

# Center for Gaming Research

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### Where Locals Play:

### Neighborhood Casino Landscapes in Las Vegas

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**ABSTRACT:** Neighborhood casinos—gaming properties that target a primarily local market—are an influential feature on the Las Vegas cultural landscape. Such institutions reveal a number of geographical patterns that have important implications in gaming and place studies. The distinguishing characteristics of neighborhood casinos underscore the importance of proximity to a market, a focus that is evident in their advertising strategies. Additionally, the prominence of such casino-resorts within their respective neighborhoods makes them important symbols and indicators of the character of the surrounding community. These unique institutions teach lessons that can potentially be extrapolated to other gaming markets around the country.

**Keywords:** gambling, gaming, market proximity, cultural landscape, symbolic landscape

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A view from above most large American cities reveals a number of distinct urban patterns. One such pattern is the cluster of towering business and hotel skyscrapers in the city's central business district (or CBD) surrounded by a broad expanse of one, two, or three story buildings that represent the residential, retail, and industrial zones of the metropolis. In many American cities, that sprawling suburban periphery is punctuated by one or several collections of tallish

buildings similar in form and function to the downtown core, but on a smaller scale. These are what have been commonly referred to as "edge cities," clusters of business and industry away from the central business district.<sup>1</sup> Examples of edge cities might include Lakewood in the Denver metropolitan area along the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Freeway, Overland Park just south of Kansas City along the Interstate 435 corridor, Schaumburg outside of Chicago at the intersection of I-90 and the

Eisenhower Expressway, and Tysons Corner on the Capitol Beltway west of Washington DC.

A similar pattern emerges in Las Vegas, but with a significant departure. This city's historic downtown (centered on Fremont Street) also is a cluster of high-rise buildings—a mixture of hotel-casinos, business and government complexes, and, most recently, condominiums. Extending south of downtown is an appendage of other tall buildings (including one of the tallest in the country) on Las Vegas Boulevard, a more noticeable and iconic skyline. To many observers, the Strip is the city's true center of economy.<sup>2</sup> In reality, the Strip and downtown together make up the Las Vegas commercial core. But, unlike other American cities, the central business in this CBD is tourism and casino gambling.

Beyond the city's tourist core, the sprawling expanse of residential Las Vegas also is similar to other American cities; approximately two million people call Las Vegas home today. And, just as the structural equivalent of this city's business core differs in function from American counterparts, so does the structural equivalent in the Las Vegas business periphery. Rather than a cluster of office complexes, the edge cities here—many of which similarly are located at interstate or beltway junctions—are giant monoliths in a sea of single-family homes, individual hotel towers that are part of large casino-resort complexes. These are locals-oriented casino-hotels, commonly called locals or neighborhood casinos by Las Vegas (Figure 1). Each is a large, Strip-style casino complex catering to a local clientele through bowling, movies, concerts, and dining entertainment, as well as, of course, gaming. The late historian Hal Rothman described this Las Vegas twist on American urban geography: "Everywhere you see a Station or Coast casino, you have a small city that revolves around the hotel-casino-movie theaters-restaurants at its core."<sup>3</sup>

### Geographical Implications

Las Vegas locals casinos present a number of important geographical implications to the study of gaming and the study of place. On first glance, casinos are important cultural landscape features in Las Vegas, and act as a surrogate measure of the city's structural similarity (or dissimilarity) to other American cities.<sup>4</sup> I will explore the significance of the cultural landscape of locals casinos further by describing in greater depth two additional geographical lessons: proximity to market and symbolic landscapes.

### A Specific Market

The three characteristics—clientele, size, and location—that distinguish locals casinos from other gambling establishments are instructive in understanding the geographical implications of this phenomenon. Las Vegas often use the two terms "locals" and "neighborhood" casinos interchangeably, but the nuance of meaning in the two terms can be illustrative. As one name implies, locals casinos largely cater to a residential customer base. Ron Lurie, general manager of Arizona Charlie's on Decatur Boulevard near Alta Drive, said that 85 percent of his casino business is local, a number that compares well to similar properties around the valley.<sup>5</sup> Lori Nelson, Director of Corporate Communications at Station Casinos, the largest operator in the locals market, characterized her company's customer base as "primarily local." They—and by implication other similar properties—host some tourist clientele (more at their luxury properties such as Red Rock and Green Valley Ranch), but between 70 to 80 percent of their revenue comes from locals.<sup>6</sup>

Such a focus on local clientele is, of course, in contrast to the aim of the Strip, a distinction visible in the marketing approaches of the different properties. In January 2011, for example, Station Casinos launched a new ad campaign entitled "We/ Locals."<sup>7</sup> I also found interesting elements of promotion to a residential customer base in earlier decades when this element of the casino industry was still young and only a handful of such properties existed in the Las

Vegas Valley. Promotions were a big draw to the locals properties. Some were strictly related to gaming, each attempting to lure local players in for more chances to win at

slots, keno, or bingo, while others attracted gamblers with locally oriented giveaways.

