



By Farhad Manjoo, *The New York Times*, May 13, 2020

“Santiago Villa [is] one of [Mountain View’s] few remaining mobile-home parks. ... In January, its residents, who rent the space on which their mobile homes stand, petitioned the City Council to [include trailer parks in Mountain View’s rent-control](#) rules.

“They’re worried that wealthy Googlers [looking for a kitschy pied-à-terre](#) near the new campus will push them out. ... Last year, the same City Council prohibited RVs and trailers — many of them used as homes — from parking on the street; a petition to overturn the RV ban [will be on the ballot in November](#).

“We have [one of the world’s highest concentrations of billionaires](#), and yet we have not been able to marshal our immense wealth and ingenuity against our most blatant and glaring challenges — including the lack of affordable housing and entrenched homelessness.

“ ‘Housing is health care,’ explained Abigail Stewart-Kahn, director of the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. Now, the connection was inescapable — people who lacked housing were also outside of the health care system, and during a pandemic, their presence on the streets created a risk for everyone else in the city. ‘What this has shown us all is that everyone’s health is intertwined,’ she said.

“While the number of coronavirus cases and deaths remain low, the full gloom of the coming recession descend into view, and ... in the absence of more help from the state and the federal government, or from the region’s billionaires, the Bay Area’s needs simply outmatch its capacity to meet them.

“Margot Kushel, a physician and scholar of homelessness at UCSF, suggested that this was the ‘nightmare scenario’ for inequality in San Francisco: low-income jobs disappear, so more people lose their homes, but because the tech industry keeps doing well, home prices remain high, and housing slips further out of reach for everyone else.

“But I wouldn’t be surprised if we — the people of the Bay Area, our lawmakers, our billionaires and our ordinary, overburdened citizens — end up squandering this moment. Rebuilding a fairer, more livable urban environment will take years of difficult work. It will require sacrifices from the wealthy. It will require a renewed federal interest in addressing the problems of cities. It will require abandoning pie-in-the-sky techno-optimism.

“This isn’t a problem that will be solved by flying cars; it will be solved by better zoning laws, fairer taxes and, when we can make it safe again, more public transportation. We will have to commit ourselves to these and other boring but permanent civic solutions.

“We cannot go back to the way things were. But as the immediate danger of the pandemic recedes, it will be all too easy for many of us to do exactly that.”



[Read the full op-ed here.](#)

Bay Area billionaires are breaking my heart