

PAYETTE COUNTY, IDAHO

Payette County Jail Study

Findings & Recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners

Prepared by Elevatus Architecture · July 2026

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What This Briefing Covers

01

Background

A 1972-era jail at the end of its useful life

02

Existing Deficiencies

Why the facility can no longer meet standards

03

How Many Beds

Population growth and bed-need projections

04

Staffing

What it takes to operate the new facility

05

Site Selection

Comparing three finalist sites

06

The Recommended Facility

Program, design, cost, and community impact

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Recommendation, Up Front

Build a new detention facility. The existing jail's deficiencies cannot be solved by renovation. A new facility sized for the next 30 years is the most prudent use of the County's funds.

222
beds — 192 detention
+ 30-bed work release

71,299
gross square feet

31
full-time staff (from 19 today)

$74.2M
total project cost

WHY NOW

- A March 2026 state inspection found the jail cannot reasonably be expected to pass a future inspection.
- The jail routinely operates at or over its 69-bed rated capacity, with no room to properly classify inmates.
- Failing building systems, no secure perimeter, and pervasive ADA deficiencies raise daily safety and liability risk.
- County population is projected to grow to ~43,879 by 2060 — driving bed need to roughly 192.

SECTION 01

Background

The Payette County Jail was built in 1972 and expanded in 1999. After five decades of continuous use, it has reached the end of its useful life.

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A Facility at the End of Its Useful Life

1972
original structure built

1999
last major addition

69
rated bed capacity

50+
years of constant use

The jail houses all custody levels — men and women, minimum through maximum security — within a single building. Conditions inside now exceed what the structure can manage, and the population differs from what the building was designed for: more individuals arrive with mental-health and substance-use needs, and the female population is larger than anticipated.

- Routinely operates over its 69-bed limit
- Cannot separate inmates by sex, security level, and special needs
- Failing plumbing, doors, and life-safety systems that can no longer be reliably repaired
- No secure perimeter; pervasive ADA deficiencies throughout

> ***In its current condition, I do not see how the current Payette County Jail will ever pass a jail inspection.***
>
> — Idaho Jail Inspection Report, March 16, 2026

SECTION 02

Existing Jail Deficiencies

The jail's problems are structural, not cosmetic — issues of layout, size, supervision, and security that renovation alone cannot solve.

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Deficiencies That Renovation Cannot Fix

01

Overcrowding

Regularly operates over its 69-bed limit, with too few housing units to separate inmates safely.

02

Unsafe Intake

An undersized booking area cannot safely process simultaneous arrivals; the sallyport can't fit a transport bus.

03

No Direct Supervision

Layout prevents constant observation of housing, suicide-watch, and segregation cells.

04

No Behavioral-Health Space

Lacks appropriate housing and program space for mental- and behavioral-health needs.

05

Insecure Perimeter

No secure perimeter and an unsecured yard — a cause of past escapes and contraband.

06

Failing & Non-Compliant

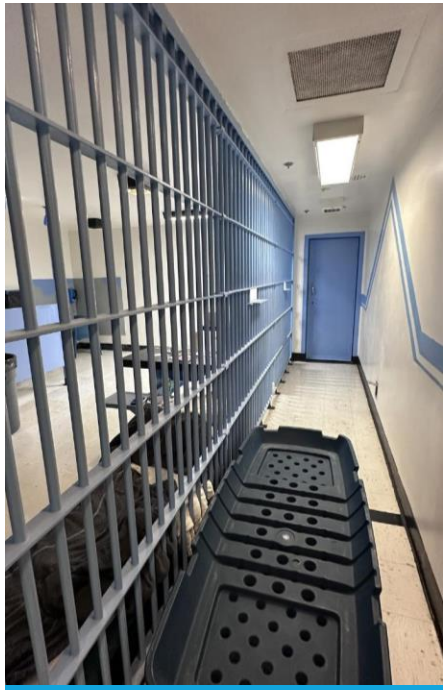
Failing plumbing, doors, and life-safety systems, plus pervasive ADA deficiencies.

Intake & Booking: Unsafe by Design

- The vehicle sallyport is too small for a transport bus — officers must escort inmates outside the secure perimeter.
- Booking cannot safely process two arrivals at once; there is no holding cell adjacent to the booking desk.
- The 'drunk tank' (Cell J) has only a concrete bunk — no sink, lavatory, or toilet — down a narrow four-foot corridor.
- Fingerprinting occurs outside the secure perimeter because there is no room for equipment on the secure side.
- Many rooms have been repurposed over the years, but the jail has ultimately outgrown its current facility.



