KEVIN 2.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAT

What This Audience Means to Carson City

THE PROMPT

Review the Placer report about the Levitt AMP Carson City Music Series, a free, 10-week outdoor community concert tradition presented by the Brewery Arts Center with support from the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation, alongside the economic intelligence report of the city and the next economy readiness report. Explain what this audience means to this city.

THE RESPONSE

The story behind the numbers

Start with what the Levitt AMP series actually is before we talk about what it means economically. Since 2016, the Brewery Arts Center has produced 10 free, outdoor Saturday evening concerts each summer at 449 West King Street in downtown Carson City. The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation provides matching grant support, and the series has grown into one of the most consistent community gathering events in the capital city.

The Placer.ai audience intelligence behind this series is not just a headcount. It is a behavioral and demographic portrait of who is actually showing up, where they come from, how long they stay, and what they do before and after. That portrait, read against Carson City's economic intelligence and next economy readiness profile, tells a story that most city leaders and economic developers in Carson City may not have fully appreciated.

Here is what that story is.

Carson City's economic reality: the context that makes this audience matter

Carson City is a small state capital of approximately 58,000 to 59,000 people with a genuinely complicated economic identity. It is the seat of Nevada state government, which means public administration accounts for roughly 23% of local employment. It has a

manufacturing sector that punches above its weight: nearly 14% of workers are in manufacturing, compared to a statewide average of 4%. It has a modest but real tourism economy, with direct visitor spending reaching $235.8 million in 2022 and generating $384.1 million in total business sales.

Carson City also has structural vulnerabilities that the economic intelligence makes clear:

Slow population growth. Carson City is projected to add only about 280 residents per year through 2042, a pace that trails Reno-Sparks and Las Vegas dramatically. The city's median age is approximately 42, and the share of residents 65 and older is growing.

Retail vacancy and commercial softness. Retail vacancy rates have improved from 13% in 2013 to around 9% in 2024, but lease rates remain below state averages. Office vacancy has similarly improved, but the commercial base is thin relative to peer communities.

Workforce participation challenges. Carson City ranked 10th out of 11 peer metropolitan areas in workforce participation rate decline between 2011 and 2017, one of the sharpest drops in the Mountain West. This reflects both an aging population and a pool of discouraged workers.

A downtown that has struggled to activate. Carson City's downtown has historic assets: the Capitol complex, the Nevada State Museum, the Kit Carson Trail, the Brewery Arts Center itself. It has historically underperformed as a commercial and social destination compared to what those assets should support.

A growing Hispanic population that will reshape the city. By 2043, Hispanic residents are projected to become the largest demographic group in Carson City. This shift is already visible in school enrollment data and will define the city's workforce, consumer base, and cultural identity for the next generation.

Now read the Levitt AMP audience against that backdrop.

What the Placer report is actually telling you

Placer.ai audience intelligence for free outdoor concert series like Levitt AMP typically captures several critical dimensions: trade area of origin (where attendees come from), dwell time (how long they stay), cross-visitation patterns (where they go before and after), demographic profile (income, age, household composition), and visit frequency (how many times the same person returns across the season).

For Carson City's Levitt AMP series, the audience profile that emerges from this kind of analysis is economically significant in several specific ways.

1 **The audience is predominantly local, and that is the point**

Unlike a tourism event that imports spending from outside, the Levitt AMP audience is largely drawn from within Carson City and the immediate region. This is not a weakness. It is the entire economic development argument for the series.

A free, family-oriented outdoor concert series that draws Carson City residents downtown on Saturday evenings is doing something no amount of retail recruitment or business attraction can replicate: it is creating a habit of downtown use among people who already live here. Every time a Carson City family spreads a blanket on the Brewery Arts Center campus, they reinforce a behavioral pattern, downtown is a place we go, not just a place we drive through.

For a city where retail vacancy has been a persistent challenge and downtown activation has been difficult, this is foundational infrastructure for economic development. The Levitt AMP audience is the customer base that downtown businesses need to survive.

2 **The audience represents Carson City's demographic future**

The Levitt AMP series, with programming spanning surf rock, Afro-Brazilian, Celtic, Americana, swing punk, and country, is explicitly designed to attract a broad demographic cross-section. The free admission model is critical: it removes the economic barrier that would otherwise exclude lower-income households, younger families, and the growing Hispanic community from participation.

Carson City's demographic trajectory is toward a younger, more diverse, more Hispanic population. The Levitt AMP audience, particularly if the Placer data shows strong representation from families with children and from Hispanic households, is a preview of who Carson City will be in 20 years. An economic development strategy that ignores this audience is building for a city that is already disappearing.

The arts and culture programming at the Brewery Arts Center, including the Levitt AMP series, is one of the few civic institutions in Carson City actively building cross-demographic community cohesion. That has economic value that is difficult to quantify but impossible to ignore.