Figure 1

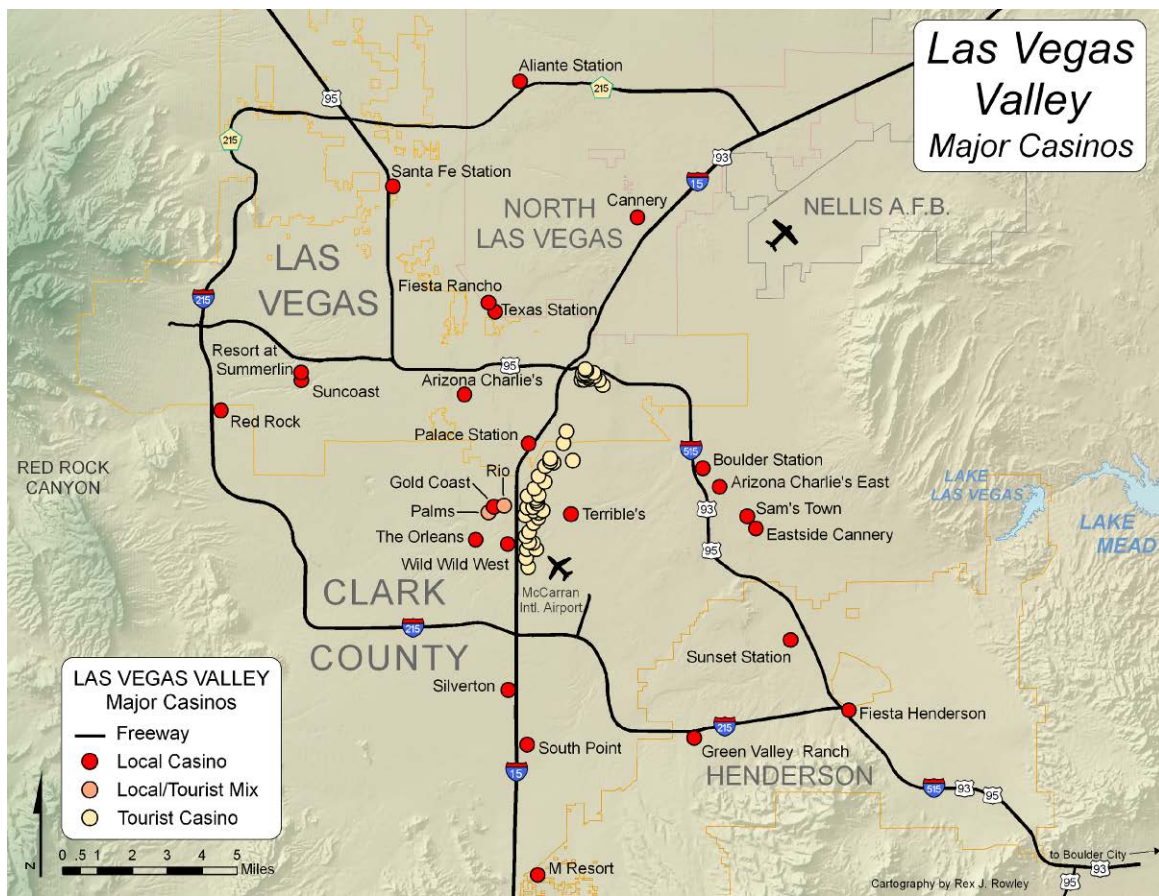


Figure 1: Locals casinos dot the periphery of the Las Vegas metropolitan area in contrast to the cluster of Strip and downtown tourist casinos at the city's core.

Here's a sampling of some of the advertisements and taglines I found in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Sam's Town ran a Keno promotion in 1990, which exclaimed, "Locals go to new limits! . . . Play \$100,000 Keno, Win up to double the previous maximum."<sup>8</sup> Other properties used non-gambling incentives to draw more players into the casino. The Gold Coast often advertised its slot club, "The Club" with T-shirt and jacket giveaways. And, Club points were redeemable at KayBee Toy Stores, an obvious locals connection.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Palace Station often gave away T-shirts to bingo

players, as it did on one Sunday in May 1984.<sup>10</sup> Palace Station also offered "Car-A-Day in May Giveaway" promotions.<sup>11</sup> Many such ads featured the name of the previous winner, like Linda Fink, who won a Chevrolet Corsica at Palace Station in May 1988, or Charles Satterfield who won a 4 x 4 truck in May 1990 at Arizona Charlie's. It is easy to see the advertiser's hope that Las Vegas might picture themselves a winner in this normal everyday person.<sup>12</sup> Palace Station also had its Paycheck Wheel giveaway (with local winners profiled) where "Every Check is a guaranteed Instant Winner! 28 great prizes

in all!” accompanied with fine print noting, “Local checks only, subject to Palace Station credit approval, Must be 21.”<sup>13</sup> The Rio ran the “Paycheck Cashing Blowout,” where a lucky player could triple their “local payroll or government check” or earn other cash bonuses by entering the drawing.<sup>14</sup> Paycheck cashing at locals casinos has become locally ubiquitous today.<sup>15</sup>

