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# Political connections to Reno casino project jeopardize development

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**vernc**

6:57 PM on July 9, 2011

Score: 13



We are dealing with two issues here. One is the suburban sprawl which is destroying our downtown. Second is the political corruption which allows developers to buy politicians with campaign contributions. I'm against further sprawl, and I believe any politician voting for it should be in front of a grand jury.

5 replies



**LouSkarroo**

7:23 PM on July 9, 2011

Score: 8



I've never seen a more corrupt place than Reno.



**vernc**

7:45 PM on July 9, 2011

Score: 7



I have, but they were off-shore.



**LouSkarroo**

8:16 PM on July 9, 2011

Score: 9



Off-shore, eh? Doesn't say much for this place.



**cbhughes**

8:07 AM on July 10, 2011

Score: 3



I have to agree with your post

The facts speak for themselves they should excuse themselves from voting on this issue. but I doubt they will, and I am interested who owned the property before.. would be interesting to see



**WRONGangle**

Score: -1





1:05 PM on July 10, 2011

The string of shootings and the BUMS are ruining downtown, not sprawl !!!



Name withheld

7:12 PM on July 9, 2011

*This comment was left by a user who has been blocked by our staff.*

Score: 1



**Raoul-Duke**

7:33 PM on July 9, 2011

And so begins the mid summer 2-Meter briefcase (\$\$\$\$) relay.....

Score: 10



**Think1st**

8:19 PM on July 9, 2011

What a surprise, city council members tied to a developer.

The question I have, and that the article fails to make clear, is what those dollar amounts actually are. Did the council members simply pay his business at the going rate for the services? If that is the case, let them vote. If these were campaign contributions, either from services provided or actual cash given, then I may question their vote but not necessarily reject it.

Score: 10



**rep44pas**

8:24 PM on July 9, 2011

When in doubt, count yourself out.

of course this takes a set of ethics to see the world in this fashion so I suspect all with connections will still vote...! LOL!!!!!!

Hello Reno Visitors! Welcome once again to the WILD, WILD, WEST! Where everything has gone wild! LOL!!!!

Score: 0



1 reply



Name withheld

7:23 AM on July 10, 2011

*This comment was left by a user who has been blocked by our staff.*

Score: 0



**Think1st**

9:34 PM on July 9, 2011

Another variable that hasn't been mentioned is the question as to when the property was purchased. If the property was purchased under the current zoning, I don't care who you are, you should have known the zoning and known what you could use the property for. Unfortunately this rarely applies to well funded developers and campaign contributors. If the zoning was changed after you purchased the property, I can see an argument.

Score: 6



**JasonAMartin**

9:59 PM on July 9, 2011

The casino areas of Reno are so attractive and comfortable. Why wouldn't everybody want one in their neighborhood? I'm sure everybody in Spanish Springs moved out there with the expectation that the downtown scum would soon follow. Congrats, just what you always wanted! Maybe you too will get an expanded bus terminal for your next civic improvement project.

Score: 11



1 reply



**vernc**

Score: 1





12:28 PM on July 10, 2011

Downtown was once very attractive. You could walk from Circus to the Sienna (then Holiday Hotel), shoulder to shoulder with crowds of tourists. All the casino fronts were all open to the sidewalk with a near-circus atmosphere. Everyone felt safe, no muggers, aggressive panhandlers, cheap hookers, drug dealers, accosting them every five feet. Sure there were panhandlers and hookers but they kept a very low profile. The bad eggs kept a very, very low profile because casino security was within seconds, and RPD within minutes. The streets weren't lined with empty buildings; space was a premium.

Jobs were plentiful. A girl from Iowa showed up today and she was working selling change, and making great tips, tomorrow. A guy from Nebraska showed up today, and he was working as a bar-back, and making great tips, tomorrow. Reno signs were plentiful along the highways from Ohio to Nevada. People wanted to come to Reno because of its "Last of the old west" reputation.

And then the new breed of politicians took over. Sprawl equal dilution of the product. Unchecked development means campaign contributions, which is a polite way of saying "BRIBES". And empty buildings. And tattoo parlors. And bars. And condos - instead of hotels. And druggies, muggers, and cheap hookers - instead of tourists.

In 1970 or 80 or even 90, a tourist from Illinois could pull up along a guy walking on the sidewalk, and ask "Where's an affordable motel?" The walker would cheerfully describe three or four. Today, if the tourist asks for directions, he's more apt for some gangbanger to rob and carjack him.

