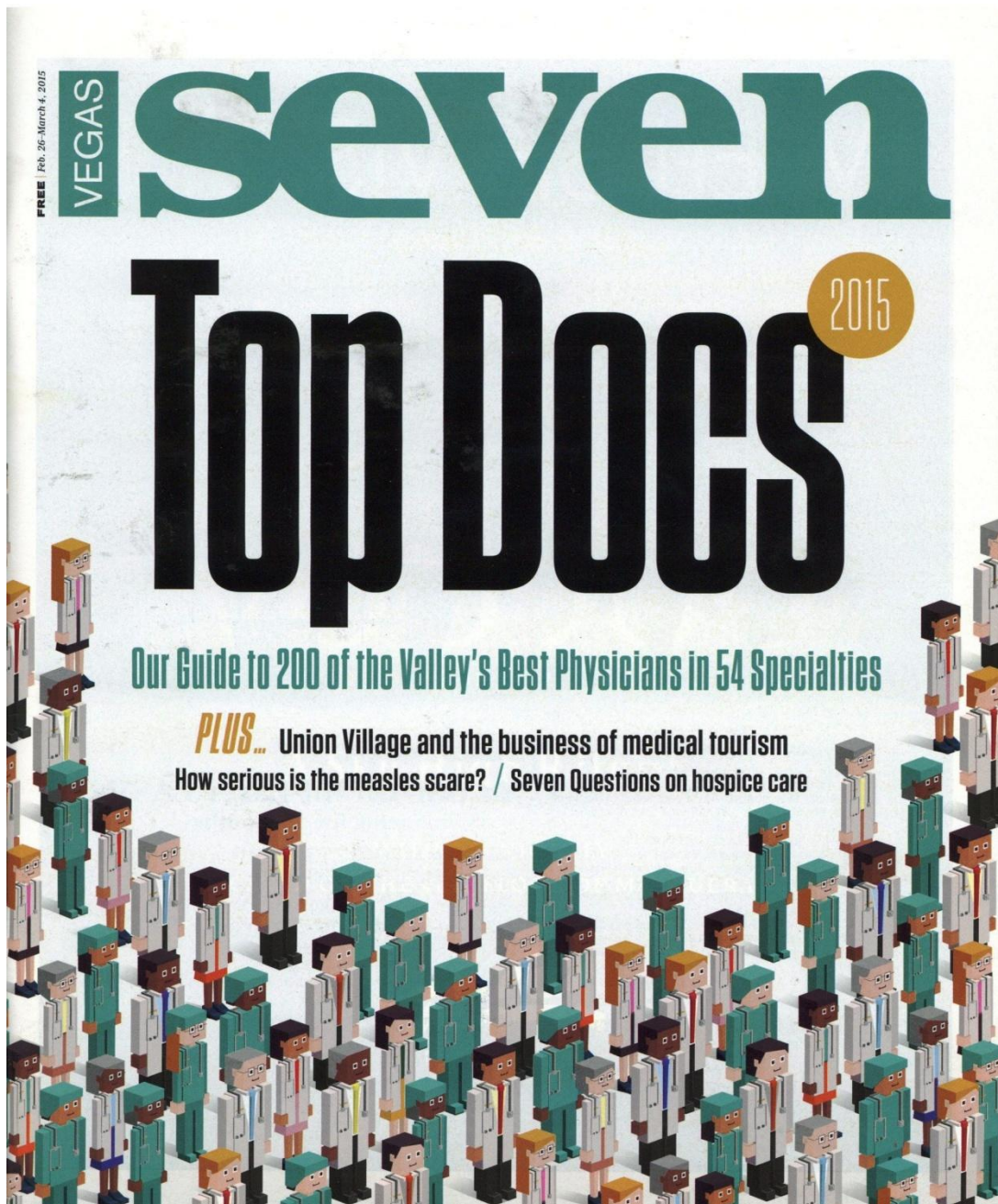


Vegas Seven
February 26-March 4, 2015

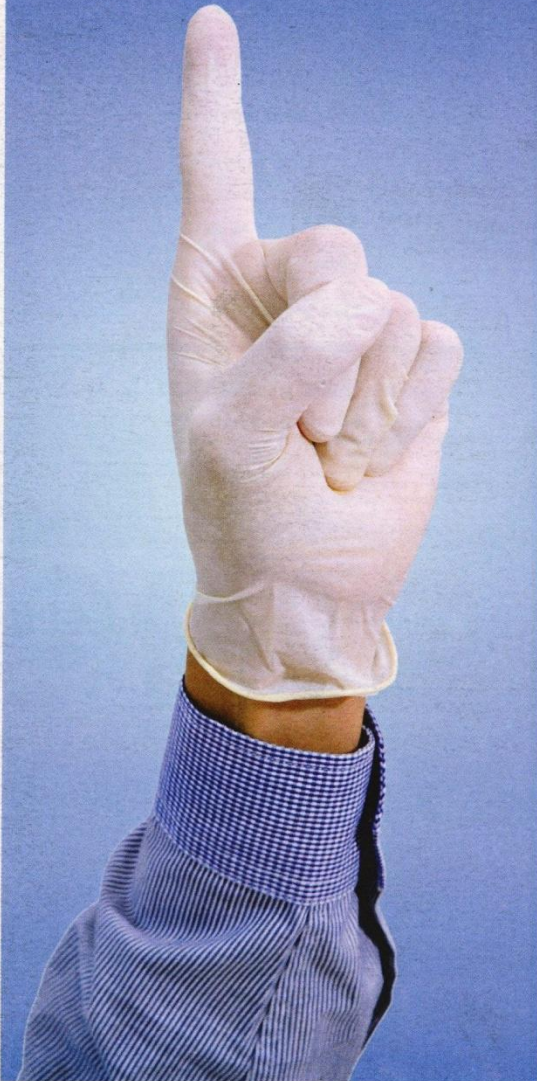


Vegas Seven

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"While \$300,000 dinner tabs are apparently back, sustained growth in gambling is, for the most part, not." **GREEN FELT JOURNAL (PAGE 20)**



A rendering of the \$1.2 billion Union Village in Henderson.



Have Ailment, Will Travel

Henderson's Union Village hopes to spark medical tourism movement

By **BROOKE EDWARDS STAGGS**

♦ **GAMBLING, SHOWS, RESTAURANTS, SHOPPING,** nightclubs—for decades, these staples have been luring people from around the world to our fair city. But in recent years, the question on the minds of some has been this: Can weight-loss surgeries and specialized care for children give visitors a healthier reason to head to Sin City?

Tourism and health care groups have been working together since 2011 to boost medical tourism in Southern Nevada. Even though the term conjures images of people heading to Mexico for cheap dental work or Singapore for cancer treatments, those behind the local effort are focused more on attracting domestic travelers for all things health related.

There's already been a jump in medical conferences, says Doug Geinzer, CEO of the nonprofit Las Vegas Heals. Additionally, the city's spas have seen a rise in the number of

customers seeking wellness treatments. But the needle hasn't moved much when it comes to those who need medical treatments coming to Las Vegas, a city that's long been plagued by doctor shortages.

That's why a lot of focus is on the southeast, where a massive development in Henderson is being billed as one of the world's first integrated health villages, one that might stoke the medical tourism fire. "I see this as being the logical place to launch that effort," says Craig Johnson, co-founder of Union Village. "There isn't another place in the United States—and certainly not in Las Vegas—where everything [a patient might need] is right there."

Union Village is a \$1.2 billion project that finally broke ground late last year along Galleria Drive at U.S. 95. It will be anchored by a new hospital, but will also include other health care

facilities, a senior residential complex, townhomes, retail, restaurants, a cultural center and, yes, even a hotel.

Johnson admits that existing tourism was one draw to develop this project here, since Southern Nevada offers patients and families ample options for hotels and entertainment. More than that, Johnson's Irvine, California-based team chose this area because of one piece of data: Nevada ranks 47th in the country in hospital beds per residents. "This area is vastly underserved—particularly at the moment, in the middle of flu season," says Scott Romney, spokesman for Valley Health System. "We have a dozen-plus hospitals in the area, and they're all full."

