

Antecedent Landscapes and Las Vegas Casinos: Exploring Place through a Referential Perspective

Rex J. Rowley, Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment, Illinois State University

Abstract The image of Las Vegas known throughout the world differs from the lived experience of Las Vegas residents. Yet, even within everyday, local spaces in Las Vegas, evidence abounds of the influence of the Strip and what it symbolizes. I look to the cultural landscape and suggest the idea of antecedent landscapes as one way to explore a sense of place that simultaneously influences and is influenced by Las Vegas tourist imaginaries. An antecedent landscape is one that serves as inspiration for another landscape. I describe several ways in which place is engendered and evoked under the sway of antecedent landscapes. As a direct reference to the Las Vegas Strip, everyday landscapes — casino and otherwise — illustrate a blurred, complicated, and tethered connection between the tourist's Las Vegas and that of the local. And, antecedent suburban landscapes that influence these same casino complexes in Las Vegas suburbs illustrate a pattern of casino emplacement within a neighborhood, further underscoring that bond between "Vegas" and everyday life. The idea of antecedent landscapes can be extended to a number of other contexts in order to better understand the human experience in place.

Key words: sense of place, cultural landscape, neighborhood casino, casino archipelago, gambling

Introduction

Las Vegas is a place that most people think they understand. Such an understanding is most often based on a limited perspective; that of the Las Vegas Strip and how it represents this city as a gambling and adult entertainment playground for more than 42 million people who come every year. Produced, directed, and endorsed by the marketing machine of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and the broader casino-resort industry, that image is embraced in dozens of popular culture depictions of Sin City informing the perceptions of people all over the world. A number of scholars have sought a wider understanding of the city, one

Rex (RJ) Rowley is Associate Professor of Geography in the Department of Geography, Geology and the Environment at Illinois State University. At ISU, he teaches GIS, Urban Geography, World Geography and field classes to explore cultural landscapes in the American Southwest and Japan. In addition, he is the geography program internship coordinator. He has research interests in cultural landscapes, sense of place, and geographic information science. Dr. Rowley has published one book, *Everyday Las Vegas: Local Life in a Tourist Town*, articles in such journals as *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *Geographical Review*, *Great Plains Quarterly*, *Journal of Geography*, and *Cartographica*, and chapters in a number of edited volumes including *Explorations in Place Attachment* and *The Changing World Religion Map*. He enjoys exploring new places on course field trips with students and on family vacations.

that better takes into account the 2 million people living in the Las Vegas Valley (Foster 2018; Gottdiener et al. 1999; Littlejohn 1999; Nédélec 2017; Rothman 2002, Rothman and Davis 2002; Rowley 2013a). And, as more people move to Las Vegas, know someone who has lived in the city, and recognize that the city is more than casinos as it now hosts NHL's Vegas Golden Knights or NFL's Raiders, the limited perception of the city as just an adult playground has begun to shift. Still, most Las Vegas observers would agree that a simple separation of the locals side of the city isn't necessarily possible. That is, the experience for residents in Las Vegas, while different from that of the tourist, is nonetheless influenced by and deeply rooted in the fact that they live in a well-known and singularly unique tourist town (Nédélec 2017; Rothman, 2002; Rowley 2013a).

In this essay, I flesh out the push and pull between the local's experience amid the influence of that well-known image of "Vegas." I introduce the idea of antecedent landscapes — cultural landscapes that influence or impact those that come later — and their manifestation in Las Vegas in order to examine a sense of place in the shadow of the Strip. In doing so, I find that, although there is a distinct place-based identity for locals, it is one that does not exist isolated from imaginaries of city held by the majority of the world's people. I consider the ways in which a number of cultural landscapes within Las Vegas — casino and otherwise — refer to or provide reference for other landscapes that locals interact with on a daily basis. I investigate how these landscapes help to engender and evoke a complicated sense of place for locals that exists within and is intertwined with the powerful Vegas image. Specifically, I will uncover a set of implications for a sense of place at two scales:

1. The Las Vegas Strip is antecedent to everyday landscapes and locals casinos, illustrating a blurred, complicated, and tethered connection between the tourist's Las Vegas and that of the local.

2. Antecedent suburban landscapes that influenced locals casinos in Las Vegas suburbs highlight both a nod to the Strip and a pattern of emplacement of a casino within a neighborhood, further strengthening that place-based bond between "Vegas" and everyday life.

In the next section I describe my approach to cultural landscape and sense of place within the context of this study and define the idea of antecedent landscapes. I then turn to an analysis of this landscape typology in Las Vegas to suggest how a referential perspective in cultural landscape study (one that takes into account elements in one landscape that reference an antecedent) can help to uncover a sense of place in this city. Finally, I conclude with some remarks about how antecedent landscapes can be useful beyond Las Vegas.

Sense of Place, Cultural Landscapes, and Antecedents

Place is a complex term embraced by a number of disciplines in many cultural contexts (Creswell 2015). I follow a phenomenological perspective that frames place as something created out of human experience within a space (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977). The geographer Cary de Wit has defined a related term, sense of place,

as “the experience of place in all its dimensions” (2003, 6). It is the feelings of identity, familiarity, and attachment that form as a result of a person’s interaction with place (Ryden 1993). JB Jackson has argued that a group of people can share a sense of place, what he termed “a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience” (1994, 157). In other words, sense of place is a recognizable character and personality within a particular locale created through human interaction with a space. Place scholars have a longstanding tradition of analyzing a sense of place through a variety of frames including literature (Pocock 1981; Wyckoff 2013), stories and folklore (Ryden 1993; Basso 1996), interviews with residents (de Wit 2001; Schnell 2003), and the cultural landscape (Wyckoff 2014; Rowley 2018).

Cultural landscapes are an influential analytical tool for scholars within geography and its allied disciplines. Geographers have understood cultural landscapes, variously, to be the outcome of a cultural group acting on a physical world (Sauer 1925), as the “unwitting autobiography” of a culture that, when read like a text, can tell us about its writers (Lewis 1979), and as a site for contest whether that be social (Alderman 2008), political (Mitchell 2003), or economic (Henderson 1998). At the heart of cultural landscape research is the idea that landscapes do work to produce meaning that is a reflection of those who create, modify, and use them (Meinig 1979; Jackson 1984; Schein 2018) and that, in turn, influence those who interact with them (Schein 1997, 2003; Mitchell 2008).

