

# Walsh County North Dakota

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Jail Planning Project

# The goal of jail planning is to make the jail design fit the operation.

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- Jail operations drive the design of the jail, which ultimately drives the cost for both capital investment (building or remodeling costs) and for long term operations, (such as paying for corrections staff).
- The “number of beds” does not really drive the cost. 80 minimum beds may cost close to the same as 20 maximum beds, depending on design. Jails need to be planned for the flexibility for the classification demands for those incarcerated.
- For Walsh County, the Sheriff established an “operational team” to examine and determine the future operational plan for the jail and for establishing long-term “bed needs” in the county. The goal is to provide for the next 15 to 20 years of jail operations. The overall goal of planning is to make the design fit the operation.

# The bed, cell and housing unit counts

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- Square footages for jails are driven by the number of inmates or “beds” and then how many inmates will be in each cell, and how many cells in each housing block or unit. Every State Department of Corrections (DOC), will have authority over local jails. The DOC sets mandates for the minimum number of square feet in the cell, and in the day room located outside of these cells. The higher the number of cells, day rooms and square footage, the higher the cost of construction or remodeling.

# Planning for Jail Beds. How Big?

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- Common problems with jails across the country is that they don't have enough beds, or they don't have enough of the "right beds".
- Jail operations need to classify inmates by risk and need. The inmates current and past criminal behaviors impact the security levels they are housed at in a local jail.
- In very general terms, inmates are housed in minimum, medium or maximum classified security levels. In addition to this, many of those detained have "special management needs" such as mental health or drug addiction, and they may require specialized housing to manage their conditions while incarcerated.
- Other inmates need to be "kept separate" because of many factors, including; being co-defendants, victims, witnesses, gang or family affiliation or other circumstances.
- Minimum inmates can be housed in a maximum unit but maximum inmates cannot be housed in a minimum block. Same for medium level inmates.

# Some of the local factors for the jail design

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- Beds and housing units need to be flexible, for various classifications and for both genders to use as the population changes from day to day or year to year.
- Because the jail will be small, designing every one of the housing units the same, with a different number of cells and beds in each unit will allow flexibility for assigning the inmates to the housing units. Inmates can be moved to different units to accommodate the fluctuating population levels by gender and classification.
- Housing unit size varies by the number of beds, to assist in this plan. Here, the bed numbers in each housing area will be 1 (for detox), 2, 4, 6 and 12 in 6 different housing units.

# Walsh County Jail total “bed count”

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- Jails operate at a design capacity and an “operational capacity”. The industry standard across the country is jails “operate” at a capacity of about 80 to 85% of design capacity. The cause in the difference is due to gender numbers and classification results. For example, you cannot put a male inmate in a female housing unit when the male unit is at design capacity.
- Special management beds for medical, mental health or detoxification are not typically “counted” in the total number of beds because inmates are only there a short while they need the extra staff attention or “management”.
- Secure holding spaces in the booking and intake area are also not considered part of the designed jail bed number because inmates may not have a bed in the intake area, and they will only be there while they are being processed into the facility. However, they may need to be locked down during processing, creating a cell.

# Walsh County Jail total “bed and cell count”

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- Total classified “bed count” will be 40 minimum, medium and maximum beds, with 20 total cells that can hold 2 inmates each.
- In addition to the classified beds, three minimum “dorms” will house 2 trustees, and one dorm will house 2 female work release inmates and another dorm will house 4 male work release inmates. Dorms will have inexpensive bunk beds in them.
- There is also one dedicated cell to house one inmate in need of mental health close observation or detoxification. This will be short-term and is not considered part of the “bed design capacity” because inmates should not be there for long housing.
- There will be 3 cells in the intake processing area, for short-term holding.
- Total “designed bed count” is then 48 beds for the facility. Factoring in the “operational capacity index”, this jail will likely be operationally full, at 40 inmates.