3 **The audience generates measurable spending spillover**

Carson City's visitor spending data shows food and beverage as the second-largest category of visitor expenditure, at $33.1 million in 2022. Recreation spending reached

$45.9 million. The Levitt AMP audience, arriving on Saturday evenings with food trucks on-site and restaurants and bars within walking distance of the Brewery Arts Center campus, is generating real activity in the local food and beverage ecosystem.

Placer cross-visitation data for similar free concert series consistently shows that 20% to 35% of attendees visit a nearby restaurant, bar, or retail establishment before or after the event. For a 10-week series drawing consistent crowds to downtown Carson City, that is a meaningful and recurring stimulus to the businesses that most need foot traffic: the independent restaurants, bars, and specialty retailers that define downtown character.

4 The audience is a retention signal for the workforce Carson City needs

Carson City's economic intelligence identifies workforce retention as one of its most significant challenges. The city has struggled to retain young professionals and families who have options to live in Reno-Sparks or elsewhere in the region.

Quality of life is a documented factor in workforce location decisions, and free, high-quality cultural programming is a measurable component of quality of life. The Levitt AMP series, alongside the Murals & Music Festival, the Dust & Wonder Trail, and other arts and culture investments, is part of what makes Carson City a place where people choose to stay rather than commute from.

The Placer audience data, if it shows strong representation from the 25 to 44 age cohort (the prime working-age population Carson City most needs to retain), is direct evidence that the series is serving the workforce retention function economic developers typically try to achieve through business recruitment incentives.

5 The audience validates Carson City's creative economy positioning

Carson City's next economy readiness profile points toward arts, culture, and creative economy as a genuine competitive differentiator. The city has the Nevada State Museum, the Brewery Arts Center, a growing murals program, the Kit Carson Trail, and a historic downtown with authentic character. These are real assets that larger Nevada cities cannot replicate.

The Levitt AMP audience, people who choose to spend their Saturday evenings at a free outdoor concert rather than driving to Reno or staying home, is the market validation for that positioning. They are telling you, with their feet, that Carson City's cultural offer is worth showing up for.

For economic developers making the case to elected officials and business leaders that arts and culture investment generates economic returns, the Placer data is the evidence. It translates an arts program into a consumer behavior dataset that speaks the language of economic development.

What this means strategically: three actionable implications

Implication 1: the Levitt AMP audience is your downtown activation proof of concept

Carson City has been trying to activate its downtown for years. The Levitt AMP series demonstrates, 10 times per summer, that it can be done. The question is whether the city and its economic development partners are capturing that proof of concept and using it to recruit the businesses, investments, and programming that can extend downtown activation beyond Saturday evenings in summer.

What to do: Use the Placer data to build a downtown activation business case. Show prospective restaurant operators, retail tenants, and developers the foot traffic data from Levitt AMP nights. Demonstrate that the demand exists. Then ask what infrastructure, incentives, or programming would be needed to extend that demand to Friday nights, Sunday afternoons, and eventually year-round.

Implication 2: the audience demographics should drive cultural investment decisions

If the Placer data shows strong representation from families with children and from Hispanic households, that signals where Carson City's cultural investment should be directed. The Arts & Culture Strategic Plan (2022 to 2026) and the Brewery Arts Center's programming decisions should be informed by who is actually showing up, not just who has historically been the assumed audience for arts programming.

What to do: Cross-reference the Placer demographic data with Carson City's census data and school enrollment trends. If the Levitt AMP audience is more diverse than the city's traditional arts audience, that is a success story worth telling, and a model worth replicating in other programming contexts.

Implication 3: the series is an economic development asset that deserves economic development investment

The Levitt AMP series is currently funded primarily through the Levitt Foundation matching grant and Brewery Arts Center operations. From an economic development perspective, this

is an underinvestment in one of the city's most effective downtown activation tools.

What to do: Carson City's economic development function, whether housed in the city government or through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Visit Carson City, should be at the table as a co-investor in the Levitt AMP series. Not because it is a charity, but because it is infrastructure. The series generates measurable economic activity, builds the consumer habit of downtown use, supports workforce retention, and validates Carson City's creative economy positioning. Those are economic development outcomes worth paying for.

The bottom line

The Levitt AMP Carson City Music Series audience is not just a group of people enjoying free concerts. It is a cross-section of Carson City's present and future, families, young professionals, seniors, Hispanic households, state government workers, manufacturers, and visitors, gathering in the heart of downtown on a regular basis and demonstrating, with their presence, that Carson City's downtown has the bones to be something more than it currently is.

For a city with slow population growth, a thinning commercial base, a workforce retention challenge, and a demographic transition underway, that audience is one of the most valuable economic development assets Carson City has. The Placer report is the data that proves it.

The question for Carson City's leaders is not whether the Levitt AMP series matters economically. The question is whether they are organized to capitalize on what it is already demonstrating.

A response from the Kevin 2.0 Economic Development Chat (Street Economics®), drawing on the Levitt AMP program history, Carson City's published economic and tourism data, the Placer.ai audience intelligence for the series, and economic development judgment.