

# Difference Between Bay Area and Silicon Valley

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## Key Difference - Bay Area vs Silicon Valley

Bay Area and Silicon Valley are two regions in the U.S. state of California. **Bay Area, better known as San Francisco Bay Area, is the region surrounding the San Francisco Bay in northern California. Silicon Valley is a subset of Bay Area.** This is the key difference between Bay Area and Silicon Valley. The name Silicon Valley originally referred to the Santa Clara Valley; however, with the explosive growth of high-tech industry all over the Bay Area, the two names Bay Area and Silicon Valley are sometimes used synonymously.

## Bay Area

Bay area (full form: San Francisco Bay Area) is a region surrounding San Francisco Bay, San Pablo and Suisun estuaries in the U.S. state of California. This is a geographically diverse and extensive metropolitan area with cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland. Although there are no exact boundaries, the bay area has nine counties: Marin, Sonoma, Napa, San Francisco, Solano, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara. Sometimes, this nine-county area is further divided into five sub-regions: San Francisco, East Bay, South Bay, North Bay, and Peninsula.



**Figure 01: Map of Bay Area**

Bay Area has a population of approximately 7.68 million people. This population is ethnically diverse as roughly half the population belong to various [ethnicities](#) such as [African American](#), [Asian](#), and [Hispanic](#). This area is famous for its lifestyle, high-tech industry, and liberal politics.

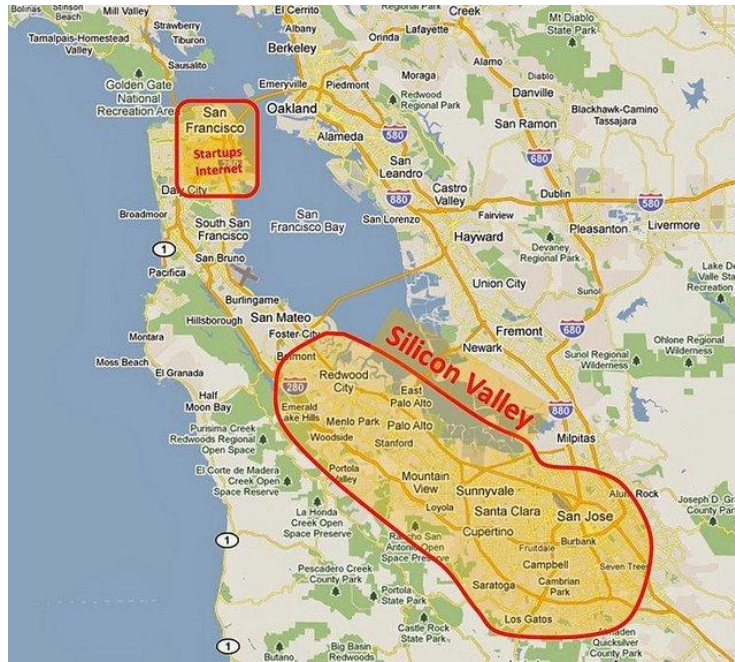
## Popular Areas in Bay Area

- Napa Valley- well known for its fine vineyards
- Oakland- the birthplace of the Black Panther Movement and a center of African American culture
- San Francisco (city) – birthplace of several liberal movements and economic and cultural center of Northern California
- Palo Alto – headquarters of famous technology companies like Facebook
- Silicon Valley – described below

## Silicon Valley

Silicon Valley is in the South Bay and the southern Peninsula of the Bay Area. This was originally known as the Santa Clara Valley in Santa Clara County and included San Jose (city) and surrounding cities and towns. With the explosive growth of the high-tech industry in the 1960s, this area came to be known as Silicon Valley. Today,

Silicon Valley has expanded to include southern portions of the East Bay in Alameda County and southern half of the Peninsula in San Mateo County as well.



**Figure 02: Silicon Valley (Santa Clara Valley)**

This area underwent explosive growth with the creation of the high-tech industry in the 1960s. Notable high-tech companies such as Apple Inc., Google, Adobe Systems, Intel, HP Inc., and Yahoo have their headquarters in this area. The term “silicon” originally referred to the large number of silicon chip innovators and manufacturers in the region.

At times, the name Silicon Valley may be used to refer to the Bay Area since tech companies are scattered all over the area at present. Thus, the term “Silicon Valley” has two definitions: the geographic area including Santa Clara County and the all high-tech business areas in Bay Area, which includes southern half of the peninsula and parts of East Bay. In fact, the term “Silicon Valley” is now often as a synecdoche for the high-tech economic sector of America.

# What is the Difference Between Bay Area and Silicon Valley?

Bay Area vs Silicon Valley	
Bay Area, also known as San Francisco Bay Area, is a region surrounding San Francisco Bay, San Pablo and Suisun estuaries in the state of California.	Silicon Valley is a small region in the San Francisco Bay Area.
Counties	
Bay Area has nine counties: Marin, Sonoma, Napa, San Francisco, Solano, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara.	Silicon Valley originally belonged to Santa Clara County. But now, it has expanded to include parts of Alameda County and San Mateo County.
Well Known for	
Bay area is well known for lifestyle, high-tech industry, and liberal politics.	Silicon Valley is well known for high-tech industry.
Use	
Bay Area refers to a geographical area.	In addition to the geographical area, Silicon Valley can also refer to the high-tech industry sector, and the economy related to it.

## Summary – Bay Area vs Silicon Valley

Bay Area is the region surrounding the San Francisco Bay in northern California. Silicon Valley is only a small region in the Bay Area. This is the difference between Bay Area and Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley is also synonymous with the high-tech economic sector in America.

### Image Courtesy:

1. “Bayarea map” By PerryPlanet – Image:Bayarea map.svg (Public Domain) via [Commons Wikimedia](#)
2. “Map of “Silicon Valley, Undated” by Nathan Hughes Hamilton ([CC BY 2.0](#)) via [Flickr](#)

### How to Cite this Article?

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