Nongaming dining and entertainment options were yet another way to get players into casinos. In 1989 the Showboat ran the obviously locally targeted ad “Now one of your oldest friends has Las Vegas’ newest dining sensation,” which advertized the Captain’s Buffet.<sup>16</sup> Of course, long before this “newest dining sensation” the Showboat offered its now famous 49-cent breakfast to lure locals to the property.<sup>17</sup> And the Bingo Palace, which became the Palace Station in 1984, taking a hint from the Showboat, had its own version of the 49-cent breakfast in the early 1980s.<sup>18</sup> Nevada Palace on Boulder Highway had its own cheap meals, with a 10% discount for seniors.<sup>19</sup> Sam’s Town advertized its version of local dining in the following ad copy for the Uptown Buffet, “Come up to down home cooking,” which also offered fair prices to all and half price to children 6 and under.<sup>20</sup> And, longtime residents will forever remember Rio Rita, advertising ambassador for her namesake casino and its locally popular Carnival World Buffet. In one humorous advertisement, we see Rita with a fruit cornucopia atop her head, giving the promise, “IF YOU DON’T LOVE THIS BUFFET, I’ll eat my hat.”<sup>21</sup>

Advertisements targeting locals were, of course, not unique to neighborhood casinos. The MGM Marina (former tenant on the MGM Grand property), for example, held paycheck promotions, the Stardust gave away “pens, lighters, watches, Stardust jackets, [and] dinners for two,” and both Las Vegas Hilton and Palace Station promoted their Thanksgiving Day dinner specials in the same newspaper on the same day.<sup>22</sup> Nor should we assume the readership of the community’s newspapers to be strictly local. It is, however, impossible to deny the volume of locals

casino advertisements in a perusal of past and present news or entertainment media and the fact that each is aimed at repeat guests and has a distinctly local flavor.

Three additional casino campaigns are most telling in this respect. Each, intriguingly, comes from what most people consider the three pioneer locals casino properties. The first is the long-running, memorable, and successful slogan for Sam’s Town: “Where locals bring their friends.”<sup>23</sup> Slightly more obscure, but no less important in such an analysis is the 1983 series of small ads leading up to the renovations and rebranding of the Bingo Palace to the Palace Station, where readers are asked to “Help us Select a New Name: Win a Trip to Hawaii.”<sup>24</sup> While simple, it reflects the target readership of the paper, and therefore the advertisement and the integration the property had and sought further with its local clientele.

It is likely that both Sam’s Town and Palace Station operators learned lessons from what is considered by most the pioneer locals property. Completed in 1954 during the resort boom on Las Vegas Boulevard, the Showboat struggled initially because of its remoteness two miles southeast of Glitter Gulch on Boulder Highway. To compensate, its operators began to offer residents incentives such as the aforementioned 49-cent breakfast special to lure them to the tables. In 1959, the Showboat added a huge bowling alley as an extra attraction for both locals and tourists and saw its revenues increase dramatically. In fact, the addition of bowling would become a watershed event, and non-casino attractions such as bowling alleys have since become staples for many locals-oriented casinos.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Showboat management offered giveaways geared to a local clientele. George Stamos, Jr. wrote in a 1979 retrospective article: “Yet another major promotion made headlines locally in late 1968 and early 1969. The Showboat was the site of a major giveaway that caused monumental traffic jams and hordes of people lining up around the hotel to get their chance at winning everything from television sets and appliances to cars.”<sup>26</sup> And

looking back even further, in 1959 the Showboat ran its own contest to develop a new slogan for the property. Irvin Hallanger submitted the winning entry: "Our best reference is local preference."<sup>27</sup>

### Proximity to Market

Much of what made the Showboat the first locally oriented casino property had to do with its location, the second defining feature of a locals casino. Rather than being part of the Strip/downtown tourist corridor, these "neighborhood" businesses are found in or near residential areas throughout the valley, some very far from the Strip. Such locality, of course, gives this type of casino resort its other name of neighborhood casino.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, it seems, the Showboat was built to start a rival commercial gambling zone to the Strip, maybe seeking to feed off of an Arizona crowd coming in on Boulder Highway just as the Los Angeles Highway brought Angelinos to the Strip. But, the Showboat was isolated. Joe Kelley, one of the initial investors in the project from the Desert Inn, who eventually moved into top management positions at the Showboat, said: "Despite great foresight, the hotel didn't develop quite as rapidly as expected . . . [The] problem we faced was to get the people to come out to the 'boat. There was nothing else out here. So, we catered to the local people. And our attitude has always been to treat people like they were our neighbors."<sup>29</sup> So, it seems maybe unintentionally, the neighborhood casino was born.

