

Closed casinos, visitation declines hurt two Clark County gaming markets

Written by Administrator
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Two North Las Vegas casinos that have been closed for 23 months and a nearly 38 percent decline in visitation to Laughlin kept the Clark County communities from meaningful participation in Nevada's record-shattering \$13.4 billion gaming revenue year in 2021.

According to the Gaming Control Board, the markets were the only two of Nevada's 18 reporting jurisdictions where [2021 gaming revenue totals](#) didn't surpass their pre-pandemic 2019 results. North Las Vegas gaming revenue of \$285.7 million was 5.5 percent below 2019 levels. Laughlin's gaming total of \$486 million was 5.1 percent off from two years ago.

Every market in Nevada surpassed 2020's revenue totals, pegging the lowest numbers since the 1990s because of pandemic-related operating restrictions and state-mandated health and safety guidelines.

At least one analyst was surprised North Las Vegas and Laughlin were down from pre-pandemic figures.

Casinos in the Las Vegas locals gaming market, which included North Las Vegas, set a single-year record of \$2.9 billion in gaming revenue during 2021. Macquarie Securities gaming analyst Chad Beynon said the Las Vegas Valley benefitted from customers who saw increased housing values and other rebounding economic indicators in the last year.

Residents and others who were visiting Southern Nevada casinos also spent more money than in prior years.

Clark County's record-breaking gaming revenue of \$11.4 billion in 2021 was boosted by the Strip's single-year record of \$7.07 billion, even as the Strip saw roughly 10 million fewer visitors than two years ago.

Michael Lawton, the control board's senior economic analyst, said revenues produced by slot machines in Clark County increased 21.7 percent in the last three months of the year. In

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October alone, slot revenues in Clark County casinos topped a single-month record of \$725.1 million. For the calendar year, Clark County slot machine revenues were a record \$7.5 billion.

“Further underlying the strength of Clark County’s slot (revenues), in each of the last eight months slot (revenues) has surpassed the previous monthly record set in October of 2007,” Lawton said.

But those results didn’t carry over to North Las Vegas and Laughlin.

Lawton blamed the declines in North Las Vegas on the two closed casinos, which are operated by Red Rock Resorts. Combined, Texas Station and Fiesta Rancho, both located on the east side of Rancho Road, have nearly 3,200 slot machines – roughly 41 percent of North Las Vegas’ pre-pandemic casino market.

The properties never reopened following the state’s 78-day gaming shutdown that ended on June 4, 2020.

Laughlin, which also saw one casino – Golden Entertainment’s Colorado Belle – not reopen, was affected by tourism declines. The drop in visitation included a 59.7 percent decline in charter airline passengers flying in and out of Bullhead City, Arizona’s small airport, located directly across the Colorado River from Laughlin.

The community’s 10 commercial casinos skew toward an older customer base, which analysts said was a contributing factor considering the pandemic.

Beynon said casino customers aged 55 and above stayed on the sidelines during much of 2021, not only in Laughlin but nationwide.

Brendan Bussmann, a partner with Las Vegas-based Global Market Advisors, said Laughlin is considered a regional market, but does pull in locals from the Bullhead City area and

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surrounding communities.

“There remains an opportunity with North Las Vegas, Laughlin, and even on the east side of Las Vegas and Henderson, to dive into that locals market that has not been able to return to their previous patterns,” Bussmann said.

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(Barry Scherid/The Nevada Independent) Rick Resorts' Texas Station on Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.

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[Report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the gaming industry in Clark County, Nevada](#)

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