In this pandemic, the most valuable resource is labor. The greatest capital to the San Francisco Bay Area region is labor. Without people to work, without people to spend, without people to activate all industries and commercial sectors, our society falls apart. The ability of the region to thrive depends on how well we care for those who labor. If people feel safe and supported, they are more likely to show up to their jobs. If they are accepted and feel like they can be their authentic selves, then they are more likely to take risks. The region’s ability to thrive is not just about economic growth but about the well-being of its people. If people feel like they can live here, then they can contribute to the region’s economy. If they are willing to take the risk of living here, then they will take the risk of thriving here.

THAT is how you keep a region economically sustainable and innovative. There’s a reason that there is no Silicon Valley in Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, the Dakotas, Idaho, Kentucky, Tennessee, Montana, or Oklahoma.

You want to plan for the next 30 years? Lay down the foundation for the people to not be hungry or sheltering in the night. If the bottom of the barrel has a roof over one’s head, then there’s the possibility of building wealth up.

To that end, insofar as the city of San Jose as an example, we still believe that mixed-use development and infill suburban retail centers with mixed-use retail and shops, with offices above, and residential higher above is the way to go. Single-use zoning is detrimental when it comes to mid-density developments around transportation. Build housing that is suited for every level of affordability. Build it around commerce that is suited for every level of enterprise. Build it around local services that is suited for any town (libraries, hospitals, schools, parks). And build it up; don’t be afraid of what height can do. Build at the level of downtown metropolises, build at the level of village, build at the level of neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Nam Nguyen