

ANSWERS

Responses to questions about Prison Relocation February 2015



Since the Prison Relocation Commission (PRC) announced the locations of the properties that are being assessed as potential sites for the relocation of the Utah State Prison, many have raised questions regarding planned relocation. This document answers several Frequently Asked Questions.

Why is the state relocating the Utah State Prison from its location in Draper?

For nearly a decade, the state carefully studied whether to move the state prison from its current location. Studies revealed a number of costs the state would incur, and benefits the state would forego, by keeping the prison at its current location:

The current prison:

- does not accommodate modern programs and services that could reduce recidivism and decrease the growth of the inmate population
- does not meet many national standards
- is difficult and expensive to maintain
- will cost about \$250 million over the next 20 years in repairs and upgrades just to keep the current facility functioning at current capacity

Relocating the prison:

- gives the state an opportunity to design the new facilities to improve the delivery of correctional treatment, education, and training programs
- will help the state reduce recidivism and provide better outcomes for inmates
- will help the state realize cost savings over time with a new, more efficient, state-of-the-art facility
- will provide the state \$1.8 billion in annual economic output and \$94.6 million of annual tax revenue for the state and local governments when the current site is redeveloped

Based on this and other evidence gathered over the past several years, the Legislature and Governor formally endorsed relocating the prison during the 2014 General Session by passing HCR 8 which states, "It is sound public policy and in the best interests of the state to move the prison facilities from their current location in Draper."

Why move the prison now?

Development of a new prison provides the state with the rare opportunity to successfully implement changes in the criminal justice system to stem the growth of the prison population and reduce recidivism. Currently, 67% of all prison admissions are parole and probation violators. The new prison is vital to corrections reform because it will improve conditions for inmates by providing programming that will better equip the inmates for re-entry into society. As inmates are better prepared for re-entry, public safety will improve. Over time, reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for inmates will also save taxpayer dollars.

Will the prison affect property values?

Evidence shows that property values do not decrease with proximity to a prison.

An examination of home value data for the two ZIP codes surrounding the prison in Draper has revealed that the median total home prices and the median price per square foot for currently listed homes are comparable to, or higher than, those in Utah County or Salt Lake County as a whole (see **Figure 1**).

Property values are not determined solely by proximity to a prison and are usually determined by variables of greater importance. These include:

- Values and marketability of properties in the area prior to prison construction;
- Interest rates, income growth, and unemployment rates; and
- Proximity to transportation networks, recreational and cultural amenities, and shopping centers.

Does a prison threaten public safety?

The prison in Draper has helped improve public safety efforts in the area.

The prison in Draper has created partnerships with nearby communities to enhance response to public safety concerns both at and away from the prison. On numerous occasions, the Department of Corrections has teamed up with its neighbors to respond to threats to public safety.

Figure 1: Property value comparison

	Location	Median Listing Price	Median Price per Square Foot
Area Around Draper Prison	Draper (84020)	\$439,900	\$153
	Bluffdale (84065)	\$369,990	\$141
Other Areas	Greater Utah County	\$269,990	\$133
	Greater Salt Lake County	\$275,000	\$150
	Sandy	\$329,900	\$159
	American Fork	\$259,950	\$154

Some have expressed concern about threats to public safety from inmate escapes. The fact is, no one has escaped from the prison in Draper in more than 20 years. Furthermore, during that time, inmate supervision and corrections technology and practices have improved, further reducing the chance of an escape. A new correctional facility would also provide better, state-of-the-art security than what is currently available at the facility in Draper, further minimizing the risk of an escape.

Will the prison negatively impact the local economy?

The prison is expected to bring positive economic growth to its host community.

The community hosting the prison will experience positive economic impacts in several ways:

1. In the short-term, the construction of new prison facilities is expected to cost several hundred million dollars and last about three years. Much of the money spent on construction is expected to directly benefit the community where the prison will be developed as construction workers temporarily relocate to the area and/or spend money at local restaurants and businesses.
2. There are over 800 employees working at the prison in Draper. While the PRC is working to minimize any negative impact on these employees, it is expected that some employees will choose to relocate to live closer to the prison. The prison will provide the host community with a very stable employment base with jobs that typically come with excellent benefits. Currently, nearly 50% of current prison employees live within a 20 minute drive of the prison as shown by the Figure 2. Over time, employees will likely relocate according to a similar pattern.

Figure 2:
Employees' proximity to Draper Prison

Drive Time (minutes)	Employees
50-60	2.35%
40-50	5.67%
30-40	22.68%
20-30	20.61%
10-20	41.08%
0-10	7.61%

Will the prison drive businesses away?

Prisons do not drive businesses away.

The existence of a prison does not affect the bottom line of a business and is unlikely to be a major consideration for businesses that are considering relocating or expanding. Using the prison in Draper as an example, businesses have not been deterred from expanding or locating in the area around the prison. Dozens of high profile businesses have chosen to open their doors within one mile of the Draper facility, including:



Furthermore, businesses are not likely to relocate or expand to areas where infrastructure is lacking or in need of significant improvements or extensions. New prison facilities will likely require investments in infrastructure in any location. As the state brings its resources to bear, the host community will benefit from infrastructure upgrades that will be a necessary part of construction. As infrastructure is upgraded, the host community will become more competitive and attractive to other developers.

Are inmate families likely to relocate to the host community?

Inmates are frequently transferred between facilities; it is unlikely that families would find it worthwhile to relocate.

Inmates in the Utah corrections system are housed in multiple locations. Besides the Draper facility, inmates are housed among 21 county jails, in the Central Utah Correctional Facility in Gunnison, Utah, and in out-of-state facilities. Inmates are regularly transferred between these facilities. Families of inmates do not relocate to live near a prison because they know there is no guarantee an inmate will stay in the same location for any length of time.

Interested in Learning More?

For information about the PRC visit: www.le.utah.gov/prc.

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