

RACINE COUNTY

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND CARE CENTER

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND CARE CENTER?

The mission and vision of the planned Youth Development and Care Center is to transform youth justice, strengthen families, and keep youth out of adult corrections in a fiscally responsible manner that avoids unnecessary expense to Racine County taxpayers. Racine County was awarded \$40 million to design and build a Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth.

The YDCC will be a state-of-the-art facility providing safe, evidence-based care and incorporating a trauma-informed approach, offering rehabilitative programs including mental health and substance abuse treatment, youth development/prevention/intervention services, and gang diversion. The YDCC will reduce detention capacity from 121 (capacity of current Juvenile Detention Center) to 48 youth; feature visitation space and time for families, including meals; provide additional classrooms, expanded seven-hour school day, and after-school and evening programming; and include multi-purpose rooms for use by youth, families, and community partners.

Under law, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families will also allocate an additional \$750,000 in annual youth aid funding that would otherwise not be made available to Racine County when the YDCC is operational. Youth aids provide each county with an annual allocation of state and federal funds from which a county may pay for juvenile delinquency-related services, including out-of-home placements and non-residential, community-based services for juveniles.

WHAT WILL THE CENTER LOOK LIKE?

The term “secure facility” often triggers outdated perceptions and threatening images of prison-like exteriors with armed guard towers and tall barbed-wire fencing. The Youth Development and Care Center will not be that kind of facility. Racine County has engaged the architectural/design team of [Ramlow/Stein + TreanorHL](#) – national leaders in trauma-informed design with an established track record of and commitment to bringing about real, meaningful social change by creating justice facilities that support positive transformation. The team has a well-earned reputation for designing architecturally stunning and inviting justice facilities that connect justice to humanity and inform behavior change and rehabilitation.

The YDCC is expected to be approximately 70,000 sq. ft. and will incorporate designs and features of national leaders in youth justice like extracurriculars, skills-based learning, abundant natural lighting, and outdoor spaces for a therapeutic environment, recreational space, as well as treatment and community spaces. The primary focus will be to convey a welcoming and inviting image, with a strong civic presence that blends into and doesn’t interrupt much less negatively impact the vitality of the surrounding neighborhood, without sacrificing the need to ensure the safety, security and well-being of all staff, residents, visitors, and community-at-large.

Visual examples of similar and representative project designs completed by the County’s architectural/design team include: [Jasper County Juvenile Services Center](#), [Johnson County Youth & Family Services Center](#), and [Wyandotte County Juvenile Justice Center](#).

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WHAT IS JUVENILE DETENTION AND WHAT DO YOUTH DO WHILE THEY'RE DETAINED?

Generally, juvenile detention is “short-term confinement, primarily used after a youth has been arrested, but before a court has determined the youth’s innocence or guilt. Pretrial detention is appropriate only when a court believes a youth to be at risk of committing crimes or fleeing during court processing. A smaller number of young people are in detention centers after their case has been heard, while they are waiting for either a disposition or placement after a disposition.... What happens in juvenile detention centers day-to-day varies by facility, but school-age youth must attend school. Youth are entitled to go outdoors regularly, engage in physical exercise, participate in a range of recreational activities and practice their religion. The rights of youth in detention – such as the rights to education; medical and mental health care; due process; access to families, counsel and the courts; and safe and humane treatment – are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, federal laws, state constitutions and laws and case law determined by the courts.” *Source: [The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).*

One of the centerpieces of Racine County’s Juvenile Detention Center has been its unique Alternatives to Corrections through Education (ACE) program, which keeps kids close to home and targets reduction of recidivism rates. It is a cost-effective alternative for youth, ages 12-17, who would otherwise be placed in a state correctional facility. Family participation is a vital component of the successful program.

