

How big will the proposed jail/sheriff's facility be and how much will it cost?

The amount of revenue available, combined with construction costs and anticipated operating costs, will determine this. The county expects those to allow for construction of a 120-bed facility – more than double the capacity of the existing 52-bed jail. It would also include offices for sheriff, jail, detective and road deputy personnel, as well as support staff, combining those operations under one roof for efficiency of operation. Total project cost is estimated at \$15-18 million.

The county is working closely with architects now to design a facility that:

- enables the county to retire the existing inefficient, undersized and inadequately built 1984 jail;
- allows it to house as many inmates as possible;
- improves safety and security;
- improves staffing efficiencies;
- and allows for expansions

The site and design should be able to accommodate two 96-bed expansions.

What will this cost me?

A 3/8-cent sales tax would add just over a third of a cent to the cost of a dollar candy bar. For \$20 worth of supplies at a store, it would add seven and a half cents.

What the new facility will do – and what it won't do

While the county expects funding to more than double the cell space, it won't resolve all the issues related to boarding prisoners in other counties. A big part of this is the corrections requirements related to classification of prisoners and the trend toward more female prisoners, more prisoners being held for violent crimes, and the length of time they are held as their cases work their way through the court system. A single crime can impact our numbers, as in a current murder case involving numerous defendants who must be separated.

If projections of potential bed space needs in 20 years prove accurate, Lawrence County will need to expand in the future. But the design will make those expansions easier and more affordable – something the existing jail does not allow. The site and design should allow two 96-bed expansions in the decades to come.

The new facility should also:

- provide a safer, more secure environment for staff and inmates alike;
- be designed for efficient use of staff, which is crucial in this difficult labor market;
- provide more pandemic-related safeguards;
- bring law enforcement services under one roof rather than spread among three buildings, allowing for other efficiencies; and
- provide ample room for expansion.