The new breed of politicians.

Corruption abounds.



**catygal59**

Score: 12



10:21 PM on July 9, 2011

Corrupt city, corrupt state, corrupt history, we get what we deserve.



**quark**

Score: 10



11:00 PM on July 9, 2011

BREAKING NEWS: Councilmen and developers are attached at the hip.

It seems many of the councilmen get the job so that they can cater to their developer friends. When they leave office they so often go back to their friends for pay back with a new job just waiting for them. Sweet deal.

1 reply



**belogical**

Score: 1



12:57 PM on July 10, 2011

Perfect example: Terry Reynolds, former Sparks city manager, left the city and went to work for . . . . wait for it . . . .

Red Hawk!!



**wdomkr**

Score: 2



11:45 PM on July 9, 2011

1 The city should try to pursue an orderly manner to regulate the new construction of other casino's. In other words, they need to be centralized.

a) If they are spread out they are likely to fail. Unless...They are going to be small Like the Bonanza, Hobey's, or the new Sally's that are popping up in malls throughout the Reno/Sparks area. They are strickly for the locals in those areas. Who wants to go from the Atlantis to the North Valley's? Out of town gamblers wont.

b) The strip malls throughout the entire area are good examples of improper planning and building. There just aren't enough people in the areas to make them work. They have a shotgun pattern of open vs closed businesses.

c) Consolidation is the key to success. There are plenty of areas in downtown that could prosper. One not so close to downtown yet possibly a good area would be the old Park Lane Mall grounds. There it would still be centralized between the other casino's.

2 There is only one reason to have municiple codes that cannot be used to pin point an argument. That is to be able to use in whatever direction you want to, when you want to. Seems to be a pattern in Northern Nevada.

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**GeneralGCuster**

Score: 5

3:15 AM on July 10, 2011

"For example, Vasquez did \$24,328.21 in campaign work for Councilwoman Jessica Sferrazza in 2004 and 2008 and performed \$40,130 worth of television advertising and related work for Councilman Dave Aiazzi in 2008.

~RGJ Superstory

Wow-These facts alone make this process sound like the ultimate insider scam...  
What exactly is going on in Reno?

3 replies



**wdomkr**

Score: 2

7:36 AM on July 10, 2011

This is a small town. Social networking for work related contacts. Here everyone knows everyone, in what ever field you go to. There are only so many people you can rely on to do the same thing. In larger cities to the west, you can pick and choose rather easily. Cities whose pop. is 3-?? million, have better opportunities to avoid similar conflicts. There are more professionals in their respective fields. Law of averages. You do not like this "person" for whatever reason, go across town, or simply down the road.

That is one of the main reasons this town is considered a "good old boy's" town. You pick any field you like, call and as another in the same filed...Do you know so and so? They will say yes.

All Vasquez did was seek legal money making ventures by social networking. Which at the time did not appear to cause any such problems.

The beauty of this is years ago before legalities were suspect, business would have just gone forward.

"Another Day in Paradise"



**belogical**

Score: 2

1:10 PM on July 10, 2011

Yes, and years ago we allowed children to wear non-fire retardant clothing, and we allowed manufacturing companies to dump toxic waste into rivers and lakes. Do you need more examples?

Just because we've always done it does not make it right.



**wdomkr**

Score: 2

7:35 AM on July 11, 2011

belogical

I never said it was right or wrong, I just said what happens here. It's a small town. Like it or not. It is what it is. That's why people get away with a lot of things, that in large cities they cant.



**a42natson**

Score: 4

7:10 AM on July 10, 2011

I find it interesting that eleted officials are waiting on others to decide the legality/morality of making a decision. Perhaps in subsequent elections the voters might be well advised to seek out potential leaders who are equipped to decide for themselves what is right.

1 reply



**wdomkr**

Score: -3

7:22 AM on July 10, 2011

TOO small of a city for a larger selection. Would need a attorney in that field of law. And that would be another boondoggle in it's self.



**Sprite**

Score: 2

7:36 AM on July 10, 2011



The jeopardy for this project is that Vasquez wants to build in an area that must be re-zoned. Casino's should be kept within a certain area as some of the other posters have already stated. It just makes good sense. The north valley has Bordertown - Is he proposing to compete with them? That is not a good thing to approve of.

In today's marketplace, we have seen so many of the large, big box, sprawling shopping areas built here - and now there are so many empty buildings because it was a bad idea that the city fathers allowed over and over. It also shut down the Mom and Pops that couldn't keep their doors open long enough to hang on till the larger store went out of business.