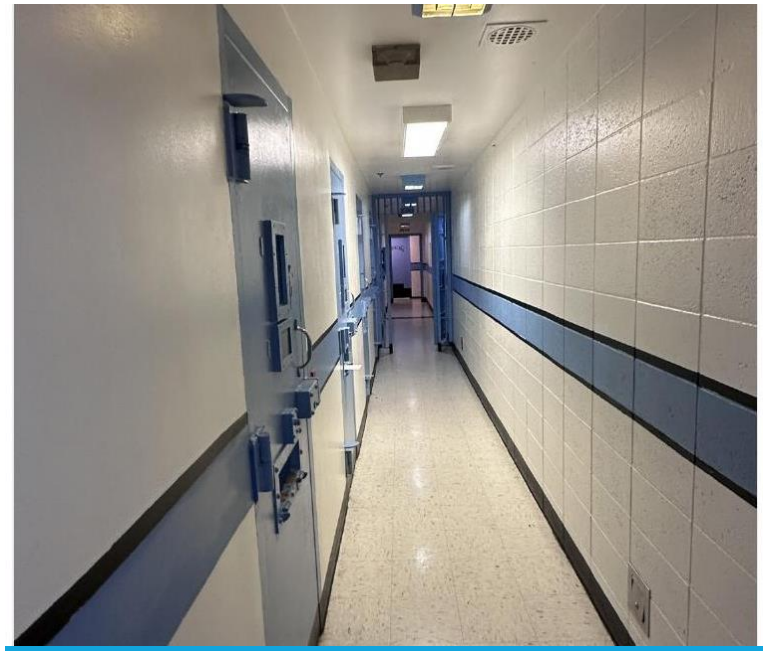
CELL J — THE DRUNK TANK



MALE INMATE WORKER DORM

Photographs from the existing facility, Elevatus Architecture site survey.

Housing & Security: No Line of Sight



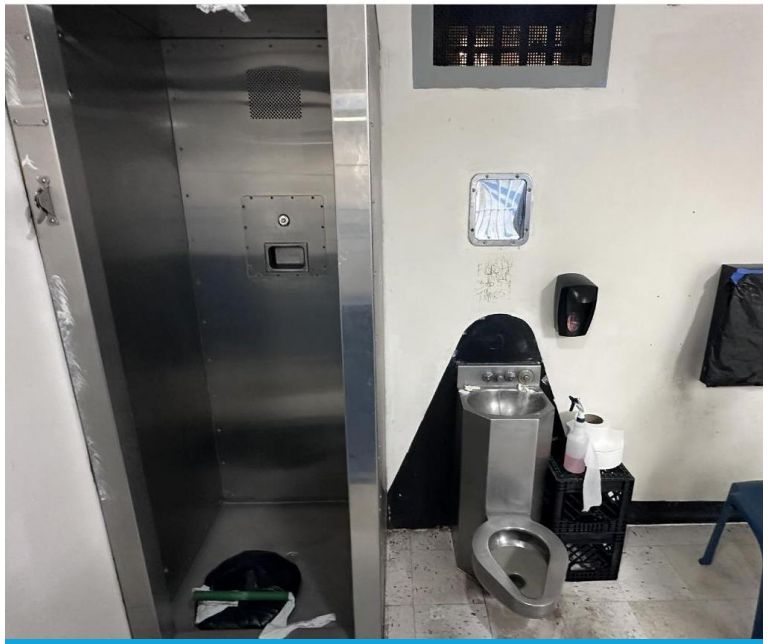
4' CORRIDOR — LINE CELLS

No natural light · observation deficient



BOOKING SHOWER

Commercial-grade fixtures, deteriorated



INMATE WORKER DORM

No natural light · not ADA accessible

Current best practice places a control room at the center of a housing pod with 360° sightlines. The existing jail provides nothing close — just eight cells serve nearly all special-classification inmates.

Consequences of Inaction

Continuing to operate the existing jail is neither cost-free nor risk-free. If the County does not act, these risks grow over time:

Failed inspections & legal exposure

Already short of at least four inspections, leaving the County open to litigation and state intervention.

Heightened safety risk

A layout that prevents supervision raises the risk of in-custody injury, death, and the liability that follows.

Persistent overcrowding

At or over capacity, the County increasingly releases individuals it might otherwise hold.

Strain on law enforcement

Staff-intensive escorts and off-site trips divert deputies from patrol and response.

Rising repair & transport costs

Failing systems require recurring emergency fixes; no nearby county has capacity to house inmates.

Higher future construction cost

Deferring the project pushes it into later years at higher material and labor costs.