Major shortcomings exist, however, with the physical structure of the current Racine County Juvenile Detention Center and it is cost-prohibitive and not an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars to attempt rehabilitating a space that is inadequate and ill-equipped to address the important needs of impressionable and troubled youth. The current detention center rests on the 4th floor of the Dennis Kornwolf Service Center within a residential neighborhood at 1717 Taylor Avenue in the City of Racine. It lacks outdoor recreation space and family meeting space. The space is dimly lit and utterly lacking in natural lighting. It has prison-like features (e.g., steel bars, loud sliding cell doors) and non-therapeutic spaces that present needless obstacles to the treatment of troubled youth and the building of trusting relationships. These site issues are of core concern, with insufficient area to work with in the current structure, and conflict with controlling state standards which may force the ultimate closure of the facility. Without an adequate replacement facility, Racine County would then have to send its youth to state facilities.

There currently exists two types of juvenile offender facilities in the state of Wisconsin. A Type 1 Facility is a juvenile correction facility that is operated by the State of Wisconsin that houses youth that have been adjudicated under the Serious Juvenile Offender program or convicted as an adult for a serious crime. These crimes carry a long-term sentence (more than one year) due to the violent nature of the crime (e.g., murder, use of dangerous weapon, 1st degree sexual assault, etc.). The Youth Development and Care Center is considered a *Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth*, replacing the previously identified *Type 2 Detention Facilities*. This facility is operated by a child welfare agency that is licensed under s. 48.66 (1) (b) to hold in secure custody youth that are adjudged to be delinquent of a crime. The stay for these youth is under one year and can be as little as one day. This will also continue to serve as a center to hold any youth that is detained and pending their court appearance until sentencing. The Racine County Human Services Department is the agency that is currently overseeing the detention center on 1717 Taylor Avenue and will oversee the YDCC.

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WHAT WOULD THE FINANCIAL IMPACT BE TO SEND YOUTH TO STATE FACILITIES?

Effective July 1, 2021, the new rate set by the Division of Juvenile Corrections for placement of youth is \$1,150 per day. On average, there are approximately 15 youth requiring placement in Racine County. In other words, if Racine County had to send its youth to state facilities, the County would incur a financial impact and cost of approximately \$6,296,250 per year (\$1,150 x 365 x 15) sending youth to state facilities in the absence of a new facility that adheres to required state standards and keeps Racine County youth closer to their families and schools.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE PROJECT?

By [Resolution No. 2020-76](#), Racine County authorized the acceptance of the \$40 million grant award and the design and construction of the YDCC as part of the Dennis Kornwolf Service Center, generally located at 1717 Taylor Avenue in the City of Racine.

IF THE COUNTY BOARD ALREADY VOTED TO CONSTRUCT THE CENTER IN THE CITY OF RACINE, WHY IS AN ALTERNATIVE SITE EVEN BEING CONSIDERED?

The County learned that it would cost an additional \$3-5 million to construct the facility at the Taylor Avenue site due to poor soil and environmental conditions. In other words, the County would need to commit a sizable portion of the \$40 million state grant to site-specific premiums rather than on what is best for our youth. The County therefore continued studying alternative locations – carefully considering cost, infrastructure needs and premiums, and access and distance from homes, schools, and community-based resources.

HOW AND WHY WAS THE VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA SITE IDENTIFIED AS A POTENTIAL LOCATION?

The County learned of the additional \$3-5 million costs due to poor soil and environmental conditions in soil and environmental site premiums in January-February 2021. In efforts to locate potential alternative sites, County leadership and staff renewed efforts to identify alternative locations and reached out to municipal leaders and other community stakeholders primarily in areas that hadn't previously been fully vetted but that generally satisfied the principal site criteria (e.g., cost, infrastructure needs and premiums, public transportation, and access and distance from homes, schools, and community-based resources). From that process, the County learned that Payne & Dolan may have interest in selling the subject [parcel](#) at 3 Mile near the airport. The County and Payne & Dolan have entered into a nonbinding letter of intent for the sale/purchase of the site at a price of \$1 million – considerably below the appraised fair market value. The site is close in proximity to the City of Racine and to the youth/families it primarily serves. The size of the parcel – nearly 29 acres – affords the possibility to place the facility next to a large pond and wooded area to act as a natural and expansive buffer between the facility and nearby residential areas. It also allows for the outdoor recreation space to be placed within the center of the facility, meaning that the exterior walls of the building will serve as a secure perimeter.

