Southern Nevada Land Inventory Review

June 2026

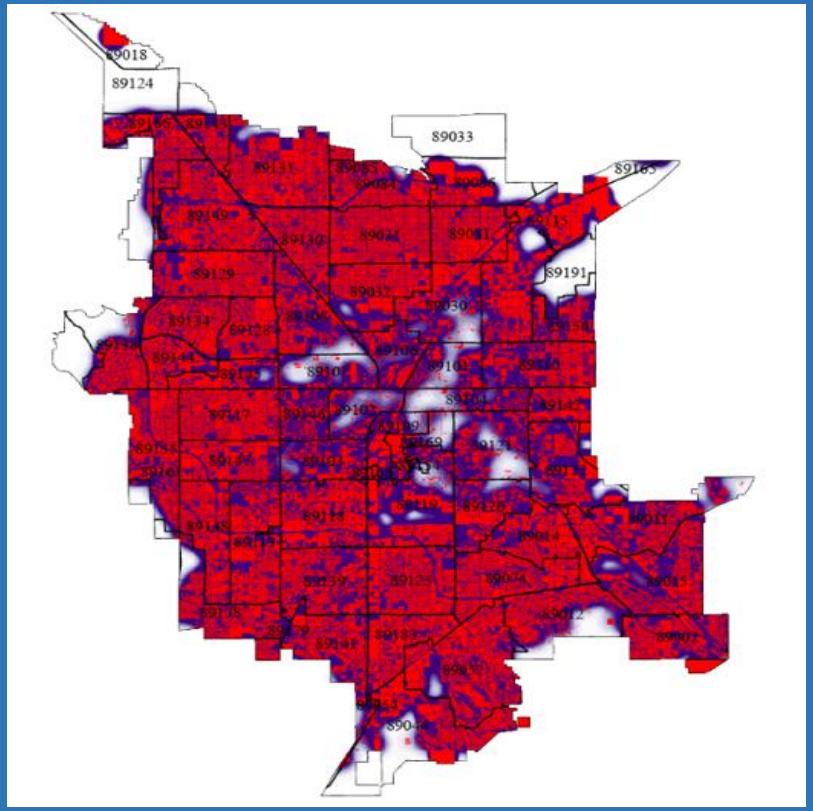
An analysis of the SNS Underutilized Lands Inventory Report

NAIOP
COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN NEVADA CHAPTER

RCG economics

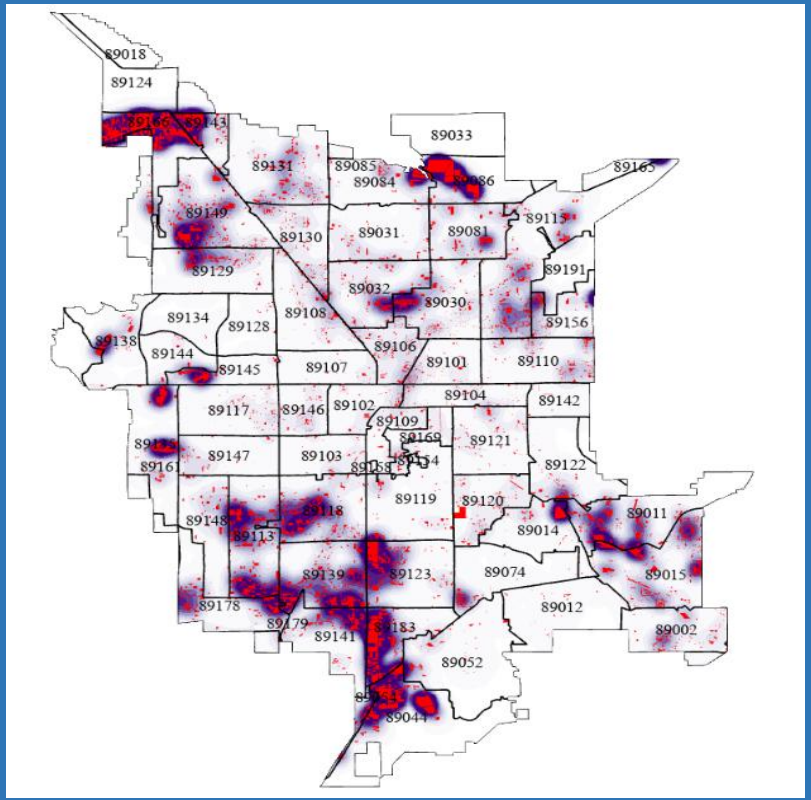
Vacant, Developable Land Has Diminished From 1980-2024

