

Accountability and Restitution Center Frequently Asked Questions

1. Briefly, what is the recommendation of the Task Force regarding the Accountability and Restitution Center (ARC)?

The first phase of the ARC (not incorporating the recommended Option 2) will include 352 beds; Of these, 256 beds are located in minimum security, direct supervision dormitories and 96 beds within single and double-bunked indirect supervision cells. In addition, Phase 1 includes central food service and booking functions, laundry, 7 program rooms, video arraignment, video visitation, administrative and IT/telecom/maintenance support functions.

The Task Force has recommended that a second phase also be constructed as soon as possible, and that the move of inmates into the ARC be deferred until that second phase has been constructed. This phase (Option 2) will include an additional 128-bed dorm unit and an intake/assessment unit with a capacity of approximately 128 beds, for a total of 738 beds at the ARC, plus 130 work release beds at the existing jail.

2. Why has this recommendation changed? Under the initial recommendation it appeared that the jail population would be almost split between the current jail and the ARC when it opened? Why was this not known upfront?

It's cheaper to run one, combined jail instead of two separate smaller jails. This was recognized more than seven years ago and was the justification behind the Regional Justice Center (RJC) proposed to the voters in 2004. However, with the defeat of the RJC bond, county officials were left with planning for a separate corrections annex (ARC) that could be financed with existing financial resources. Consequently, the ARC was designed to be built over time, in phases, under a master plan intended to address county corrections needs for decades to come.

With the design plans complete and the building permits ready to issue, projected operating costs can now be accurately calculated. These estimates show that it is more cost effective to implement the planned second phase sooner, rather than later.

3. Under this recommendation, how many and what classification of inmates will remain at the Courthouse jail and what populations will be moved to the ARC?

Under the proposed Option 2, both male and female work release programs will remain at the current jail along with community betterment work crews. In addition, all other non-bed Options programs such as electronic home monitoring, day reporting and day jail will be supervised from the current jail facility.

The central intake area of the current jail will also continue to be used as a court holding area for inmates transported from the ARC to the Thurston County courthouse for court appearances which can not be conducted through video.

All other inmates will be housed at the ARC which includes both pre-sentenced and sentenced male and female maximum custody, medium custody, minimum custody, and inmates with special needs.

4. The capital construction costs for the ARC have increased under the recommendation. Where will the funding come from?

All construction costs are funded out of restricted revenue sources that are accumulated for this type of project.

The current construction (Option 1) of the ARC that is now underway is funded from Detention Facilities Sales Tax. This revenue is a 1/10th of 1 percent component of the sales taxes collected within Thurston County. These revenues are accounted for outside the General Fund and their use is limited solely for costs associated with financing, design, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, reequipping, and improvement of juvenile detention facilities and adult jails. This will fund the first \$40 million in debt to pay for construction.

The additional units related to Option 2 are projected to cost about \$20 million dollars. This construction will be financed by the 1st quarter percent of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET). This revenue is derived from taxes on the sale of real property in the unincorporated county and its use is limited to capital projects.

5. What will the staffing be like once the ARC is operational and how is it different from current corrections staffing?

Staff in the present jail facility, is 111 positions. This includes 92 commissioned staff and 19 civilian staff.

Under Option 2, 168 staff will be needed. This includes 129 commissioned staff and 39 civilian staff.

6. Why do you need an increase in jail staffing if the inmate population remains the same?

Under Option 2 the new ARC facility will be approximately 150,000 square feet. The current jail facility is approximately 50,000 square feet. This represents a 200% increase of square footage. The increase in square footage is based upon the American Correctional Association (ACA) standards. (The ACA is the oldest and largest international correctional association in the world and is widely accepted as the authority on correctional standards.) Due to the increased size of the facility under Option 2, more staff is needed to operate efficiently.

Also, under the latest U. S. Department of Justice nationwide jail census, the number of inmates per jail employee was 2.9 for all staff and 4.3 for Correctional deputies. Current staffing in the Thurston County Jail lags behind the national average (4.05 and 4.89) and the projected staffing for the ARC under scenario 2 is more in line with the national average of inmates per employee ratio.

