
PRISONS IN NORTH CAROLINA: ARE THEY A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES?

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Abstract

A prison construction boom is currently underway nationwide. Non-urban areas are forming the impetus behind this movement. As rural areas become the sites of these new prisons, the local economies are experiencing associated growth through the provision of stable employment in often economically depressed locales. This is the case in North Carolina. North Carolina has effectively used its increased capacity needs for prisons to promote economic development in rural counties. Most of the academic and policy studies of economic development success to date focus solely on community level variables and their effectiveness. This article looks at the importance of state level siting procedures on host communities' experiences with prisons. The North Carolina Department of Corrections siting policies and procedures have contributed greatly to the success of this construction program. This paper will discuss factors affecting community receptivity to prisons with a focus on the effect that the state's, in this case North Carolina's siting procedures has on the community's perception.¹

Rural America has been increasingly eager to house prisons (Welch 1991; Young, 1994).² The logistical reasons are straightforward. These locales are more likely to pursue and obtain economic opportunities to offset their losses stemming from de-industrialization and the demise of the agricultural base of the economy.

Numerous articles and studies have been published regarding the booming "prison economy" across the United States. However, most of the literature has focused on community-level variables of residents' perceptions of what having a prison in the vicinity entails compared with the reality of the situation (Parcells & Farrington, 1988; Hodge and Staeheli, 1988; Poole and Lidman, 1988; Poole and Lidman, 1988;

Carlson, Katherine, 1988), (Lidman, Russell, 1988; Rogers and Haines, 1987; Sechrest, 1992; Schicor; Smykla, Cheng, Ferguson, Trent, French, and Waters, 1984; Stanley, Craig, 1978). What will make a rural community define a potential prison siting in its midst as an economic development trophy? Alternatively, what will make a prison an unwelcome nuisance to be avoided (NIMBYISM – not in *my* backyard)? The question does not seem to be one of rational calculations, but of issue definition and intuitive decision-making. Many factors of varying importance determine the community's attitude and perception of what the prison means as an issue.

One factor that has been largely overlooked in the literature is the effect that the state's siting strategy (or model) has on determining whether the community is enthusiastic or negative in its views of a prison siting. This article examines prison sitings from 1979 to the present, in one state, North Carolina. The author addresses the factors affecting community receptivity to a siting and describes the state-promoted "good neighbor" policy that characterizes the manner in which new prison locales are identified and approved within this state.

Research shows that a prison siting in a community results in little or no negative impact on the host community's objective reality. Incidences of escapes, in-migration of prison families, and changes in real estate prices represent improbable events (Thies, 1998; Thies, 2000; Carlson, 1988; Lidman and Poole; Lidman, 1988; Abram & Lyons, 1988). Economic benefits do result from job creation and other additional industrial and commercial activity, even though additional tax revenues are not significant.

Prison sitings are inherently controversial. As one North Carolina Department of Corrections official stated, "whenever you site a prison, someone is going to be upset" (Interview, N.C. Department of Corrections, 2000). Historically, most communities shunned prison sitings. Until the mid-to-late 1980's it was unheard of that a community would actually seek out a prison. Prisons, like landfills were viewed as a NIMBYISM – or as a collective "bad". Recently, in Midwest states such as Missouri and Illinois, rural communities have been clamoring for prisons via overt and open bidding wars in front of the relevant committees of the state legislatures.

The author suggests that what is going on here is a change in issue definition regarding prisons. In one community, the prison may

be defined in the following way: "Prison Equals Jobs or Prison Equals Economic Vitality. In another community the issue is defined as: Prison equals Higher Crime or Prison Equals A New Image as a Prison Town. The same objective impacts accompany the siting of the prison in each case, but the perceptions vary nonetheless. This variation may exist even within a community. One person may define the prison as the economic salvation and another may define it as the bane of the community.

Existing research has set some objective criteria by which a community can measure the disadvantages and advantages of the prison as economic development proposition (Hoyman, 1991). This research found that the siting of a prison would be beneficial to rural communities, assuming the absence of other more attractive, i.e. less stigmatized, economic development opportunities, such as large industrial sitings. Yet the answer to the question of whether a prison is a good thing still seems to vary with each host community. For instance, assessing whether the jobs created are considered "good" has two very important components: 1) the average salary on the prison payroll compared to the average current salary for the county, and 2) the goodness of the fit between the educational level of the workers who are unemployed and the entry level requirements of jobs. This second criterion is important to insure that the jobs will go to residents of the host county, as opposed to the residents from the adjacent county or from two counties over. Impacts of a large economic development project are often much more diffuse than local leaders think they will be when they recruit them (Hoyman, 1999).

A community's perception of what a prison siting means varies rather dramatically by community, with some being wildly enthusiastic and others being hysterical in opposition. Variation can also exist over time, within the same community, depending on factors such as the community's economic status and its political leadership. Within different constituencies, there can be variation among the political elite, the general public, and the business community. Finally, there is variation across states, depending on the state siting criteria and the process by which communities are invited (or not invited) to bid. Next, the author will address some of the more salient issues affecting a community's attitude toward hosting a prison.

Factors affecting community's attitude to prisons

1) Community's history of hosting a prison

One factor of importance to the host community's attitude is whether the host community had a past experience with a correctional facility. It is much easier to site a prison in a community that already is home to at least one existing prison or that is home to another governmental facility. In such cases, the groundwork has already been laid in dispelling fears and educating the populace of the reality of having a prison in the community. The more contentious sitings arise when business and community leaders are required to "sell" their constituents on the prospect of having a first-time prison in the community and allay the associated panic.

