



**HISTORIC  
HENDERSON  
WALKING TOUR**

- 1. City Hall Plaza
- 2. Recreation
- 3. Patriotism
- 4. Family/Home
- 5. Industry
- 6. Business
- 7. Government
- 8. Education
- ★ Public Art



Lake Mead Parkway and Water Street



**WHERE EVERY STREET  
TELLS A STORY**

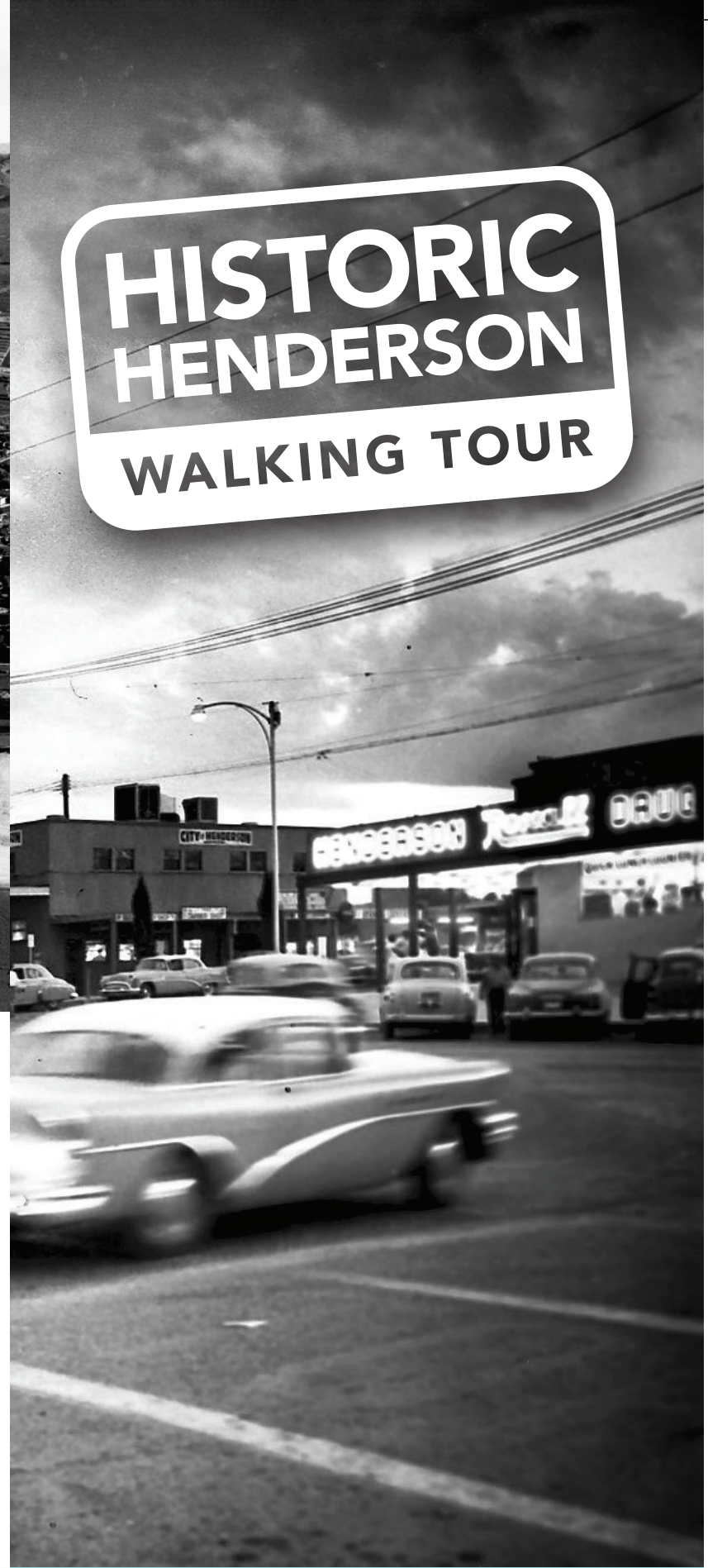
The City of Henderson and the Henderson Historical Society thank you for exploring our special city! Take a closer look at Henderson's robust history and how it is intertwined with our national history and the building of our county.



Scan the QR code for access to additional photos, facts and more virtual storytelling.

**HENDERSON™**

**HISTORIC  
HENDERSON  
WALKING TOUR**



**WATER STREET DISTRICT**  
HENDERSON



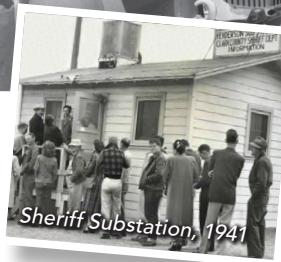
# HISTORIC HENDERSON WALKING TOUR



Henderson Fire Department, 1956

## SITE 1: CITY HALL PLAZA

Water Street was once the commercial and civic heart of Henderson. The name is rooted in Henderson's industrial heritage, after the water pipeline used to pump water to the Basic Magnesium, Inc. (BMI) plant. The story of Henderson started in 1939 when Cleveland businessman Howard Eells obtained the mineral rights to the magnesium deposits in Gabbs, Nevada, 350 miles away, for use in making refractory—or heat resistant—bricks. The plant opened in 1942 and employed almost 15,000 people.