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HOW WOULD THE PROJECT BENEFIT CALEDONIA?

The proposed site is nearly 29 acres but faces significant challenges to development and large portions of the site are wholly undevelopable. The [site](#) is next to the Batten International Airport and neighbors two large quarry operations. Those portions of the site that are developable face significant height and other construction restrictions due to proximity to the airport which limit the type and size of potential development that could occur. Building the Youth Development and Care Center at this location fills a significant need for Racine County (and its taxpayers and families) and puts a developmentally challenged and inactive site into productive use. The County is also committed to keeping the natural landscaping intact and enhancing it where appropriate to reduce visibility to the YDCC.

The nation is in the midst of a transformative shift in juvenile justice policy and practice that moves away from punitive detention and reflects increased awareness of adolescent development and behavioral decision-making. Most youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced some level of trauma in their lives. The YDCC will provide therapeutic environments and flexible spaces to support the needs of youth through a variety of different programs aimed at rehabilitation and keeping them out of the adult judicial system – thus minimizing attendant costs (e.g., safety, security, and financial) to Caledonia residents and Racine County taxpayers. The YDCC will be a centerpiece for Racine County that is expected to draw state and national attention for innovation and as a blueprint for design and construction of a secure juvenile justice facility aimed primarily at helping young people get back on track toward successful lives. The YDCC will also avoid unnecessary costs (e.g., youth placement in state facilities) to County and Village taxpayers, meaning that greater resources can go toward other vital services such as law enforcement, 911 communications, parks, workforce solutions, and mental health.

The Village of Caledonia and Racine County have a long history of and commitment to partnership as evidenced most recently and concurrently by the County's exploration of taking ownership of and revitalizing the Franksville/Memorial Park.

HOW WILL THE PUBLIC FEEDBACK AFFECT THE PROJECT?

Public feedback is critical to the project development process and selection of a final site. The Village of Caledonia hosted a public informational meeting at Village Hall that was attended by more than 100 people and lasted for more than three hours on August 4, 2021. Postcards with meeting information were mailed to 565 residents neighboring Batten Airport. Moreover, flyers and postcards were shared with Douglas Avenue businesses as well as marketed through print, digital, and social media. Click [here](#) to see a map depicting outreach efforts.

MAY THE CENTER BE BUILT NEAR BATTEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) conducted an aeronautical study and determined that the proposed structure does not exceed obstructions and would not be a hazard to air navigation. The study was conducted by the FAA under the provisions of 49 U.S.C. Section 44718 and Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, part 77. The FAA ultimately confirmed that the structure is off airport property and outside a clear zone easement area that runs west of and parallel to the airport runway. Preventative and corrective noise mitigation measures exist and would be incorporated into the design and construction of the Youth Development and Care Center. Racine County is committed to working closely with the Batten International Airport, the FAA, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics to minimize impacts to operations of the airport and the Youth Development and Care Center.

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HAS THE CALEDONIA SITE ALREADY BEEN SELECTED?

No.

WHAT IS THE SITE SELECTION AND APPROVAL TIMELINE?

The Executive Committee of the Racine County Board of Supervisors will discuss – but not take action on – the location of the Youth Development and Care Center at 5:15pm on Tuesday, August 24th. A resolution authorizing the construction of the Youth Development and Care Center may be considered by the Executive Committee as early as Tuesday, September 14th. If a resolution advances out of the Executive Committee on that date, it is anticipated that the County Board may consider and potentially take action on the matter on Tuesday, October 5th. All meetings of the Racine County Board of Supervisors (including Executive Committee) are held at Ives Grove Office Complex, 14200 Washington, Avenue, Sturtevant, WI 53177. Agendas for County Board meetings – including information for accessing meetings virtually using WebEx, Facebook Live, or by telephone – are posted at <https://www.racinecounty.com/departments/county-board/committees-agendas-and-minutes>.

