

Aquatic Gentrification

Abstract:

This research explores the dual nature of surf tourism, highlighting both its benefits and detriments. On the positive side, surf tourism can stimulate local economies and provide healthier lifestyle alternatives for impoverished communities, as seen in regions like Nicaragua and El Salvador. However, it often displaces locals, fosters environmental harm, and exacerbates gentrification, with unchecked market growth marginalizing host communities. Localism and territorial disputes among surfers further contribute to tensions, leading to aggression and violence. In the end some surfers advocate for sustainable practices and collaboration among stakeholders to combat these problems. This research on the other hand will aim to use data as a resource to find whether the financial impacts are positive or negative towards both the environment and communities.

Introduction:

In some ways surfing is a sport that brings friends closer, spending time on the water together just chilling, having a good time. But on occasion and getting more and more common these days surfing has pushed apart communities due to peoples incentive to think they have more right on a wave or break than other people, this is a problem in the surf community because with more people fighting over territory it brings this toxicity to places that can't sustain this activity such as places like El Salvador. This research addresses the question of How can we fix the problems of gentrification and overpopulation from surf tourism in places like La Libertad, El Salvador, that receive large negative effects compared to other popular pro surf spots such as Trestels, California that receive little negative effects. One of the things that will help with this is through sustainable practices which specifically means that surfers and people of the surf industry should take the extra time to practice reusing wasted materials or leaving beach areas the same or better than you found it so people can reuse that area sustainably.

Lit Review:

Surfing mostly benefits the outsiders and displaces impoverished countries, sustainable practices negate these effects, and surfing is like a form of colonization. Although surf tourism has some very bad harms that come with the surf industry that follows it, there can be some very beneficial side effects of surf tourism such as In Henry Schrandt's blog, Surf Tourism and Poverty, He notes that in certain places that live in poverty such as Nicaragua and El Salvador "particularly [experience] the negative effects of surf tourism. Fortunately, it does not have to be this way. Through collaboration between governments, surf businesses, travelers and residents, surf tourism and poverty can be dealt with responsibly and bring much-needed

economic stimulus to impoverished surf meccas” (Schrandt, Henry 2020). Henry Schrandt also notes in this quote that with different groups and the peoples collaboration, there are ways to deal with the negative effects of surf tourism responsibly. Along with this in Jordan Rashaad’s article, Surf Tourism: The Good, the Bad, and the Waves, he talks about how surf tourism brings the surf industry to these impoverished areas that develops into a non-controlled free-market system. Despite these challenges, using a quote from Tracy Roberts, the Marketing & Communications officer for Saffa Surf Tours, Rashaad explains one of the benefits of surf tourism. “The benefits of getting local children from informal settlements into the surfing lifestyle are undeniable. Surfing is a much healthier alternative to the norms they experience in their settlements, like gangsterism, alcoholism, violence and drugs” (Jordan, Rashaad 2018). This shows that tourism from surfers can teach these kids that there are other, more healthy, alternatives to what they mostly experience, being the aforementioned list of norms.

Surf tourism breeds an industry that harms rather than benefits through unlimited growth of a market that restricts involvement of other communities. Again in Jordan Rashaad’s article, Surf Tourism: The Good, the Bad, and the Waves, He claims that one of the benefits that surf tourism brings is the revenue that comes with these big industries allowing for some of this revenue to be injected into these coastal economies. This positive effect also has its downsides to it, according to researcher Christin Radtke, “But despite the revenue surf tourism brings, it is generally not considered in coastal management plans. This means that it often develops as an uncontrolled and free-market industry, growing unlimitedly and restricting the involvement of host communities” (Jordan, Rashaad 2018). This shows that surf tourism can bring even more harm to coastal economies if they continue to operate without limits in these areas.