1980



Source: UNLV Lied Center for Real Estate

2024



Source: UNLV Lied Center for Real Estate

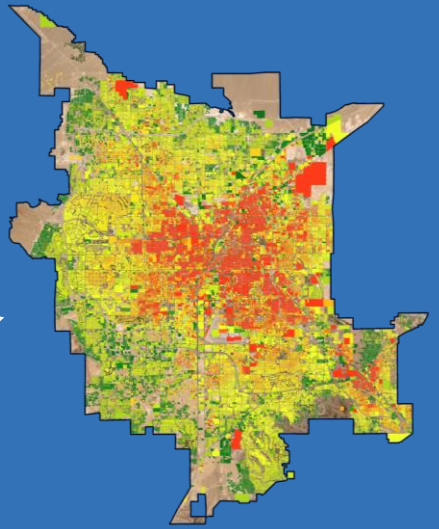
Disposal of Federal Land guided by SNPLMA (1998) Clark County, NV

SNPLMA Valley Disposal Boundary (green)

6.3% of County's *Land Mass*

Developed Parcels (Disposal Boundary)

96% of County's *Developed Real Estate*



Source: Map produced by Shawn J. McCoy, Ph.D., Lied Center for Real Estate, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Shawn.McCoy@unlv.edu). Data sources include the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Census Bureau, and Clark County Assessor. Information on the disposal of federal lands in Southern Nevada under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA, 1998) is available here and here.

The Core Question

WHAT THE ULI STUDY DOES

The ULI study identifies **78,285 acres** of vacant & underutilized land within Clark County using assessor data, slope analysis & planning criteria.

It shows **where** land is located & what planning characteristics it has.

WHAT'S MISSING

The ULI study doesn't assess whether that land can **feasibly support development** or when it might be available to the market.

Critical gaps found:

1. *infrastructure capacity,*
2. *market economics,*
3. *development timing,*
4. *change of ownership, &*
5. *geographic detail.*

The Regional Challenge

800K

NEW RESIDENTS

Projected population growth through 2050 (according to ULI)

78K+

HOUSING SHORTAGE

Current affordable housing unit deficit

78,285

ACRES IDENTIFIED

Total land in inventory

The inventory provides a foundation, but translating these numbers into practical development requires understanding infrastructure, economics, & timing constraints.

Two Types of Land, Two Methodologies

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VACANT LAND

69,300 Acres

Objective criteria: Assessor codes, slope thresholds (15% employment, 25% residential), minimum parcel sizes, & flood zone filters.

Manual review corrected 5,800+ parcels (13.8% of reviewed properties).

UNDERUTILIZED LAND

8,985 Acres

Planning preferences: Improvement-to-land ratios plus stakeholder-weighted rankings emphasizing density, transit, & walkability.

Rankings reflect where development should occur, not where it's financially viable.

Vacant Land: Critical Issues with Slope Analysis

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Issue 1: Threshold Selection

ULI reports using 15% slope threshold for employment land, but the 15% threshold doesn't align with available data categories in GISMO.

Industry standard: Non-residential development typically becomes prohibitive above 12% slope (established since 1967).