Valley Health System operates five of those hospitals, but it doesn't have one in the southeast part of the Valley. That's why it agreed to develop the first phase of Union Village, breaking ground October 8 on the

142-bed Henderson Hospital.

Romney says the facility will emphasize maternity services, with top-floor views for new moms. There will also be 12 newborn intensive care rooms, plus emergency services, surgery centers, radiology and more.

Henderson Hospital won't necessarily offer treatments that aren't available at other facilities, but Romney says it will deliver those services in new ways. For example, the hospital is being designed with a sound system so that pink noise—steady frequencies proven to create more restful sleep—can be broadcast in every room. Also, traditional nursing stations will become mini stations for every two rooms, with discreet windows so nurses can check on patients without disturbing them.

Crews that have largely been moving dirt since October expect to finish site work by May, with the steel structure going up in June or July. The goal, Romney says, is for Henderson Hospital to open on Nevada Day in 2016.

The hospital's design has been heavily impacted by the other developments planned for Union Village. For instance, Romney says it doesn't make sense to incorporate physical-therapy rooms when, say, a rehabilitative care center will be built across the pavilion.

Furthermore, Johnson stresses that the integrated design will particularly ease care for senior patients, who are typically transferred via ambulance between hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living—often with lengthy waits to be readmitted each time. At Union Village, patients can be wheeled across the courtyard while their files are electronically transferred from the hospital to a planned 165-bed subacute-care facility or a 130-unit senior complex being built by Franklin Group.

While these services likely will draw patients from across the Valley, it's the ensuing phases that developers hope will truly make Union Village a destination for medical care.

"We're working hard to create a children's hospital at Union Village," Johnson says, adding that they also hope to focus on orthopedics and cancer treatments, the goal being to lure top specialists to practice in a unique setting. "It will take a while to develop these centers of excellence. But the potential to bring in medical tourism is huge."