Another bad side to surfing is that it is acting as a cause for violence and aggression towards outsider surfers and the industry causing environmental harm. When surfing many people feel threatened or left out due to people commonly known as locals who are basically the people who are protective over their home break. In Nick Towner’s & Jérémy Lemarié’s article, Localism at New Zealand surfing destinations: Durkheim and the social structure of communities, Towner and Lemarié have seen that as surfing’s popularity grows, so does the amount of people out in the water on each surf break. This results in a lot of locals getting defensive as they are protective and want to maintain a sort of ownership over this specific break. “At these crowded locations, some local surfers are protective and maintain ownership over a site or break through the practice of localism. Localism may produce aggressive behavior, including verbal abuse, damage to property and violent confrontations”(Towner and Lemarié, 2020). This might be caused by outsiders coming to surf spots and not treating the locals with respect or the surrounding area with treatment that might harm the environment causing locals to become protective over their home break.

Even under all the good sides and the bad sides of surf tourism and the surf industry that are all fairly obvious or public, there are still sides of the surf industry that cause gentrification in places all over the

world. In an Oxfam Blog, *Stemming the tide of injustice in the surfing industry*, the author writes about retired professional surfer, Ben Fortun, who reflects about his experiences in surfing. The thing that stood out to Fortun the most is the darker aspect of it that no one really talks about. Fortun says “I remembered the farmers in Sinaloa, Mexico forced off their land to build resorts – leaving them with the choice to either become resort workers or turn to illicit activities. I remembered the gangs in Costa Rica that have grown out of the massive inequality there. I remembered the sweatshops in China and elsewhere that produce surfing products, from board shorts to surfboards, by the thousands with little to no safety regulations to protect their workers. I have seen the dark side of the surfing community, that existed then and persists to this day, but is rarely seen or talked about” (Steaming the tide, 2015). Exclaiming that it's rarely ever seen or talked about shows that either people do not care enough for these problems or companies are not publicizing these facts. Either way we need to fix something about it which is exactly what Fortun wants to do. “I am working hard to get back to the water, and to be a champion again. I don't want to be the type of champion who wins contests and seeks out spots in magazines and movies, though. I'm hoping to find a way to be a champion for the rights of the poor – namely those being exploited and hurt by the surfing world. And I don't want to do this alone. I'm looking to my fellow-surfers, those in surfing communities, and those in positions of power to join me. Surfers can and should recognize the impact of the sport on the world, and stand together to make that impact a positive one. In our search for perfect waves, we must also be searching for a more perfect society” (Steaming the tide, 2015). This shows that Fortun is working hard for a way to fix what has been done and I think it is important for us to strive for this too, not coming up with excuses to not do it but to come up with excuses to do it.

Methodologies:

The inquiry approaches used consisted of looking at correlation research to examine the relationship between the presence of the surf industry and its effects on impoverished coastal residents. Tools used to collect correlation research included databases that tracked economic stability or net worth of a coastal economy before and after a surf industry entered the area while also using satellite imaging to see the growth in development during the same time. Correlation and regression were used as data analysis techniques to assess the relationship between the surf industry's influence and the decline or support of impoverished coastal residents; this was also used to view development. Inferential statistics were also applied to make predictions on how a surf industry could affect an area, either positively or negatively. The data collected was quantitative and qualitative, analyzing numerical changes in economic status and their correlation with the timing of surf industry expansion

while also looking at visual photos to see the change of the area overtime. Required materials and equipment included a computer and access to relevant databases.

Findings:

This graph is the GDP of California during its most popular years of surfing (1960s-70s.) This is to see how the change of GDP of an economic area would look if it is stable.