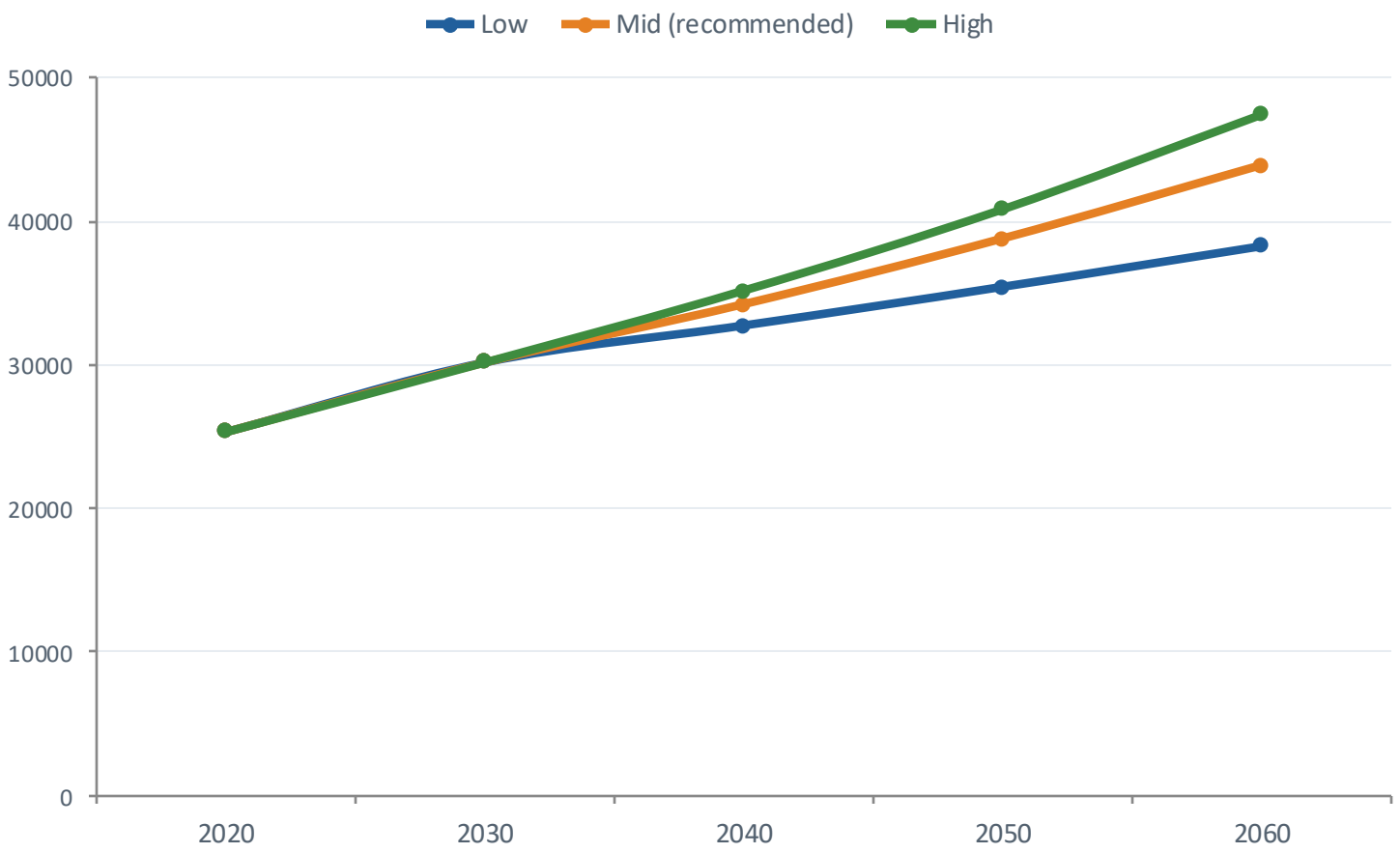
SECTION 03

How Many Beds?

Three independent methods, applied to the County's own growth forecast and booking history, point to the same answer.

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Payette County Is a Growth County



THE GROWTH STORY

25,386 residents in 2020 (U.S. Census)

~43,879 projected by 2060 (Mid path)

- Population has risen every census since 1980.
- The County's own demographic report (McClure, 2024) recommends planning to the Mid path.
- A jail sized to today's county would be undersized well within a 30-year bond period.

How the Bed Need Was Forecast

1

National Rule of Thumb

~175 beds

Beds ≈ 0.4% of population. A sanity check, not a design number.

2

Average Daily Population

~92 beds

Backward-looking from recorded ADP. A useful floor for today's demand.

3

Little's Law (primary)

~192 beds

ADP = (Admissions ÷ 365) × length of stay. Ties bed need to the growth forecast.

