

To Whom it May Concern;

The idea of establishing a segregated living/working/social community for people with ID truly makes me cringe. I know that Opportunity Village has good intentions, but Betty's Village would be a step back in time. It goes against many years of development of best practices for people with ID. Even CMS, always conservative in their action, has acknowledged that segregating a certain group of people is not healthy and should not be condoned or paid for with public funds.

I have many concerns about the Betty's Village proposal. Here are just a few:

1. Out of sight, Out of mind. For too many years, people with ID were warehoused in separate communities, also with the best intentions and to "protect" them from society. They travel in groups with chaperones, and people in the community can be "relieved" of any responsibility to interact or get to know them. They become forgotten members of our society and are not valued by the community.

2. There is much more chance of abuse in a community where people are segregated. According to www.disabilityjustice.org, an online resource for legal professionals, law schools, students and others dedicated to protecting the rights of people with developmental disabilities:

- People with disabilities are often isolated and dependent on a small circle of friends or caregivers for critical support, including assistance with basic physical needs. These same caregivers are often the abusers, which poses a difficult decision for the victim who is required to choose between the potential for continuing abuse and an uncertain future.
- In segregated environments, abuse can occur – and be hidden – more easily.
- Victims who are abused in group settings may have limited access to police, advocates, medical or social services representatives, or others who can intervene and help.
- People with limited communication abilities and/or cognitive disabilities may find it difficult to report abuse effectively.

3. It is an outdated model. If Opportunity Village is truly looking for a way to support people with ID in leading full, inclusive lives, they should take a lesson from innovative models, like the Mission Project in Mission, Kansas. <http://www.themissionproject.org>
The Mission Project supports people with ID in their own apartments, living in an inclusive community setting. An apartment complex was chosen that is close to a health club, transportation and other community services. The project supplies some transportation to work, job development, and supported living as needed by each person. People with ID interact on a daily basis with others in the apartment complex, at their jobs and socializing. There are opportunities to socialize together and in the larger community.

I believe CMS is right in not using public funds for a segregated community. I hope that OV will reconsider this backwards step and look for better ways to support people with ID in the Las Vegas community.

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