Source

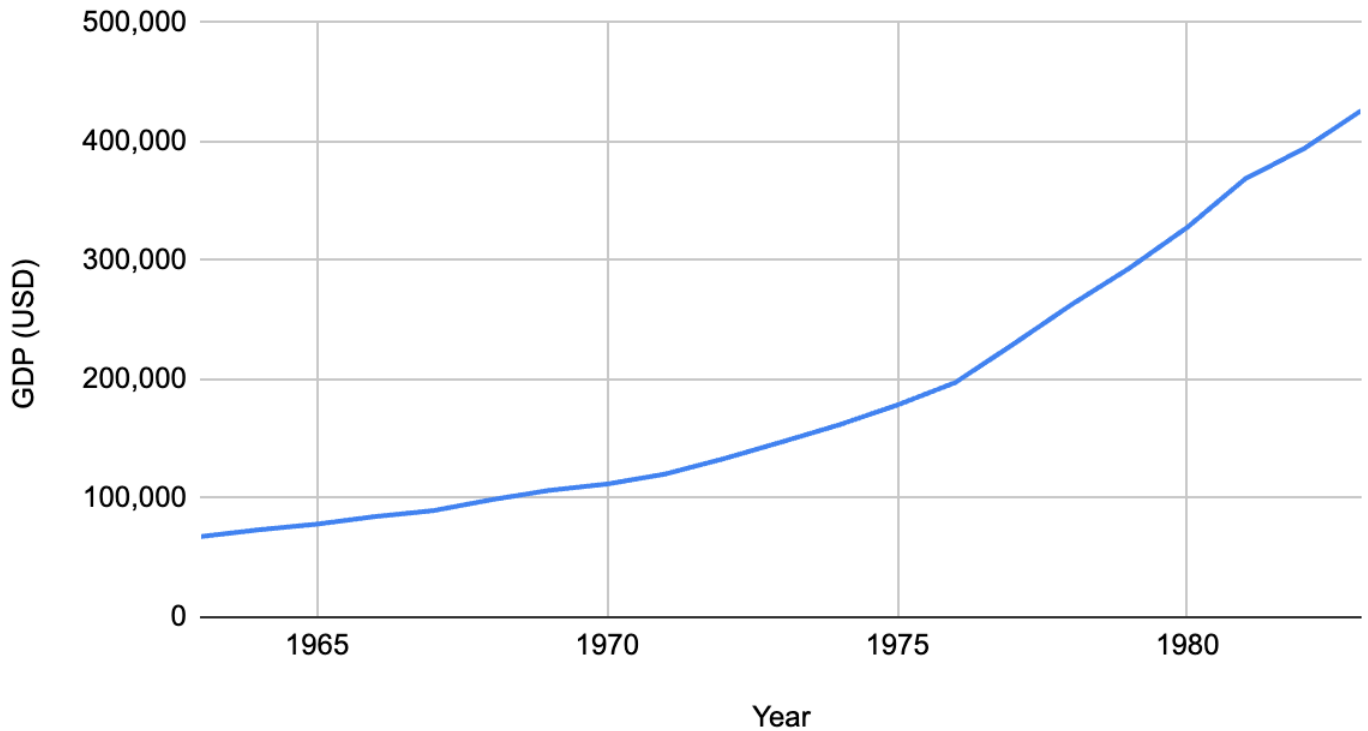
<https://dof.ca.gov/serp/?q=GDP+>

Year	GDP (USD)
1963	67,809
1964	73,513
1965	78,253
1966	84,628
1967	89,571
1968	98,721
1969	106,629
1970	111,985
1971	120,372
1972	133,143
1973	147,231
1974	161,815
1975	178,394
1976	197,347
1977	229,592
1978	262,803
1979	293,491
1980	327,959
1981	368,808
1982	393,788
1983	426,143

