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# **JAIL FACILITY SITE EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

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## Modern Jails Make Good Neighbors

Modern technology allows new jails to be totally sealed buildings, where the outer walls of the building act as the security perimeter. This means that neighbors don't have to see buildings surrounded by ugly fencing and razor ribbon under the glare of intense lighting. Too often the public's negative reaction to jail construction is fueled by an outdated mental vision of what a jail will look like. Remember to take the time and effort to develop an accurate image, through drawings and models or pictures of completed jails elsewhere, of the modern jail.

The public also fears that jail construction or expansion will depress property values and raise local crime rates. Several studies have been conducted to determine the effect of jails on local communities. The studies look at property values, crime rates, and local economies of communities in the vicinity of correctional facilities to determine what impacts, positive or negative, the facility had in the area.

In most cases, the studies showed that new jails, if properly designed, do not have adverse impacts on local property values or any other aspect of the community. In a few instances, property values decreased in the vicinity of a new correctional facility, but this was thought to be due to an already existing trend in real estate values in that area or some other non-facility factor. Some studies reported that crime rates dropped in areas surrounding new correctional facilities.

Some previously completed studies that deal with the impacts of correctional facilities on the surrounding community are:

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- Craig E. Stanley, University of Wisconsin, The Impact of Prison Proximity on Property Values in Green Bay and Waupin, Wisconsin November 1978; determined that prisons studied did not have any adverse effects on property values and in some cases, the value of homes closer to the prisons were slightly higher than homes further away.
  - Community Residences Information Services Program, "There Goes the Neighborhood..." March 1986; a summary of forty studies focusing on group homes for the disabled, dependant and neglected children and ex-offenders. The study determined that a facility will have different positive or negative impacts

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depending on the makeup of the neighborhood. The editor concluded that in general, the studies indicate that fears that the presence of a group home in a neighborhood will cause property values to decline, crime rates to increase and quality of life to deteriorate are not justified. This study relates to the siting of correctional facilities because many of the same concerns are expressed when siting group homes and correctional facilities.

- Comparative Analysis of Property Values in the Vicinity of New Correctional Facilities at the Oshkosh Correctional Institution and its Relationship to the Proposed Racine Correctional Institution January 1988; This study reported that in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, property in the vicinity of a recently opened prison had a slightly lower rate of increase in value. However, after interviewing local real estate brokers, it was learned that an already existing decrease in popularity in that portion of the city may have been the cause.
- U.S. Department of Corrections Issues in Siting Correctional Facilities; This study is an adaptation of a study completed by the Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University (FAU-FIU) Government Center for Environmental and Urban Problems entitled Impact of Correctional Facilities on Land Values and Public Safety. The study determined that land values, public safety and quality of life were not adversely affected by the presence of correctional facilities.
- Senate Office of Research, California, Cities with prisons: Do They Have Higher or Lower Crime Rates? August 1985; Data presented in this study suggested that the presence of a prison did not depress property values or increase the crime rate in the surrounding community.

### **The Site You Select Will Affect Your Operations**

If you want to add on to your existing jail there may not be enough land alongside to put the entire facility on one level, therefore you'll have to go to a multi-story configuration.

If you decide to build your new jail out of town, but your courthouse is downtown, it means you'll spend additional operating funds transporting prisoners to and from court.