I am interested in examining the role of casino landscapes in the production of a sense of place. In his treatise on the origins and meaning of the word “landscape” JB Jackson promoted the following definition: “A composition of . . . spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence . . . which underscores not only our identity and presence, but also our history” (1984, 8). Groth reminded that “landscape denotes the interaction of people and place . . . from which [they] derive some part of their shared identity and meaning” (1997, 1). Wyckoff further clarified the connection between landscape and place: cultural landscape is the “material, tangible expression of human settlement on the surface of the earth [a notion that] embodies how people — through their experiences — connect these visible elements to place-based meanings and regional identity” (2014, 4). Geographers and other landscape scholars have long looked to the cultural landscape to interpret place meaning and a sense of place (see Colton 2010).

I suggest the idea of antecedent landscapes as one way of understanding place meaning as derived from cultural landscapes. An antecedent landscape serves as inspiration for another landscape. The result, a subsequent landscape, owes some portion of credit — with regards to its appearance, aesthetic, character, construction, and/or naming — to that antecedent landscape. References to an antecedent landscape may be as obvious as a toponymic connection or more obscure in, for example, a surficial mimicking of architectural style. Similarly, such reference may be directly traceable to decisions made by a designer, architect, or institution responsible for creating a new landscape that mimics an antecedent. Or a subsequent landscape may be the result of such actors having been inadvertently

inspired by some strong cultural influence or dominating market force (the common pattern in Las Vegas). Interpreting cultural landscapes through this typological lens helps landscape scholars to include but go beyond a simple “reading” of our “unwitting autobiography” (Lewis 1979) to more fully understand how landscapes change, what forces behind that change tell us about place (Alderman 2008), and how changed landscapes inform the experience of those who live and interact with them (Schein 1997).

The idea of looking to an “antecedent” has a long history in cultural landscape research. The term was often invoked by Terry Jordan in studies of American folk landscape and architecture’s connection to European precursors (Jordan 1974; 1983), and others followed such usage in similar research (Kaups 1981; Weaver 1986; Butzer 1988; Roth 2018). Reference to an antecedent landscape has often focused on the rural, where “the goal of most children was to live in a world in which they could replicate the patterns (social as well as spatial) of their antecedents” (Salter 1990, 69). Even beyond such explicit usage of antecedents, the idea of looking to the historical background of a landscape to interpret meaning is nothing new. In fact, the historical perspective is fundamental to cultural landscape study (Lewis 1979; Meinig 1979; Mitchell 1996; Schein 1997; Foote 2003; Dwyer 2004; Mitchell 2008; Wyckoff 2014). I want to go beyond simply understanding a landscape’s derivation. In pointing to a subsequent landscape’s roots within antecedents, we can better tease out landscape’s influence in the creation of a sense of place.

The conclusions I present are a condensation of 15 years of observations and analysis of the casino landscape in Las Vegas and its influence across America. This work builds on recent scholarship that has grappled with questions of gaming’s expansion in the US (Cohen and Schwartz 2018, Rowley in press), the definition and history of Las Vegas locals casino enterprises (Rowley 2013b; Schwartz 2014), the significance of naming within the gaming landscape (Raento and Douglass 2001; Alexis et al. 2016), gambling’s influence on place-based identity (Raento and Schwartz, 2011; Rowley 2015), and the often blurry lines between the Las Vegas experienced by residents and that of the tourists (Rothman 2002; Nédélec 2010; Rowley 2013a; Alexis et al. 2016; Nédélec 2017). At the foundation of this research is a long-term ethnographic project to understand the local side Las Vegas, a city that is most commonly perceived by those living outside Southern Nevada as only a tourist space (Rowley 2013a). That research involved interviews, archive work, and participant observation over several field periods, and included my own experience living in the city in my youth. I don’t draw directly on that “data” here, although I examine a series of observations — grounded in my own work and the recent work by other scholars of Las Vegas — that have coalesced around the work that casino landscapes do. What follows is a presentation of meaning within everyday landscapes that often go unrecognized by passersby; after all, “everyday experience is essential to the formation of human meaning” (Groth 1997, 3). I thus look to the commonplace, seemingly banal connections between people and surrounding landscapes as the site of such experience and,

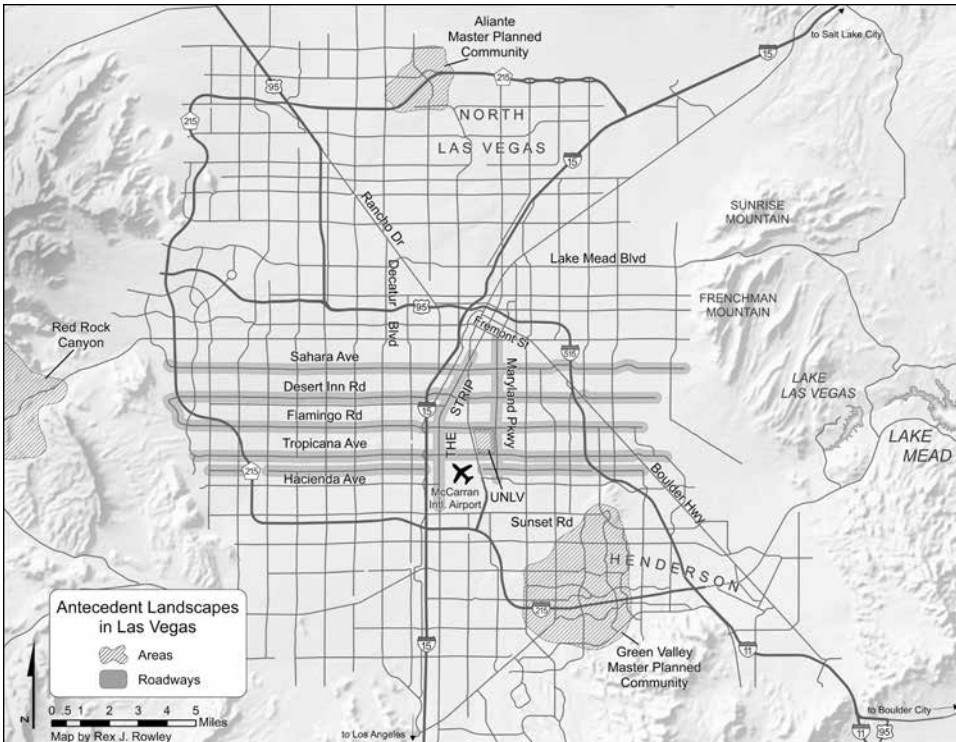


Figure 1. Map showing some of the significant antecedent landscapes and other important locations referred to in the text. Cartography by the author. Road data from Clark County GIS Management Office.