Because the Showboat was built on a highway near the edge of town and the edge of a neighborhood instead of actually in a residential neighborhood, some observers do not acknowledge it as a true neighborhood casino. They give credit instead to the Moulin Rouge, which opened in a residential area of West Las Vegas in 1955. Although lacking the amenities of the Showboat, the Moulin Rouge was the first racially integrated resort in Las Vegas and hosted many entertainers and residents from the surrounding (mostly

black) Westside neighborhoods.<sup>30</sup> Whereas the Showboat did see a fair share of local traffic, the Moulin Rouge did not have the impact on the market (aside from its location in a true neighborhood) that it could have because it was so short lived and lacked many of the amenities locals found attractive in the Showboat.<sup>31</sup>

Additional casinos followed in the pioneering footsteps of the Showboat. The next to make a play for a local clientele living in proximity to the property was Frank Fertitta and Jerome Snyder, who opened "The Casino" in 1976, which soon took on the name Bingo Palace before it became Palace Station in 1984. Next Sam and Bill Boyd expanded their successful downtown Las Vegas casino empire to include Sam's Town on Boulder Highway in 1979. These were followed by the Gold Coast on Flamingo and Valley View in 1986, and Arizona Charlie's in 1988 on Decatur Boulevard near Alta Drive. A boom of growth in the 1990s and early 2000s brought another nearly 2 dozen such properties (see Figure 1), all of which catered to the ever-expanding Las Vegas locals population. And, significantly most are surrounded on two or three sides either by housing or by residential commercial areas such as strip malls or shopping centers (Figure 2). Thus, location near a market is not only a defining feature of locals casinos, but is key to their success.

The third defining feature of a locals casino is size. I have not so far included any smaller gaming establishments, such as bars, in my discussion. Locals casinos are part of a large complex containing restaurants, entertainment amenities, and, most important, an attached hotel. The hotel feature of the properties, in fact, distinguishes them from bars, convenience stores, and other stand-alone casinos. In addition, the casino areas in neighborhood casinos are much larger than other gambling venues located away from the tourist corridor. In fact, locals casinos typically have more than one thousand slot and video poker machines whereas the largest of the non-hotel casinos have only around two hundred.<sup>32</sup>

Amenities are an important contributor to the size aspect. It takes a larger-than-corner slot house to offer the many dining options,

huge bowling alleys, and movie theaters common in neighborhood casinos. One such property, the Orleans, contains a multi-

Figure 2



Figure 2: Google Earth image showing Boulder Station surrounded largely by residential neighborhoods. This confirms the origin of the moniker “neighborhood casino.”

purpose arena, the Fiesta has an ice rink, and a number of other properties offer lavish spas to their guests. The large size and seemingly all-encompassing set of entertainment amenities contributes to the edge-city character that I described above and makes the locals casino a hub of gaming as well as entertainment to the surrounding neighborhood.

#### Neighborhood Symbolic Landscapes

Such a characteristic leads to the second geographical lesson of locals casinos: they

delineate distinct neighborhood divisions within the larger city. Locals casinos are embedded in the neighborhood landscapes around the valley and are an entrenched part of everyday life there. Many properties, as mentioned earlier, are directly adjacent to homes on most sides. Others sit in a larger complex of retail or commercial fare, but all are as much a part of their surrounding neighborhoods as the corner grocery or convenience store. Of course, it makes sense, based on simple geographic proximity and market logic, that a particular locals casino

would serve customers from the neighborhood surrounding it.

I found this to be true in my experience in the city and with people I met there. Many people visit the locals casino closest to them. Station Casinos, for example, has found that their primary market is a five-mile radius surrounding a particular property.<sup>33</sup> This pattern became clearly apparent to me while visiting with a local barber, Charley Sparks, as he cut my hair. He said that: “Everybody has their home casino and it’s usually the one in their neighborhood. For me it’s South Point. For someone else it might be Red Rock. I might go visit there [to Red Rock], but my home casino is the one that’s near me.”<sup>34</sup> Charley’s use of the term “home casino” struck me as profound. It suggests a connotation of belonging for people who live near such an establishment. Yvonne Manriquez’s experience confirms that Charley’s comment is not an anomaly. Manriquez visits Boulder Station every day and sits in the “same spot, playing her favorite video poker machine in the southeast section of the casino. If it’s not available when she arrives at her usual time, around 3 p.m., she leaves.” Her spot, she says, “is like my living room.”<sup>35</sup>

