



Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition

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By C. Gregory Dale

Learning from Las Vegas

However, regionalism *can* work. Over the past few years, I have been involved (as a consultant) in a fascinating project that has sought to develop an effective approach to regional planning, while recognizing the strongly held concerns citizens and local officials have about regional government. I'm referring to the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition ("[SNRPC](#)"), a body established four years ago by the Nevada Legislature to deal with rapid growth in the Las Vegas Valley ³

The Las Vegas Valley is the fastest growing region in the country, with its population increasing by about 75,000 per year. This growth is perceived locally as a mixed blessing. While it has meant economic prosperity and job opportunities for many, it has also placed enormous stress on infrastructure (such as roads, water supply, sewers, and schools), and on the environment.

In establishing the SNRPC, the Nevada Legislature was looking for a way to better manage the Valley's growth. In recognition of the importance attached to local control, the Legislature envisioned that the SNRPC would seek regional solutions through a collaborative, problemsolving process.

The enabling legislation called for the preparation of a Regional Policy Plan focusing on a broad range of regional issues (including not just land use in a narrow sense, but also questions related to public facilities, air and water quality, and the promotion of infill housing and development). The legislation also framed a "conformity process" to better ensure consistency between local plans and the newly developed Regional Policy Plan.

The Regional Policy Plan was adopted two years ago. As its title indicates, it is a policy-based plan. Most importantly, the Plan identifies a number of regional initiatives that the Valley's local governments and other entities can cooperate on, and sets out ways in which development standards can be made more consistent between different jurisdictions! The Plan *does not* include a regional map that attempts to allocate future growth among various jurisdictions.

Following adoption of the Regional Policy Plan, the SNRPC engaged in a collaborative process of working with approximately twenty local, regional, and state agencies to review their individual plans to determine whether they were in conformity with the regional plan (and if not, to identify steps to bring them into conformity). As a result, there are now a series of "conformity

agreements" between the SNRPC and the local jurisdictions that identify incremental changes to move them closer to the adopted policies of the Regional Policy Plan.

SUMMING UP:

Clearly, no one solution will fit all regions. But as you consider the relationship between local land use decision-making and regionalism, bear in mind that this does not have to be an "either-or" choice between local autonomy and regional responsibility. Be willing to participate in a dialogue about how you can have both. .

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3 The SNRPC is comprised of elected officials from the cities of Las Vegas, NOM Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder City, along with officials from Clark County and from the Clark County School District

4 Among the initiatives recommended: creating a series of mixed-use development centers in newly developing areas; convening an inter-jurisdictional planning committee to improve the identification of school sites; developing a long-range plan to address the issue of homelessness; and creating incentives for infill development. The Plan also includes a number of policies related to development standards, such as: limiting non-contiguous development; requiring local governments to have capital improvement plans consistent with their land use plans; and developing __ model local regulations and standards for controlling access on major arterials. The Policy Plan can be down loaded from the SNRPC web site: www.snrpc.org