CALIFORNIA STATE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP), 1963 TO 2023						
(Millions of dollars)						
Year	Current Dollars	1997 \$	Deflator 1997=100	Annual Percent Change		
				Cur \$	1997 \$	Def
SIC-based						
1963	67,809	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1964	73,513	NA	NA	8.4%	NA	NA
1965	78,253	NA	NA	6.4%	NA	NA
1966	84,628	NA	NA	8.1%	NA	NA
1967	89,571	NA	NA	5.8%	NA	NA
1968	98,721	NA	NA	10.2%	NA	NA
1969	106,629	NA	NA	8.0%	NA	NA
1970	111,985	NA	NA	5.0%	NA	NA
1971	120,372	NA	NA	7.5%	NA	NA
1972	133,143	NA	NA	10.6%	NA	NA
1973	147,231	NA	NA	10.6%	NA	NA
1974	161,815	NA	NA	9.9%	NA	NA
1975	178,394	NA	NA	10.2%	NA	NA
1976	197,347	NA	NA	10.6%	NA	NA
1977	229,592	523,796	43.8	16.3%	NA	NA
1978	262,803	559,843	46.9	14.5%	6.9%	NA
1979	293,491	581,986	50.4	11.7%	4.0%	NA
1980	327,959	599,507	54.7	11.7%	3.0%	NA
1981	368,808	619,243	59.6	12.5%	3.3%	NA
1982	393,788	619,420	63.6	6.8%	0.0%	NA
1983	426,143	641,585	66.4	8.2%	3.6%	NA
1984	482,166	693,095	69.6	13.1%	8.0%	NA
1985	523,906	728,599	71.9	8.7%	5.1%	NA
1986	563,082	756,166	74.5	7.5%	3.8%	NA
1987	615,360	802,816	76.7	9.3%	6.2%	NA
1988	671,575	848,273	79.2	9.1%	5.7%	NA
1989	722,979	880,307	82.1	7.7%	3.8%	NA
1990	773,460	906,103	85.4	7.0%	2.9%	NA
1991	790,046	893,112	88.5	2.1%	-1.4%	NA
1992	807,358	891,631	90.5	2.2%	-0.2%	NA
1993	826,447	888,070	93.1	2.4%	-0.4%	NA

These graphs are the raw data I used from the California GDP charts. This was to find out how the GDP changed during the time of California's most growth in its surf history.

GDP (USD) vs. Year



This graph is the GDP of El Slavador during its most recent years when surfing has become popular. (2004-2024) this is to compare the area in which we think gentrification is happening and where it seems to not be a problem like in california.

