

Report on Community Forums

Purpose

The Keller Group designed and facilitated community forums for each of the sites under consideration for a municipal jail. In June and July 2008, four forums were held for the four sites then identified for a potential Seattle Municipal Jail. In December 2008, an additional four forums were held for the additional sites identified for a potential regional North/East Cities Municipal Jail. The forums were opportunities for community members to receive information and provide feedback about a potential municipal jail. Three questions were asked to prompt discussion:

- What are the top five factors the cities should consider in siting the Municipal Jail?
- What is your biggest concern about a jail at this site?
- Given that a jail has to go somewhere, what are the top three things the cities could do to address your concerns?

The sites under consideration are:

- King County Jail Annex, vacant land at the southeast corner of the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Jefferson Street, Seattle
- Seattle north, 1600 W. Armory Way
- Seattle south, Highland Park Way S.W. & West Marginal Way S.W.
- Bellevue, 555 116th Ave. N.E.
- Shoreline, 2545 N.E. 200th St.
- Unincorporated King County, 13225 N.E. 126th Pl.

(Note: In July 2008, a forum was held for another site in north Seattle which has since been removed from consideration. Comments from that forum are not included in this report.)

Methodology

This report is a summary of the comments received at the forums. Attendees had multiple ways to leave their comments:

- Write comments on the flip chart pages provided for each table
- Write comments on comment cards provided at each table
- Write comments on the discussion sheets provided at each table
- Go online and leave a comment at www.seattle.gov/municipaljail or www.necmunicipaljail.org

All comments from the flip chart pages, comment cards, and discussion sheets were transcribed and posted on the municipal jail Web site. Comments that come via the online system are also posted on the Web site. In addition, the forums were recorded by the Seattle Channel. The full video tapes of the forums are available at www.NECMunicipalJail.org.

For this summary report, a simple content analysis was used. The transcriptions of the written comments from the flip chart pages, comment cards, discussion sheets, and online comments through December 17, 2008, were coded by topic. Topics were ranked by frequency of mention for each site. Multiple coders were not used, so there was no concern about inter-coder reliability. The same set of topic codes was used for all of the material across all of the forums. The purpose of this analysis is to identify common themes by site and the relative frequency of comments related to that site. This report

is not intended to be a quantitative analysis of the comments, and it is also not intended to draw any conclusions about the relative frequency or strength of comments between sites.

Executive Summary

Overwhelmingly, people are concerned about the proximity of a municipal jail to residences, schools, parks, and their neighborhoods generally. There was strong advocacy that the sites are, in fact, in neighborhoods, regardless of zoning, and that downtown would be a better option since people who live downtown expect mixed use and infrastructure. Specific concerns included safety, property values, transportation impacts, and the image and well-being of the neighborhood. People commented on the opportunity cost of not being able to use the site for other purposes, and questioned whether a municipal jail would be the best use for the sites.

There were concerns about the decision-making process, including the assumptions about the size and configuration of a municipal jail required. People raised concerns about the studies and projections being used to come to these conclusions and asked how potential sites were evaluated and identified. They questioned whether all alternatives to increasing the region's number of jail beds had been exhausted. They were concerned about transparency, representation and participation in the process.

People differed on which solution is the best policy. Some argued that a regional solution is the most effective; others advocated that the jail be located in the city requiring the most beds, or that many small jails sized for the immediate area be built. People in south Seattle noted that they take a disproportionate amount of Seattle's services and infrastructure; people throughout Seattle said that Seattle already hosts a King County jail and sex offender housing. People in Unincorporated King County asked about representation and services, including police protection. People in Shoreline asked for elimination of the site based on it being closest to residences.

There were very few mitigation ideas in response to the question, "Given that a jail has to go somewhere, what are the top three things the cities could do to address your concerns?" Most of the responses had to do with concerns about a site or alternatives to incarceration. The few comments that did include mitigation were consistent across sites and are collected in a separate table on page 10.

Additional comments that are specific to the sites are noted in the site summary pages following.