In addition, due to substandard square footage per inmate in the current jail, we are able to monitor more inmates with fewer staff. But the current facility is far below national standards as it relates to space required per individual inmate which in turn creates an unsafe environment.

It should also be noted that the inmate population will not remain the same. Between now and the opening of the ARC the number of inmates will continue to grow.

7. What will operation costs for the ARC be like on a yearly basis? How do these costs compare with the original operating costs when the ARC process was started several years ago?

If both phase-1 and phase-2 of the ARC are built, operational costs for county corrections will increase by approximately \$5.7-million. The costs are less than earlier estimates because they involve a single facility instead of two; and also because early estimates assumed a significantly larger staff. County corrections planners have worked diligently to prepare the most cost-effective staffing plan possible that still ensures safe operations.

8. Where will the money come from to pay for the ARC operating costs?

ARC operations are funded primarily out of the General Fund and partially from Detention Facilities Sales Tax.

9. What will be the impact on the overall county budget from the ARC operations?

The overall county General Fund budget is significantly restricted by the limit on growth of the property tax, which is the primary source of General Fund revenue. The property tax cannot expand more than one percent per year (except for the addition of new construction to the tax rolls). Since normal inflation is usually higher than one percent per year, all General Fund costs will need to be greatly controlled. A financial plan for the foreseeable future has been developed to show that ARC costs can be added to the General Fund if \$4 million in county-wide cost savings are found in 2008 and 2009 and all costs are controlled thereafter.

10. How much public input went into the design and programs of the ARC?

There have been at least 21 public meetings, workshops and hearings conducted for the planning that resulted in the ARC project as it is presently conceived. Many citizens attended those meetings and most were televised. In addition, elected and appointed officials conducted open meetings at least twice a month over four years of planning that lead to the decision to proceed with the ARC. Finally, individual city councils and the Board of County Commissioners conducted a number of meetings that allowed citizens to offer comment on the project.

11. Why do things keep changing? Is this final or will we see more changes in the future.

In the environment where finding the financial resources to plan and develop a new correctional center is uncertain, change is a certainty. County corrections planners have had to adapt to match a changing financial situation with changing jail population needs. That being said, both phase-1 and phase-2 are part of a well-developed master plan intended to be carried over the ensuing decades as needs require.

12. Why are you going to direct supervision if the costs are greater?

There are several benefits to direct supervision which include:

- Lower initial building costs.
- Higher level of safety and security for inmates and staff.
- Increased inmate accountability due to constant monitoring.
- Fewer assaults on staff and inmates.
- Less damage to the jail facility (which equates to long-term cost savings in facility and maintenance repairs.)
- Provision of a cleaner and quieter jail facility.

- Reinforcement of positive behavior in inmates.
- Increased beneficial interactions between jail staff and inmates.

Direct supervision costs are not necessarily greater overall. In fact many studies show that it is less costly to operate direct supervision facilities. Greater costs between the current facility and the ARC under Option 2 are more attributable to the increase in the size of the new facility and adding more jail staff to be more in line with national averages.

13. Are we creating a facility to which inmates will want to return?

The ARC is no "Taj Majal." Inmates will be held under constant supervision in stark concrete dorms or cells. While the setting will be safe for jail volunteers, corrections staff and inmates, it will not be a place offenders will want to come back to.

14. What new programs and services will be offered at the ARC that will help reduce recidivism?

In the current jail, a wide variety of validated and evidence-based programs are offered to inmates to help reduce recidivism. Though we are constantly researching and striving to implement new programs beneficial to both inmates and the county, expansion of current programs will be a primary focus. The existing jail has only one central classroom. The ARC will have a central classroom, a classroom in each dormitory unit, and classrooms in the maximum custody units. Inmates will have more access to programs than they ever have before.

In addition to expanded program space, a new risk and needs assessment tool will be utilized to target inmates for specific assistance programs.