2) Security Level of Facility

Usually communities prefer maximum (or what are referred to in North Carolina and other places as close custody) facilities. Why? This may seem counter-intuitive at first, since these facilities contain society's hard-core criminals. However, according to a NC DOC official, residents have a higher comfort level with maximum-security facilities because of the extent of the safeguards (i.e. wired fencing, armed guard tower, larger buffer area) associated with these prisons. For these reasons, the risks to the surrounding community are perceived to be less.

The least desirable facilities include work camps and other facilities where occupants may be working outside in the community and interacting with residents. Medium and minimum security prisons generally fall between these two options in terms of acceptability. Abrams and Lyon (1987) also found that people tend to prefer a county jail over a state or federal facility.

3) Jobs and other economic activity

There are several questions that a community must answer before deciding whether the prison is good for it economically. First of all, how many jobs are generated? New prisons constructed in North Carolina can employ between 240 and 400 persons per facility depending on the security level and inmate population.³ (There is a lot

of variation in the number depending on the type of facility with the number currently employed at each facility displayed in Chart 2.)

Second, what is the salary? North Carolina correctional officers' salaries start at nearly \$21,000 and progress up to a maximum of \$37,500 based on the civil service pay scale. A third issue is whether the jobs go to county residents or to persons outside the county? As mentioned earlier, is there a match between the requirements of the job and the qualifications of county residents? The educational requirement associated with the correctional officer position is a high school diploma.

Chart 1⁴: Economic Data shows counties that had sitings from 1979 to 2000 and the educational data for their population. The chart illustrates the fact that the vast majority of adults in the counties that were host counties of prisons since 1993 did not have college degrees in 1990, the last year for which data was available. High school diploma rates for the seventeen recently hosted counties in 1990 ranged from 53.7% to 75.9%. So it would appear for the baseline jobs, as well as for the correctional officer jobs, there is a fairly good overall fit between the educational level in these counties and the requirements of prison jobs.⁵

Another related question is does the average salary of the prison jobs meet or exceed the average wage or salary for the county? Do these jobs represent an upgrade or are these just more jobs? Additionally, are they recession-proof jobs or will there be lay-offs or a closing during a downturn in the economy? Finally, is there an increase in other economic activity such as satellite industries coming in or commercial activity?

Prison jobs are also considered depression-proof in that prison closings are rare and lay-offs even more rare. The minimal educational requirements associated with prison jobs have been discussed previously. The author illustrates this point with the example of a severely economically distressed county like Tyrrell (North Carolina), which recently got a prison siting. The starting salary for a correction officer is a third more than the average annual wage for the county. It is also the case that the prison is now the largest employer in the county. As stated before, one additional consideration is whether county residents, regardless of the level of qualification, would actually fill the jobs. If efforts are not made to ensure concentrated recruitment, adjoining localities may graft some of the benefit from the host

community. Crowley County, Colorado is such an example. While jobs were created by the construction of the prison in Crowley County, they generally went to residents of the “big city” (nearby Pueblo) resulting in the

**Chart 1A:
Recent North Carolina Sitings:
County Education and Unemployment**

County	1990 Percent HS Grads	1990 Percent College Graduates	1999 Unemployment Rate
Rowan	66	11.7	2.9
Greene	59.2	8.9	4.7
Montgomery	55.3	7.8	4.1
Nash	65.1	13.7	5.2
Anson	60.8	7.3	6.6
Burke	60.1	10.6	2.5
Pender	64.6	11.6	4.8
Robeson	57	11	7.8
Wayne	71.2	12.7	4.1
McDowell	58.5	8.1	4
Pasquotank	67.4	14.4	3.5
Craven	75.9	15.1	4.2
Warren	53.7	7.1	6.2
Hyde	60	7.7	6.3
Davidson	64.2	10	2.3
Caswell	55	6.6	2.2
Granville	62	9.6	3
Tyrrell	58	7.6	8.6
Avery	62.2	12.4	3.4
Pamlico	65.9	11.6	3.7

Source: NC Department of Commerce
employment benefits passing over the host community (Thies, 1998).

In other ways prisons may not be welcome since higher paying prison jobs attract some of the employees from the town’s established employers (Hoyman, 1991). One North Carolina siting was thwarted

**Chart 1B:
Recent North Carolina Sitings:
County Employment and Earnings**

County	Government (including Dept. of Correction) as % of County Employment 3rd quarter 1999	Avg Weekly Earnings Govt. 3rd quarter 1999	Avg Weekly Earnings All- Industries 3rd quarter 1999	State Rank (out of 100 counties)
Rowan	14.3	608.98	539	10
Greene	32.6	522.11	411	77
Montgomery	13.6	516.90	427	69
Nash	12.8	578.16	504	22
Anson	26.0	500.20	469	95
Burke	20.8	542.17	484	32
Pender	25.6	518.18	405	84
Robeson	17.0	548.06	425	72
Wayne	24.0	525.95	461	49
McDowell	13.7	466.68	484	33
Pasquotank	34.6	554.07	448	52
Craven	33.9	620.00	510	19
Warren	30.0	487.03	397	86
Hyde	32.2	472.29	346	99
Davidson	11.1	529.89	483	36
Caswell	41.1	455.37	412	76
Granville	36.7	591.77	540	9
Tyrrell	38.8	528.14	395	87
Avery	14.5	517.82	383	94
Pamlico	21.8	444.08	337	100

N.C. Dept. of Commerce

**Chart 1C:
Recent North Carolina Sitings: Median Family Income**

County	Median Family Income 2000	State Rank (out of 100 counties)
Rowan	\$57,100	7
Greene	\$39,800	59
Montgomery	\$39,100	66
Nash	\$44,900	40
Anson	\$39,600	62
Burke	\$46,400	30
Pender	\$44,000	45
Robeson	\$34,000	85
Wayne	\$41,600	52
McDowell	\$41,300	54
Pasquotank	\$44,800	52
Craven	\$51,000	19
Warren	\$29,300	97
Hyde	\$30,300	95
Davidson	\$51,000	14
Caswell	\$40,900	55
Granville	\$48,100	26
Tyrrell	\$25,300	100
Avery	\$33,400	88
Pamlico	\$41,700	51

N.C. Dept. of Commerce

after a long-time local employer balked by telling the County Commissioners and the Department of Corrections that all of this employer's employees would quit and leave if a prison came to town. The bottom line is that the jobs are modest in numbers and salaries, but they are steady and clean.