If the matter advances on the above timeline, it is anticipated that the County would submit necessary zoning applications to the Village of Caledonia Planning Commission by early October for consideration and potential approval by that government body in October-November.

WILL THE CENTER NEGATIVELY IMPACT PROPERTY VALUES?

Worries about declining neighborhood property values was a primary fear articulated by those who attended the August 4 informational meeting. While tangible influences such as heavy traffic, eyesore buildings, odors, railroads, and foreclosures *can* adversely affect demand and property values, there is no clear statistical relationship linking secure facilities with declining property values and other unfavorable housing characteristics. In fact, residential concerns about declining property values may be unwarranted. *Source:* [Sage Journals – Correctional Facility Establishments and Neighborhood Housing Characteristics](#).

Although the YDCC differs in key respects from an adult prison, there is a lack of available research regarding property value impacts from modern, trauma-informed secure youth facilities (not surprisingly, because the YDCC would be the first of its kind in Wisconsin). Nevertheless, studies that focus on adult correctional facilities are helpful because the YDCC can reasonably be expected to have even less impact considering the lack of threatening and unsettling secure perimeter features typically associated with adult correctional facilities. A study of tax assessor files and the U.S. Census indicated that proximity to the Green Bay Reformatory and Waupun State Prison had no measurable deleterious effect on either the assessed value or market prices of homes in the sampled data set. In fact, there was a small tendency for homes to increase in assessed value the nearer a home was located to the facility. In general, other variables were much more important in determining assessed value or market value than were variables associated with distance to or within sight of the prisons. *Source:* [Office of Justice Programs – Impact of Prison Proximity on Property Values](#).

By way of further example, the nearby Milwaukee County House of Correction has not stood in the way of significant upscale residential development occurring in the City of Franklin with no less than 4 notable subdivisions (approximately 216 single-family homes starting in low \$400,000s and 56 duplexes) built a short distance from the prison since 2018, and another approximately 385

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(Property Values – Continued)

units (with estimated \$186.75 million in property value expected to be generated) currently under consideration by the Franklin Common Council. The House of Correction compound is also placed directly between and next door to two popular youth sports complexes (Franklin Little League and Croatian Eagles Soccer Club/Park). It bears repeating that the Milwaukee County House of Correction is a secure adult prison facility and the bulk of aforementioned studies have likewise focused on traditional prisons and correctional settings; the Youth Development and Care Center will not be that kind of facility and is therefore not expected to negatively impact property values in the Village of Caledonia.

Visual examples of similar and representative project designs completed by the County's architectural/design team include: [Jasper County Juvenile Services Center](#), [Johnson County Youth & Family Services Center](#), and [Wyandotte County Juvenile Justice Center](#). These facilities fit seamlessly within and enhance surrounding downtown and residential areas.

The current Racine County Juvenile Detention Center does not have a significant traffic impact on Taylor Avenue within the City of Racine, and it is reasonably expected that the YDCC would also present minimal traffic impacts. Racine County's staffing estimates for the Center include 25-30 staff during 1st shift, 15-20 staff during 2nd shift, and 15 during 3rd shift. There will be no large vehicle/semi delivery for supplies or food; such deliveries are made with a delivery van.

IF APPROVED, WHEN WOULD CONSTRUCTION COMMENCE?

Likely early-spring 2022.



HAVE A QUESTION WE HAVEN'T ANSWERED?

Members of the public who wish to ask questions or submit written comments should complete a [Comment Form](#) and submit it by email to Kristin Latus, Deputy Director of Human Services, at Kristin.Latus@racinecounty.com. Completed Comment Forms will be shared with the Racine County Board of Supervisors. County Board meetings include a public comment period. Individuals wishing to provide public comment in writing in lieu of attending County Board meetings may submit them by email to RCClerk@racinecounty.com prior to 12pm on the date of the meeting (upcoming scheduled meetings: August 24th, September 14th, September 28th, and October 4th).