

ITASCA COUNTY RESIDENTS WILL DECIDE HOW TO PAY FOR THE NEW COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER



"Itasca County wants to give our residents the chance to decide how to pay for the new Justice Center. The two options are the local sales tax on the ballot in November, or a property tax increase if the referendum fails."

TERRY SNYDER
Itasca County
Commissioner

For the past several years, the Itasca County Jail was operating far past its useful life. The jail's outdated design and severe overcrowding created major safety and security challenges for law enforcement. Decades of heavy use led to infrastructure and air quality problems that would require major renovations and repairs. In 2018, the Minnesota Department of Corrections ordered the jail to cease operations by May 2023.

Recognizing the importance of having a modern jail and courts system, Itasca County moved forward with a comprehensive review of options to address the need for a new jail as well as long-standing challenges in our county courtrooms. In June 2020, the County Commission approved a plan to build a new \$75 million Justice Center that will house both the jail and county courts. The facility is under construction in downtown Grand Rapids.

To finance the cost of construction, the County Commission identified two reliable, long-term revenue sources – an increase in property taxes or a local sales tax.

During the Nov. 8 General Election, Itasca County voters will consider a single ballot question seeking a local sales tax of 1% to finance the county's new Justice Center. If the sales tax isn't approved, the County Commission plans to use property taxes, which will increase the county's property tax levy by approximately 10%.

WHY PROPOSE A LOCAL SALES TAX?

Itasca County is proposing the sales tax because it recognizes the regional significance of a new jail and courts facility. The State Legislature reviewed the county's plan, agreed it had regional impact and authorized the county in 2021 to present the sales tax proposal to county voters.

A sales tax impacts all people who shop and enjoy this area, not just local residents. Visitors would contribute 40% of the sales tax revenue, according to research by the University of Minnesota Extension Center. The sales tax would cost the average county resident \$4.42 a month, according to the university's research.

If approved, the 1% local sales tax would be in place for up 30 years to provide the revenue to repay the bonds for the construction of the Justice Center and would expire once the bonds have expired. The sales tax cannot be extended or used for any other purpose unless authorized by the Minnesota Legislature and Itasca County voters.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE JUSTICE CENTER PROJECT & THE SALES TAX REFERENDUM AT:
ItascaCountyJusticeCenter.org

- Early voting continues until Nov. 7
- Election Day is Nov. 8