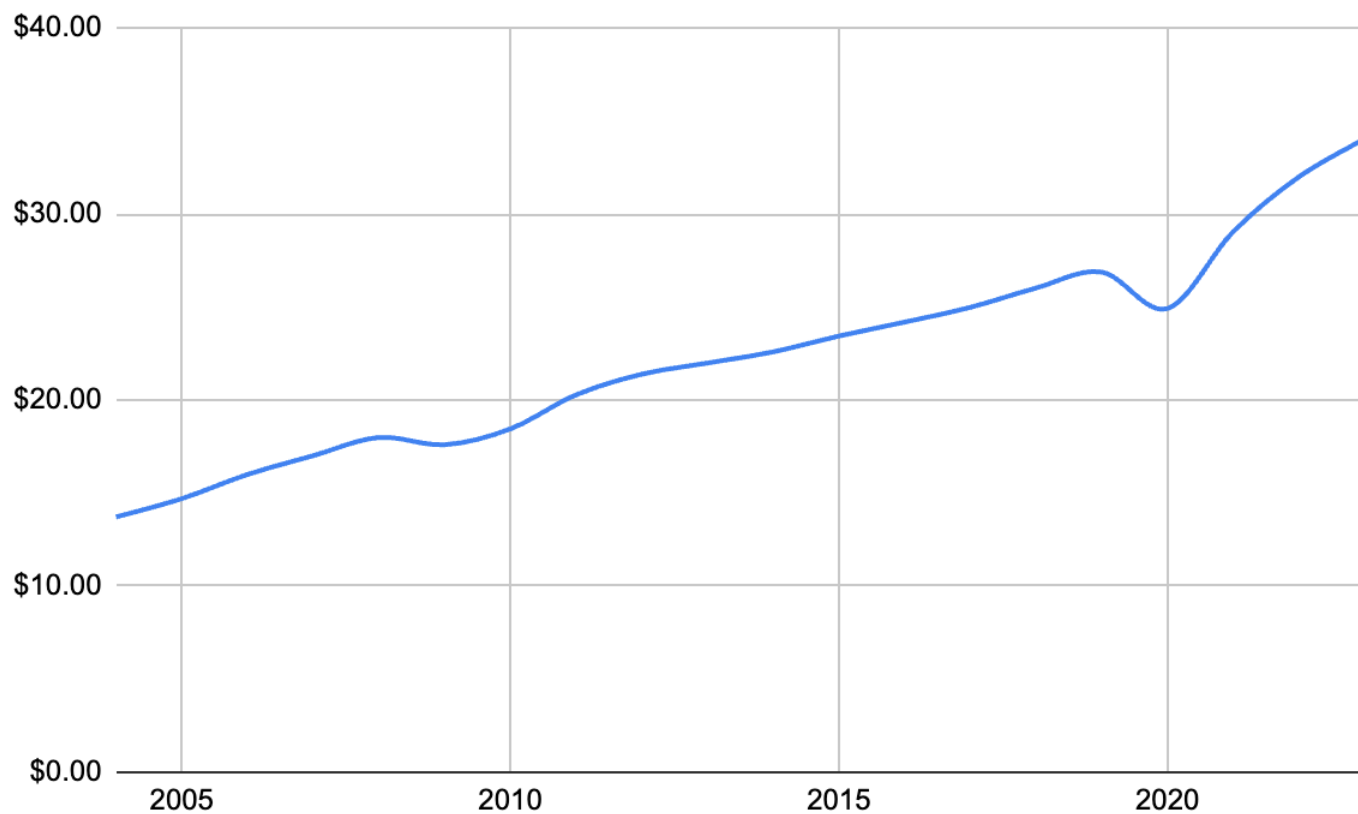
Source

<https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/slv/el-salvador/gdp-gross-domestic-product>