King County Jail Annex

The forum focused on the King County Jail Annex at Fifth and Jefferson in downtown Seattle was held at Seattle City Hall on December 3, 2008. Most of the people in attendance identified themselves as being from neighborhoods near other potential sites and said they were there to advocate for the Annex over other sites.

The combined comments from the forum and online, ranked in order of greatest frequency by topic:

- Proximity of services for misdemeanants
- Transportation impact and access
- Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; adhering to City policy and priorities
- Environmental and geological issues
- Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields
- Advocacy for a downtown Seattle location, near the existing system and courts
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Quality and image of neighborhood
- Cost for site acquisition, construction, and operation

At this forum, most of the comments seemed to be advocacy for the Annex site. The most frequent comments had to do with the convenience of locating additional jail beds near courts, social services, and keeping the jail part of the existing system. People also noted the central location of the Annex for police, visitors, and lawyers, and the proximity of the Fifth and Jefferson location to Interstate 5.

The comments about process were mostly positive, noting that this location is consistent with the City of Seattle's existing zoning and emphasis on density. People at this forum also expressed the most advocacy for alternatives to sentencing and said that the proximity of the Annex to social services was a reason in favor of this site.

The comments about neighborhood quality and image were focused on avoiding impact on neighborhoods outside of Seattle and assumed that residences and business that locate downtown expect mixed use, including corrections facilities and other infrastructure.

The greatest concern about the selection of the site had to do with the likelihood that it would be higher in cost, the acknowledgement that it involves a process between the cities and county to acquire the site, and concern that a deal could fall apart at the last minute for either of those reasons.

Other comments about this site were related to:

- Property values and taxes
- Safety, crime
- Seattle downtown has the most crime, so the jail should go there
- Positive economic development, business needs, best use and opportunity costs
- Regional solutions
- Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates
- Light pollution
- Social and economic justice
- You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable
- Release issues
- Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region
- What will happen if a jail isn't ready in time?

Seattle North

The forum focused on the Seattle north site at 1600 W. Armory Way was held at the Seattle Center on July 30, 2008.

The combined comments from the forum and online, ranked in order of greatest frequency by topic:

- Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields
- Positive economic development, business needs, best use, and opportunity costs
- Safety, crime
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City policy and priorities
- Regional solutions
- Transportation issues and access
- Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts
- Cost for site acquisition, construction, and operation
- Release issues
- Environmental issues, including geological issues

Concern about economic development and best use of the land at Interbay was second only to the concern about proximity to residences, schools, and parks. Comments frequently mentioned existing or planned businesses, such as the animal shelter and the Whole Foods development, and asked about the opportunity cost of a municipal jail compared to other uses. Questions and concerns about alternatives to incarceration were significant issues at this forum.

The process concerns mostly had to do with the City's priorities of density and preserving industrial land. Geological issues, such as liquefaction, came up frequently; most of the comments about cost assumed that it would be an expensive site to build on because of the engineering issues.

Other comments about this site were related to:

- Proximity of services
- Discouraging to tourism
- Quality and image of neighborhood
- Property values and taxes
- Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates
- Too easy to escape
- Noise
- This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails
- You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable
- Light pollution
- Operations and jobs
- Outreach, communication, and notice
- Will it remain misdemeanor only?
- Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region

The comments that were specific to this site had to do with the proximity of the cruise ships and the concern about the image the jail would present to tourists and the possibility of discouraging tourism. The comments about escape noted the proximity to trains and the ease of hiding and escaping because of it.

Seattle South

Two forums focused on sites in south Seattle: one on June 26, 2008, and another on July 26, 2008. At the time of these forums, there were two sites in south Seattle under consideration: one on West Marginal Way S.W. and one on Myers Way S. Because most people did not distinguish between the two sites in south Seattle in their comments, this summary includes all comments from both forums and all online comments referring to south Seattle sites.