I would be in favor of floating a ballot issue to impose restrictions on where developers may build and see if we can't get a few areas that are a blight on our town - re-developed or re-imagined into something totally new and different. Why should things be built further and further out, forcing our city services to stretch the police/fire/and other services ever thinner? There are empty buildings all over within the core area - say Vista to the East and West McCarran in the opposite direction - like the K-Mart out there - why not re-purpose those areas?

Just asking.

5 replies



**OldReno**

Score: 4

8:09 AM on July 10, 2011

"The north valley has Bordertown - Is he proposing to compete with them? That is not a good thing to approve of."

Why not? What's wrong with competition? The larger question is "will the market support two similar operations in that area?"

-----  
One thing the big national chains (McDonalds, Home Depot, Lowes, WalMart, etc.) do very well is site selection. They have the experience and the resources to minimize the chances of a store failing because of location. They are also able to weather economic downturns far better than "Mom and Pops." If necessary, they can close underperforming stores (like Macy's did a few years ago, when they acquired some other-branded chains) without going out of business chainwide. Most Mom & Pops can't do that.

It's unrealistic to expect any M&P to be able to hang on until the larger store goes out of business. Instead, the M&P needs to find a niche that isn't well-served by the big-box store, and excel in ways that big-box stores generally don't. Exceptional customer service, specialized inventory, higher quality, and so on.

One example - a couple of years ago, I was visiting some friends in Portland. We needed some particular screw size and length for some project my friend was working on. Home Depot and Lowe's didn't have anything close. We went to a local, smaller hardware store near downtown. They not only had exactly what we wanted, they had the biggest selection of screws, nuts and bolts I've ever seen. They are the "go-to" place for hard-to-find hardware, and I'm told they are always busy - even though they are hard to get to, and parking is about impossible.

When HD and Lowe's moved in, they didn't try to outlast them, they adapted and thrived.



**wdomkr**

Score: 1

8:35 AM on July 10, 2011



OldReno

You must be talking about Aces Hardware off of South Virginia. They are a very good store indeed. Very helpful and you do not have to drive 5 miles for a ????. They have a nice selection of things most us need for the small home repair. The staff is awesome.



**wdomkr**

Score: 0

8:38 AM on July 10, 2011

Sprite

Good call. If those strip malls had been allowed to flourish slowly perhaps they would have succeeded better. Fill one up, move to the next. Instead of simply build, build, build, and others will follow. It doesn't work that way when you have super stores that are cheaper and have a larger selection.



**OldReno**

Score: 2

3:49 PM on July 10, 2011

wdomkr, I was thinking about the now-departed Shelley's Hardware on Greenbrae in Sparks when I wrote that.

The great selection and knowledgeable folks they had working there were much more than you would expect in a building that size. I lived in the McCarran/Kings Row area then, and it was always worth the drive over because I knew I'd have the best chance of getting what I needed in one trip.



**wdomkr**

Score: 0

7:20 PM on July 10, 2011

OldReno

I have used them a couple of times. Usually I was never in that area, so I forgot about them.

The one I'm thinking about is called Carter Brothers Ace Hardware, on So. Virginia. They have a very extensive assortment of nuts and bolts, better than any Home Depot and Lowes in this area. They have a small store at street level, but it has a basement that doubles the Sq Ft of the building. They are like any other Ace Hardware and have various home improvement tools and supplies. The staff is extremely helpful. They also make keys for home and automotive.

They remind me of Commercial Hardware off of 4th and Valley Road.



**1959GMC**

Score: 0

10:51 AM on July 10, 2011

The only group that I know of who has taken a stand against City Hall is... get ready... The firemen. As a result they have been hung out to dry by your local rag and the political-development machine that runs this town.

Lets blame the firemen again for the \$634,000,000 (are all the zeros in here - such a big number).

It was Ed Finger, past City of Reno Finance Director-Assistant City Manager, who state the City does not have a labor management problem it has a bond debt problem. Then Ed was escorted out the door. However, Ed didn't get the same treatment as Mary Ann Parrot, former City of Reno Finance Director, who after bringing up the same issue was fired by Donna, the Mayor's girl.

And the beat goes on.



**Conservative2010**

Score: 1

10:52 AM on July 10, 2011



Seems a no brainer to me.

If you paid the guy to print some fliers for you or do some work for you, that is just business and you can still vote.

