



# REAL GEOGRAPHY

EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

McGraw-Hill Higher Education

## “Urban Growth in Sin City” by Jon C. Malinowski, Ph.D.

A lot of discussions about urban growth focus on the megacities of the world, such as New York, Tokyo, or Mexico City. But rapid growth can also have a dramatic impact on smaller cities.

Las Vegas, known worldwide as Sin City and considered a playground for gamblers and families alike, faces real challenges linked to rapid growth.

Las Vegas was still a small city when the first tourist hotels opened in the 1940s. Gambling boomed in that decade as well, and Vegas was on its way. The 1960s and 1970s saw an additional boom based on tourism and further boom in the 1980s and 1990s as a convention city.

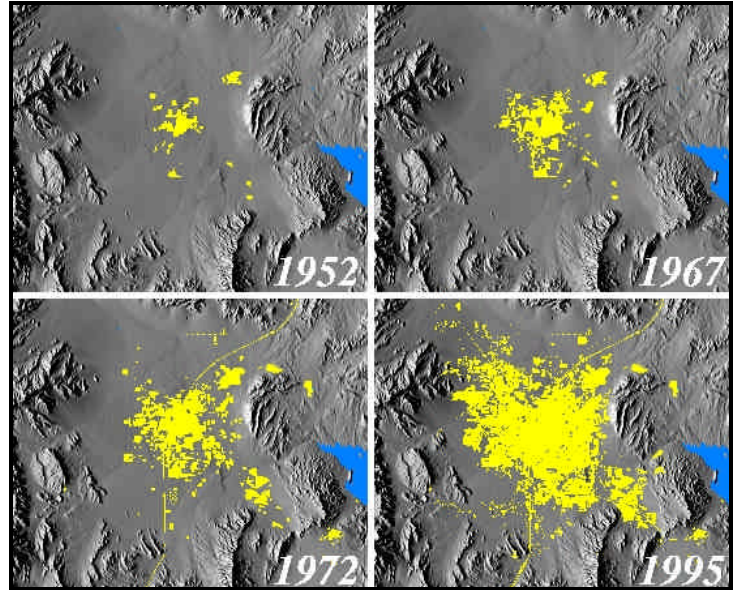
Today, the Las Vegas metropolitan area is the fastest growing in the United States. From less than 50,000 people in the Las Vegas metropolitan area in 1950, the valley now has 1.4 million and is growing by over

70,000 residents per year.

The impact of this growth touches all aspects of the human and physical environment. More housing destroys or disrupts fragile desert soils, causing dust problems and near irreversible environmental damage.

Water supply is quickly becoming a problem as well. In May of 2003, the U.S. government warned Southern Nevada that without greater conservation efforts, the region could face a serious water shortage by 2025.

Human landscapes are also



Source: USGS

### Further Research

1. Las Vegas is the U.S.'s fastest growing urban area. What are some of the other fast growing areas? Do they face similar problems as those faced by Las Vegas?
2. Explore the geography of gambling in the United States. Where is it legal and where is it illegal? Has the geography of gambling changed in recent decades?



affected. Urban planners must build roads, locate new schools, plan sewerage systems, and insure that citizens have adequate access to health care and emergency services. Traffic jams both on the Strip and across the city are worse than ever.

So the next time you or a friend visits Las Vegas, look beyond the lights and resorts and think about sustaining a city in the middle of the desert. Ask local workers about traffic and housing and how they've changed in the past decade.

### Links:

- Urban Land Use Change in the Las Vegas Valley  
[http://geochange.er.usgs.gov/sw/changes/anthropogenic/population/las\\_vegas/](http://geochange.er.usgs.gov/sw/changes/anthropogenic/population/las_vegas/)
- Las Vegas Sun  
<http://www.lasvegassun.com/>