

Northern Nevada growing without tourism

By Ryan Frank, Las Vegas Sun

Reno had a problem in 1998. Lots of problems, in fact.

“The Biggest Little City in the World” long had been surpassed by Las Vegas and Atlantic City as a gaming destination, and tribal casinos had taken over Reno’s monopoly on northern California gamblers.

Lance Gilman, a music promoter-turned-real estate mogul, had a solution. While others focused on the warts of boarded up casinos, Gilman saw Reno’s potential as a hub for warehouses, manufacturers and data centers. And he had the cash to make a big bet on the region’s future.

Gilman and his partner bought a parcel of land east of town that was so big it covered more ground than the city of Las Vegas does today. On it, they planned to build what they described as the world’s biggest industrial park.

Sixteen years later, Gilman has the world’s attention.

Tesla Motors announced this month it would build an electric car battery plant in Gilman’s industrial park, the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center. It’s expected to be one of the biggest buildings in the world and, if all goes as planned, deliver up to 22,000 jobs, \$100 billion in economic impact and a new industry to help power Nevada’s economy.

Gov. Brian Sandoval said the deal “changed the trajectory of Nevada forever.” State lawmakers agreed, approving four Tesla bills, 240-0, including more than \$1 billion in tax breaks and incentives.

Southern Nevadans may wonder why Tesla landed in tiny Storey

County when Clark County has 30 times more land mass and 500 times more people. The lesson for Las Vegas is that the Reno region won because it had the right mix of strategy, location, geography and people.

Northern Nevada's civic leaders accepted the reality that tourism wasn't coming back and embraced Reno's new identity as a remote suburb of San Francisco, rich with wealth, talent and tech. Fortune 500 companies such as Amazon, Wal-Mart and Barnes & Noble picked the region so their trucks could reach every major market in the West with one-day shipping.

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