

How can jail design support inmate mental health?

In recent years, design experts have identified certain design attributes and principles that can enhance the health and wellbeing of inmates dealing with mental health issues. Designed and built more than 40 years ago, the current Allen County jail offers few, if any, of these attributes – nor do local design experts believe it possible to incorporate these principles into an expansion of the current jail.

On November 4, 2022, representatives from Elevatus shared a presentation that included conceptual renderings showing jail living units set up as pods that include multiple recreation and program spaces, as well as mental health housing concepts.

It is important to remember that those staying in the Allen County jail have either been convicted of a crime or are awaiting trial. The jail must be a secure place free from hazards, objects, and spaces that can contribute to injury of staff or inmates. However, our intent with the new confinement facility is to create a space that is appropriate for all inmates, including those with mental health concerns.

Given this consideration, in addition to building layout, there are design elements that are being factored in to help support inmate stabilization and mental health. Some of these include:



Quality lighting / ample natural light



Connection to nature / outdoor spaces



Use of color



Air temperature / quality



Open planning / spaces



Acoustics



Material / finishes / furniture

Questions?

Visit allencounty.us/jail for details on each of these criteria and for more information.