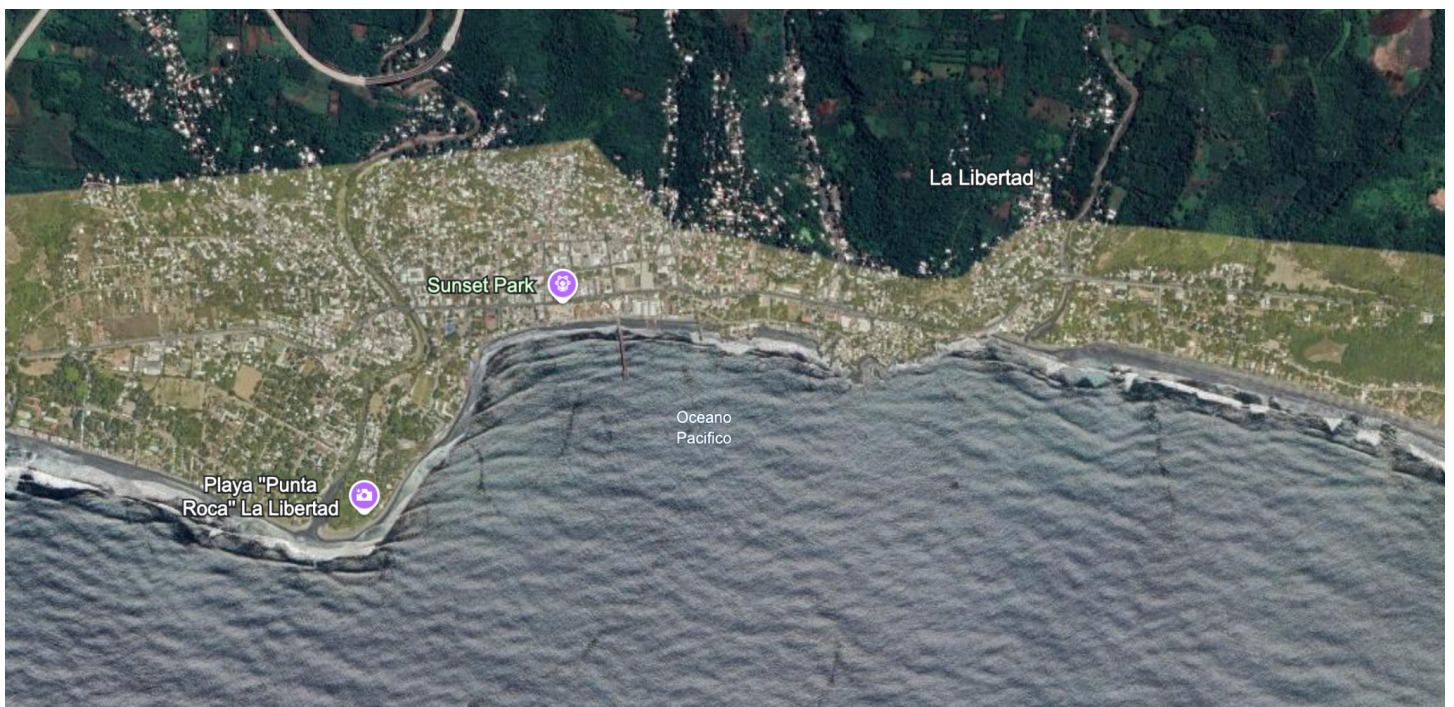
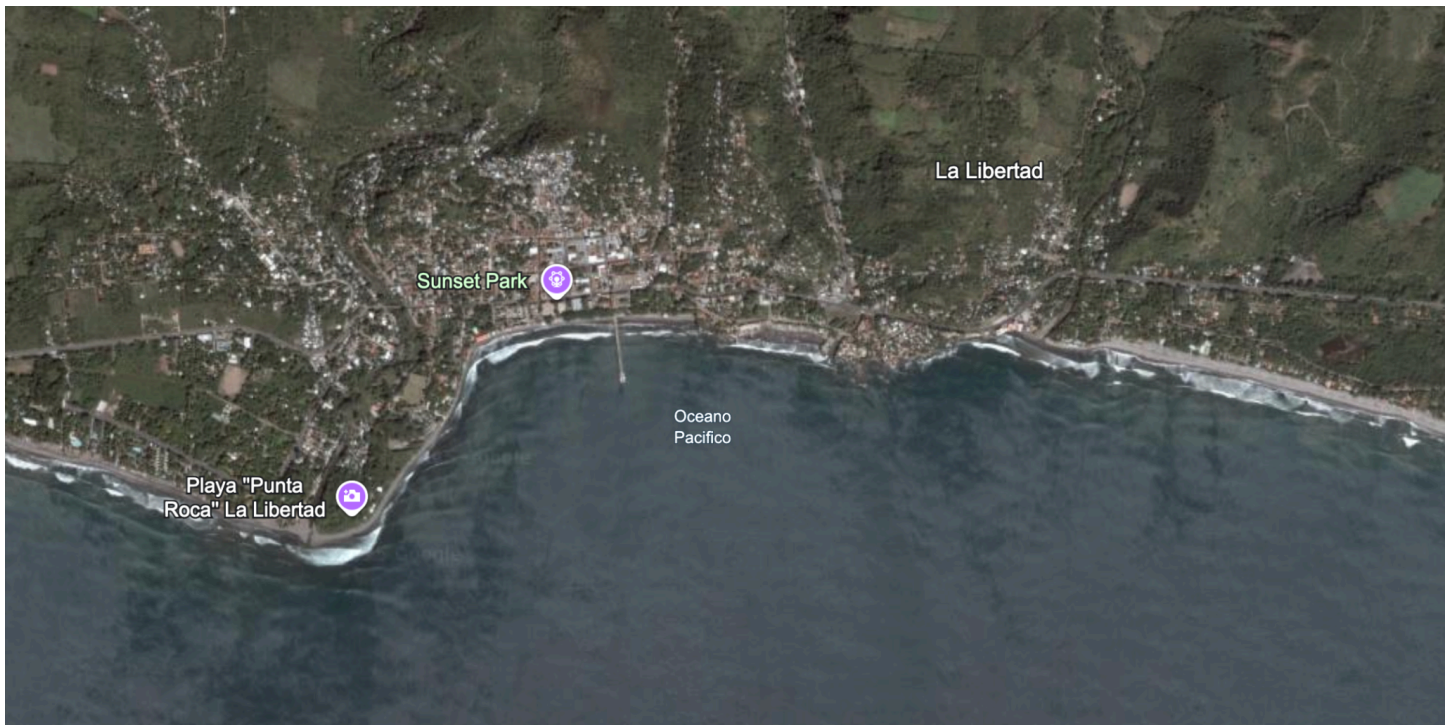
Year	GDP (B USD)
2023	\$34.02
2022	\$31.99
2021	\$29.04
2020	\$24.92
2019	\$26.88
2018	\$26.02
2017	\$24.98
2016	\$24.19
2015	\$23.44
2014	\$22.59
2013	\$21.99
2012	\$21.39
2011	\$20.28
2010	\$18.45
2009	\$17.60
2008	\$17.99
2007	\$17.01
2006	\$16.00
2005	\$14.70
2004	\$13.72