PLAN-FOR-THE-BUSY-YEAR INPUTS

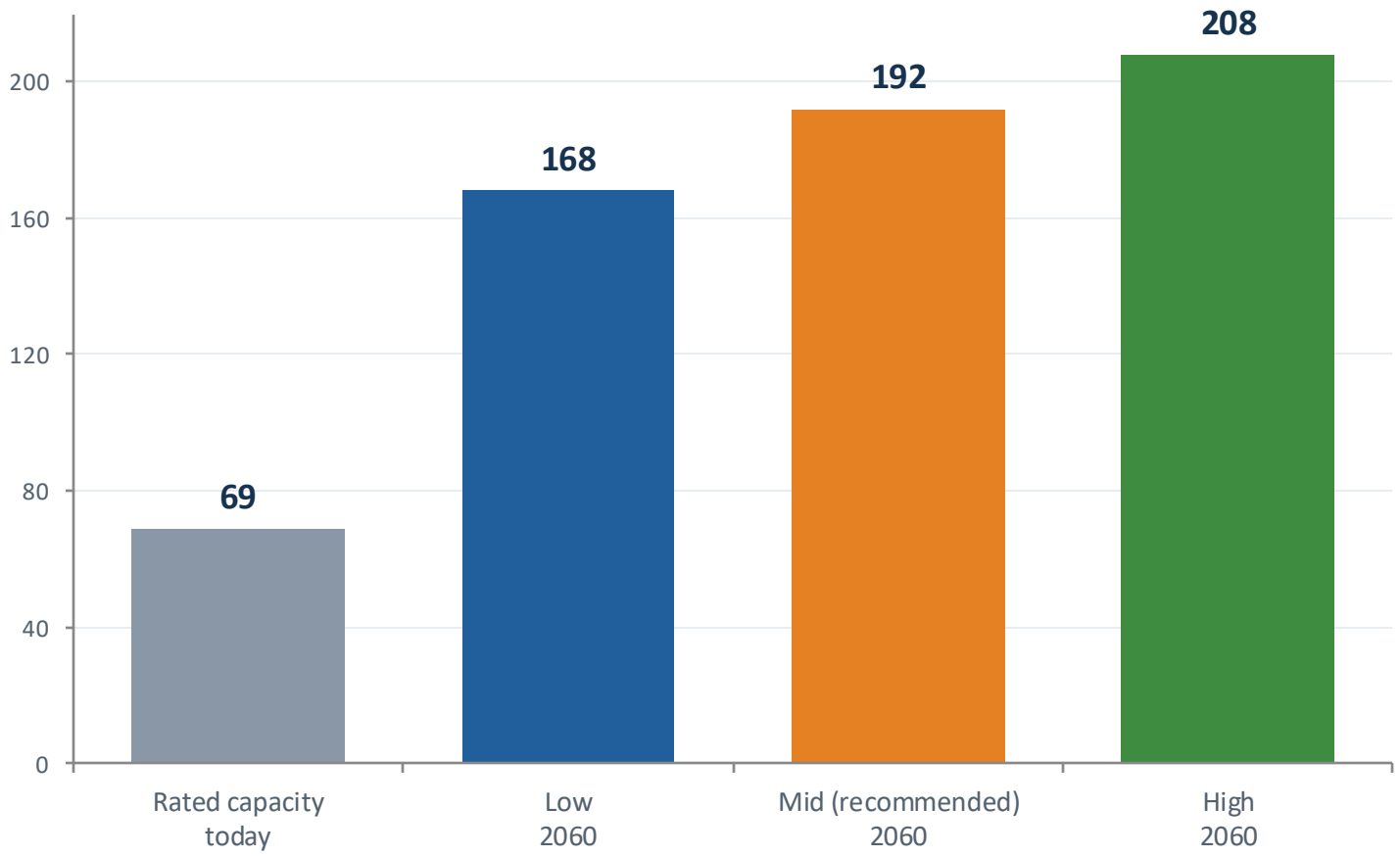
7,100
admissions per 100k (2011 peak)

18 days
planning length of stay (observed high)

1.25×
classification & peaking factor

80%
operational-capacity rule

Projected Bed Need: ~192 Beds



RECOMMENDATION

~192

detention beds, using the Mid growth forecast, the peak admissions rate, and an 18-day length of stay.

+30 work-release beds bring the facility to 222 total.

SECTION 04

Staffing

A jail is a 24/7/365 operation with fixed posts. Staffing the new facility to national standards requires 31 full-time positions.

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Why Jail Staffing Is Different

The jail is a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year public-safety operation with fixed posts that must always be staffed. Its overall security level is essentially equivalent to a maximum-security prison. Staffing follows the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) method — the most widely accepted approach.