Another impact of a prison siting for a community is new industries moving into town to supply the prison and increased revenue for existing businesses that will serve the needs of the prison. Thus the prison creates jobs indirectly and contributes to greater livelihood for local proprietors.

The rise of strip malls to accommodate the growth associated with the prison or the coup of a new Wal-Mart are both examples of commercial activity. New residential areas constructed to house employees of the prison also represent increased commercial activity.

What can a typical prison or correctional facility generate indirectly for a host community? Estimates of the economic impact on one county in late 1996 dollars of the demand pull on local industries look rosy. One of the prisons regularly generated: \$932/month of sales for a bread supplier; \$200-\$500/month to a local eye doctor; \$593/month to a coffee distributor; \$2,326/month for a produce supplier and \$1,937/month in local subcontracting. It also keeps a local plumbing supply store busy. A local tire company claims that the contract it has with three local prisons is responsible for 20% of its total sales (Raleigh News and Observer, 1996 p. A-3).

4) Tax Revenue:

Is the prison a revenue producer? To summarize the literature on revenues, tax revenues are meager at best from prison sitings (Lidman, 1988; Carlson, 1988; Thies, 1998 Sechcrest, 1992). Why? First of all, for state facilities, there is no property tax revenue generated. Even if the correctional facilities are private facilities, they may be located within a zone with a special tax designation and therefore do not generate taxes.

There are some modest gains in revenues from sales taxes that can be expected from a prison. An incoming local sales tax revenue stream occurs at the onset of the prison construction and this would be enhanced if building materials were purchased within the county. However, the percentage of required local purchases varies from site to site. The local community could solidify this benefit by negotiating a clause stating a guarantee of a percentage volume of contracting which must be local or a guarantee of a percentage of materials to be bought from local sources.

In some states, particularly where sitings are mandated, the state provides some resources to the community to offset the costs of preparing for the prison. This is called an impact fee. Regarding private prisons, another source of revenue would be profit taxes. Such is the case in Washington state. Finally, business and occupation taxes

do not apply in all jurisdictions; and in some places are available to cities but not to counties.

5) Quality of Life Concerns

The quality of life concerns include crime, in-migration of inmate families, the impacts from an increase in population and growth in general and changes in property value. There are some very negative perceptions about impacts of prison sitings that would adversely affect the host community, but generally are not borne out by reality. We examine some of these quality of life indicators below.

5a) *Environmental Impacts*

One of the ways in which prisons clearly outrank most industrial sitings is that prisons are clean environmentally. Although they do require an increase in the sewage and water capacity of a rural community, they do not pollute via effluents to the air or water.

5b) *Demographic Changes*

The fear is that huge droves of inmate families also will tend to have a derogatory effect on the town. This impact exists more as a perception than as a reality (Thies, 2000).

Ironically, one of the more subtle and little-noticed impacts is the benefit from increased population since inmates "count" for purposes of census calculations. These calculations directly affect the allocation of funds for government programs. In states where this is done, prison populations also count toward the share of state-collected, locally shared revenues and sales tax equalization. A recent report from City Project report finds that 64 out of 71 of New York's prisons are located in Republican districts, but hold as prisoners 80% Black and 70% from New York City. The City Project report finds that "The state's prison policies effectively transfer...public funds and electoral influence from low-income inner-city neighborhoods of color to white, rural upstate areas ⁶ (Gage, 2000 Lidman, 1988 p. 5).

5c) *Public Safety*

A major fear of communities, particularly those that have not hosted a prison, is that the crime rate will increase. For example the proposed private prison siting for federal prisoners in Hertford County elicited this concern from a nearby citizen: "We're about half a mile from the site. Our daughter will be 16 in June. I'm going to be worried

about her coming back and forth by the place every day" (Rawlins, 1999). Although this perception is supported by one study by Lidman, (Lidman, 1988 p. 5), there are others which do not find a definite trend (Thies, 1998; Hoyman, 1999; Abrams and Lyons, 1987; and Ammons, 1992).

5d) *Property Values*

Another dominant myth about prison sitings is that they will bring down the real estate values of the private homes in the same jurisdiction. The best constructed studies are by Lidman⁶ and Abrams and Lyon. It would appear that this is not generally true. In some cases it may even raise the property values. In his study of several Washington state prison sitings matched prison counties with comparable counties having no prison, Lidman found that between 1970 and 1987 the property values and retail sales grew at a comparable rate after the advent of the prison to the host communities (Lidman, 1988:5; Abrams and Lyons, 1987).

6) Other Economic Development Opportunities

In determining the attractiveness of the prison opportunity, counties will evaluate this option with respect to any other potentially available economic development strategies. If the community needs jobs but has other alternatives, such as tax-yielding private industry options, there will likely be less enthusiasm toward a prison. Consider the case of the Polk Youth Facility for example.

Polk Youth Correctional Center was re-sited in Butner, NC (Granville County) in 1997. This occurred after almost ten years of protest over the original prison's siting in Raleigh detracting from the aesthetics of the surroundings and a federal lawsuit in 1992 which addressed overcrowding issues and alleged cruel and unusual punishment routinely taking place at the facility. As a result of the lawsuit, and as part of a state corrections capital bond issue, the facility was scheduled for expansion from a capacity of approximately 350 inmates to over 1,000.

