

Minnehaha County Juvenile Justice Center
Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Juvenile Justice Center?

- The current Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) is a secure 40-bed facility which provides secure detention for Minnehaha County and 15 partner counties.
 - The JDC provides these services for juveniles under 18 but older than 10.
 - The Minnehaha Juvenile Justice Center project will be a secure, 64-bed facility which prepares Minnehaha County to continue to provide secure detention.
- While designing and planning the Juvenile Justice Center, Minnehaha County's vision is to create a facility based on trauma-informed juvenile justice, maintaining a safe and positive culture for both youth and staff. The Juvenile Justice Center focuses on family reunification and the dignity of the juveniles and all those involved.
- The courts are heavily involved in the juvenile justice process. A Juvenile Justice Center would place the judge, judge's chambers, court services staff, probation, and the existing juvenile detention center staff all in the same place. The new Juvenile Justice Center creates efficiencies both at the Juvenile Justice Center and creates additional space in the Minnehaha County Courthouse.

How would a new facility be different than the current one?

- The current facility is designed with long hallways, which limit sight-lines and create difficulties for staffing and for keeping youth separated based on age, offenses, or other classifying criteria.
- Currently, the juvenile judge and court services are not located at the JDC.
- A new facility will have a pod design. This approach creates separate housing units, each having eight sleeping rooms, staff desk, shower area, and day room.
- A new facility would integrate the juvenile court system with the detention center. This combination creates efficiencies for the entire juvenile justice process and opens up space in the Minnehaha County Courthouse.

Why would a juvenile be held in secure detention?

- There are two main reasons used to determine if a juvenile should be held in secure detention
 - Whether the juvenile poses a danger to the community and/or to their individual self; or
 - Whether there is a concern the juvenile will not appear for court on the assigned day.
- There are several factors considered at the time of arrest:
 - The seriousness of the current offense.
 - Their history with the Juvenile Court over the past two years.
 - Do they have a history of running away or escaping from facilities?
 - Do they have any pending cases with the Juvenile Court?
 - Are they on probation or in the custody of the Department of Corrections for very serious crimes?
 - Are they being arrested for more than one charge?
 - Are they under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
 - Is there a parent available to be responsible for the juvenile?
 - Have they been arrested in the past year?
 - Have they failed to appear for Court in the past two years?

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How many juveniles are in the current facility (JDC)?

- The JDC has 40 secure beds.
- The daily population can vary based on a variety of factors.
- The JDC staff track the average daily population, which includes both Minnehaha County and Partner County youth. For 2022, the average daily population has increased from 23 in January to 30 in July.
- The annual average daily population increased from 20 juveniles in 2016 to 27 in 2021.

Why do we need a new facility?

- The JDC is 53 years old, much of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing infrastructure is near the end of its useful life, and based on projections the facility will be out of space by 2026.
- A new facility would be built with the flexibility to address issues without interrupting the rest of the facility.
 - The JDC staff maintain an eight youth to one staff ratio. This ratio is a requirement under the Prison Rape Elimination Act. In order to maintain this ratio, staff often have to place all the youth in their sleeping rooms to complete intake processing, to address behavioral issues, and to keep appropriate separations between youth in place. Placing youth back in their sleeping rooms interrupts their day, whether they are in school or other programming.
- The JDC's population trends continue to increase and the JDC only has 40 secure sleeping rooms.
- Minnehaha County hired Jail Consultant Bill Garnos, who has done previous population projections for the Minnehaha County Jail, to study the trends for the JDC. He found that by 2026 the JDC will need 43 – 48 beds, between 49 – 55 beds by 2031, between 55 – 62 beds by 2036, and between 60 – 69 beds by 2041.
- A facility is generally considered “full” when the facility is at 80% capacity because of the need to separate juveniles based on age, classification criteria, and security considerations. Minnehaha County needs a larger facility to accommodate the growing need.

Why can't you use the Minnehaha County Jail?

- In 1974, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. This Act limited officials from putting adult and juvenile prisoners in the same facility.
- Juveniles housed in the same facility as adults are eight times more likely to commit suicide and five times more likely to be sexually assaulted¹.
- The Minnehaha County Jail does not provide specific needs related to juveniles such as tailored education needs and mental health counseling.

What designs have been considered to update the facility?

- The architect and construction team have identified two options. Both allow the facility to remain the same location. Both would have 64 sleeping rooms.

¹ Austin, J. (2000). Juveniles in adult prisons and jails: A national assessment. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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- Option one is to renovate the existing facility, including adding on additional sleeping rooms for a total of 57,000 square feet. This option would take approximately 31 months, consist of five different phases, and cost approximately \$48,954,000.
- Option two is to build a new facility to the east of the existing facility on land already owned by Minnehaha County. This option would result in an innovative, brand-new facility, built in two phases over approximately 27 months, resulting in a 67,000 square foot facility, and cost approximately \$50,307,000.

Shouldn't we be trying to help juveniles instead of putting them in jail?

- The JDC is not a jail and the Juvenile Justice Center will not be a jail either.
 - While in secure detention, youth continue their education through services provided by the Sioux Falls School District. In the summer months, outside organizations and JDC staff provide hours of programming to keep the youth engaged.
- Minnehaha County participates in a variety of diversion programs aimed at reducing the number of kids in detention.
 - Alternative programs provide forms of supervision for youth who would otherwise be detained.
- For youth who are not eligible for diversion, secure detention is the most appropriate place to ensure both the safety of the youth and the safety of the public.

Juveniles and mental health have been in the news. How would a new facility better address mental health needs?

- The age of the current facility limits the ability to meet best practices.
- The design of the Juvenile Justice Center is based on understanding the relationship between the individual and their environment.
 - Youth in the justice system may have experienced trauma and may present that trauma in different ways. Designing this facility using principles of trauma-informed care means designing a facility to be flexible and adaptable.
 - Trauma-informed care is an approach to understanding the trauma youth have experienced and their emotional and physical reactions to trauma. A flexible facility allows staff to adapt as the needs of the juveniles change.
 - The Juvenile Justice Center is designed using trauma-responsive design. Having the right functional and spatial adjacencies in the facility reduces safety and security challenges and makes the facility a positive environment for both the youth and staff.

I have heard that this project will result in an increase to my property taxes. Is this true? How much will my property taxes go up?

- Estimates indicate that Minnehaha County will need an increase in revenue of approximately \$21 for every \$100,000 of property value per year.
- The need for increased revenue decreases each year as payments are made and as the county continues to experience growth. This means the impact to the individual will decrease annually.