8,760
hours a 24-hour post must be covered each year

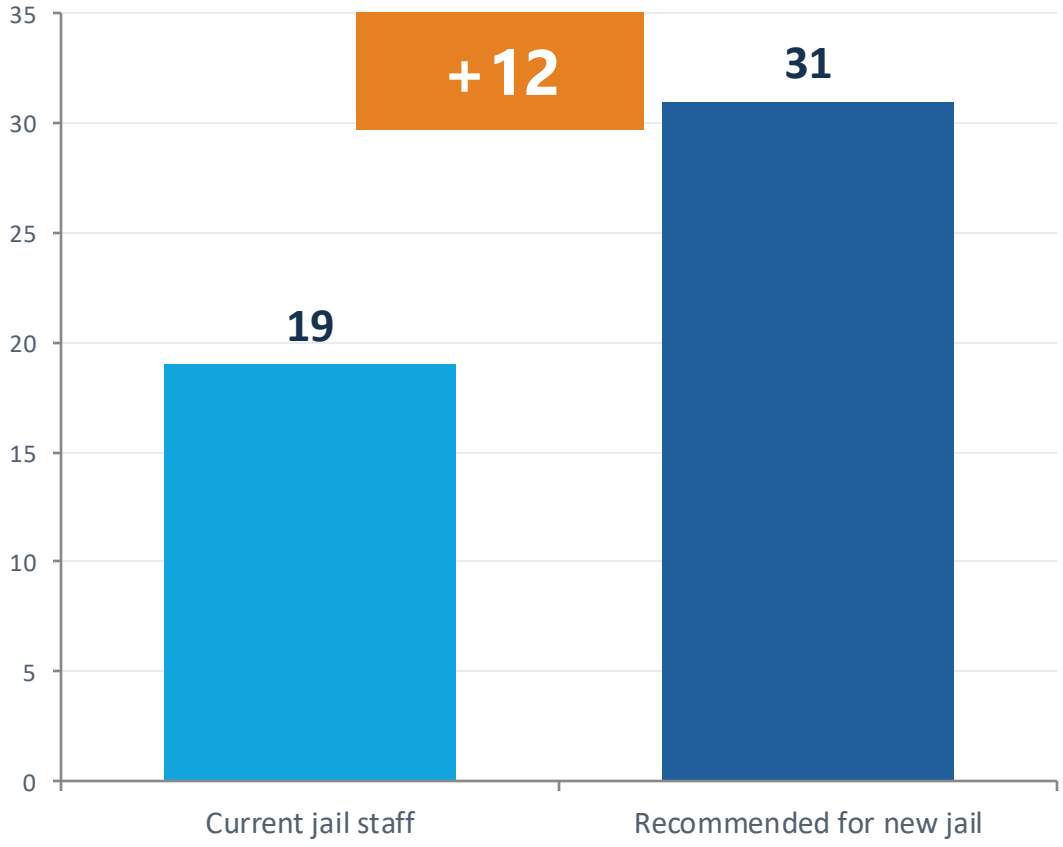
1,927
productive hours one deputy provides

4.55
full-time staff needed to fill one 24-hour post

A post is not a person: because no employee works 365 days a year, keeping one post filled around the clock requires a shift relief factor that accounts for days off, vacation, holidays, sick leave, and training — set by Payette County's own personnel policies.

The bottom line: four functions must be staffed around the clock — the control room, intake/booking, floor security, and on-duty supervision.

From 19 to 31 Positions



RECOMMENDED STAFFING BY POST

Post	FTE
Jail Lieutenant / Administrator	1.00
Administrative Assistant	1.00
Sergeants	2.00
Intake / Floater	6.84
Control Room	4.56
Transport	1.50
Floor Security	12.54
Courthouse Security	2.00
Total Required Staffing	**31.00**

These 12 additional positions will not need filled until construction for the new facility is complete.

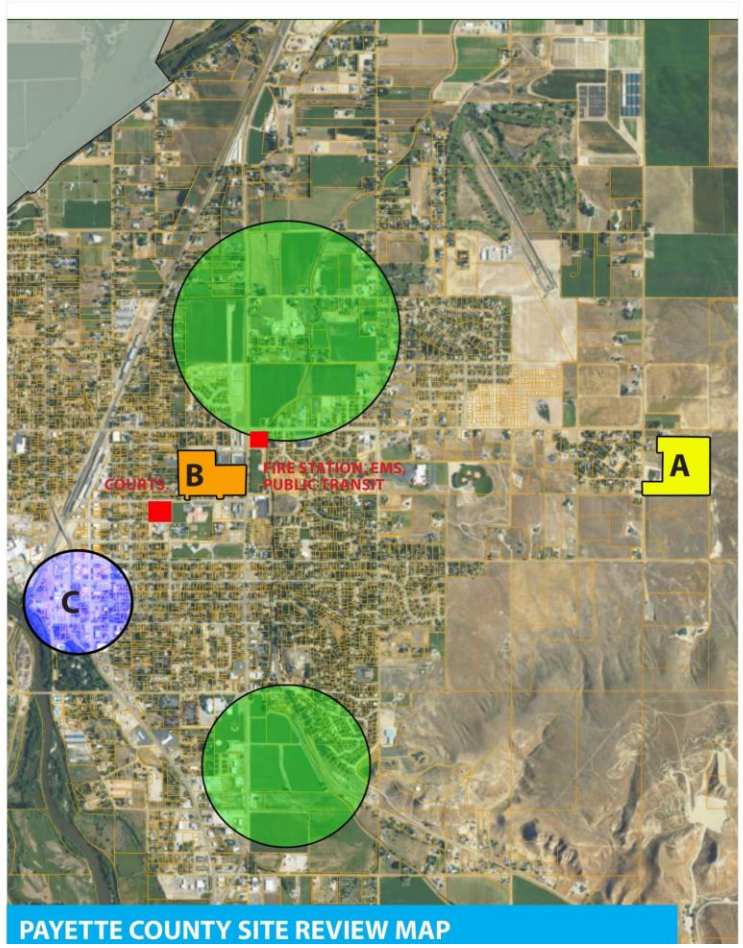
SECTION 05

Site Selection

Three finalist sites were scored on land, utilities, access, and proximity to county and emergency services. Site B scored highest.