The significance of locals hotel-casinos within neighborhoods is, however, deeper than simple customer proximity or market demographics. As I visited each of the hotel-casino properties around the valley and listened to locals comments about their own experiences, I concluded that each property is influenced by and, in turn, influences the character of the neighborhood in which it sits. In waging such an argument, I first point to the impact of the existing cultural landscape on the second wave of locals casinos that followed in the wake of the city’s population explosion in the 1990s. Strip casinos have influenced the naming of streets and businesses in the city. Flamingo, Tropicana, Hacienda, Desert Inn, and Sahara (which was San Francisco before the Sahara resort was constructed at its intersection with Las Vegas Boulevard) all have taken their names from early Strip casino resorts. Many businesses,

apartment complexes, etc. along these thoroughfares, in turn, utilized the same names. Tropicana West Chiropractic, Flamingo Surgery Center or Sahara West Apartments are good examples. Thus, the influence of the Strip on the city’s cultural landscape is obvious. In contrast, the naming of many locals properties derive from toponyms already imprinted on the areas in which they were built. Rampart Casino is on Rampart Boulevard. Boulder Station is on Boulder Highway and Sunset Station is on Sunset Road. Fiesta Henderson (after a name change from the Reserve) took on the name of the surrounding municipality, while its counterpart on the other side of the valley, Fiesta Rancho, takes the name of an adjacent thoroughfare. Green Valley Ranch is in that master-planned community in Henderson and sits adjacent to Green Valley Parkway; Aliante Station is in North Las Vegas’s Aliante master-planned community; Red Rock Resort is at the gateway to Red Rock National Conservation Area; and both South Point and Cannery Eastside have names derived from the cardinal directions of the part of the valley in which they were constructed. We may say that locals casinos are therefore *subsequent* landscapes to their neighborhoods, unlike the *antecedent* nature of early Strip casinos.

As indicated in their naming, in nearly all cases, neighborhood casinos came after the neighborhood in which they were built. This makes sense given the earlier discussed location-clientele relationship. As geographer Pascale Nedelec has noted, the neighborhood casino market has grown with the valley.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the locals casino phenomenon can be a surrogate measure for growth in the valley. This point is further bolstered by the comments of representatives of the two largest locals casino operators in town today. Boyd Gaming’s Rob Stillwell explained the following: “The single most important factor we use when deciding to build a neighborhood casino is population. Locals casinos rely heavily on customers living within close proximity, so having sufficient population density in your casino’s

neighborhood is crucial for success. Unless we see that critical mass in our target neighborhood, we won't proceed with the development."<sup>37</sup> Lori Nelson of Station Casinos put it in simpler terms, giving a nod to the antecedent Strip: "When the rooftops grow in a certain area, we grow too. As the Strip grew, so did we."<sup>38</sup>

Even though the locals casinos, on a whole, came after the neighborhood, I also argue that each has come to represent their neighborhoods in more than just name. In other words, each off-Strip casino property in the Las Vegas Valley has a distinct personality, one that seems to "fit" and reflect the human landscape of the surrounding residential subdivisions. In most cases, it is likely that developers purposely designed a property with *that area* and the customer *in that area* in mind, especially at the newer properties. Although Boyd Gaming's Rob Stillwell noted the company's development formula is the same regardless of the surrounding neighborhood, he also admitted that "price points differ depending on the relative affluence of each neighborhood."<sup>39</sup> Lori Nelson told me that cable television is allowing Station Casinos to target different ads to different neighborhoods in their new "We/Locals" campaign. She also noted that Station's Boarding Pass slot club becomes a tool for marketers to identify where people play and what properties they visit most frequently.<sup>40</sup>

In some cases, even the design of casino properties is meant to reflect their surrounding environment. Nelson explained that the Fertitta brothers, children of pioneer Frank Fertitta Jr., are involved in the design of their properties and they have chosen color palettes and stones that reflect the surroundings of both Red Rock and Aliante Station, their two newest properties.<sup>41</sup>

Comparing three distinctly different casino hotels across the valley from Red Rock and Aliante Station further illustrates this phenomenon. Fiesta Henderson, Sunset Station, and Green Valley Ranch each are located within Henderson and operated by the same parent company, Station Casinos.

Despite this commonality, however, each appeals to a different demographic group<sup>42</sup> and exhibits a different feel that reflects its surroundings of the same general character.

Fiesta Henderson is a basic, no-frills locals casino. Until a recent expansion that added more casino space, additional dining options and a twelve-screen movie theater, the property offered only the core casino, hotel, and dining facilities. Architecturally, its fortress-compound, African safari appearance, mixed with Southwestern motifs (occurring after it was taken over by Station and changed to the Fiesta brand) is only minimally attractive.<sup>43</sup> Although it would be incorrect to label Fiesta Henderson a "grind joint," it certainly lacks the spa, entertainment, and high-end treatment of a number of other locals casinos. The Fiesta's neighborhood is a mix of recently constructed subdivisions and older homes near the historic core of Henderson. It is directly adjacent to the junction of Interstate 215 and Highway 95, and these routes act as a barrier to hinder easy access to the rest of Henderson and Green Valley. It is interesting that this property has taken the name of its municipality, one that historically has been perceived negatively as a dirty, industrial town. In fact, a view of the casino from the southwest reveals Henderson's industrial complex looming in the background directly across Lake Mead Drive from the casino property.

