
LAS VEGAS SUN

Planner: Vegas not so great now, but has potential

Green space, parks and transit can lift city's standing, he says

By [Mike Trask](#)

Mon, Mar 31, 2008 (2 a.m.)

Audio Clip

Richard Florida imparts a few pointers on how Las Vegas can thrive under the globalization that is transforming major cities everywhere.



Audio Clip

Florida discusses what he believes is Las Vegas' greatest asset in its move toward globalization.



Audio Clip

Florida talks about what Las Vegas must do in order to transition into a "mega region."



Beyond the Sun

[Richard Florida](#)

Richard Florida has become one of the most quoted and respected urban planners in America.

He created the term “creative class.” His ideas are used by cities across the country looking to regentrify, as well as in ad campaigns by BMW and Apple.

Talk to people in the redevelopment community in Las Vegas or Henderson and they'll inevitably rehash Florida's theories.

Now the University of Toronto professor has a new book and a new theory — one filled with ideas and rankings Las Vegas planners are less likely to want to repeat, but that offers a road map to a better future.

“Who's Your City” argues that because globalization essentially allows people to live wherever they want, less encumbered by factors such as job location than perhaps ever before, the most important decision anyone makes is which city to call home.

Because cities have much to gain by drawing the creative class' artists and technology gurus, those “high bohemians” have power.

Which brings us to Las Vegas. Each month 6,000 people choose to move here.

Even so, Florida ranks Las Vegas low in terms of overall livability, and especially low in some categories assessing cities' quality of life for various demographic groups. Out of 166 places evaluated, Las Vegas ranked No. 66 for singles, No. 82 for professionals, No. 135 for families with children, No. 88 for empty nesters and No. 127 for retirees in a ranking of the best places to live.

The numbers were based on a poll of 28,000 people across the country.

“Party places such as Miami and Las Vegas rank pretty low on our list,” Florida wrote.

Florida, using a combination of his own research and other academic studies, argues people really don't want to move to Las Vegas. But with so many casino service jobs available, they do — especially men, creating a huge male-female disparity, resulting in 30,000 more single men living in Las Vegas than women.

Plus, some jobs can be performed only in Las Vegas or a few other gambling-friendly towns. Nearly a third of all gaming supervisors nationwide work in Las Vegas, as do 20 percent of casino cage cashiers and 16 percent of costume attendants.

But Florida said Las Vegans need not be discouraged by their city's current low ranking. Bright possibilities are on the horizon, he said.

"Vegas has to be congratulated on the growth," he said. "It hasn't had a lot of time to solidify and grow up. My sense is it (the lower rankings) is a consequence of the relative youth."

Adding more green space, parks and transit options could push it rapidly up the list, lifting it to the level of places such as Boulder, Colo., San Francisco and Washington, D.C., that ranked among Florida's most desirable cities to live.

In meetings with local leaders, Florida has encouraged continued efforts to capitalize on the natural beauty of the Las Vegas Valley and to seek increased linkage to other places throughout the Southwest. The city also should use the factors that lure people here as a planning tool, he said.

"Las Vegas is such an entertainment center it is able to attract artists, musicians and designers," Florida said. "I think building an economy around that in some ways will equal the success of Nashville," a city that has transformed itself from a dusty country outpost to one of the hubs of the music industry.

Being in Southern Nevada is a huge asset for Las Vegas, he said.

"The thing that bodes best for Las Vegas is its location," Florida said. "It's sandwiched between these mega regions, Southern and Northern California and Phoenix. As Las Vegas connects to those regions and becomes part of those regions, it has a bright future."

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