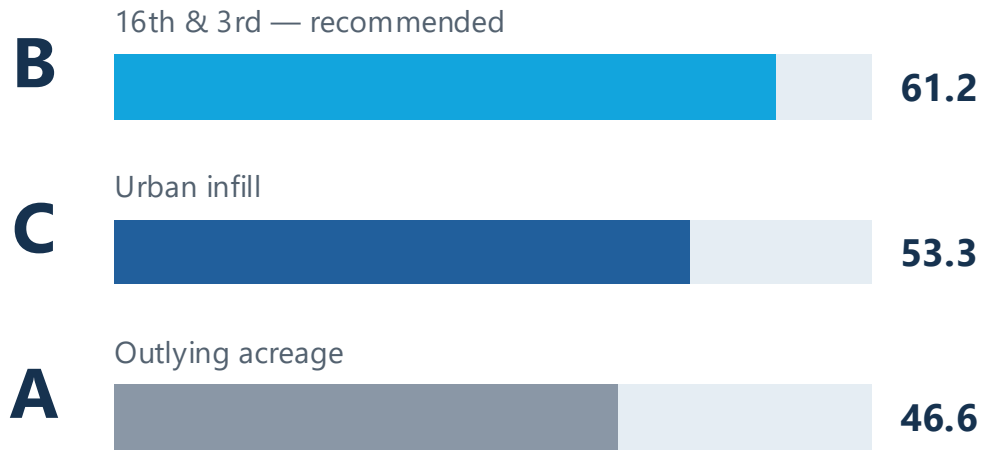
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Site B — 16th & 3rd



Recommended site, adjacent to the courthouse, EMS, fire, and police.

WEIGHTED SITE SCORES



- Adequate acreage (~13 acres) with room for future expansion — reducing the risk of becoming landlocked.
- Available utilities and limited off-site infrastructure cost, unlike Site A's estimated $20–30M in roads and utilities.
- Multiple points of access and strong proximity to the courthouse and emergency services.