Raleigh residents vehemently opposed the expansion of the facility on the same land that it originally occupied. Primary reasons cited include the proximity of the facility to the North Carolina Museum of Art, the construction of several residential subdivisions in the neighborhood surrounding the prison, and the visual prominence of the

facility when first approaching the city of Raleigh (Neff 1993b). In contrast, nearby Johnston County and Granville County were both interested in obtaining the prison for economic development purposes. During the re-siting phase, Selma mayor (Johnston County) Jay Creech was quoted as saying, "It's not so much we want another prison. It's that we want the jobs," ... "Those are recession-proof jobs" (Neff, 1993a).

7) Current economic status of the county

A high unemployment rate or a recent downturn in the local economy due to a plant closing will cause the prison to be viewed more favorably. A town with a burgeoning growth rate will not be eager to define the prison as an economic development trophy, which is why many urban areas find prisons unattractive.

As stated earlier, prisons provide some indirect benefits in the form of jobs and revenue to suppliers. The economic multiplier in the prison industry is 2.8 according to Lidman. This author found no other definitive studies of how much commercial activity an average prison generates.

8) Demographic factors of the community

Elderly, retirement and tourist communities, even in rural areas are the most hostile to prisons. A NIMBYISM reaction is common in these locales.

9) State institutional siting practices

A variable that has not been looked at carefully in other research is the state's siting practices. These practices can make a significant difference in how receptive the potential host community is to a prison. Procedures range from state-mandated decisions to competitive bidding wars. A typology of siting models will be discussed in the next section.

Siting Models

Now that we have looked at the factors determining how a community will perceive the impacts, we can examine the different models of siting. There are no studies measuring precisely what

difference the model makes in evaluating the prison as perceived economic development success. However, there was one excellent survey describing different states' siting criteria by Ammons. Ammons, in his study of 39 states and their siting criteria, (Ammons, 1992) categorizes all the states' siting approaches into four models: 1) no selection criteria; 2) state-imposed siting; 3) state "promotion" of sites; and 4) overt local competition for sites. This author adds a fifth model, dubbed the "state give-away model". This moniker refers to the enticements and incentives that some governments provide to encourage a community to accept a prison. Here is a brief definition of each of the siting models:

1) **No selection:** States with no selection criteria appear to prefer remodeling existing facilities. Examples are states like Iowa and Minnesota.

2) **State-Imposed:** In this model, states such as Delaware, target certain regions and try to court the communities with the prison opportunity. Michigan is a textbook example of state-imposed siting. Working from a comprehensive plan, the state identifies a broad geographic region and type of facility and then invites the county commissioners participate on the advisory board. Although the State endeavors to pick a hospitable location, if necessary it will place a prison even over community opposition. The Michigan Department of Corrections even has the statutory power to override local zoning ordinances.

3) **State-Promoted:** This is the process by which the state corrections authority "sells" the idea of a prison to hostile or neutral counties. Scholars differ as to who is in the driver's seat in this process—the legislature or the corrections authority. Control issues notwithstanding, the corrections authority acts as a broker between the state (or corrections system) and the community. The state of California has an eight-page brochure promoting the idea of prison as a good neighbor. In very recent years, N.C. has used the same approach coupled with word of mouth from counties with successful prison siting experiences.

4) **Local Competition:** Under this model, the counties vie with each other so fiercely that the state may even benefit from some incentives as localities set out to distinguish themselves from the competition. The author refers to this loosely as the Midwest model since rural communities in Illinois and Missouri have recently been galloping to the state legislature to compete for the "prize of the prison". It is quite possible,

even probable, for the state to benefit more than the local community under this model.

5) **State Give-Away:** (*not part of Ammons typology) As stated before, the author coined this phrase to describe instances when the state itself provides inducements to potential sites. If there are no host communities interested, a state must provide incentives unless, like Michigan it has legislative power to mandate a siting. For instance, recently the state of Vermont could not find a willing host in the area of the state where it needed to site a prison. The state ended up offering to build a new community center in the town that finally accepted the prison.

**Chart 2:
Siting Models and Implications**

Model	Cost	Benefits	Benefits Whom	Competition level
Model I retrofit	Low – use existing site	Sales tax, employment	Community, state	Quiet
Model II state imposed	Medium – Public opinion	Sales tax, employment	State	Quiet – usually erupts later
Model III state promoted	Low	Sales tax, employment	Community, state	Quiet
Model IV local competition	High – drives cost of admission up for competitors	Sales tax, employment	State	Controversial
Model V state give away	Low	Sales tax, employment	Community, state	Quiet

There are some implications of these different models captured in Chart 2 above. These implications concern the costs and benefits to the community (columns 2 and 3), to whom do the benefits accrue - the state or the community (column 4), and the amount of controversy or quietness which accompanies the siting (column 5). From the community's point of view, it appears as if the Local Competition model (Model IV) is the most expensive. The economics of bidding wars for other industrial sitings have shown that the community raises its own price of admission when it overtly competes with another siting (Thomas, 1997; Hoyman, 1999; and Milward and Newman, 1988). The price of admission for the local community definitely goes up for each

added actor. The county may have to provide incentives to attract the prison. For example in states where the county is not expected to donate the land, doing so may place the county in a favorable position relative to other competitors. As a result, the local competition model favors the state over the local community.

