

San Jose Mercury News
Sunday

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LIFESTYLE
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Welcome to
SILICON VALLEY

The techiest place on Earth

Venture capital, software development, biotech and social media — the place we call Silicon Valley is all of these things and more

BIOTECHBORO
South San Francisco
 The biotech industry was born here. Or was it spliced?

social mediaville
San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood
 The young, hip and creative help the geeks at the hot social media companies.

Software City
Redwood City
 Thanks to heavyweights Oracle and Electronic Arts, this is a programmers' haven.

FACTORY TOWN
Fremont
 Where companies manufacture things.

VENTURE LAND
Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park
 The world headquarters of the VC industry.

the incubator
Palo Alto
 Students and professors wander off the Stanford campus, hatch their companies — and move on.

Startup Central
Mountain View
 Young companies flock here, partly to be near that big search engine company.

Sprawl City
North San Jose and Santa Clara
 When companies hit middle age and want to loosen their belts a little, they settle here.

Outsiders see Silicon Valley as a single-industry region, depending on technology in the same way Napa focuses on wine and Detroit on cars. But those of us who live and work here know different. Just as Napa's geography is home to dozens of different types of wine, from chardonnay to Rhone varieties, Silicon Valley has its own set of microclimates. In these areas, companies in similar niches have clustered to create distinct cultures. That diversity is the region's strength. "The valley is the sum of all these waves of innovation," said Steve Blank, who teaches entrepreneurship at UC Berkeley and Stanford University. "And the old generations are still there. New layers just get built around them." With help from some of the valley's savviest observers and top economic development folks, I put together my list of the "valleys within Silicon Valley." Let's take a tour. **PAGE A27**

CHRIS O'BRIEN
 COLUMNIST

Software City

Place: Redwood City
What makes it special: If you're looking for the valley's software hub, pull off U.S. 101 here. That reputation begins with Oracle, with its gleaming towers that double as an official monument to the city's software cluster. Oracle has only gotten bigger by gobbling up crosstown rival Siebel Systems.

But it's not just the big, dull makers of business software that loom large in the city. The second biggest employer in town is Electronic Arts, the video game giant that has attracted a hive of other video game companies.

Notable names: Oracle, Electronic Arts, Informatica, BroadVision

Notable number: Redwood City had a higher percentage of its venture capital — 25 percent — go to software companies than any other Silicon Valley city except San Francisco — 33.9 percent.

Did you know? Pixar's main rival in digital animation, DreamWorks, might be based in Southern California, but its other main studio is in Redwood City, where it has 480 employees, according to Redwood City economic development officials.