Sunset Station goes one step beyond Fiesta Henderson in sophistication by offering a more encompassing entertainment package for its guests. In addition to the casino and movie theater, Sunset contains a bowling alley, Kids Quest hourly daycare, fairly elaborate and eclectic dining options, and both indoor and outdoor venues for live entertainment. Even though it opened a year earlier than Fiesta Henderson, Sunset Station has a fresher quality. The complex's architecture is not stunning, but its "Spanish Mediterranean village" design is definitely more attractive and inviting than its neighbor down the road.<sup>44</sup> The housing developments surrounding Sunset Station are largely part of



Henderson’s new growth area and look like other recently constructed suburbs in the

greater Las Vegas area. In short, Sunset Station is a middle-of-the-road, quintessential

Figure 3

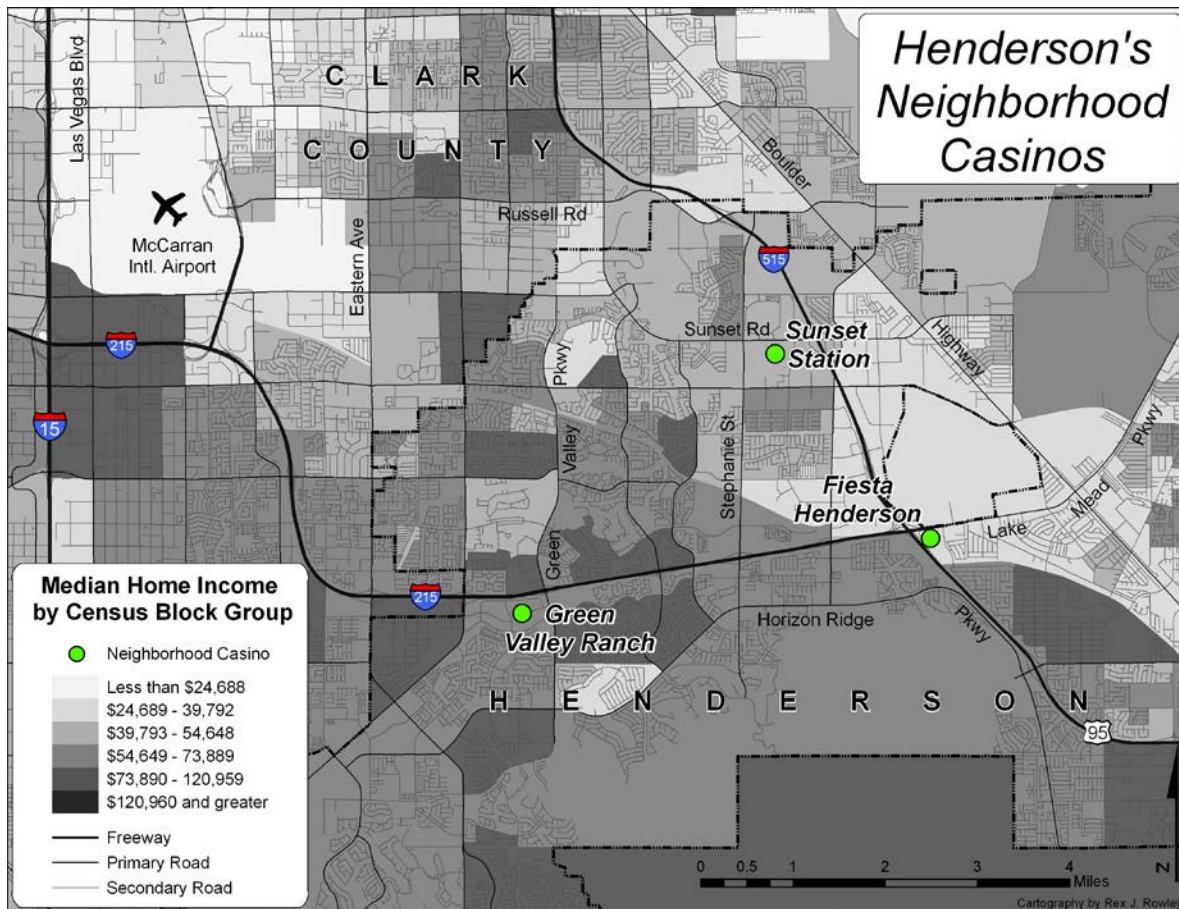


Figure 3: The demographic context for three Henderson locals casinos. Note that Highway 95/Interstate 515 acts as a barrier for affluent Green Valley dwellers living to the southwest of Fiesta Henderson.

locals casino in a neighborhood with that same character.