The combined comments from the forum and online, ranked in order of greatest frequency by topic:

- Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City policy and priorities
- Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields, green spaces
- Social and economic justice
- Regional solutions
- Transportation issues and access
- Quality and image of neighborhood
- Environmental issues, including geological issues
- Safety, crime
- Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts
- Property values and taxes
- Proximity of services
- Release issues

The greatest number of comments focused on the assumptions and process that led to selection of potential sites, such as the choice between a low-rise and high-rise facility; how the (then) four sites were identified from a list of 35; the factors involved in the process and the meaning of terms, such as “fatally flawed”; the perceived inconsistency with City priorities, such as density and preserving industrial land; the transparency of the process; and the accuracy and currency of the studies and data used in making decisions.

Following closely on process concerns were concerns about social and economic justice, stating the belief that south Seattle takes more than its share of undesirable City services and infrastructure, and that these neighborhoods have fewer financial and political assets with which to influence these decisions. Both the process and social and economic justice comments frequently referred to the fact that two of the then-identified sites were in south Seattle.

In addition to concern about proximity to schools, residences, the greenbelt, trails, and playfields, comments frequently described the West Marginal Way S.W. location as the gateway to the Highland Park neighborhood and expressed concern about the effect of a municipal jail on a struggling but improving neighborhood. There were comments about neighborhood, image, stigma, pride, and quality of life.

Transportation issues for this site usually were about the distance, lack of access, and travel time that it would take to get to a south Seattle site, and frequently mentioned the future of the First Avenue South bridge and the viaduct as barriers to access, either because of their current inadequacy or because of future removal or reconstruction.

Other comments about this site were related to:

- Cost for site, construction, and operation
- Outreach, communication, and notice
- Will it remain misdemeanor only?
- Alternatives to incarceration

- Proximity to senior housing
- You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable
- Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates
- Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region
- Archeologically sensitive site; Duwamish tribal area
- Positive economic development, business needs, best, use and opportunity costs
- Light pollution
- Operations and jobs
- Too easy to escape

Shoreline

The forum focused on the site in Shoreline at 2545 N.E. 200th St. was held at Shoreline Community College on December 11, 2008.

The combined comments from the forum and online, ranked in order of greatest frequency by topic:

- Proximity to residences
- Property values and taxes
- Positive economic development, business needs, best use, and opportunity costs
- Safety, crime
- Transportation issues and access
- Quality and image of neighborhood
- Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City policy and priorities
- Will it remain misdemeanor only?
- Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts
- Seattle downtown has the most crime, so the jail should go there
- Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates
- Cost to school district
- Outreach, communication, and notice

The comments having to do with the Shoreline site were overwhelmingly focused on proximity to residences, schools, and play areas. There are significant concerns about property values and safety, and the “positive economic development” comments mostly have to do with pointing out the current use of the site as a community space and playfield and the lack of space for alternatives to this site for that purpose.

The process concerns mostly had to do with the disconnect between the school district and the City. The concerns about the cost to the school district referred to both lost revenue from a possible disposition of the site and to questions about whether there would be a financial burden on the district to educate 18 to 21 year old misdemeanants from other cities while incarcerated.

The comments about outreach, communication and notice frequently expressed a desire that notice would be mailed to all Shoreline residents and to residents of neighboring municipalities given the proximity to the site.

Other comments about this site were related to:

- Release issues
- Environmental issues, including geological issues
- Noise
- Proximity of services
- You’re comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it’s not comparable
- Impacts to neighborhood during construction
- Operations and jobs
- This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Cost for site, construction, and operation
- Light pollution
- No representation on NEC; there should be a vote
- Regional solutions
- Social and economic justice

Unincorporated King County

The forum focused on the site in Unincorporated King County at 13225 N.E. 126th Pl. was held at The Hollywood Schoolhouse on December 10, 2008.

The combined comments from the forum and online, ranked in order of greatest frequency by topic:

- Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields
- Safety, crime
- Transportation issues and access
- Property values and taxes
- Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts
- Positive economic development, business needs, best use and opportunity costs
- Will it remain misdemeanor only?
- Annexation issues
- Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates
- No representation on NEC; there should be a vote
- Proximity of services
- Release issues

The concern for proximity to schools, residences, and parks was closely followed by a particular concern for safety due to the absence of a municipal police force. Comments about safety usually included questions and concerns about how the cities can guarantee adequate police protection given that the site is in the King County Sheriff's jurisdiction. These concerns were exacerbated by recent news of King County budget cutbacks.