thus, as shapers of a sense of place. Figure 1 shows the spatial context of several landscapes that will be referenced below.

The Strip as Antecedent to the Local's Las Vegas

Like any cultural landscape, the Las Vegas Strip can be seen from a variety of perspectives each with its own set of meanings. The Strip emblemizes the Las Vegas of the *Hangover* movies and countless other films and TV shows portraying this tourist landscape. The Strip is the focal point of weekend vacations, evenings out after a long day at a trade show, and bachelor/bachelorette parties. The Strip is the main character in many-a-story told by friends reminiscing about college spring breaks. The Strip is the economic engine at the heart of the Las Vegas economy. The tourism industry, centered on this four-mile stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard, accounts for more than 37% of Southern Nevada's employment and more than half of its gross product (LVCVA 2019), and much of the rest of the city's workforce provides goods and services in support of the community that exists as a result. And, the Strip is the driving force behind many of the everyday landscapes that the city's two million residents interact with on a daily basis.

What we know today as the Strip grew out of tourism expansion in the 1940s. Before that time, Las Vegas was a small railroad town born at a 1905 land auction for the San Pedro, Los Angeles, & Salt Lake Railroad. It relied on Hoover Dam construction and visitors coming through the area to see the massive project to



Figure 2. The Flamingo on the Las Vegas Strip, 1950s. Courtesy UNLV Special Collections. Used by permission.

get it through the Great Depression, and, with gambling legalized in 1931, the city remained attractive to tourists thereafter. In 1940, just over 10,000 people called Las Vegas home. The city's population, and its gambling industry, remained centered around downtown and Fremont Street. At the encouragement of local boosters, Thomas Hull expanded his chain of El Rancho hotels into the Las Vegas Valley, but chose to do so just outside the city limits, at the corner of Highway 91 (an extension of 5th Street leading south out of town that was then known as the Los Angeles Highway and today as Las Vegas Boulevard) and San Francisco Avenue (later renamed Sahara). This allowed him to avoid city taxes and regulations, but also provided him enough space for an expansive set of low-lying, motel-style rooms, accompanying parking space, and recreation amenities that he wouldn't have found downtown (see Figure 1). In the El Rancho, Hull set the mold for the Las Vegas casino resort and what would become the Las Vegas Strip (Roske 1986).

A series of mostly western-themed casino resorts along Highway 91 came later, each inspired by the success of El Rancho Vegas: The Last Frontier (1942), Club Bingo (1947), and the Thunderbird (1948). Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel is credited for taking that pattern and giving it a frill and flare that was mimicked by future Las Vegas casino-resorts when he opened the Flamingo in 1946, two miles south of the El Rancho at Las Vegas Boulevard and Flamingo Road (Figure 2). The trend in both style and structure set by Hull and Siegel continued southward on Las Vegas Boulevard with new resorts built throughout the 1950s: the Desert Inn (1950), Sands (1952), Sahara (1952), Dunes (1955), Riviera (1955), Hacienda

(1956), Tropicana (1957), and Stardust (1958). Guy McAfee, who built downtown's Golden Nugget and the 91 Club, gave the four-mile stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard extending south of San Francisco/Sahara Avenue its most well-known moniker today; he thought the budding resort corridor reminiscent of the Sunset Strip in his native Southern California (Moehring and Green 2005). This early Las Vegas Strip planted seeds for the Las Vegas that is known by millions around the world today and serves as antecedent to many of the landscapes Las Vegas locals experience in their everyday lives.

The Strip dictated the trajectory for urban expansion in the growing city. As preeminent Las Vegas historian, Eugene Moehring (2000), reminded, tourism was the primary force that “fueled the urbanization of Las Vegas in the 1950s” (73); the Strip “revolutionized the town’s growth patterns” (246). Defense projects in both North Las Vegas and Henderson provided additional seeds for such growth in the north and south of the Las Vegas Valley, but expansion of resorts along Las Vegas Boulevard was a primary driver of commercial and residential growth beyond the historic downtown core. Maryland Parkway was the channel for much of this growth. Maryland Parkway, like Las Vegas Boulevard, is a southern extension of a downtown street that runs parallel to the Strip and commercial growth along this corridor paralleled the tourism growth on the Strip. During the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s, the street saw construction of Sunrise Hospital and ancillary office buildings, the city’s first indoor mall, and a number of other retail and commercial ventures. Residential development began filling in county land adjacent to both Maryland Parkway and Las Vegas Boulevard. At the southern end of the road, the first buildings of Nevada Southern University (to become University of Nevada, Las Vegas) were constructed near Tropicana Avenue in 1957. A mile further south, in space between Maryland and the Boulevard, the city’s new airport began taking shape in the early 1960s. Finally, the path and placement of Interstate 15 — the modern link between Southern California, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City completed in early 1970s — was heavily influenced by Strip; it was intended to “easily transport gaming and hotel employees to their jobs [and] deliver . . . tourists from [Southern California]” (247). Additionally, the interstate, located parallel to and west of the Boulevard, would spur on expansion of the urban area to the west half of the valley (Moehring 2000; see Figure 1).

