

A case to be made for “growth”

by Yerington city councilman and current candidate Nick Beaton

Most of us call Yerington home because we like the small town culture and feel. We like knowing our neighbors. We like the fact that we can walk from one end of town to the other. We like waving at folks as we walk or drive by. I personally love all of that, and the fact that I can take my dog for a run in the hills after a three-minute drive. For those of you wondering, yes, he’s a very good boy.

But there’s a delicate balance between small town and an unsustainable town. Yerington is on its way to the latter, but we can reverse several of these trends if we can usher, steward and guide in just a little bit of growth.

Now, when I say growth, some people immediately think of Fernley. I’m not arguing for that. What I’m arguing is that we need to return Yerington to a state of sustainability. In my now almost year (when did that happen?) on city council, three years on the Yerington Main Street Committee, and six years (again, WHAT?) living back here, there’s some data that I don’t like, and I think shows that Yerington is trending toward unsustainability or, at the very least, not keeping up.

- In 2012, Yerington’s median household income hovered at about \$40,000. In 2022, the most recent year we have data for, it’s barely budged. [1] The rest of the county is bringing home more than \$70,000 a year.
- In that same time span, the percentage of citizens over the age of 65 almost doubled in our community, from 19.8% to 38.1%. [1] Young, working families (ages 20-44) sat at just 18.5%.
- Between June of 2023 and December of 2025, Yerington Elementary School lost more than 60 students. [2] That’s almost 20% of the entire population drop in Lyon County School District. From one small elementary school.
- At the most recent school board meeting, with a 6-1 vote, school board trustees approved a preliminary budget package that cuts approximately \$2 million to meet fiscal restraint needs.
- The Nevada Department of Taxation expects a drop of nearly 50 taxpayers for the City of Yerington going into this budget year. [3]
- Due to a reduction in customers and higher costs, the city’s sewer fund is projected to lose \$270,667 this year. [3]

I don’t drop these here to scare anyone, but rather to let you know what we’re facing, and why we need some growth to fix it.

We need good, high paying jobs in our area. What agriculture does for our area is amazing. The Peri family, the Snyder family, and so many more are the reason we still have a town here at all. Mining has sputtered for decades in our valley, but there are promising projects coming from Southwest Critical Materials, Hudbay and more. That's only two industries. Copper prices plummet? Half our economy goes down. Intake prices for fertilizer or seed skyrocket while people are pinching their purse at the grocery store? Now the other half of our economy goes down. Those good, high paying jobs need to bring in diversification as well.

Like I said at the start of this piece, it's all about how we usher in, steward and guide this growth. Nobody should be able to just come into our valley, set up shop, create negative impacts, profit, and call it a day. But, that's why there are channels in place at all levels of government to establish guidelines, work with companies to offset impact and make sure that any project is a net benefit for our people and area. We can bring in new opportunities for our area and new families to enjoy living here while still keeping our water, our environment and our people front of mind.

I want to make something very clear here to avoid confusion. I am not a blanket yes man on any one type of industry, project or facility. But I'm definitely not a blanket no man, either. We need to view potential growth in our area on a case-by-case basis, determine its fit, see how they can work within our community, and go from there.

Every residential lot that pays taxes costs more in services to the city than the revenue brought in. But every industrial or commercial lot does the exact opposite. [4] It's why, during our most recent city budget workshop and then again at Monday's meeting, we'll discuss the need to freeze multiple positions within our government, including two spots in our police department, a few public works spots, and not hiring current empty positions in city hall, like a grant writer. Sure, our population isn't plummeting, but the bankruptcy of Nevada Copper wiped out more than \$1 million in revenue we had coming into the city from property tax. And what has been able to replace that? Well, nothing so far. What was in place to help fill the gap? Yes, some ag tax revenue and some businesses in town, but ag land is legally capped for taxation, and the amount of open businesses we have in our town is far from growing.

We'll also likely begin discussions on a sewer rate hike. I use hike instead of increase for a reason. We cannot carry a deficit on our books. But, we also can't carry funds from one source to another. So while our city's water fund is projected to come in over expenses thanks to an agreement with SB Energy for the Libra Solar project construction, we can't move that money from the water fund to the sewer or general fund. Even if we could, the funds we're projected to net on our water fund come

nowhere close to covering necessary and past capital improvements on the system. Our population hasn't plummeted, but it hasn't grown either. Meanwhile, our costs to provide sewer services have skyrocketed. Without more customers, without more people coming into town and building houses, opening businesses, moving into houses, etc., very nearly the only option the city has is to increase rates (trust me, I don't want to pay more either).

Speaking of the Libra Solar water lease, now seems like a good time to touch on the fact that, as long as ushered in properly like we've spoke about, growth can provide much-needed capital improvements that our community has been waiting on but can't otherwise afford. My job that pays the mortgage has me drive all over. That stretch from Yerington to Silver Springs is no fun, to say the least. At a recent solar project permit presentation to the county, it came up that NDOT is requiring these companies looking to move into our area to tackle surrounding infrastructure impacts. In fact, NDOT is requiring impacts be addressed, including things like lane widening, passing lanes, stop lights, etc. as far north as Ramsey Weeks Cutoff and as far south as Smith Valley.

These are improvements and projects that we need, but that are so far down on any priority list because of manpower and funding, that I may term out before they get completed. Working with incoming companies to put their money in and address the impacts they'll create has the potential to be a much faster, more effective way to get infrastructure improvements if we can grow right. With an increased tax base, improvements to public works, emergency services and parks and recreation are all more easily achievable, too.

Growth will also inspire other, smaller, much-needed growth. That vet office we all miss? The chance of someone moving in goes up with a larger customer base? A bakery, an option for electronics, new recreation and tourism businesses and an increase in retail and grocery are all more likely with a little bit of sustained growth. With some options comes some competitive pricing, and with that the chance at an affordable cost of living. Not to mention, depending on what industry and business we usher in, there's a strong chance for continuing education right here in our valley. Apprenticeships, CDL classes, increased revenue for our school districts, etc. are all net benefits from growth.

Good, high paying jobs allow our young people to stay or come back sooner, and bring in new young families to our community. I love that so many people who either grew up and raised families here want to stay here to retire. And I love that people from outside of our area view Yerington and Mason Valley as a place to live out their golden years. But I also love see full stands at high school games. I love seeing our Boys & Girls Club full of young learners. I love seeing town alive on a Saturday night. I love seeing events

sell out and people having a great time. We need to encourage growth that will help our demographics trend back toward a more equal balance.

I'm realizing that I've blown right through the 1,000 word limit I gave myself on this. I could talk to people about this kind of stuff all day. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out on social media or to my email, nickb@yerington.net, and I'll get back to you.

If you've made it this far, thank you for reading. Eyeing responsible, stewarded growth will not only make Yerington a better place to live, but it's necessary if we want our town to continue to sustain.

[1] <https://www.yerington.net/DocumentCenter/View/868/2025-MASTER-PLAN-FINAL-ADOPTED-10132025>

[2] <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Agenda/1027?meeting=726881>

[3] https://yerington.net/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_05182026-59

[4] <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3114737>