Sheriff Substation, 1941



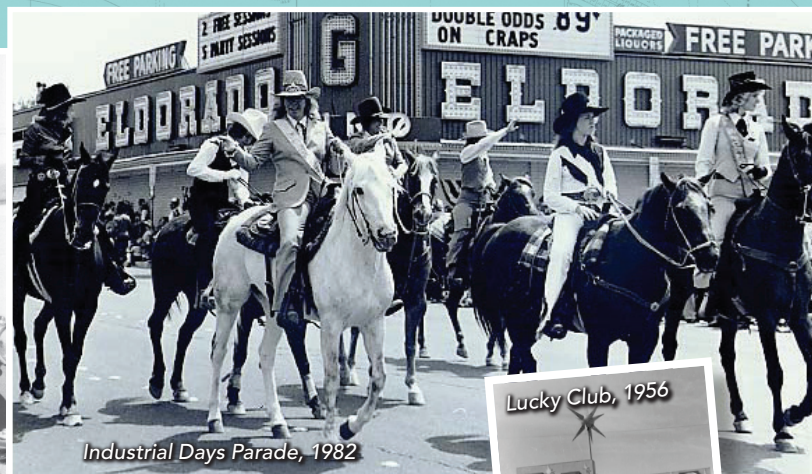
Basic Magnesium Workers, 1943

## SITE 5: INDUSTRY

Henderson's origins can be traced to the groundbreaking for Basic Magnesium Inc. on September 15, 1941. McNeil Construction, which later built Disneyland and the Dunes Hotel, constructed the plant. During World War II, BMI's work was heralded as critical to the war effort. In July 1943, the plant reached full production capacity of magnesium at 112 million pounds annually, and the B-17 Flying Fortress *Memphis Belle* and her original crew commemorated the event.



A "Magnesium Maggie" at work at the BMI plant.



Industrial Days Parade, 1982

## SITE 2: RECREATION

Despite the intense focus on industrial production to aid the war effort, Henderson workers and families also sought ways to relax and have fun. In 1943, N.D. Van Wagenen opened the Victory Theatre on the corner of Army and Panama Streets.



Victory Theatre, 1943



Lucky Club, 1956



Frank Sinatra performs at Henderson Youth Center, 1954



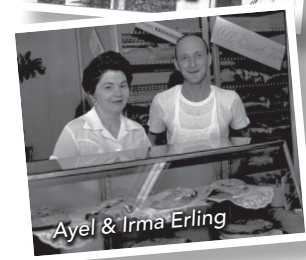
Arctic Circle Restaurant, 1946

## SITE 6: BUSINESS

In 1943, Clark County grocer Mark S. Schulman announced the opening of the first townsite grocery market. Located on Water Street and Atlantic Avenue, the 12,000-square-foot store was the first business to open in the new Water Street shopping district. As Water Street developed, it became the social and commercial center for residents.



Gold Mine, 1972



Aye & Irma Erling



The Memphis Belle Crew

## SITE 3: PATRIOTISM

Henderson, "born in America's defense" during World War II, was the key site for magnesium production for use in airplane parts and ammunition. Street names reflect this patriotic origin with Army Street and Navy Street and places like Victory Village. The town grew to provide housing for the workers at Basic Magnesium, the community's industrial center.



VFW Dignitary, 1964



Former City Hall

## SITE 7: GOVERNMENT

Even though Henderson was officially founded 70 years ago, city offices have had four different homes, from a location above a grocery store to the current beautiful complex on Water Street. Led by the Chamber of Commerce, Henderson incorporated on April 16, 1953, marking a long-awaited hope to become an official city. The first City Council was sworn in at the Central Fire Station which doubled as City Hall for a brief period.



Henderson's First Mayor, Dr. James B. French, 1953



Federal Home Sale, 1952

## SITE 4: FAMILY & HOME

The first BMI workers lived in campgrounds and tent communities near the Basic Magnesium plant beginning in 1941. They planted the seeds of community that would become Henderson and a place for hard-working families to call home. The Federal Government later assisted with home construction due to the influx of workers at BMI.



Public Library



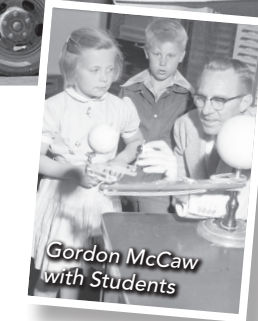
Early Homesites



Henderson School

## SITE 8: EDUCATION

The construction of the Basic Magnesium plant instantly transformed the desert lands east of Las Vegas into a populous tent and trailer city, complete with children of all ages. The nearest elementary school district, Railroad Pass, a school district with a one room building and one teacher, was expanded to include the new community. The name was later changed to the Henderson School District until it merged with Clark County School District in 1965.



Gordon McGaw with Students