The third Henderson casino, Green Valley Ranch, adds further elements of luxury. Located in an affluent part of the city, its lavish quality matches the caliber of homes. Green Valley Ranch has a spa, for example, and The District, an adjacent mixed-use shopping center. Unlike both Fiesta Henderson and Sunset Station, Green Valley Ranch does not have a hotel tower. Instead, the hotel’s low-lying, “Mediterranean-style” design is reminiscent of an oversized suburban mansion one might find in the

surrounding neighborhoods. In fact, as the property’s fact sheet explains: “Guests arriving at the hotel and spa lobby, separated from the action of the casino floor, will find the overstuffed furniture and detailed carpets [feel] like being in an opulent and cozy living room.” In addition, the resort’s posh pool and vineyard sit in an eight-acre area that owners have dubbed the “Backyard.”<sup>45</sup> Green Valley Ranch, one of the swankiest locals casinos in the valley, is part of an area that contains some of the most expensive homes in the valley.

A map showing the location of the three casino properties in relationship to local median home income accentuates my argument (Figure 3). One can clearly see the distinct differences in the affluence of the population directly surrounding each property. Similar indicators (e.g., median home value, median number of rooms per home) tell the same story.

Extending the notion of the neighborhood casino anchor, I submit that the gaming and entertainment complexes have become landmarks. When describing location within the valley Las Vegas often use major cross-streets. More generally, they use cardinal directions or municipality/master-planned community names: north, south, east, and west, or Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Summerlin. But, in a growing number of cases, locals casinos definitely help to identify location. I have found myself using all these systems. For my childhood home, I might say I lived near Rainbow Boulevard and Flamingo Road. To explain the location of my more recent home, I might say it is in the eastern valley near Boulder Station and Sam's Town. Recently, I met a former local who explained that he used to live "down in Henderson, by the Fiesta."<sup>46</sup> And, if you browse through Craigslist.com and look at the descriptions buyers and sellers give for their part of the Las Vegas metropolitan area, you will often find something akin to "near Santa Fe Station."

To summarize, Las Vegas's locals casinos are a geographical phenomenon in illustrating an urban structure similar to other American cities and in their role in catering to a location-based market. Such attributes can serve as a possible model for understanding gambling's expansion around the country. Indeed, many of the casinos that have opened in American cities in the past twenty years can be considered a type of the Vegas neighborhood casino in their gaming and entertainment offerings and in their location relative to an intended urban or suburban market population. In addition, as prominent suburban landscape features that act as reflections of their surrounding

environments, locals casinos act as a symbolic landscape for the non-tourist side of Las Vegas. If we can call the Strip the city's *perceptual* symbolic landscape from the outsider perspective, then we might label the sprawling complex of locals casinos the city's *functional* symbolic landscape for residents. And, I would also submit the notion that each neighborhood casino is also an individual symbolic landscape for its chunk of city. Such a claim takes the influential geographer Donald Meinig's original use of the term "symbolic landscape" at a national and regional scale and applies it at the neighborhood level.<sup>47</sup> In any city, one looks to the most prominent features on the local cultural landscape to represent different sectors or regions of a city. In Las Vegas that just happens to be casino complexes.

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**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).
- <sup>2</sup> Hal Rothman, "How the Valley's Growth Pattern Has Helped Shape the Future of the American Downtown," *Las Vegas Sun* (hereafter *Sun*), July 9, 2006, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/text/2006/jul/09/566661511.html> (accessed June 9, 2007).
- <sup>3</sup> Hal Rothman, "How the Valley's Growth."
- <sup>4</sup> In many aspects, Las Vegas (especially from the locals perspective) is like any other city in the country, but because of its uniquely tourist-centric economy, Las Vegas warps the mold.
- <sup>5</sup> Ron Lurie, interview with author, June 7, 2007, Las Vegas, NV. Lisa Snedeker, "Newest Casino Opens in Northwest Las Vegas," *Sun*, September 13, 2000, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2000/sep/13/newest-casino-opens-in-northwest-las-vegas/> (accessed March 26, 2008); Liz Benston, "Palms, Ranch Find Right Blend of Tourists, Locals," *Sun*, November 15, 2002, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2002/nov/15/palms-ranch-find-right-blend-of-tourists-locals/> (accessed March 25, 2008); Liz Benston, "It's on Las Vegas Boulevard, but M Resort Aims Mostly at Locals," *Sun*, August 11, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/20087/aug/11/its-las-vegas-boulevard-m-resort-aims-mostly-local/> (accessed August 13, 2008).
- <sup>6</sup> Lori Nelson, interview with author, January 19, 2011, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>7</sup> Station Casinos has even launched an accompanying website, <http://www.weluvlocals.com/>.
- <sup>8</sup> Advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (hereafter *Review-Journal*), February 8, 1990, 6A.
- <sup>9</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, November 1, 1989, 3A.
- <sup>10</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, May 24, 1987, 3A.
- <sup>11</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, May 19, 1985, 5B.
- <sup>12</sup> Advertisements, *Review-Journal*, May 26, 1988, 3A; May 16, 1990, 7A.
- <sup>13</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, March 23, 1987, 4E.
- <sup>14</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, May 16, 1990, 13A.
- <sup>15</sup> Adam Goldman, "Paycheck Cashing at Casinos Questioned," *Sun*, November 8, 2004, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2004/nov/08/paycheck-cashing-at-casinos-questioned/> (accessed March 26, 2008).
- <sup>16</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, November 1, 1989, 10A.
- <sup>17</sup> Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas 1930-2000*, 2nd ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 77-78.
- <sup>18</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, January 2, 1983, 2A.
- <sup>19</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, February 5, 1989, 14A.
- <sup>20</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, July 30, 1990, 6A.
- <sup>21</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, September 23, 1990, 2K.
- <sup>22</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, January 12, 1990, 4A; Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, May 24, 1987, 8C; Advertisements, *Review-Journal*, November 25, 1986, 8D, 4E.