Other site-specific concerns had to do with annexation issues, including objecting to cities siting a municipal jail here while not annexing the area, and concern that the presence of a municipal jail will harm the chances of being annexed in the future. Comments frequently mentioned the casino as an example of another undesirable use that cities don't want and which may hurt chances of annexation.

There were frequent comments about the lack of representation of Unincorporated King County on the North/East Cities group and calls for a change to the process, including representation and a public vote.

Other comments about this site were related to:

- Seattle downtown has the most crime, so the jail should go there
- Social and economic justice
- Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City policy and priorities
- Discouraging to tourism
- Quality and image of neighborhood
- Environmental issues, including geological issues
- Too easy to escape
- Outreach, communication, and notice
- This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails
- Cost for site, construction, and operation
- Noise
- You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable

In "outreach, communication, and notice," there were multiple requests to call the site something other than "Unincorporated King County," such as "Kingsgate," so that people would know what neighborhood is closest to the site.

Bellevue

On December 15, 2008, a forum was held at the Meydenbauer Center for a site at 555 116th Ave. N.E. in Bellevue. This forum was sparsely attended and there were no written comments; there were also very few comments submitted online.

The comments received online through December 17, 2008 had to do with:

- Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields
- Design suggestions

Mitigation

One of the questions asked at the forums was: “Given that a jail has to go somewhere, what are the top three things the cities could do to address your concerns?” Most of the comments in answer to this question had to do with advocating for elimination of the site or exploring alternatives to incarceration, and those comments are included in the preceding summaries. There were relatively few comments having to do with specific mitigation should a site be chosen, and they did not differ significantly across sites. These are the most frequently mentioned mitigation ideas, combined across all sites:

Mitigation Idea	Frequency
Release protocols; release away from site	7
Increase police presence	7
Traffic improvements and infrastructure	5
Co-locate social services with the jail	5
Economic development and investment	4
Improvements to parks and green spaces	2
Invest in area schools	1
Invest in community centers	1
Improve public transportation	1
Develop monitoring and response systems for the jail	1
Bike and pedestrian improvements	1
Increase lighting	1

Appendix: Tables

For this summary report, a simple content analysis was used. All of the written comments from the flip chart pages, comment cards, discussion sheets, and online comments through December 17, 2008, were transcribed and coded by topic. Topics were ranked by frequency of mention for each site. Multiple coders were not used, so there was no concern about inter-coder reliability. The same set of topic codes was used for all of the material across all of the forums. The purpose of this analysis is to identify common themes by site and the relative frequency of comments related to that site. This report is not intended to be a quantitative analysis of the comments, and is also not intended to draw any conclusions about the relative frequency or strength of comments between sites. Following are tables with the frequency of comments by topic for online comments and forum comments.

Table 1: King County Jail Annex

Note: No online comments specific to the King County Jail Annex site were received as of December 17, 2008. All comments are from the forum.

Topic	Frequency
Proximity of services	29
Transportation issues and access	23
Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City rules and priorities	20
Environmental issues, including geological issues	13
Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields	13
Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts	11
Alternatives to incarceration	11
Quality and image of neighborhood	9
Cost for site, construction, and operation	8
Property values and taxes	7
Safety, crime	6
Seattle DT has the most crime, so the jail should go there	5
Positive economic development, business needs, and opportunity costs	4
Regional solutions	4
Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates	3
Light pollution	3
Social and economic justice	2
You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable	2
Release issues	1
Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region	1
What will happen if a jail isn't ready in time?	1