These initial growth patterns, dictated by the Strip, propelled a southward trajectory that made it so future growth did not simply take place in concentric circles around downtown, but allowed for a spread from a much wider base until today when the city has built up nearly to the mountains that are a natural boundary for the urban area. Furthermore, the hospital, mall, retail areas, university, and airport developments of this early era all still thrive in their original locations, standing as a legacy of Strip-driven growth during this time.

As the city continued to grow, a system of arterial roads was necessary to carry the growing population moving to and from work, shopping, and play. Here too, the Strip played the role of antecedent landscape. Like other cities, Las Vegas’s major roads connect people to their history and place. They are named for nearby

physical features (Spring Mountain Road; Lake Mead Boulevard), historical figures (Fremont Street), significant people in local history (Decatur Boulevard and Stewart Avenue after an early ranchers in the valley), historical moments of local and regional importance (Bonanza Road; Rancho Drive), important places within the state (Reno Avenue), and neighboring communities (Boulder Highway). Five other major roads in the city, however, take their names directly from resorts on the Las Vegas Strip, indicating the casino landscape's powerful historical presence, its continued influence within the city, and the toponymic connection between Las Vegas and their place (Raento and Douglass 2001).

The east-west thoroughfares, starting at the southernmost, are Hacienda Avenue, Tropicana Avenue, Flamingo Road, Desert Inn Road, and Sahara Avenue (see Figure 1). Each road stretches across the valley, from edge to edge, and is named for the major resort-casino built at its intersection with the Strip in the 1940s and 1950s. Only three of the properties — Sahara, Flamingo, and Tropicana — exist at their original location today. But, all of the names remain and “leave no doubt about the business that characterizes Las Vegas” (Alexis et al. 2016, 20). These are some of the first streets new residents come to know; the thoroughfares not only connect east and west parts of the valley (through the Strip corridor), but are home to major hospitals, businesses, offices, and shopping complexes used by residents from all over the city. Most locals using the roads to move through the city are likely more focused on simply getting across Las Vegas Boulevard without getting stuck behind tourist traffic than they are on the reason Flamingo Road is named as such, but as Alexis and colleagues note, these streets “carry associations to the Las Vegas of popular imagination and the Rat Pack days, announcing that this is Las Vegas, even in the suburbs” (2016, 21). Hacienda, Trop, Flamingo, DI (shortened form used by locals) and Sahara, as subsequent landscapes to the antecedent Strip, underscore a direct connection between the local and the tourist side of their city.

Even residents who fail to recognize such a connection will continue to interact with the legacy of the Strip on these roads in other, even more significant ways. Raento and Douglass (2001) noted that toponymic landscapes can be both reflective and projective. Indeed, “street names denote the city's history, geography, and identity as an inheritance” (Alexis et al 2016, 21). The Strip's influence is further projected as it is passed down to a second wave of naming in the establishments that carry similar denotations. Many such businesses line these five roads, embedding the Strip's powerful antecedence even deeper within the local landscape. Here are just a handful of examples: Hacienda Liquors, Tropicana West Chiropractic, Tropicana Christian Fellowship, Flamingo Pet Clinic, Flamingo Promenade Shopping Center, Flamingo Surgery Center (Figure 3), Desert Inn Mobile Home Park, Don's DI Auto and Truck Service, Sahara Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, and Sahara West Apartments. The act of naming such institutions does not imply direct reference to the Strip; the namers were likely more interested in providing a company name that evoked a proximal familiarity within everyday spaces. But these landscapes, and others like them, remain connected to the



Figure 3. Flamingo Surgery Center on Flamingo Road, near Eastern Avenue. This is one of many toponyms with antecedence on the Las Vegas Strip. Photo by the author.

city's tourist history by toponymic lineage, further highlighting the penetrating, projected influence of the antecedent Strip, beyond the Strip.

Antecedents and Locals Casinos

A relatively new casino landscape in Las Vegas owes its origins, expansion, and present-day form and function to the antecedent Strip. Las Vegas in generations past had a more direct relationship to the Strip. Longtime locals will remember times when the Strip was their playground too (Frehner 2002; Rowley 2013a). But, as the city's population grew, and as the tourist crowds became a nuisance for locals who wanted to gamble, a unique pattern of locally oriented casinos began to develop (Gottdiener et al. 1999; Schwartz 2014). The result became what Las Vegas call locals, or neighborhood casinos.

Gambling is everywhere in Las Vegas. Whereas video poker in bars, grocery stores and gas stations demonstrate the ubiquity of gaming beyond the tourist core, the institution of locals casinos provides a clear illustration of the Strip's influence in the entertainment landscape of residents. Locals casinos are a distinct casino landscape in three ways (Rowley 2013b). First, they cater primarily to a local clientele, typically on the order of 75% or more of their business. Second, they are sited at locations away from the tourist corridor, within or near a neighborhood context in proximity to their primary market. Third, neighborhood casinos must be of a certain size, typically attached to a hotel, often containing more than 1000 slots or other electronic games of chance, and offering a set of dining and other entertainment amenities to attract a broad range of patrons. Some locals properties, in fact, have more slot and video poker machines than Strip casinos due to the popularity of such games among locals (LVCVA 2016). Neighborhood



Figure 4. Bingo Palace casino (circa late 1970s), pioneer in the Las Vegas locals casino market and forerunner to today's Palace Station at Sahara Avenue and Rancho Drive. Courtesy UNLV Special Collections. Used with permission.

casino Santa Fe Station, for example, has 2400 slots while the Flamingo on the Strip has around 1600. Tourist properties typically have many more hotel rooms, however, given their primary out-of-town customer base. In short, neighborhood casinos may be thought of as imitations of Strip properties, but in a neighborhood space and for a residential market.

As Schwartz noted, “when the first identifiable purpose-built ‘neighborhood casino’ appears is a matter of debate” (2014, 886). Indeed, the growth of the locals casino market seems to have emerged organically over time, but did so with reference to the Strip. The Showboat was completed in 1954 during the great boom of Strip casino construction, but at a location on Boulder Highway two miles outside of downtown. Intent on becoming an anchor for a new resort corridor, the property struggled financially due to its remote location and so began to market to locals. Adding breakfast specials, a bowling alley, and other promotions geared to Las Vegans, the Showboat eventually shifted its focus and catered to a hybrid local-tourism clientele (Moehring 2000; Schwartz 2014). Such a move would be mimicked by later locally-oriented casinos. The Moulin Rouge, opened in 1955 and only open for a short time, was the first racially integrated resort in the city and the first major off-Strip casino property located within a residential neighborhood (Moehring and Green 2005), another pattern found in today's locals joints.