**THE NORTH CAROLINA EXPERIENCE
SOME GENERAL SITING REQUIREMENTS
FOR N.C. PRISONS⁷:**

Land	The host county must provide the land, a square plot of at least 125 acres is desired. (A county may incur significant costs to acquire the land, unless it already owns a viable plot or other state-owned land is available at no cost.) The land should have a buffer zone with trees.
Access	Public highway access to the site appropriate for use by large buses and tractor trailers.
Utilities	Availability of adequate water and wastewater capacity to the site boundary to support the long-term needs of the correctional facility.
Services	Regional proximity of the site to emergency medical and fire prevention services.
Public Opinion	Community support for the construction of a correctional facility on a specific site.

In contrast, the state give-away model, Model V, indicates a different balance of power; favoring the community over the state. Looking at the costs to the community, there are none while the benefits to the community are significant and the amount of community leverage is significant. The state-mandated model (Model II) does just the reverse. Finally, within the state-promoted model, Model III, it makes a difference whether the bureaucracy dominates or the legislature dominates. If the legislature dominates, the process may become more public and much more overt and more competitive. If the bureaucracy dominates, the process tends to be quieter and more controlled.

Using the preceding discussion of typical prison impacts, community perceptions and siting characteristics as a basis; we now

turn our attention to the specific case of North Carolina prison sitings over the past two decades.

Background: Institutional Context

There were three major political or institutional jolts that significantly impacted the North Carolina criminal justice environment in the past decade. First, there was an early 1990's study of government inefficiency compiled by the Government Performance Audit Committee, a panel of legislative leaders and private citizens. This committee reviewed many aspects of government, including Department of Corrections, Division of Motor Vehicles, and Commerce and Revenue Departments with a goal of closing down smaller local facilities for purposes of saving money and using economies of scale to create larger, regional operations. The committee recommended closing 30 prisons with an advertised savings of \$275 million dollars (Krueger and Dew, 1992). The original legislative enthusiasm waned as local legislators voiced opposition to prisons in their district being closed (Krueger and Dew, 1992) since this would have devastating unemployment impacts on many communities. Nonetheless, as a result of this report, there were prison closings in Granville, Halifax, Rockingham, Vance and Washington Counties. Senator Frank Ballance took action as the legislature began to consider closing these facilities. He, in effect, advocated for one of the new prison sitings in Warren County in exchange for the closing of the other five (<http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/prisons/warren.htm>). In 1997, Warren County was awarded one of the new prisons being constructed. A top-level NC DOC official estimates that over 90% of the jobs lost in the closings were recouped through the new Warren County facility.

The second situation resulted from two lawsuits filed against the state in 1992 for over-crowding at Polk Youth Facility and one for cruel and unusual punishment at the same prison. In order to settle the lawsuit, the state agreed to address the overcrowding issues and has substantially increased the number of beds and facilities dedicated to housing youth offenders in the state.

Finally, changes in the mandatory sentencing laws enacted in North Carolina within the past decade have had a direct impact on the increased capacity needs of the state prison system and have driven the current construction boom.

These institutional developments provide the context for the unique North Carolina situation of spurts of prison construction interspersed with prison closings. This is not an entirely typical occurrence in the prison industry. While increased capacity needs are being experienced by jurisdictions across the nation, the uniqueness of the North Carolina experience comes with the prison closings. After all, one of the attractions of prisons cited above is that they "never go out of business." It is worth saying that the move to "super prisons" and new sitings in rural communities is very much a national move.

Analysis of Data on North Carolina Recent Prison Siting History

Now that the siting models have been introduced and the unique features of the North Carolina experience have been mentioned, we can evaluate the North Carolina experience in the context of the previous discussion. In this section we will ask the following two questions: Is the amount of competition in North Carolina increasing over time similar to the Midwest experience, consistent with the open competition/local competition model? Second, what siting model (if any) does North Carolina most closely approximate?

I. Does North Carolina follow the Local Competition/Openly Competitive Model, based on the different eras of prison construction and the level of competition in each era?

The first noteworthy fact is that based on a careful assessment of the data and media accounts of individual North Carolina prison sitings, the author determined that the most appropriate characterization of North Carolina counties seeking prisons is not competitors at all, but "interested parties". Why? Other interested counties went out of their way to "shirk" open competition, preferring to "wait in line". This was exemplified over and over in the "gentle" manner of each of the "competitor" counties, as they would signal the Department of Corrections of their interest and then wait in line for the next available siting. This ritual occurred with very few exceptions. A definite pattern of counties waiting for their turn and respecting other localities interests was established and maintained throughout the past decade. At first glance there appears to be no evidence that N.C. communities are engaged in the overt competition such as has characterized Illinois and Missouri prison sitings of late with contests in the legislative committee.

What about the number of competitors? Has it been increasing? There is no simple answer. There is certainly not a monotonic movement from an average of one competitor to two competitors to three competitors, and so on over time.

How can we characterize the process of siting in N.C. regarding the amount of competition? The sitings tend to follow a pattern of "sequential competitors" inasmuch as the Department of Corrections might eliminate one because it did not meet the siting requirements. Then, the Department of Corrections would provide the "losing" county with one of the next available prisons. Therefore the author terms the situation "managed competition". It was not the case that two potential host communities are pitted against one another, driving up the cost of entry for each county due to a bidding war.

However, notwithstanding the lack of a monotonic trend, the data do appear to fall into three eras as can be seen in Chart 3: Recent North Carolina Prison Sittings defined by the existence or lack of other interested counties for each prison sited. A "yes" or "no" indicates the presence of other interested parties for each siting. The null hypothesis regarding amount of competition is that there would be no difference across time in the presence (or lack) of interested parties - that prisons once shunned, would continue to be shunned. Hypothesis I is that there would be an increase in number of interested parties or competitors beginning in the late 1980's and reaching a crescendo in the 1990's. If that were the case, there would be evidence for the open competition or local competition model being used in N.C.