Issue 2: Partial Deduction Problems

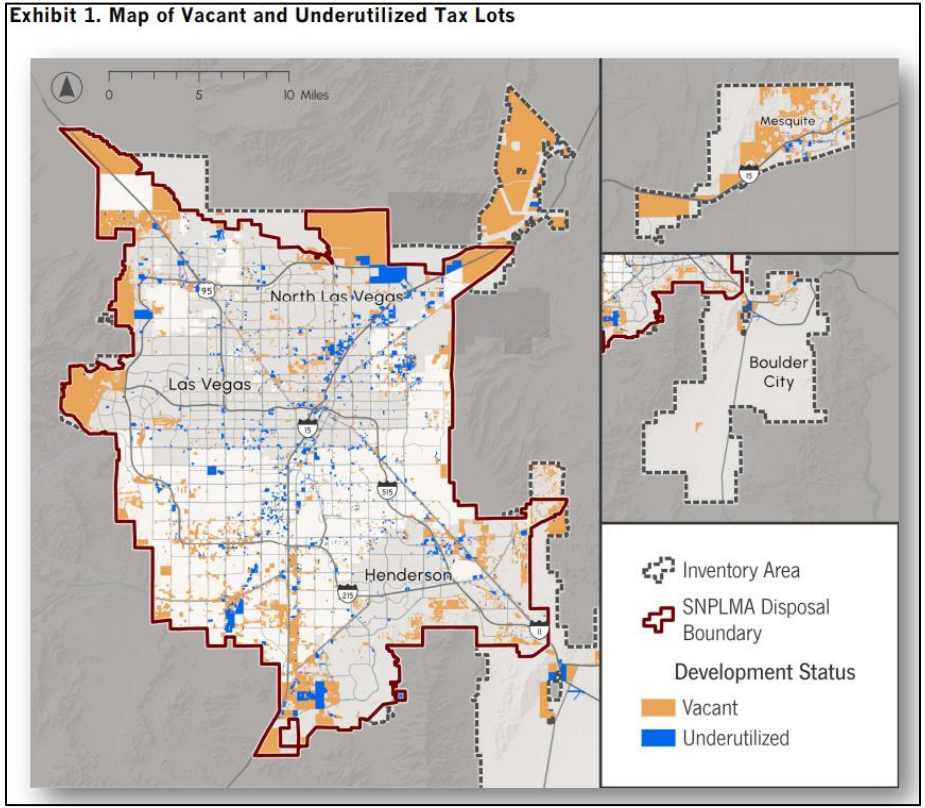
Rather than excluding entire parcels with steep slopes, ULI deducts only steep portions. This creates fragmented parcels, big issue for smaller parcels.

Small parcels (including 0.5-acre minimum) may become too fragmented for practical development after deductions.

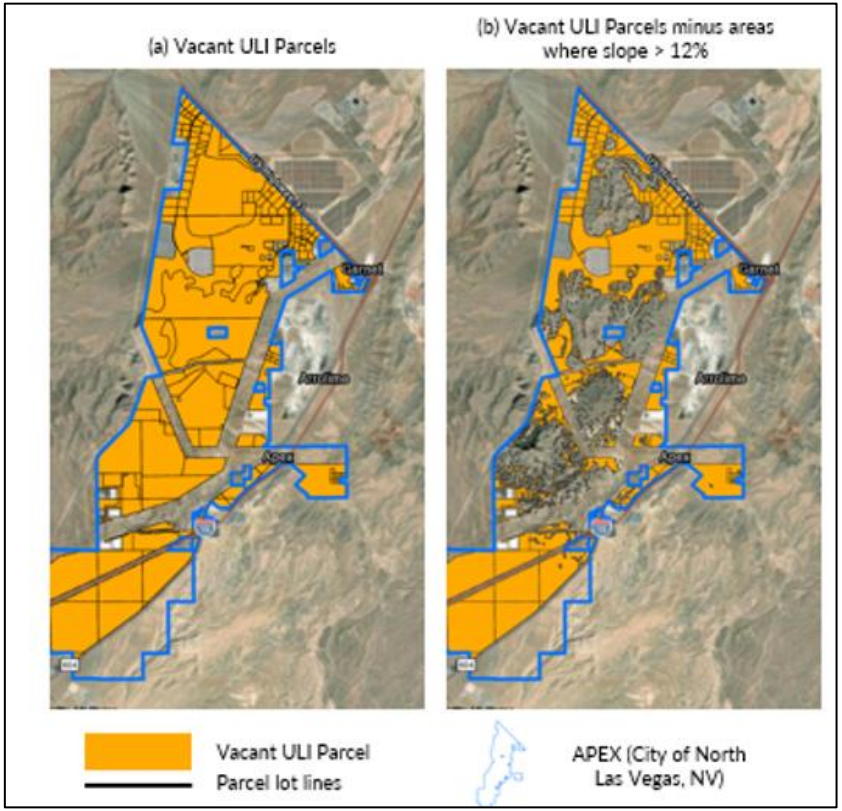
Vacant Land: Critical Issues with Slope Analysis

RCGeconomics

Exhibit 1. Map of Vacant and Underutilized Tax Lots



Source: Southern Nevada Strong Underutilized Lands Inventory: Technical Methodology Report



Source: SNS ULI Data, RCG

Vacant Land: Critical Issues with Slope Analysis

RCGeconomics

Example: 223-Acre Parcel

20 (estimate)
Flat acres (buildable)

200+ (estimate)
Steep acres (not buildable)