It was in the 1970s that we see the locals casino gain purposeful staying power. “As the town grew and tourism increased [during this period], local residents became less willing to fight the traffic and crowds of the Strip” (Gottdiener et



Figure 5. Location of casinos in the Las Vegas metropolitan area, overlaid on city streets. Cartography by the author. Data from Clark County GIS Management Office.

al. 1999, 204). In July of 1976, Frank Fertitta Jr., a downtown bellman turned blackjack dealer turned pit boss, saw a hole in the local gaming market. Along with two investment partners, Fertitta opened “The Casino” adjacent to the Mini Price Motor Inn on Sahara, near Interstate 15 (Powers 2009) with just 100 slots, six table games and a snack bar (Schwartz 2014; Lilly 2016). It was meant as a place where his fellow employees, dealers and cocktail waitresses in the tourist core, could play after work (Powers 2009). Operators changed the name to Bingo Palace the next year, after a renovation and addition of that locally appealing game to its offerings (Figure 4). A third and final name change to Palace Station came in 1984 as the casino continued to expand in dining, gambling, and lodging options. The name was chosen from thousands of entries submitted by locals. The theme of trains became an iconic one for the property, evoking a local sensibility while avoiding a blatantly western theme so common of Strip properties of the time (Prince 2017). By the 1990s the property had expanded to over 1000 hotel rooms, “2,175 slot machines, 55 gaming tables, two keno lounges, a bingo parlor, a poker room, and a race and sports book” (Schwartz 2014, 893). Palace Station established a pattern for the locals casino market through their locally friendly atmosphere, games with local appeal (bingo and slots in the early days and slot machines and video poker in more recent years), and marketing promotions that continue to draw locals to the casino floor to the present (Rowley 2013b; Schwartz 2014).

Table 1. Las Vegas Locals Casinos and Their Amenities. Sources: Clark County GIS Management Office, casino websites, World Gaming Directory

Name	Opened	Current Owner	Rooms	Slots	Tables	Dining Options	Bowling Lanes	Movie Screens	Other Attractions
Palace Station	1976	Station Casinos	575	1800	43	9	0	9	Convention/Meeting Space
Sam's Town	1979	Boyd Gaming	645	1936	29	11	56	18	Live Entertainment Venue, Arcade, RV Park, Indoor Park, Spa, Convention/Meeting Space
Eastside Cannery	1979 (as Nevada Palace)	Boyd Gaming	306	1484	17	5	0	0	Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
Silver Sevens	1981 (as Continental)	Affinity Gaming	300	600	25	4	0	0	Convention/Meeting Space
Gold Coast	1986	Boyd Gaming	712	1767	49	8	70	0	Convention/Meeting Space
Arizona Charlie's Decatur	1988	Golden Entertainment	258	1100	12	5	0	0	Concert Venue
Santa Fe Station	1990 (as Santa Fe)	Station Casinos	200	2400	39	13	60	16	Kids Quest, Convention/Meeting Space
Boulder Station	1994	Station Casinos	299	2500	33	11	0	11	Kids Quest, Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
Silverton	1994 (as Boomtown)	Ed Roski Jr.	300	1500	23	11	0	0	Salwater aquarium, Bass Pro Shops, Silverton Village (Retail and Hospitality Center), Convention/Meeting Space
Fiesta Rancho	1994 (as Fiesta)	Station Casinos	100	1020	16	7	0	0	Ice Arena, Arcade, Live Entertainment Venue
Texas Station	1995	Station Casinos	200	1700	20	8	60	18	Kids Quest, Arcade, Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
The Orleans	1996	Boyd Gaming	1885	2443	60	14	70	18	Spa, Kids Tyme, Arcade, Concert Venue, Spa, 9,000-seat Events Arena, Convention/Meeting Space
Sunset Station	1997	Station Casinos	457	2100	36	12	72	13	Kids Quest, Live Entertainment Venues, Convention/Meeting Space
Fiesta Henderson	1998 (as Reserve)	Station Casinos	224	1400	16	8	0	12	Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
Wild Wild West	1998	Station Casinos	258	165	6	1	0	0	Truck Stop
Rampart Casino at the Resort at Summerlin	1999	Hotspur	548	1767	26	10	0	0	Spa, Golf Access, Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
Suncoast	2000	Boyd Gaming	427	1801	31	9	64	16	Live Entertainment Venue, Arcade, Golf Access
Arizona Charlie's Boulder	2000	Golden Entertainment	300	840	0	4	0	0	Live Entertainment Venue, RV Park
Green Valley Ranch	2001	Station Casinos	495	2300	48	15	0	10	Kids Quest, Arcade, Spa, Live Entertainment Venue, Golf Access, "The District" Shopping Mall, Convention/Meeting Space
Cannery	2003	Boyd Gaming	199	1620	26	7	0	16	Live Entertainment Venue
Red Rock	2006	Station Casinos	796	3000	60	21	72	16	Spa, Kids Quest, Outdoor Concert Venue, Outdoor Adventure Access, Convention/Meeting Space
South Point	2006	Michael Gaughn	2100	2390	60	14	64	16	Spa, Equestrian Center, Live Entertainment Venue, Convention/Meeting Space
Allianté	2008	Boyd Gaming	202	1860	40	13	0	16	Kids Quest, Spa, Arcade, Live Entertainment Venue
M Resort	2009	Penn National Gaming	390	1000	40	8	0	0	Spa, Live Entertainment Venue



Figure 6. Fiesta Rancho Hotel and Casino. Photo by the author.