During the first era, from 1979 to 1996, there were almost exclusively no other interested parties. The one site with competition (Foothills in 1994) was a case in which the competitor was still accommodated later inasmuch as McDowell received a prison in 1995. The next era consists simply of prisons sited in 1997. During this time there was an even dispersion of "yes" and "no" responses, indicating a mixed picture. Finally during the third era, 1998 to 2000, every siting had at least one other interested party.

The general trend that the author finds important here is that the presence of competition (or other interested parties) increases across the three time periods. Is it the overt competition that characterized the head-to-head confrontations in some state legislatures, with some

**Chart 3A:
Prison Sitings in North Carolina 1979 to Present**

Year of Completion	Name of Prison	County/City
1979	Piedmont Correctional	Rowan/Salisbury
1983	Eastern Correctional	Greene/Maury
1983	Southern Correctional	Montgomery/Troy
1993	Nash	Nash/Nashville
1993	Brown Creek	Anson/Polkton
1994	Foothills	Burke/Morgantown
1994	Pender	Pender/Burgaw
1994	Lumberton	Robeson/Lumberton
1994	Neuse	Wayne/Goldsboro
Year of Completion	Name of Prison	County/City
1995	Marion	McDowell/Marion
1996	Pasquotank	Pasquotank Elizabeth City
1997	Craven	Craven/Vanceboro
1997	Warren	Warren/Manson
Year of Completion	Name of Prison	County/City
1997	Hyde	Hyde/Swans Quarter
1997	Piedmont (Women's)	Davidson/Lexington
1997	Dan River	Caswell/Yanceyville
1997	Polk (Youth)	Granville/Butner
1998	Tyrrell Work Farm	Tyrrell/Creswell
1998	Mitchell-Avery	Avery/Spruce Pine
1998	*Mountain View	Avery/Spruce Pine
	*Pamlico	Pamlico/Bayboro

Chart 3A (continued): Prison Sitings in North Carolina 1979 to Present		
Sitings in Progress		
	Scotland	
	Anson	
	Alexander	
	Hertford	
Rejections		
1980's	Cabarrus County	
late 80's	Transylvania County	
	Cherokee County	
	Martin County	

* privately owned prisons

Source: NC Dept. of Corrections

communities going to great lengths to win the favor of decision-makers? No. The competition in North Carolina appears to be of a more controlled, less desperate nature. This leads the authors to characterize North Carolina as participating in the rural prison boom, but on its' own terms.

**Chart 3B:
Prison Sitings in N.C. 1979 to Present**

Name of Prison	Security Level	No. of Employees	Mean Salary
Piedmont Correctional	medium		
Eastern Correctional	close		
Southern Correctional	close		
Nash	close	293	27389
Brown Creek	medium	316	26086
Foothills	close	381	27909
Pender	medium	307	26763
Lumberton	medium	254	26475
Neuse	minimum	259	27138
Marion	close	357	26500
Pasquotank	close	384	26052
Craven	medium	324	26627
Warren	medium	307	26614
Hyde	medium	235	25120
Piedmont (Women's)	minimum	41	26054
Dan River	minimum	176	26534
Polk (Youth)	close	547	26409
Tyrrell Prison Work Farm	minimum	163	26341
Mitchell-Avery	medium	320	26340
*Mountain View	medium	95	25866
*Pamlico	medium	143	25472
Sitings in Progress			
Scotland		42	28799
Anson		67	26967
Alexander		0	0
Hertford			
Source: N.C. Dept. of Corrections			

Chart 3C: Prison Sitings in North Carolina 1979 to Present - Other Interested Parties				
Name of Prison	Yes- No	Name of Other County or City	Who Rejected (DOC or did competitor drop out)	Why Rejected?
Piedmont Correctional	No			
Eastern Correctional	No			
Southern Correctional	No			
Nash	No			
Brown Creek	No			
Foothills	Yes	Mc Dowell	DOC reject	unacceptable site
Pender	No			
Lumberton	No			
Neuse	No			
Marion	No			
Pasquotank	No	Hyde	Dropped out	deferred to Pasquotank and bid for Hyde
Craven	Yes	Pitt, Pamlico		Pamlico original site unacceptable (swampland), Bayboro site not able to sustain high traffic levels
Warren	No			
Hyde	Yes	Intra-county		County Commissioners decided

Chart 3C (continued): Prison Sitings in North Carolina 1979 to Present - Other Interested Parties				
Name of Prison	Yes- No	Name of Other County or City	Who Rejected (DOC or did competitor drop out)	Why Rejected?
Piedmont (Women's)	No			
Dan River	No			
Polk (Youth)	Yes	Wake, Johnston	Dropped out	Wake -not interested in keeping prison, Johnston - couldn't agree on price of land
Tyrrell Prison Work Farm	Yes	Martin	Dropped out	Industrial opposition
Mitchell-Avery	Yes	Mitchell, McDowell, Buncombe, Yancey, Watauga		Legislative (political) siting
*Mountain View	Yes	Mitchell, McDowell, Buncombe, Yancey, Watauga, Montgomery		Private corporation controlled selection
*Pamlico	Yes	Currituck, Pasquotank		Private corporation controlled selection
Sitings in Progress				
Scotland	No			

Chart 3C (continued): Prison Sitings in North Carolina 1979 to Present - Other Interested Parties				
Anson	No			
Name of Prison	Yes- No	Name of Other County or City	Who Rejected (DOC or did competitor drop out)	Why Rejected?
Alexander	Yes	Catawba, Iredell, Yadkin		DOC chose Alexander which was first choice from the inception
Hertford	No			

Source: North Carolina Dept. of Corrections

II. What Prison Siting Model Does North Carolina Represent?

As alluded to in the previous section, the North Carolina sitings illustrated a quiet, take turns, "I'll wait in line" behavior. For instance, if an interested community became aware of existing negotiations between another county and the NC DOC, it would not enter the fray and compete against the first county. If it were interested in a site, the second county would "signal" the N.C. Department of Corrections acknowledging interest and effectively earning a place "in line" for a subsequent siting. In the process North Carolina avoids the overt, often heated and contentious competition typical of the siting process in such states as Illinois and Missouri.

