

# Q&A

## Tackling the Need for a New County Jail

**Q: Why are you not repairing and or upgrading the existing downtown jail facility?**

**A:** We have maintained it to date. Our needs assessment shows that the current downtown jail's structure, utilities, and mechanical systems are so outdated that renovation would not be cost-effective. The existing floor plan was designed for a different era of corrections. Its space constraints cannot be reconfigured to meet today's requirements for sight lines, separation, medical care, or staff safety. If renovated, it would be able to house 42 inmates, which does not meet the needs of today, much less the future.

**Q: Can you combine all inmates at the 25A facility?**

**A:** The jail on County Road 25A is a minimum security jail. It does not meet the state guidelines to be able to house violent offenders and felonies such as aggravated robbery, kidnapping, sexual assault and manslaughter. The downtown jail is classified as a full-service jail, meaning it can house all classifications of offenders, regardless of their charges.

**Q: Is State funding available for this project?**

**A:** For the past several years the state has made 50 million dollars per year available to be shared amongst county jails across the state for jail construction and renovation. It is anticipated that after the capital budget is passed later this year, at least 50 million dollars will be available again each of the 2 years. Miami County will apply for grant funding from those monies when they become available. Greene County, which recently completed a similar jail project, received 15 million dollars for their project. We are hopeful Miami County would receive at least that amount.

**Q: What will this project cost in the future if we don't do anything now?**

**A:** Our consultant has estimated that each year Miami County waits to construct a full-service jail, costs go up, conservatively, 2.5 million dollars per year.

**Q: Why does the Sheriff house federal inmates at the 25A jail?**

**A:** For the past few years the 25A jail has averaged between 9 and 15 federal inmates per year. The 25A jail has some idle bed space. The space is rented to the U.S. Marshal's Service and sometimes other counties to offset operating costs at the facility. It does not interfere with Miami County Judges' sentencings. The inmates' classifications are low to meet a minimum security facility requirement.

**Q: What does a 0.5% sales tax increase mean?**

**A:** This increase is for one-half of one percent, or 0.5%. For example, \$0.05 would be added to a \$10.00 purchase. The cost for essential purchases would not change, as they are not subject to sales tax. Grocery food, prescription medicine, and medical services would all continue to be sales-tax free.

**Q: How will the mental health crisis be addressed in the proposed facility?**

**A:** 65% of all inmates have a mental health issue, substance abuse issue or both. The proposed facility will have 32 beds for mental health treatment with the goal of treating to reduce recidivism. Miami County is proud to also have Mental Health Court and Second Chance Drug Court, programs designed to reduce recidivism and tax dollars through diversion.

**Q: When is the last time Miami County spent money on adult detention center construction?**

**A:** 1972 (54 years ago), when the current Downtown Jail was constructed. The 25A facility opened in 2000 and was funded with state and federal dollars. No local funds were used.

**Q: Where will the proposed jail be located?**

**A:** A 200 bed full-service jail would be built on the 25A jail campus. This is county land with sufficient infrastructure in place.

**Q: What makes jail construction expensive?**

**A:** Reinforced walls, tamper-proof fixtures, electronic locking systems, surveillance biometric systems, centralized controls, medical units, segregated areas, control rooms, among other features. In addition, prevailing wage can raise total labor costs by 10-30%. Average residential construction cost per square foot is \$225. Average jail construction cost per square foot is \$1,261.

**Q: How much of the current 7% State sales tax stays in Miami County?**

**A:** 1.25%

**Q: Explain the "sunset tax." Will this be in effect for ten years from the start date, or will it end when the funds are collected?**

**A:** The Sales and Use Tax will sunset in ten years maximum. It is the intention of the County Commissioners to seek grant funds to offset the cost and end the Sales and Use Tax as soon as the construction is paid off.

**Q: Is the total cost of this project a moving target or will it be specified in the ballot language?**

**A:** The Needs Assessment study estimated the cost to be in the range of \$90-\$100 million dollars. An exact amount will not be available until a final bid is accepted; therefore, the ballot language will not include the total cost. Again, it is our intent to pursue grant funds to lower the final amount and end the Sales and Use Tax early.

**Q: If approved, it's been stated that the current jail space will be used for County office spaces. Is this cost included in the current request, and if not, how will this be funded?**

**A:** The cost to rehabilitate the existing jail for other purposes is not included in the cost and is not being funded through this Sales and Use Tax. Future use of the existing space has not been decided upon; any work to be done there will be through existing capital improvement and maintenance funds.

**Q: Why hasn't State funding been secured before asking voters to fund this project?**

**A:** The deadline with the Board of Elections to get this issue on the May ballot is February 4th, 2026; however, the State has not released funding for 2026. Typically, the State wants to see community commitment (i.e. financial support for the construction project) before they will allocate funds.

**Q: What public forums are being offered for residents to understand this request and ask questions?**

**A:** The Jail Tours include a presentation with opportunities for Q and A with County Commissioners and Sheriff. There are options for Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings. Sign up: [tinyurl.com/miamicountyjailtour](https://tinyurl.com/miamicountyjailtour)