

**Comments received via <http://www.seattle.gov/municipaljail/questions.htm>  
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City: Seattle

Neighborhood: Highland Park

The City's recent "high v. low" rise study is flawed for many reasons, the most obvious being the limited scope of costs considered by the report. Some of the reports costs appear to be redundant (increased staffing needs, operating costs and project costs) while other costs are entirely ignored such as costs to the "low rise" community in terms of safety and reduced property values, transportation costs for prisoners, costs in time and public safety for police officers to travel to a jail outside of downtown, costs for necessary services not available outside of downtown, and costs to construct, staff and operate an offsite courtroom. Moreover, the City neglects consideration of an option to modify an existing downtown building to accommodate a jail. In fact, the report appears to go out of its way to find additional costs for the downtown option rather than find ways to reduce those costs.

Despite any cost difference found by this City sponsored report, the bottom line is that the only area within the City that a jail can be sited, per the City's Zoning Code, is downtown. There are several good reasons for this limitation: (1) the majority of arrests are downtown, (2) services for released inmates are all located downtown, (3) there are several transportation options downtown for prisoners and their visitors, and (4) having a downtown jail does not put the burden and stigma of a jail on a single neighborhood - the burden is shared by the City residents.

Although the recent study is flawed, even if we assume a downtown option will be more expensive to construct, the costs to the City and to any residential community that is forced to shoulder the burden of a jail far outweigh the expense of siting the jail downtown. I would prefer that there be no jail in the City of Seattle. But if it comes to a decision as to where the jail should be located it shouldn't be in near anyone's backyard. It should be downtown, where it is properly zoned.