Table 2: Seattle North

Topic	Forums	Online	Total
Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields	26	34	60
Positive economic development, business needs, and opportunity costs	24	6	30
Safety, crime	14	6	20
Alternatives to incarceration	17	1	18
Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City rules and priorities	17	1	18
Regional solutions	18	0	18
Transportation issues and access	12	6	18
Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts	13	2	15
Cost for site, construction, and operation	13	1	14
Release issues	9	2	11
Environmental issues, including geological issues	10	0	10
Proximity of services	9	0	9
Discouraging to tourism	6	2	8
Quality and image of neighborhood	4	3	7
Property values and taxes	2	3	5
Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates	2	2	4
Too easy to escape	4	0	4
Noise	1	2	3
This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails	3	0	3
You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable	2	0	2
Light pollution	0	1	1
Operations and jobs	1	0	1
Outreach, communication, and notice	1	0	1
Will it remain misdemeanor only?	1	0	1
Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region	1	0	1

Table 3: Seattle South

Topic	Forums	Online	Frequency
Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City rules and priorities	107	15	122
Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields, green spaces	66	28	94
Social and economic justice	59	18	77
Regional solutions	65	6	71
Transportation issues and access	61	10	71
Quality and image of neighborhood	49	19	68
Environmental issues, including geological issues	60	6	66
Safety, crime	39	10	49
Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts	42	5	47
Property values and taxes	30	9	39
Proximity of services	20	4	24
Release issues	19	4	23
Cost for site, construction, and operation	17	2	19
Outreach, communication, and notice	16	2	18
Will it remain misdemeanor only?	16	1	17
Alternatives to incarceration	8	5	13
Proximity to senior housing	12	0	12
You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable	11	1	12
Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates	7	3	10
Seattle is already doing more than its share in the region	10	0	10
Archeologically sensitive site; Duwamish tribal area	9	0	9
Positive economic development, business needs, and opportunity costs	6	0	6
Light pollution	0	1	1
Operations and jobs	1	0	1
Too easy to escape	0	1	1

Table 4: Shoreline

Topic	Forums	Online	Frequency
Proximity to residences	167	137	304
Property values and taxes	40	20	60
Positive economic development, business needs, and opportunity costs	28	15	43
Safety, crime	19	23	42
Transportation issues and access	32	10	42
Quality and image of neighborhood	23	7	30
Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City rules and priorities	21	8	29
Will it remain misdemeanor only?	17	1	18
Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts	12	5	17
Seattle downtown has the most crime, so the jail should go there	12	2	14
Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates	9	1	10
Cost to school district	9	0	9
Outreach, communication, and notice	6	3	9
Release issues	8	1	9
Environmental issues, including geological issues	6	2	8
Noise	5	2	7
Proximity of services	6	1	7
You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable	4	0	4
Impacts to neighborhood during construction	3	0	3
Operations and jobs	3	0	3
This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails	3	0	3
Alternatives to incarceration	2	0	2
Cost for site, construction, and operation	1	1	2
Light pollution	2	0	2
No representation on NEC; there should be a vote	1	1	2
Regional solutions	1	0	1
Social and economic justice	0	1	1

Table 5: Unincorporated King County

Topic	Forums	Online	Frequency
Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields	154	24	178
Safety, crime	71	9	80
Transportation issues and access	41	3	44
Property values and taxes	33	6	39
Advocacy for putting it downtown near existing system and courts	18	0	18
Positive economic development, business needs, and opportunity costs	17	0	17
Will it remain misdemeanor only?	17	0	17
Annexation issues	11	3	14
Jail culture; bonds, pawn shops, visitors, associates	13	0	13
No representation on NEC; there should be a vote	13	0	13
Proximity of services	11	0	11
Release issues	9	0	9
Seattle downtown has the most crime, so the jail should go there	8	0	8
Social and economic justice	5	2	7
Process concerns; assumptions, data, and projections; transparency; City rules and priorities	5	1	6
Discouraging to tourism	5	0	5
Quality and image of neighborhood	5	0	5
Environmental issues, including geological issues	4	0	4
Too easy to escape	4	0	4
Outreach, communication, and notice	3	0	3
This planned jail is too big; build fewer smaller jails	3	0	3
Cost for site, construction, and operation	1	0	1
Noise	1	0	1
You're comparing to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, but it's not comparable	1	0	1

Table 6: Bellevue

Note: There were no written comments submitted at the Bellevue forum. Both comments were submitted online.

Topic	Frequency
Proximity to residences, schools, parks and playfields	1
Design suggestions	1