Competition to Fertitta's venture wasn't far behind. Sam Boyd and his son Bill added to their successful casinos in downtown Las Vegas and Henderson with Sam's Town, which opened in 1979 on a stretch of Boulder Highway roughly half way between the two city centers. With a decidedly western theme but with a hometown feel (in naming, atmosphere, and locally oriented promotions) the new property anchored the budding locals casino market on the east side of the valley, as Palace Station had done on the west (Moehring and Green 2000; Rowley 2013b). Nevada Palace (today Eastside Cannery) opened its doors that same year, just south of Sam's Town on Boulder Highway. Michael Gaughn leveraged his success in the tiny Barbary Coast on the Strip to build the Gold Coast in 1986, a larger property on Flamingo and Valley View Boulevard, a mile west of Las Vegas Boulevard. The Gold Coast became a favorite for residents with budget-friendly dining, bingo, bowling, and, eventually, a movie theater, a trait adopted by many later locals casinos. Another competitor on the valley's west side, Arizona Charlie's opened in 1988 on Decatur Boulevard and Alta Drive within an established neighborhood, again with local-friendly games and a bowling alley (Schwartz 2014). Then, during the meteoric population boom of the 1990s and early 2000s, nearly twenty additional locals casinos opened to profit from residents filling new homes in new subdivisions throughout the Las Vegas Valley (Figure 5; Table 1). Fertitta and the Boyds had set the mold (and Station Casinos and Boyd Gaming are still the major players in the market), but by the 1990s, the locals casino had become an institution (Figure 6).

That institution owes its legacy to the antecedent Las Vegas Strip. Several locals properties followed the pattern set on the Strip to build a resort around a regional

or place-based theme. Santa Fe Station, Texas Station, The Orleans, and both Arizona Charlie's are examples of such mimicry. Even beyond theming, tourist resorts provided a template for what a casino resort should look and feel like. As Schwartz put it, "neighborhood casinos provide a homey taste of these resorts close by" (2014, 897). In fact, as tourist resorts became more lavish, so did those in the locals sector. Just as the Mirage, Treasure Island, and MGM Grand upped the resort offerings on the Strip in the 1990s, Sunset Station, built during the same period, "was decidedly more upscale than [its predecessors] Palace Station or Boulder Station . . . the design centerpiece, the Gaudi Bar, might not have been out of place on the growing Las Vegas Strip" (Schwartz 2014, 895). A few years later, Green Valley Ranch became the luxury standard after the pattern of the Bellagio. Red Rock upped the ante further, just as Wynn Las Vegas did on the Strip in the early 2000s.

Locals casino operators also followed the lead of Strip casinos in *how* they delivered their product. Non-gambling amenities have always been an important component to draw tourists into a Strip or downtown property in hopes that they would stay and gamble away their money. That same pattern is found in locals joints. Consider the amenities for the locals properties listed in Table 1. The ice rink at the Fiesta, the arena at The Orleans, the suite of restaurant offerings at each property, and gaming promotions are all geared to a largely local audience and are meant to bring people through the doors (Rowley 2013b). Nearly all of the city's bowling lanes (the only exception is four lanes in a non-casino cosplay bar in downtown Las Vegas) are found in a casino and two-thirds of the valley's movie screens are housed within locals casino complexes.

In addition, the growth of a locals casinos market was a reaction to what was happening on the Strip. They met the growing desire of locals to have gambling spaces of their own. In the period between 1974 and the late 1980s, no new major resorts come to the Strip, but, new construction of locals casinos was steady (Gottdiener et al. 1999). Further, this new gambling market wouldn't exist without jobs available at Strip resorts, which lured a growing population to the city. As the city population grew and the urban footprint expanded during this time, "casinos closer to their neighborhoods gave people a place to gamble and meet friends after work" (Benston 2005). In the boom decades of the 1990s and 2000s, the construction of several mega-resorts on the Strip was a driving force for population growth, spurred on the second stage of locals casino construction. A representative of Station Casinos acknowledged the antecedent Strip: "When the rooftops grow in a certain area, we grow too. As the Strip grew, so did we" (pers. comm. January 19, 2011). Journalist Liz Benston put it this way: "as always, the future of the locals market is ultimately determined by the Strip. Every new job there counts as another set of feet inside a locals casino" (Benston 2005).

Such a reaction points to a second important antecedent landscape for locals casinos. "Locals casinos follow the urban pattern of growth" (Nédélec 2010, 5). Such a sentiment is evident in the above statement about the expansion of Stations Casinos. Another casino company representative, this one from Boyd Gaming (the

other major player in the market) told me: “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” (pers. comm. April 23, 2007). Whereas the Strip was antecedent to much of the early residential growth in the city, residential growth was antecedent to the establishment of locals casinos.

The antecedent influence of the neighborhood in which locals casinos exist is further evidenced in the naming patterns. Just as a number of everyday toponyms take their cues from the Strip, more than half of locals casinos make toponymic reference to everyday landscapes already in existence when the casino opened. Such a pattern is particularly evident in the wave of properties built since the 1990s. Some properties have taken on the name of the neighborhood context in which they were built. Red Rock sits at the western edge of the Las Vegas Valley just a few minutes’ drive from Red Rock Canyon. Green Valley Ranch has become an entertainment and shopping hub for the Green Valley master-planned community in Henderson. And, Aliante has become a similar anchor for that master-planned community in North Las Vegas. Another set of casinos takes the name of the street on which they are built, including Boulder Station and Arizona Charlie’s Boulder (both on Boulder Highway), Sunset Station (on Sunset Road), Arizona Charlie’s Decatur (on Decatur Boulevard), and Fiesta Rancho (on Rancho Road). Yet another group takes cues from the cardinal directions or names of a municipality, a common way Las Vegans identify in what part of the valley something may be found. South Point, Eastside Cannery, and Fiesta Henderson are examples here (see Figures 1 and 5).