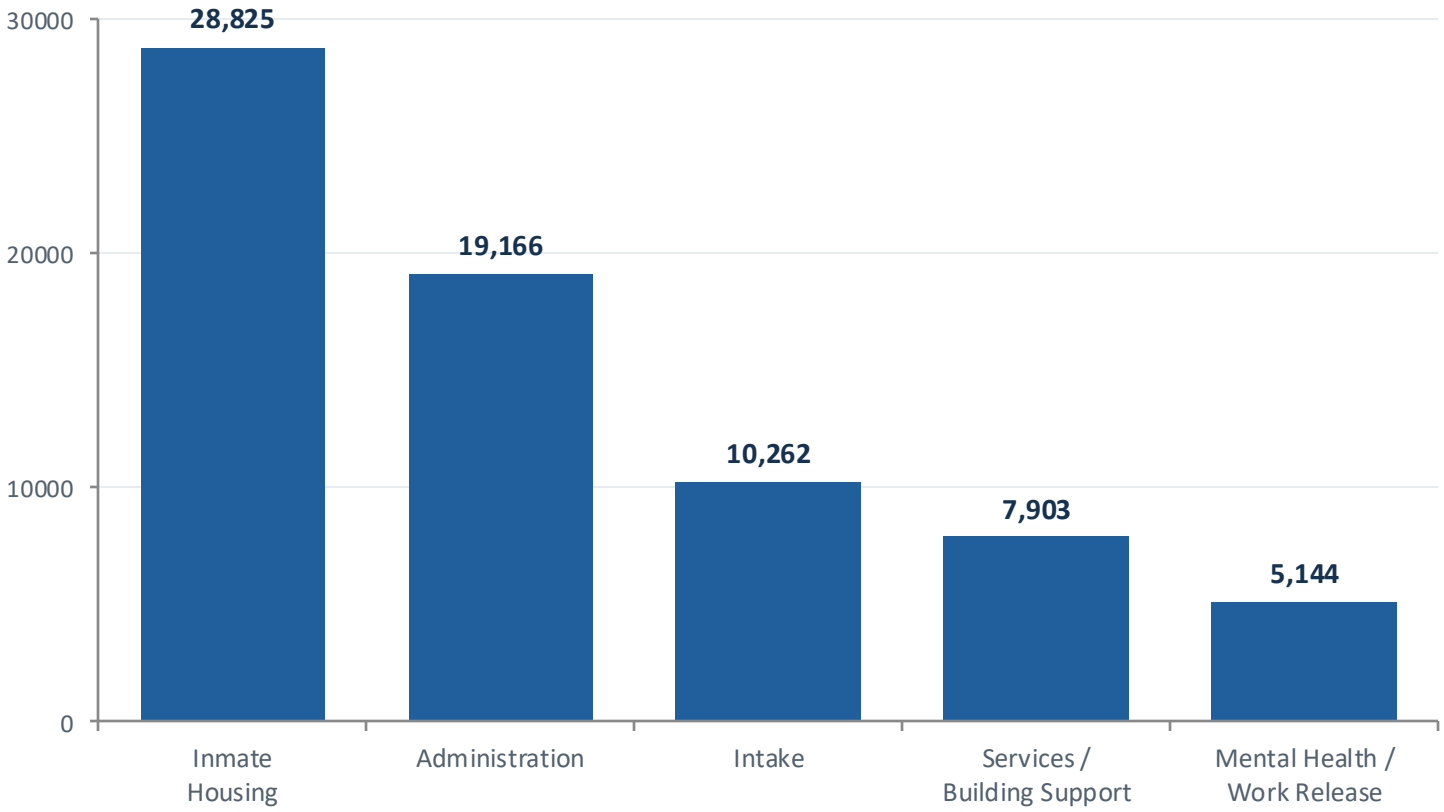
SECTION 06

The Recommended Facility

A new ~222-bed jail and Sheriff's Office of approximately 71,299 square feet — designed for safety, supervision, and 30 years of growth and potential expansion.

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A Facility Built Around Function