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- <sup>23</sup> Advertisement, *Review-Journal*, February 8, 1990, 6A.
- <sup>24</sup> Advertisements, *Review-Journal*, October 27, 1983, 5A; November 15, 1983, 5A.
- <sup>25</sup> Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas 1930–2000*, 2nd ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 77–78; Rex J. Rowley, *Bright Light City: Sense of Place Beyond the Las Vegas Strip*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 2009, 468–69, 486.
- <sup>26</sup> George Stamos, Jr., “The Great Resorts of Las Vegas: How They Began!” *Las Vegas Sun Magazine*, September 2, 1979, 9. Incidentally, Stamos explained, this promotion almost backfired because it brought so many people into the place that not all could or would gamble while there.
- <sup>27</sup> “Contest Winner,” *Review-Journal*, December 30, 1959, 15.
- <sup>28</sup> Interestingly, because of these two different names and the characteristics they connote, some people in Las Vegas distinguish between the two as different types of property. Ron Lurie, General Manager for Arizona Charlie’s, for example, claimed that his property was the first real “neighborhood” casino because it was literally built in a neighborhood, without much other commercial or industrial land around it as was the case with other locals properties. In fact, a postcard for that property from the 1990s included the text, “Visit Arizona Charlie’s, Your Neighborhood Resort.” More often than not, however, the terms are used interchangeably. Even Mr. Lurie did so. At the same time, the different names do allow us to dissect the characteristics of this type of casino property. See Ron Lurie, interview with author, June 7, 2007, Las Vegas, NV; Postcard, in Dennis McBride Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Special Collections.
- <sup>29</sup> Stamos, “The Great Resorts,” 7.
- <sup>30</sup> Moehring, *Resort City*, 183; Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 166.
- <sup>31</sup> See Howard Stutz, “Casino Sinks Into History,” *Review-Journal*, January 12, 2006, [http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj\\_home/2006/Jan-12-Thu-2006/news/5303102.html](http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2006/Jan-12-Thu-2006/news/5303102.html) (accessed April 3, 2008).
- <sup>32</sup> One exception to this latter guideline is the Wild Wild West located on West Tropicana Avenue, which houses only 220 slot/video poker machines. But, since it is attached to a hotel, I put it in the category with other locals casinos. Station Casinos, “Wild Wild West Hotel and Casino Property Fact Sheet,” <http://www.stationcasinos.com/corp/newsroom/kits/> (accessed February 23, 2009).
- <sup>33</sup> Lori Nelson, interview with author, January 19, 2011, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>34</sup> Discussion with author, April 11, 2007, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>35</sup> Sonya Padgett, “Boulder Highway Casinos: The Other Strip,” *Review-Journal*, March 27, 2008, <http://www.lvrj.com/living/17044801.html> (accessed April 4, 2008).
- <sup>36</sup> Pascale Nedelec. “Urban Dynamics in the Las Vegas Valley: Neighborhood Casinos and Sprawl,” Occasional Paper Series 4. Las Vegas: Center for Gaming Research, University Libraries, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2010
- <sup>37</sup> Rob Stillwell, email communication with author, April 23, 2007, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>38</sup> Lori Nelson, interview with author, January 19, 2011, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>39</sup> Rob Stillwell, email communication with author, April 23, 2007, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>40</sup> Lori Nelson, interview with author, January 19, 2011, Las Vegas, NV.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> Station Casinos, “Fiesta Henderson Casino Hotel Property Fact Sheet,” <http://www.stationcasinos.com/corp/newsroom/kits/> (accessed February 23, 2009), 1.
- <sup>44</sup> Station Casinos, “Sunset Station Hotel and Casino Property Fact Sheet,” <http://www.stationcasinos.com/corp/newsroom/kits/> (accessed February 23, 2009), 1.

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- <sup>45</sup> Station Casinos, “Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa and Casino Property Fact Sheet,” <http://www.stationcasinos.com/corp/newsroom/kits/> (accessed February 23, 2009), 2.
- <sup>46</sup> Phone conversation with author, March 14, 2009.
- <sup>47</sup> Donald W. Meinig, “Symbolic Landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Donald W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 164–65.