use development and high-quality urban design and construction
3. Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and improve streetscapes, ensuring full access to and between public areas and private developments
4. Develop a balanced multimodal corridor to maintain and improve mobility of people and vehicles along the corridor
5. Manage parking assets
6. Provide vibrant public spaces and gathering places
7. Preserve and accentuate unique and desirable community character and the existing quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods
8. Improve safety and public health

Image courtesy of GBI.
9. Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections with the corridor
10. Pursue environmentally sustainable and economically viable development patterns

While each city will implement the principles differently to fit local conditions, we believe that long-term improvement of the corridor will come from the judicious applications of shared principles.

Similarly, the Silicon Valley Economic Development Alliance (EDA) is a collaboration of local economic development officers who share a goal of promoting the region, but have differing priorities for growth in their own communities. The EDA looks at key business clusters, such as cleantech and life sciences, and recognizes that each driving industry has a variety of supporting industries behind it – from manufacturing to professional services. While not every city will have all types of businesses, the region as a whole benefits from success in the clusters. And that means more development overall.

At the Silicon Valley regional level, we think there are some solid foundations for collaboration and policy development, and we’ll keep working on them. When it comes to the larger Bay Area, we have questions – and we’re exploring them now. We have partnered with SPUR to analyze key issues facing us, including land use development patterns, transportation systems, and the challenges presented by climate change, to help us determine if there are better means to achieve our goals – and what we risk by not taking a more regional approach. We look forward to sharing the results of this inquiry in our 2013 Index of Silicon Valley.

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www.jointventure.org

Image courtesy of GBI.