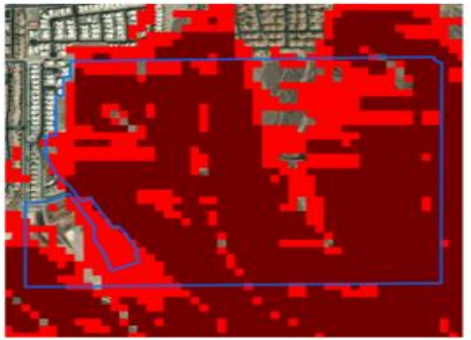
Average slope across parcel (estimated)
>12%

Result: Using the 15% threshold, this entire parcel is included in the visual map (not necessarily their acres estimates)—even though it has only potentially less than **10% of developable acres**.

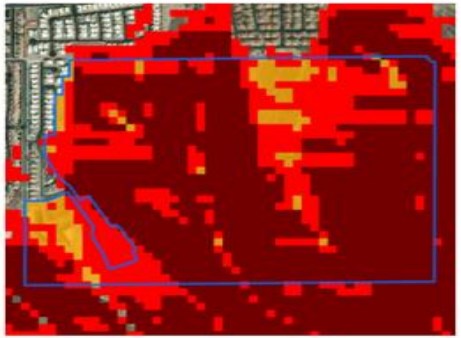
Bottom line: Visually, this approach overstates what's developable. This approach may also under-count some developable land on larger parcels with varied terrain while also over-counting developable land on fragmented parcels.

(a) Vacant parcel in ULI Inventory

(b) GISMO's slope map (slope >12%)



(c) Vacant parcel overlaid with slope map



(d) Portions of parcel <12%

Source: Clark County GISMO, RCG

Vacant Land Gaps & Missing Analysis

RCGeconomics

1 No Sensitivity Analysis

Key filters like slope thresholds & minimum parcel sizes are not tested. Total developable acreage can change significantly with minor changes.

2 Missing Geographic Detail

No split by use-type (employment vs. residential), jurisdiction, or position relative to SNPLMA disposal border, the primary land supply availability policy question.

3 Uncertain Ownership Structure

BLM land is included in ULI study, but its share of inventory isn't stated. Federal disposal processes hinder development pipeline entry.

4 Data Quality Concerns

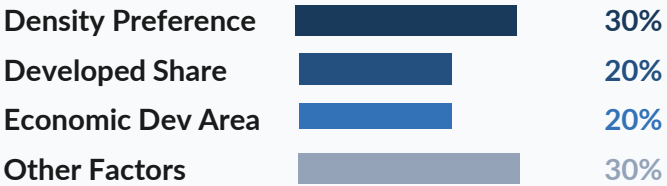
42,000 parcels were manually reviewed; 5,800 (13.8%) needed revisions. ULI study doesn't document mistake types, imagery era, or classification validation procedures.

The “Underutilized Problem”

The ULI's underutilized land methodology differs from vacant land analysis. It mixes quantitative (objective) indicators with qualitative (subjective) policy preferences.

The methodology heavily weights **what planners think is desirable**—not what the market supports.

WEIGHTING FACTORS



Key Concerns

1 Ignores Property Rights

Many "underutilized" properties are fully functional businesses with no interest in redevelopment. Open space often serves important functions.

2 Valuation Can Be Misleading

Low building-to-land ratios may reflect rising land values, not building obsolescence. Some property types naturally have low ratios.

3 No Reality Check

No analysis of whether owners want to sell, whether redevelopment is financially feasible, or whether zoning allows higher density.

Example: *A retail center near a bus stop might score "highly underutilized" even if the business is profitable, customers drive (not use transit), & the parking lot is essential for operations.*

Questionable “Underutilized” Parcels

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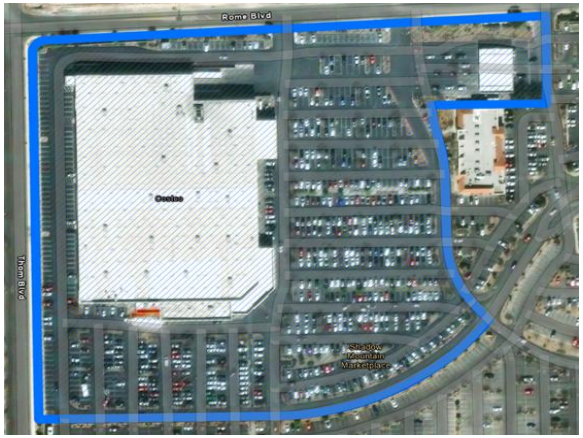
⛪ Guardian Angel Cathedral