Gross square feet by component

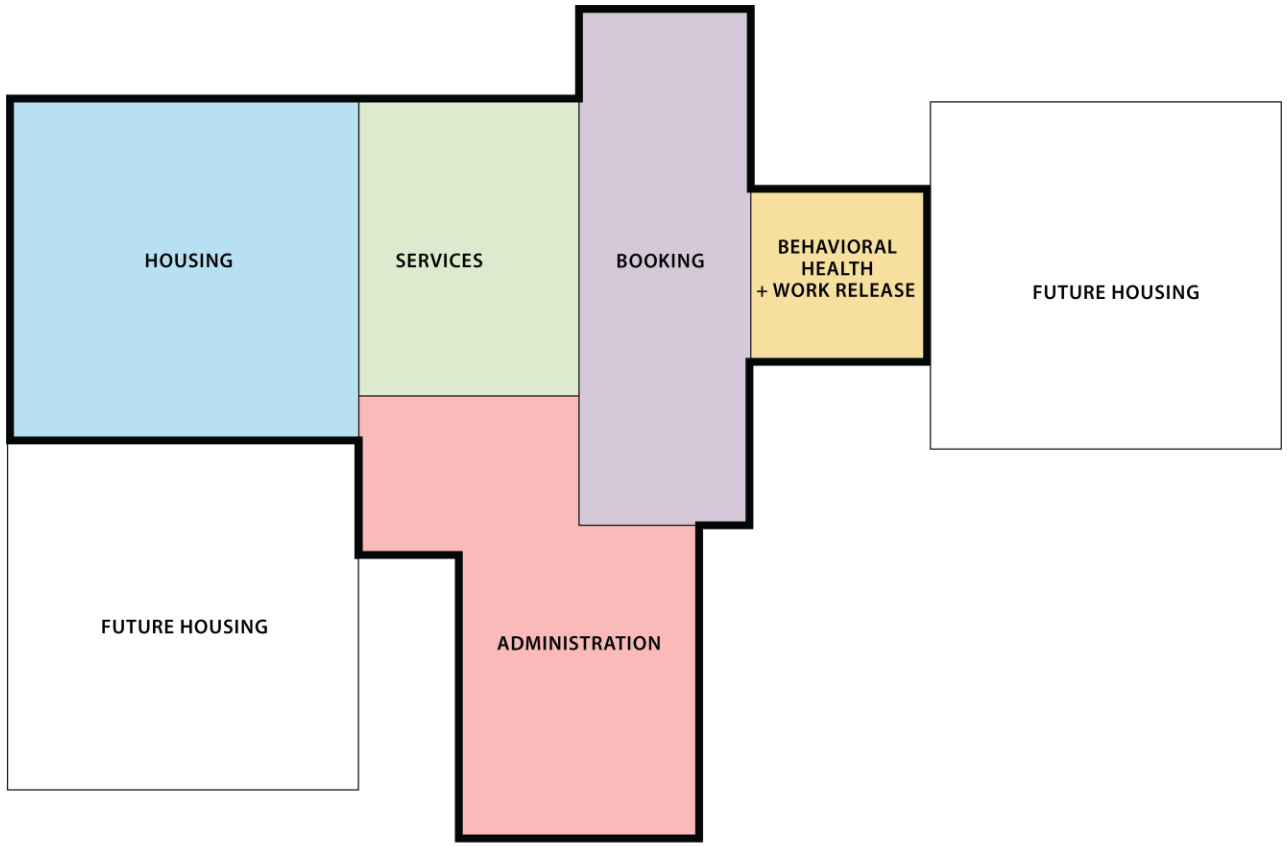
TOTAL FACILITY

71,299

gross square feet

- Twelve dayrooms give the Sheriff real classification capability — including two IGNITE program dayrooms.
- A 4-bed behavioral-health unit and two 15-bed work-release dormitories.
- Expanded rehabilitation, classroom, and program space to support reentry.

Conceptual First-Floor Plan



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The functions that need the most observation sit closest to the booking desk.
- The booking desk has direct views of pre-booking, the housing control room, and the work-release corridor.
- Intake and release are separated; inmates are released through a sallyport to the public lobby.
- Behavioral-health dayrooms are near booking yet buffered from intake noise.
- Room to add future housing pods as the County grows.

A Safe, Dignified Civic Building





Concept renderings pair durable, low-maintenance materials with a civic presence appropriate to a public-safety building — while meeting Idaho Jail Standards, ADA, and ACA best practice.

What the Project Will Cost

$61.8M

hard construction cost

15–20%

soft costs (varies by county)

$74.2M

total project budget

BASIS OF THE ESTIMATE

- Hard costs are based on recent bids for the 256-bed Flathead County, Montana Jail (June 2026), adjusted for Payette's location.
- Adding soft costs of 15–20% brings the total project budget to approximately $71.1M–$74.2M.
- The facility runs about $871 per square foot — the additional ~15,000 SF over the prior study accounts for roughly $13M of the difference.
- Delaying the project raises cost: construction moves into later years at higher material and labor prices.

What a New Facility Delivers

Safer for inmates and staff

Direct sightlines and constant supervision protect officers and vulnerable inmates alike.

Restored compliance

Meets Idaho Jail Standards, ADA, and ACA best practice — removing exposure to failed inspections and claims.

Behavioral-health support

Classification housing and program space allow on-site medical, mental-health, and substance-use care.

Lower recidivism

Education and reentry space helps people return to work and family — and cycle back less often.

Efficient operations

A secure intake and vehicle sallyport end staff-intensive escorts, returning deputies to patrol.

Responsible stewardship

Ends recurring emergency repairs and avoids the far greater cost of rebuilding again within one lifetime, while providing accommodations for future expansion.

THE RECOMMENDATION

Build Payette County's New Jail

~222	71,299	31	$74.2M
total beds	gross SF	staff (FTE)	project cost

NEXT STEPS

- Confirm Site B (16th & 3rd) and begin property acquisition.
- Authorize design of the new ~222-bed facility, targeting a spring 2028 opening.
- Establish the financing plan within the County's 30-year bond horizon.



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Prepared by Elevatus Architecture · July 2026

FOR THE RECORD

Appendix & Sources

Every figure in this briefing is drawn from the Payette County Idaho Jail Study. Page references for each section follow.

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Where to Find More Detail in the Study

Source: Payette County Idaho Jail Study, Elevatus Architecture (July 2026). The pages below point to the fuller analysis behind each section of this briefing.

Background pp. 5–9
Executive Summary 1972/1999 jail, 69-bed capacity, at the end of its useful life

Deficiencies pp. 11–17
Jail Deficiencies Report Fails Idaho Jail Standards 18.11 (intake) & 18.14 (housing)

Current Conditions pp. 23–41
Existing Jail Photos Documented intake, housing, and security photos

Existing Layout pp. 19–21
Existing Jail Floor Plan Original plan and cells repurposed over time

Bed Projections pp. 43–51
Jail Bed Projections Little's Law forecast → ~192 beds by 2060

Staffing pp. 53–57
Jail Staffing Analysis NIC post/relief-factor method → 19 to 31 FTE

Site Selection pp. 59–75
Site Review / MEP Review Site B scored 61.2, highest of three finalists

Program of Spaces pp. 77–87
Program of Spaces 71,299 GSF across five functional components

Conceptual Design pp. 89–95
Conceptual Design Conceptual floor plan and Scheme 07 / 12 renderings

Opinion of Cost pp. 97–99
Opinion of Probable Cost $61.8M construction; $74.2M total project budget

Study Appendix (pp. 101+): Committee Meeting Minutes · Idaho Jail Standards · 2024 Payette County Facilities Assessment · Jail Inspection Reports · Population Projections · Facility Staffing Analysis · Glossary of Definitions