If the guy gave you money, that is a bribe. Call it a campaign contribution all you want, it was still a bribe. And you should not vote on anything that involves the guy.

I do not see why our elected leaders can not tell the difference.



**Conservative2010**

11:00 AM on July 10, 2011

Score: 0



This is actually ROFL funny.

The Farahi family/Monarch Casino bought some land way down south on Virginia street. At the time they bought it, with the idea of someday putting a casino there, it was zoned for a casino. But as time went by, the area got rezoned and the Catholics went and built a high school down there. Those who opposed the casino used the zoning change and the school as reasons why a new casino hotel could not be built there. Essentially it was theft by zoning. The city said "no" and now the land is a cow pasture.

So if land can be rezoned away from allowing a casino, how come it can not be rezoned towards allowing a casino? Or would you all say this shows favoritism towards one casino group and against another? If the Council allows this rezoning then if I were Monarch Casino, I would sue the city for having a double standard. After all, the land Monarch had was originally OK for a casino.

But that aside, I do not think we need any more casinos in Reno. We are losing a ton of business due to the economy, the Indian casinos and if online gambling gets approved nationwide, people will gamble in the comfort of their own homes and will have no reason at all to fly/drive to Reno and spend money on a hotel room and expensive food.



**paulmattson**

12:49 PM on July 10, 2011

Score: -4



Its nice to see that the Council is wise enough to abstain if need be ! Our Constitutional Framers would be proud ... Let me attempt a different approach as a resident in the North Valleys . First , anything that will add money to City Services is a positive . Wal Mart is already there . So be it !

The infrastructure needed to carry a large amount of traffic through the area has already been done and it handles the traffic quite well for the Air Races which will still be here in our next lifetime . The pipelines for water are already in place - " Growth is inevitable " .

I Love Downtown but the 395 corridor North will at some point connect with a bypass road to Pyramid Hywy which would then make the North Valleys the Center of Reno's Sphere of influence ... Why wait for progress ? Its already here !



**belogical**

1:06 PM on July 10, 2011

Score: 3



conservative2010 and paulmattson, you are missing the point. If the developer has performed work for the council person in the past, they have a relationship. The council person has a duty to abstain from voting on the developer's project. Developers should be warned by the Supremes' decision. Don't bring in the council person's buddy to sell the project. That is unethical. The excuse that "this is a small town" doesn't cut it.

It's hard to believe the council can't understand this.

3 replies



**vernc**

11:03 PM on July 10, 2011

Score: 1



Perhaps Jessica will step aside, but there's no way that Aiazzi will. Plus a couple others will have their hands outstretched, not to mention Mayor Bob.



**wdomkr**

Score: 1

7:39 AM on July 11, 2011

Maybe you should go to towns where they are really smal, anywhere from 1/10 to 1/5 the size of Reno. Then you will understand the politics of Nevada.

Again not saying it's right or wrong.

The argument about council ethics is baby feces compared to what really goes on in small cities/towns.



**vernc**

Score: 0

9:36 PM on July 11, 2011

I was raised just outside a town of 900 people. Everyone was everyone else's brother-in-law, uncle, cousin, etc. We had to drive 25 miles to find a stranger.



**teedofftaxpayer**

Score: 0

4:23 PM on July 10, 2011

I think the Supreme's ruling last month was wrong for the local level. There are not very many people who can run for office whether it be City or County who in some way shape or form not involved with most businesses. Now this is making it hard for the City Council to do their jobs. Don't get me wrong, as far as I'm concerned most of the City Council hasn't been doing their jobs anyway. But this situation puts it at a stand still.

I'm sure some of the City Council members of both cities and the County Commissioners made some money off this "sprawl". There were too many out-of-state contractors and builders who came in and basically screwed this area and took off with the money and didn't help with the infrastructure. Some even were foreclosed on and now coming back and buying the property back at a discount under another name. While the local banks took a hit in helping this area grow.

Regardless, the ruling ties the hands of the Council Members and the Commissioners, making business harder to conduct in the cities and county. Payback is a bytch.



**sagehopper**

Score: -3

6:22 PM on July 10, 2011

So what? the mayor of the danged town owns Boomtown..If there isn't a conflict of interest there, I don't know what is..Remember all the infighting between him and the residents in the area that didn't want him doing certain things with the land on the south side of the I-80? Two guesses of who got their way on that one...First guess doesn't count.

1 reply



**RenoSkier**

Score: 3

8:59 PM on July 10, 2011

The mayor hasn't owned Boomtown for a long time.





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