So far, the impression is that of the quiet, bureaucratic (state-promoted) model. However, there is intermittent legislative input. The legislative interests do not dominate the process as in other states. In North Carolina, legislators entered the process under various circumstances to advocate the position of their constituencies. This happened only a handful of times in two decades of prison sitings. As discussed previously, Senator Frank Ballance facilitated the Warren Correctional Facility siting. Similarly, State Representative Beverly Purdue, who represented Pamlico and Craven Counties, lobbied for Craven County to get a prison siting once Pamlico County did not work

out as a site. In another instance, one state representative was instrumental in bringing a prison to Robeson County by making certain that plans for a road that had been proposed plans for a certain location were changed to accommodate the needs of the prison. Finally, the targetting of certain areas such as Hyde, Pasquotank (Elizabeth) and Tyrrell sites by Senator Marc Basnight are examples of the legislative intervention on behalf of certain sites which punctuate the otherwise quiet bureaucratic siting process. In conclusion, although the NC DOC controls the siting process, the agency is very responsive to siting suggestions by state representatives and state senators.

We now compare the North Carolina experience against the five models of siting discussed previously. Regarding Model I, clearly North Carolina has general siting criteria (described above), although they are interpreted flexibly and has undertaken extensive new prison construction projects, so it does not fit Model I. In terms of Model II, it appears that North Carolina is Department of Corrections-centered but it certainly is not Department of Corrections imposed, in the way that the state of Michigan operates. Therefore, it does not meet Model II. North Carolina also does not meet Model III, Open Competition, which drives the communities to an ever-increasing number of overt competitors. In fact, the only case in which North Carolina sends out an open bid type of solicitation via a Request for Proposal is when private correctional facilities are being placed in the state. In that case the state must select the lowest bidder.⁹ The solicitations are public in that case. Even in the case of private prisons, it should be noted that the State of North Carolina required the two prisons be located on either side of Interstate 220 to allocate the economic benefit east and west of the state.¹⁰

Model IV, the state-promoted model, is one in which the state coaxes or cajoles sitings, based on economic development benefits. This is the model that North Carolina has followed in recent years. There has been a promotional drive emphasizing economic development benefits and emphasizing the prison as good neighbor. NC Assistant Secretary for Prison Construction, Lynn Phillips, is quoted in *Corrections Today*, "part of our operating philosophy is that we want to be a good neighbor. We have yet to force a prison in any area that didn't want it" (Gaseau, 1999). Therefore, the pattern of North Carolina's prison siting most closely approximates the Department of Corrections-promoted model. The author characterizes the competition that does occur as managed competition.

The state-promoted model has several obvious advantages. It puts the Department of Corrections in the driver's seat. If there is something flawed about the site that a particular county is proposing, the Department of Corrections can still quietly turn down the bidder without a great loss of face for the county and without the politicization that characterizes the open-competition model. One of the hallmarks of the model as it is executed in N.C. is that prisons are defined and promoted as economic development enterprises to the counties. The stories of the recent sitings in Hyde and Tyrrell Counties provide us with examples of this process of framing of the issue of prison as economic development and are discussed below.

In addition, the host counties have already reached a certain threshold of enthusiasm and that means that the chance of the match between county and prison is greater. In North Carolina, the enthusiasm of the county is often based on having received positive feedback from another county. (In North Carolina, there are sitings in 59 of the 100 counties.)

Another more neutral implication of this model is that this model allows the bureaucracy to control events more than the state legislature or the governor. Does this mean there was no gubernatorial or legislative intervention in North Carolina? No. As described in the cases below, there are instances of legislators interjecting themselves into the decision-making process.

The Case of Hyde Correctional Center, 1997

Hyde Correctional Center was sited as a concerted effort to bring economic development to economically depressed localities in North Carolina. The state expended almost \$6M in excess of the budgeted amount for the facility in order to ensure that the prison was successfully sited in this area. Many criticized the extent to which the state went to locate the facility in Hyde County, calling into question the quality of the land on which the site was built. (A significant amount of the cost overrun was spent upgrading the land on which the prison was built.) However, there is no debate about the need for stable economic sources of jobs and incomes in this county. The Raleigh News and Observer cited the following statistics for Hyde County as of 1997: More than half of Hyde residents receive public assistance. One-third of the children live at or below the poverty line. Only three of North

Carolina's 100 counties are poorer. In addition, Hyde County's unemployment rate was 11.6 percent in March 1997, compared with 3.5 percent for the state. Becoming the county's largest employer, the prison will provide 227 jobs and an annual payroll of \$6.6 million.

State Senator Marc Basnight advocated aggressively for Hyde County to get this site and also was instrumental in attracting two more prisons for the area during this time period, Pasquotank Correctional in Elizabeth and Tyrrell Prison Work Farm in Tyrrell County. The three prisons provided 230, 437 and 143 jobs respectively to local residents (Neff, 1995; Allegood, 1997).

