

Bay Area Council Wants to Bring World Expo to Silicon Valley in 2020

Over the weekend, Council President & CEO Jim Wunderman had an [Op-Ed in the San Jose Mercury News](#) that is essentially the tip of the spear of one of the Council's next major pushes. Right now we can't reveal too much, but everyone in the region should definitely stay tuned in the next couple of weeks for more details. In the meantime, check out Jim's Op-Ed.

Lately, it seems like you can't read a newspaper, turn on the TV or go online without hearing about China's rise and America's demise. Whether it's China overtaking Japan as the world's second largest economy or the Agricultural Bank of China having one of the biggest IPO's in history, the story inevitably is about China.

Yes, China is gaining influence around the world. Yes, China is growing in stature. If we are smart, we will embrace it. Our organization just opened an office in Shanghai to help our region's business succeed in China, and we're leading a delegation with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in September to grow our exports to that country.

But China's rise doesn't mean we're giving up here in the States. Quite the contrary. We can, and should, learn a lot from our Chinese partners. A great example is the Shanghai World Expo.

Just look at what Shanghai has been able to accomplish this year with its Expo. When everything is said and done, more than 70 million people from across the world will have attended. The city captured the world's attention for six months and used billions of dollars generated by the Expo to build new subways, rail lines, ferries and other infrastructure projects. The Expo has been Shanghai's stimulus package.

In a world where a strong global image is a key asset, world expositions are once again a vehicle for "region branding." Apart from cultural and symbolic reasons, organizing countries – and the regions hosting expos -- can use the event to share their best thinking, companies and culture on a global stage. China has certainly done this. Silicon Valley and California can and should too.

It's time we lay a marker down and start to make a bid for the 2020 Expo to come to the Bay Area. Think about the possibilities.

Expos are about showcasing your region and its qualities and how they fit into a common vision for the future. For 30 years, the Bay Area and Silicon Valley have been the pre-eminent hot spots



August 30, 2010

for the innovation that drives the world's technological advances. Our region already has everything we need: innovation, creativity and technology, plus leadership in sustainability.

Another plus for a Silicon Valley Expo is that, unlike an Olympic bid, the exhibit is tied to commerce, not sports. Instead of building massive sports arenas and stadiums, we would allow countries to create international pavilions -- buildings we can keep or demolish -- and upgrade existing infrastructure that would benefit the region for decades after the Expo is over.

Perhaps we could even create a Silicon Valley campus for the University of California, for free! Everything that's built could be used for a whole multitude of purposes, whether academic, business-related or nonprofit. And since the Bay Area is already working on getting high-speed rail from San Jose to San Francisco, perhaps an Expo would be the right ingredient to get that project over the finish line in a way everyone can agree on.

We've done it before. In 1915, San Francisco hosted the Pan-Pacific International Exposition, primarily to showcase that San Francisco was back and fully recovered after the 1906 earthquake. We have the chance to do the same thing right now after enduring an economic earthquake.

If we were able to invent the microchip, the iPhone, biotechnology and the search engine, we can also lead America's way to prominence and respect once again.

Shanghai used its Expo to show how China has arrived on the world stage. Let's make a bid for 2020 and do ours to show we are not leaving it.