Active religious institution with essential parking for Sunday services

Source: Clark County GISMO, RCG

🛒 Costco on Decatur Blvd

Thriving retail store where parking lot is essential for business operations



Source: Clark County GISMO, RCG

🏫 Vassiliadis Elementary School

Operating school with playgrounds & athletic fields essential for students

Source: Clark County GISMO, RCG

The Core Issue: Just because a site has open space doesn't mean it must be redeveloped. Open space serves important functions for existing uses. These properties are **fully functioning** & meeting community needs, but the ULI says they are “underutilized.”

Key Findings: Methodology Limitations

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1 Vacant Land Methodology

Important inventory information, but requires sensitivity analysis, regional segmentation, fragmentation appraisal & data quality documentation to accurately estimate developable land supply.

2 Underutilized Land Methodology

Stakeholder planning preferences, not market feasibility. Rankings show where current patterns deviate from planned goals, valuable for policy talks but not empirical development.

3 Ground Truth Validation Missing

No field verification. Schools, churches, retail establishments with necessary parking, & other assets that meet technical criteria but lack redevelopment potential may be classified.

Market Economics vs. Planning Preferences

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These Rankings Can Be Helpful, But They Don't Predict or Direct Development

- The "underutilized" index weights factors that are all desirable from a planning standpoint, but not determinative of market viability.
- **The disconnect:** Infill sites face estimated 20-40% cost premiums over greenfield development due to demolition, remediation, & complex entitlements.
- Development continues at boundary edges despite lower "underutilization" rankings because developers follow profitability, not planning scores.

20-40%

INFILL COST PREMIUM

Developers follow profitability, not planning scores—greenfield sites win on economics despite lower composite rankings.

Market Economic Example: Infrastructure

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Electric Power

Many "highly underutilized" urban areas have aging infrastructure at capacity. Upgrades cost millions per substation.

Data centers & manufacturing need substantially more power than residential—without three-phase power, sites are unsuitable.

Water & Sewer

Older areas lack capacity for added density. Extension costs run million of dollars per mile for trunk lines.

Some service areas may have limits on new connections regardless of zoning.

THE REALITY

A site may look perfect on paper but without infrastructure capacity, it can't be developed without costly & time-consuming upgrades that affect project feasibility.

Critical Gaps: What the Study Does Not Tell Us

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1 Infrastructure Capacity

Does the identified land have adequate water, sewer, power, & road infrastructure?

Additional Needs: Infrastructure readiness assessment

2 Market Economics

Is development of this land financially viable given current market conditions?

Additional Needs: Financial Feasibility Analysis

3 Absorption Timing

How long will this land supply last at projected growth rates? Static snapshot doesn't project land consumption rates.

Additional Needs: Years of supply calculation

4 Geographic Detail

Which specific jurisdictions have adequate supply vs. shortfalls?

Additional Needs: By-jurisdiction breakdown

Practical Information Different Stakeholders Need

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Housing Advocates

Analysis of infrastructure & development expenses on housing production & affordability.

Developers

Find sites with infrastructure, regulatory, & economic aspects for near-term practicality.

Economic Development

Power capacity, parcel size, & highway access classify employment land for target industry recruiting.

Infrastructure Providers

Utility assessment highlighting development areas that need investment & priority ranking by projected demand.

Essential Analyses Needed

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1

Infrastructure-Constrained Supply

Identify which parcels have adequate capacity vs. those needing major upgrades. Quantify costs & timelines.

2

Realistic Absorption Analysis

Project land consumption rates based on historical patterns. Assess whether supply spans the 2050 horizon.

3

Employment Land Categorization

Match available land to target industry requirements—power, size, access—& compare with peer market offerings.

4

Geographic Distribution

Report totals by jurisdiction & inside vs. outside SNPLMA boundary. Enable local adequacy assessment.

The Path Forward

ULI provides valuable inventory data showing where land exists. Answering whether that land can support So. Nevada's growth requires the market-based analyses outlined in this review.

WHAT ULI PROVIDES

A macro inventory identifying 78,285 acres & planning characteristics

WHAT MORE IS NEEDED

Micro-based market analysis of practical features like infrastructure, economics, timing, & geography

THE GOAL

Evidence-based decisions for regional growth, housing affordability, & economic competitiveness

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