

# Genesee County Jail Construction Project Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Why is Genesee County building a new jail?

**Answer:** The Genesee County Jail is outdated, inefficient and not meeting the needs of the people of Genesee County. The current facility which was originally built in 1902 and expanded in 1985 is woefully inadequate and deficient in many ways.

- a. Currently, the Genesee County Jail does not have the ability to house female inmates, forcing Genesee County to spend considerable time and resources transporting and boarding out female inmates at various facilities throughout the State. Not only is this an added cost to the County, but also a matter of fairness to individuals and families forced to navigate the justice system with an added challenge of traveling greater distances than their male counterparts.
- b. The current jail is in need of significant capital improvements, including plumbing upgrades, electrical upgrades, sprinkler upgrades, HVAC upgrades and a new roof, among many other needed improvements.
- c. The current jail does not have adequate space to allow for in house programs or services that are aimed at fighting recidivism. These lost opportunities only hurt our community in the long run.
- d. Genesee County has operated the Jail over the last decade working with a 10 bed variance from the New York State Commission of Correction (NYSCOC). Even with this 10 bed variance, the County was consistently forced to house male inmates to outside facilities this past summer. The NYSCOC has clearly stated that if the County does not work towards building a new County Jail immediately the 10 bed variance will be permanently removed. The loss of the ability to apply for this 10 bed variance could have significant future cost implications to the Genesee County budget.
- e. By having to constantly transport inmates outside of the County, valuable law enforcement resources are vastly underutilized. A new jail will allow our Sheriff's Deputies to be more reactive to the needs of the citizens in Genesee County and better utilize their abilities to serve and protect. While this is not a direct cost savings, this will result in overall better public safety for our community with more Deputies available to respond to calls for service.

**Question:** Where is Genesee County planning on building the new jail?

**Answer:** The new County Jail will be located next to County Building 2 at 3837 West Main Street Road in the Town of Batavia. This is also next to the Genesee County Animal Shelter.

**Question:** How big is the new Genesee County Jail going to be? How big is the current jail?

**Answer:** The latest design has the new jail getting built with 4 separate pods with a maximum population of 184 inmates. The current jail can house 87 males. Our current jail does not allow us to house female inmates. It is important to highlight that a 184 bed jail is not being built to house 184 people. Our bed needs study projected an average daily jail population of 143 people by 2042. The extra space is designed to allow for such factors as peak occupancy days, inmate classification, and maintenance. The NYSCOC does not want to see jails consistently housed at 80+% capacity, as this starts to get into overcrowding situations.

**Question:** Why is the County building a new larger jail with the new bail reform laws?

**Answer:** The County conducted a study (it is attached on our website) that indicated we will need a jail in Genesee County in the year 2042 with a maximum bed count of 184. The study was later updated with newer population data which indicated the maximum need had grown to 215 beds by 2042. We have decided to not increase the bed count due to the recent bail reform laws and instead keep with the original estimate of 184 beds.

We are keeping a close eye on bail reform, but the consensus of the professional criminal justice community in Genesee County is that we don't have enough information to materially change from the estimates provided by our consultant. We anticipate there being some adjustments to the bail reform laws that will impact our daily jail population, all of which are controlled by the New York State Legislature and Governor.

**Question:** How much is the new jail going to cost?

**Answer:** After the study showed a need for a 184 bed facility, the County's architect/engineering firm provided an initial cost estimate for a facility of this size. Taking into consideration the estimates provided by our consultant and what the County is going to need for the next 50+ years, the Genesee County Legislature has authorized the architect/engineering firm to design the new jail with a budget not to exceed \$60 million. Estimates show that this is a tight budget for a 184 bed facility, but that is the goal of this project. It is important to note that the size of the jail was first determined by a study from a

national firm with extensive experience in projecting jail bed needs, and then this information was used to set the budget. The goal of this County is to build a jail that will meet the needs of this community for the next 50+ years as efficiently and inexpensively as possible.

**Question:** When is the new jail going to be built and opened?

**Answer:** The County anticipates breaking ground for the new jail in September of 2020, with an expected opening of the new jail in spring of 2022.

**Question:** What impact will the new jail have on County staffing?

**Answer:** The NYSCOC will have the ultimate say on how many Corrections Officers are required for the new jail, but at this time we are planning on an additional 12 – 13 Correction Officer positions getting added to operate the new jail. In addition, we anticipate additional positions for maintenance, cleaning and nursing.

**Question:** What is the plan for the old jail once the new jail is operational?

**Answer:** As part of our contract with our architect/engineering consultant, they will provide options the County can explore as what to do with the old County jail. They will use their national experience to provide a variety of options for Genesee County. There currently are no final plans for the old County jail after it is emptied.

**Question:** How is the new jail going to be paid for?

**Answer:** Genesee County has entered into a new sales tax sharing agreement with the City of Batavia where a portion of future **growth** in sales tax in Genesee County will be dedicated towards the jail debt service. The County has a jail reserve set aside to be utilized towards debt service until the growth in sales tax revenue is enough to cover the debt payment.

The operating expenses are projected to be higher in the new County jail, because while the new jail will be much more efficient, it will be more expensive to run a 184 bed facility compared to an 87 bed facility. We are projecting the majority of these costs can be offset by savings from boarding out inmates, overtime and revenue from housing federal inmates. The Genesee County Legislature and management are working to make the financial impact to the County taxpayer as minimal as possible.