The design of locals casinos also reflects a neighborhood context. The Fertitta brothers, sons and successors of pioneer developer of Palace Station, have been heavily involved in the design phases of the Stations properties, choosing colors and architectural themes reflecting the surroundings of these properties. This is particularly evident at their two most recently built properties. The “rich reds, golds and browns, inspired by the nearby Red Rock Canyon, are the foundation of the color palette” at Red Rock Casino and Resort (Figure 7; Station 2018a). And Aliante (originally Aliante Station before the Fertitta’s sold it to Boyd Gaming as the company faced financial struggles amid the Great Recession), with its off-white stone and blue windows, mimics the white soil of the surrounding arroyo (particularly visible on satellite imagery) and the blue skies against a backdrop of the nearby Sheep Range. Even at the Santa Fe, with toponym and architectural reference beyond Nevada, the overall look of the exterior is meant to reflect the area’s physical geography: “the rugged stones and desert landscaping incorporate the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains” (Station 2018b). And, even without direct visual, architectural reference to local geography, each casino’s style, offerings, and ambiance reflect neighborhood demographic and socio-economic patterns (Rowley 2013b). Higher-end locals casino/resorts that offer spa and other



Figure 7. Red Rock Resort with Red Rock Canyon in the background. Photo by the author.

expensive luxury amenities (Red Rock, Green Valley Ranch, M Resort, Rampart) tend to be found in more affluent neighborhoods while basic, no-frills casinos (Fiesta Henderson, Eastside Cannery, Boulder Station, Arizona Charlie's) are found in older, and largely lower-to-middle-class areas.

Place Implications

Antecedent landscapes are an analytical lens through which we can understand how people interact with their places. Contemporary and explicit landscape references to an influential antecedent underscore the visible, indelible impact of that past on everyday landscapes and, thus, on the human experience in that space. In short, by examining antecedent landscapes we can come to understand the reciprocal interplay between cultural landscape and a sense of place.

In Las Vegas that sense of place is rooted in the experience of locals within a tourist context. The recognition among outsiders of a residential side to Las Vegas is often lost in the shadow of the Las Vegas Strip. In the past, it was common for Las Vegans to be asked in what hotel they lived, in what casino their dad dealt cards, or in what club their mother danced. As Las Vegas has grown, such stereotypes have faded, but the most common reaction I get when I say I grew up in the city is still the distant, "Wow, that must have been weird." In response to such queries, Las Vegans often claim their life in the city is as normal as it would be in any other place. Neither the outsider's uninformed query nor the insider's flippant, dismissive response is true. The foregoing discussion about antecedent and subsequent casino landscapes, I argue, addresses such misconceptions and points to two related personality traits of this place.

First, a direct reference to the Las Vegas Strip in everyday landscapes and locals casinos illustrates a tethered connection between the tourist's Las Vegas and that of the local. The Strip is an ever-present and defining feature of life for Las Vegas. It isn't likely that a local thinks about Bugsy Siegel and his original Flamingo hotel as they drive on Flamingo Road or the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino made famous by Howard Hughes' casino ventures as they drop their car off to have the timing belt changed at Don's DI Auto and Truck Service. Nor is it likely that a resident of the city's older suburbs will recognize that their neighborhood was a direct response to construction on Las Vegas Boulevard and an increase in tourism traffic to their city. But, the Strip serves as antecedent to each of these landscapes experienced by residents on a daily basis. "Like any street sign the [casino names inscribed on the streets] tell [residents] where they are and where they hope to go" (Alexis et al. 2016, 25). Just as the Strip drove urban growth, and the expansion of gambling into residential Las Vegas in the past, tourism, centered on the Strip, remains the driving economic force for urban growth and the "fun" of Vegas remains a pull factor for many other, more recent transplants to the city (Rowley 2013a). And, as they continue to arrive, the locals casino landscape will remain an important entertainment venue, where transplants are likely to play video poker or bet on sports as residents.

Beyond references found on the Strip, neighborhood antecedents to locals casinos in Vegas suburbs reveal a pattern of emplacement of the casino enterprise within residential space, thus blurring the line between local and tourist. Neighborhood casino properties came after residential growth, providing strong evidence pointing to these casino properties as embedded components of their respective neighborhoods. That these casinos, following a pattern seen in places everywhere, take their names from everyday, non-casino toponyms derived from streets or regional monikers strengthens that argument. Naming is an intentional process. "Names shape our expectations and experiences within/in place; they quite literally emplace us" (Alexis et al. 2016, 13). Names of casinos are meant to attract a wide slice of people (Raento and Douglass 2001). An explicitly localized reference to a recognizable street or part of town accomplishes that goal and connects visitors to the casino's broader neighborhood context to which they already identify. Even those properties with non-propinquitous names provide an opportunity for patrons to place themselves; for "indeterminate references [allow] residents to contribute their own meaning" (Alexis et al. 2016, 23). In providing directions as to where they live or work, locals often refer to one of the neighborhood gaming properties as landmarks of particular areas of town. Furthermore, locals often identify with a particular locals casino as their "home casino" (Rowley 2013a; 2013b).

Indeed, locals casinos, embedded in and a part of their neighborhood, have become placemaking tools in their respective sectors within the Las Vegas Valley. As a number of Las Vegas observers have noted, locals casinos properties have become anchors of activity and economy — de facto community hubs — for the neighborhoods in which they exist (Gottdiener et al., 1999., Rothman



Figure 8. Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall, an emblematic example of a Las Vegas locals casino that has become a community hub in its neighborhood. Note the movie theater on the right. Photo by the author.

2002, Benston 2005, Nédélec 2010, Rowley 2013a). They are important spaces for employment. They are the place where people go to play, both in games of chance and in other entertainment. According to a recent study by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitor's Authority (LVCVA), 63% of those residents who gamble on a regular basis do so in a Las Vegas casino (as opposed to a bar or convenience store). Of that group, fully 82% do so in locals casino properties. Beyond gambling, the same study cited casinos as important venues for other leisure activities, including eating out, shopping, bowling, and movies (LVCVA 2016). Significantly, movies are the most popular leisure activity among Las Vegas residents (LVCVA 2016), and with so many movie screens housed in locals casinos, it is plain to see how influential these properties are in everyday life. The fact that such influential institutions — rooted in a gambling *raison d'être* — exist as hubs within a neighborhood context further emphasizes the fact that local, everyday life for Las Vegas residents is not far from the Strip (Figure 8).