The Case of Tyrrell Prison Work Farm, 1998

When another interested county (Martin County) dropped out of the picture for this prison due to concerns over the potential loss of a major employer because of safety concerns voiced by its' employees, Tyrrell County stepped in. In 1994, Tyrrell County had North Carolina's highest unemployment rate at 12.8 percent. As with the Hyde facility discussed previously, the work farm represents Tyrrell County's largest employer, accounting for almost 20 percent of the work force. With an annual payroll of \$4.1M and starting pay for correctional officers around \$20,000 per year, the prison provides jobs that increase the standard of living (the starting wage is significantly higher than the county's average annual wage) and promote stability in a county largely dependent on seasonal industries (News and Observer, 1994; News and Observer, 1996).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE N.C. EXPERIENCE

Based on the N.C. experience, a state's siting practices can either pre-dispose a community toward a prison siting or drive it away. This paper revealed the following about the state-promoted model as it was used in N.C.

- 1) The way the model was used in N.C. it did involve intermittent intervention by the legislature and the Governor.
- 2) This model avoids the high costs to the community of an open bidding war for prisons via the press and state legislatures. The bidding wars have the effect of raising the cost to the community as each community is inclined toward offering incentives.

- 3) Because of the state promotion model, there were not very many communities that overtly rejected a prison. However, the few that did are listed at the bottom of Chart 3.
- 4) There was considerable word of mouth promotion from one county to another and a considerable amount of enthusiasm regarding the economic development aspects of prison sitings.

CONCLUSION

North Carolina has used its need for increased prison capacity to help facilitate economic growth in poor, rural communities. This has been accomplished via a fairly quiet and systematic prison siting process, characterized as the “prisons are good neighbors” policy. This policy depends largely on a county’s self-identification of interest in and qualification for obtaining a prison site. The feared stigmas associated with the flourishing of “prison towns” have not materialized, nor have the oft-cited concerns of increased crime, lowered property values, and overall decrease in quality of life.

Why have the counties with prisons tended to view them as economic development trophies? The main reason rests in the associated jobs. The prison sitings in recent years have tended to go to counties without many other economic development opportunities. Another reason is that the sitings are not forced. This more quiet bureaucratic model means there are no open bidding wars that leave communities robbed of resources since they “gave away the store”. Third, the counties are already favorably disposed; they self-nominate. This may be due in part with the parallel learning that occurs via county commissioner associations and city-managers meetings. These communities have found a vehicle for economic stability that provides county-wide benefits in the form of employment opportunities and a steady consumption of local goods and services.

While no two locales will report exactly the same results of having a prison in its community, some general observations can be drawn based on N.C. data. Based on contextual case study information and economic trend data, it appears that prisons have been and continue to contribute positively to the economic status of rural North

Carolina communities that pursue this vehicle as an economic development strategy. Second, the amount of overt competition does not seem to have surfaced and this benefits counties by not raising the price of admission. Although there is an increasing amount of competition, it is "managed competition", handled by the Department of Corrections on a "taking turns basis". Third, the siting model of state promotion, modified by political intervention intermittently is a good one inasmuch as it serves the interests of the state and the host counties. Based on the preceding discussions, it appears that North Carolina is maximizing its' benefits of the national rural prison boom while minimizing the costs as defined by public sentiment and political fallout.

Notes

1. The author wishes to acknowledge Lynn Phillips, Assistant Secretary for Construction, NC Department of Corrections, Kendra P. Alexander, M.P.A. Program (UNC) and Jim Klingler, M.P.A. Program (UNC) for their assistance in this research.
2. According to a federal survey there had been 390 prisons built in rural and small towns settings in the U.S. as of 1991. (Larner, 1995). This number has been burgeoning ever since as open spaces for prisons elsewhere become scarce and as rural communities seek out the jobs that prison sitings bring. It is estimated that new non-metropolitan prisons represent 60% of the total, whereas non-metropolitan areas have only 20% of the population as of 1993. Further some rural counties are the site of multiple prisons and huge prisons. For example, Walker County and Anderson County (Texas) and Kings County, California now house 36,000 prisoners, with 11,000 persons needed to guard them. (Beale; Johnson and Beale, 1998)
3. This is the average range for North Carolina prisons, provided by the N.C. Dept of Corrections.
4. The Chart is available by contacting the author.
5. Recently, there were concerns along similar lines for a North Carolina prison proposed in Hyde County. The NC DOC requested that the State Department of Commerce conduct a

study regarding the compatibility of the workforce in Hyde County with that needed for the prison. The report concluded that there existed a large enough qualified applicant pool and Hyde subsequently received a prison.

6. The authors would like to acknowledge Jim Klinger, MPA program at UNC for bringing this article in Nation by Beverly Gage to their attention. To illustrate, 71,000 of New York's prisoners serve time in upstate New York, in Republican strongholds. More than 80% are Black or Latino and 70% come from New York City. A recent report from City Project finds that 64 out of New York's 71 prisons are located in Republican districts.
7. Lidman, in his study of several Washington state prison sitings, matched prison counties with comparable counties having no prison and found comparable growth in both the counties with prisons and those not having a site.
8. The Chart is available by contacting the author.
9. The terms are those required in N.C. for a siting.
10. Information provided by the N.C. Department of Corrections, interview with Lynn Phillips.
11. Across the country there has been a vast experiment going on with the privatization of prisons (Schicor; Yeoman, 2000). As one can tell from Chart 3, N.C. does not have much experience with this private prison movement. There are only two private prisons currently, Mountain View constructed in 1998 located in Spruce Pine, Avery County, and Pamlico Correctional in Bayboro, Pamlico County, which opened in 1998. In 1999, the state Department of Corrections took over operations of these private prisons and the employees are now considered state employees. Their ownership remains private and the state leases the facilities from CCA.

As part of a District of Columbia Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997, Lorton Correctional Facility is closing. Lorton is a federal prison which houses D.C. prisoners although it is currently located in Virginia.

Wackenhut Corporation, will be operating a federal prison in Hertford County, North Carolina that will be used to house displaced Lorton inmates.

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