El Salvador GDP - Historical Data			
Year	GDP	Per Capita	Growth
2023	\$34.02B	\$5,344	3.51%
2022	\$31.99B	\$5,048	2.80%
2021	\$29.04B	\$4,600	11.90%
2020	\$24.92B	\$3,960	-7.89%
2019	\$26.88B	\$4,280	2.44%
2018	\$26.02B	\$4,146	2.41%
2017	\$24.98B	\$3,986	2.25%
2016	\$24.19B	\$3,870	2.54%
2015	\$23.44B	\$3,762	2.40%
2014	\$22.59B	\$3,639	1.73%
2013	\$21.99B	\$3,555	2.18%
2012	\$21.39B	\$3,471	2.89%
2011	\$20.28B	\$3,305	3.77%
2010	\$18.45B	\$3,017	2.15%
2009	\$17.60B	\$2,890	-2.11%
2008	\$17.99B	\$2,964	2.15%
2007	\$17.01B	\$2,815	1.85%
2006	\$16.00B	\$2,651	4.34%
2005	\$14.70B	\$2,434	2.68%
2004	\$13.72B	\$2,274	0.89%
2003	\$13.24B	\$2,197	1.57%
2002	\$12.66B	\$2,107	1.57%
2001	\$12.28B	\$2,051	0.88%
2000	\$11.78B	\$1,978	1.13%
1999	\$11.28B	\$1,905	2.16%
1998	\$10.94B	\$1,858	2.65%
1997	\$10.22B	\$1,750	3.14%
1996	\$9.59B	\$1,654	0.81%
1995	\$8.92B	\$1,552	4.73%
1994	\$7.68B	\$1,349	4.69%
1993	\$6.68B	\$1,186	5.82%
1992	\$5.81B	\$1,047	7.02%
1991	\$5.25B	\$962	1.49%

This is the raw data collected from the El Salvador GDP growth over the last 20 years and how the changes look on a graph able to



These photo shows the Growth in development from 2002-2023 in La Libertad, El Salvador



Conclusion

1. The most important thing that the graphs on the left tell us is how well the economy is doing as a rush of tourists come into the area for surfing. Both of these graphs have a very similar trend but only California is very consistent. This may suggest that El Salvador has a more unstable economy making any big shifts such as big companies or new rich residents a big threat to the current economy.
2. On the right we can see El Salvador has developed incredibly fast, expanding residential all over the coast almost doubling the surface area of residential. This dramatically increases the amount of people living in the area, increasing the costs of goods, and services due to the increased demand.