The line between the local and the tourist in Las Vegas is both unmistakable and blurry. As revealed through an understanding of antecedent landscapes, the influence of the Strip and the embeddedness of the casino landscape in the local, everyday Las Vegas experience evoke a sense of place that is difficult to completely separate from a tourist space. Geographer Pascale Nédélec (2017) has described the bleeding of influence from the tourist's Las Vegas into that of the locals through the lens of stigma, describing a "contamination from the city's popular representations to its population" (10) and noting "that the urban area is intrinsically determined by tourism" (23-34). Elsewhere, and from a less

pessimistic perspective, Nédélec (2016) recognized the ever-present influence of gambling and tourism entertainment in the city: “Thus, the Strip has become the synecdoche where the part has absorbed the whole. . . . the tourism imaginaries and the city imaginaries have merged to become one at the expense of the ‘regular’ metropolitan area” (5). In my own research, I have found varying perspectives among locals; some love and some hate the idea that the Strip imaginary is ingrained in life in the city. But, most recognize the benefits of the Strip, in jobs (both direct and in support of employees in the tourist sector), in entertainment, and in the 24-hour convenience that comes with living in a city that never sleeps (Rowley 2013a). In addition, as Thompson et al. (1993) found in their survey of home buyers in the city, Las Vegans have varying opinions about gambling and the positives and negatives of casinos embedded in their neighborhood. Such a diversity of perceptions and experience among locals has created what I call an “ambivalent attachment” between locals and their place (Rowley 2013a, 177). In terms of locals casinos, this ambivalence comes in the form of residents resenting the potentially destructive force of gambling close to home, whilst appreciating the nearby convenience of entertainment, shopping, dining, and, yes, even gambling, when they want it. The very existence of such ambivalence further illustrates the idea that part of life and living in Las Vegas is inevitably and inseparably connected to the Las Vegas Strip and what it represents.

Conclusions and Future Research

A study of antecedent landscapes illustrates how the built environment continually influences people and place. As an analytical tool, antecedent landscapes reveal how a particular cultural force can affect the continued development of subsequent landscapes and, in turn, how such development promotes patterns that evoke the values of a particular community and its sense of place. The Las Vegas of the local is a product of antecedent economic and cultural forces that made the city a major tourist and gambling hub for the world. It is a unique place, molded by unique forces within the American experience. We can, however, look to the city, and what it teaches us about antecedent landscapes, for lessons beyond this tourist town.

One such lesson may be in the expansion of Las Vegas-style gambling across the American scene. Simultaneous to the expansion of casinos within Las Vegas in the 1980s and 1990s, legalized institutional gaming also spread across the United States. Beginning with Atlantic City’s birth as a gambling resort town in the late 1970s and propelled further afield by Indian and riverboat gaming in the 1980s and 1990s, islands of gaming, in what Schwartz (2013) called a “casino archipelago,” are now found in a wide hinterland throughout the United States. This is a broad reaching casino landscape that is ever expanding. Even as critics claimed that such expansion would damage Las Vegas’s standing as a gambling hub, “history proved that the widespread diffusion of gambling only induced a bigger appetite for even more gambling. . . . Las Vegas became the epicenter of gambling” (Lang and Nicolas 2012, 497-8). Scholars have argued for decades that Las Vegas can tell us much about the broader American experience (Venturi

et al., 1977; Gottdiener et al. 1999; Rothman 2002). Casino scholars have noted the connection between Las Vegas locals casinos and those now found in, for example, Dubuque or Kansas City (Rowley in press, Schwartz, 2014). Looking to the casinos in the epicenter of gambling as antecedent landscapes to the American casino archipelago, may help scholars better understand what Lang and Nichols (2012, 498) called “this socio-cultural-legal-lifestyle transition” to more widespread gambling in the American scene. Casinos across the United States — taking their cues from Las Vegas, and particularly locals casinos — communicate the relaxing of anti-gambling American morality and illustrate a national sense of place and identity (Anderson 1991) undergoing changes in the last three decades.

Beyond casinos, cultural landscape scholars may also benefit from invoking a referential perspective that more directly investigates the influence of antecedent landscapes. Shopping malls are similar to Las Vegas locals casinos in that they are often named for and built to fit into suburban contexts to serve residential areas already established. They are subsequent landscapes. Scholars can use the frame of antecedent landscapes to better understand this well-researched cultural landscape by further exploring how such spaces represent the consumerist tendencies of those in the proximal market (Goss 1993), evoke a sense of place for the community in which they exist through mall design and theming (Stewart and Dickinson 2008), and act as a restrictive community space where only certain voices in the locality may be allowed public expression (Staeheli and Mitchell 2006). An antecedent landscape perspective may be even more necessary in understanding the contemporary shift in the American shopping mall. Once anchored by department stores with smaller retail throughout, many such shopping complexes have now either become largely vacant “zombie malls” or have transitioned to all-encompassing entertainment complexes that some have started to call “Alls” (Plante 2009). What role do antecedent landscapes within the neighborhood, or the antecedent malls themselves play in these new versions of consumer complexes? What do such references say about a sense of place in and around such a venue?

Another logical application of the antecedent landscape perspective is in places that undergo changes due to human or natural events. In a country where mass shootings have become commonplace, landscape scholars are likely to examine how American communities choose to commemorate such events. As they do, what role does the site of the shooting itself play in the placement or design of a monument or of what becomes of that site (Foote 2003)? After the 1 October shooting on the Las Vegas Strip in 2017, for example, questions have emerged as to what is to be done with this site, particularly since it is on a street in a spatio-cultural context where people seek fun and not necessarily memories of the worst mass shooting in American history (Rowley 2019). In such decisions, antecedence matters. In the realm of natural disasters, residents along with local and national leaders face questions of how to rebuild (Cox and Perry 2011). As scholars analyze landscapes of recovery (Rowley 2018), it is important to understand what came before the disaster, what sort of place-based identity existed, how it was impacted by the event, and how such changes have affected what and how rebuilding occurs.

Observers of these and other cultural landscapes would benefit by interrogating their referents in order to better see the significance of landscape antecedence in maintaining or modifying the human experience in place.

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