

Reno starting to look more like Silicon Valley

By Karen Weise, Bloomberg

“Are you with Tesla or Panasonic?” the waitress asks with a smile. It’s morning in Reno, and it’s natural to assume anyone eating breakfast among the rustic wood walls and Instagram-worthy succulents of the Whitney Peak Hotel would work at the mammoth Tesla Gigafactory, jointly run by the two tech companies. For transplants landing in Reno, the boutique hotel, formerly a casino, has become a common crash pad—albeit one wrapped by an outdoor rock-climbing wall.

Around 8:30am, the men arrive in waves. The Panasonic workers from Japan head for one buffet, with rice, pork, and miso soup; the Tesla crowd favors eggs. Soon they’re gone, traveling by carpools and shuttles 20 miles east into the desert to the factory, where they’ll make lithium ion batteries to power Tesla’s electric cars.

Not long ago, Reno was a home foreclosure capital and fading casino town. “There was only one place to go, and that was up,” says Mayor Hillary Schieve. Unemployment peaked at almost 14 percent in 2011, when Governor Brian Sandoval signed a law aiming to diversify the state’s economy, recognizing that gambling alone can’t sustain a workforce.

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