

# Indicators down for August

By [HUBBLE SMITH REVIEW-JOURNAL](#)

Analyst says that despite decline in monthly reading, state economy still going strong

<b>Economic indicators</b>			
	July 2004	Aug 2004	Percent change
Median new home price 	\$259,700	\$206,167	26.0
New residents	8,889	8,643	2.8
Total employment	853,100	814,800	4.7
Unemployment rate	4.6	5.8	—
New home sales	2,502	2,183	14.6
Existing home sales	5,851	4,697	24.6
New license permits	2,232	1,906	17.1
Commercial permits	103	103	0.0
Taxable sales	\$2.60 bil.	\$2.24 bil.	16.4
Gaming revenue	\$647.2 mil.	\$655.9 mil.	-1.3
Visitor volume	3.71 mil.	3.65 mil.	1.7
McCarran passengers	3.70 mil.	3.25 mil.	13.9

SOURCE: Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, Nevada Builders Research, UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research, Nevada Gaming Control Board, Nevada Department of Taxation, Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety. Percent changes are rounded.

Southern Nevada's economy slowed minimally in August as the index of leading economic indicators declined to 129.29, the Center for Business and Economic Research reported Friday.

Despite eight indicators posting declines from the previous month, the economy continues on an upward trend, said Keith Schwer, director of the research center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He noted that business activity is up 7.37 percent from a year ago. "Whereas many areas of the U.S., particularly those dominated by manufacturing, have experienced job losses or anemic growth, Southern Nevada has created about 35,000 jobs during the last year."

The index is a six-month forecast from the month of the data, based on a net-weighted average of 10 series after adjustments for seasonal variation. The accompanying Review-Journal chart includes several of the index's categories, along with data such as new residents and employment and housing numbers, updated for the most recent month for which figures are available. Indicators contributing negatively to the

index, based on June data, were visitor volume, McCarran International Airport passengers and gallons of gasoline sold.

Clark County's gross gaming revenue, which was up in June, posted a 1.3 percent decline in July from the same month a year ago to \$647.2 million.

Christopher LoBello, regional manager of Marcus & Millichap brokerage in Las Vegas, said increases in office-using employment bode well for the local office market, where demand for properties remains strong. "The robust Las Vegas economy will continue to rank among the best in the nation throughout 2004 as growth in population-driven employment sectors leads the economy," LoBello said.

Office employment in Las Vegas is on track to rise by 4.7 percent in 2004, compared with 4.2 percent last year, he said. Job growth is expected to reach 4 percent by the end of the year. Forty percent of companies interviewed in Las Vegas plan to increase hiring in the final quarter, while 57 percent expect to maintain current staff levels, an employment outlook survey by Manpower, an employment agency in Las Vegas, shows.

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in construction, education, transportation and public utilities, wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate and professional services, Manpower reported. "There is a little bounce in jobs here," said Kelly Karch, manager of Nevada JobConnect's office on Maryland Parkway. "Instead of getting calls from people wanting to fill out unemployment claims, I'm getting calls from employers wanting to post jobs."

Employment declined in June in each of the past two years and this year's modest gain is indicative of the strengthening economy, said Jim Shabi, economist for the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. Nevada's tourism industry, particularly in Las Vegas, has reported strong results over the past several months, he said.

Las Vegas hotels and motels have recorded a room occupancy rate in excess of 90 percent for three consecutive months for the first time since summer 2000, which is even more impressive considering 7,000 more rooms have come online since August 2000. Gaming employment has grown by 2,900 in Las Vegas since June 2003, although it remains 5,900 below its peak in August 2000, Shabi noted.

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