

Unbelievable horrors



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Skinnier Nikkei Abstract In recent years, the lawmakers and criminal Justice experts have conveyed alarm regarding the growing prison population in elder prisons, along with the crumbling prison structures housing these inmates. While a majority of individuals agree this issue warrants immediate attention, the concurrence diminishes about how to attack this problem.

A review of decisions set into place with laws, it has become clear that monetary confinements of elder prisons have become invisible barriers to the bargaining table. The paper compares the cost of renovating elder prisons to the costs of creating new facilities. This autopsy of decisions delves into the financial aspects of closing down older structures and whether or not it was cost beneficial. The numerous facilities coming into the " over-the-hill" age require an extensive examination to prevent monetary waste in the future. A Review of Decisions The dark side of humanity has existed for millennia.

Some would contend that murder is the darkest, vial atrocity blanketing humanity. From the first documented Biblical fratricide involving Cain and Able, to recent homicides plaguing the media outlets, mankind has struggled to prevent these unbelievable horrors and reprimand the convicted. Society did not want these individuals roaming freely, as their unspeakable crimes invoked fear in the mind of every law-abiding citizen. Thus, structures were erected to cage the criminals and further prevent crimes against humanity. As time went on, more and more structures were needed to house the influx of criminals.

Existing facilities were running beyond capacity and some were in need of dire repair. The question put forth was, " Is it financially practical to renovate existing structures or to build entirely new ones? " Additional costs factors, such as food, clothing, healthcare, and educational programs, were itemized and incorporated into that equation. Converting older prisons with substantial monetary confinements may and may not be the best practical solution. Looking into the closure of the Eastern State Penitentiary the following questions can be answered: 1 .

Was it practical to close the Eastern State Penitentiary? 2. Is it financially beneficial to re-open the Eastern State Penitentiary? 3. Why build new facilities? 4. What are the plans for abandoned U. S. Prisons? Understanding the true reason for this prison closure could answer future questions regarding taking a facility out of operation. Whether it is a court-ordered ruling due to cruel and unusual punishment or asbestos issues creating a health concern, it is necessary to truly evaluate the closure and expose monetary waste. Incarceration as a form of punishment was first documented in the 1st millennium BC in the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Suspected or guilty criminals awaited their death sentence or command to become a slave in underground facilities labeled dungeons. The Ancient Romans adopted even harsher methods of incarceration by building prisons exclusively underground with tight walkways and cells in pitch darkness. (Prison History. N. D.). Time gave way to incarceration reform and the world's first true prison, the Eastern State Penitentiary, was opened in 1829.

Abandoning corporal punishment and harsh treatment of the inmates, the Eastern State Penitentiary was designed with complete and solitary confinement in mind to help the criminal move to reflection and change their criminal ways. Was it practical to close the Eastern State Penitentiary?

Situated on 11 acres near downtown Philadelphia, PA, the Eastern State Penitentiary was considered the most expensive American building during the sass's and soon became the most famous prison in the world.

The design, o'clock wings radiating outward from a central rotunda, allowed each o'clock with " central heat, running water, a flush toilet, and a skylight. " Additionally, each o'clock had an adjacent " private out door exercise yard contained by a 10-foot high wall. (U. S. History. Org. N. D.). Originally built to hold 300 inmates, by the sass's, it was forced to house over 2, 000. Due to the costs of the inflated prison population, the subsequent cells, even those built underground, did not have skylights, lighting, or flushing toilets.

By the sass's, over 130 years after it was erected, the Eastern State Penitentiary was outdated and in need of extensive repairs. The neo-Gothic exterior has weathered the tests of time; however, the electrical and mechanical systems inside of the prison walls were deteriorating. The monetary resources needed to ring the structure back to its momentum were too vast and in 1971, the state of Pennsylvania closed the doors to the once famous prison. (Woodman, 2008). Is it financially beneficial to re-open the Eastern State Penitentiary?

The city of Philadelphia, PA acquired the title to the Eastern State Penitentiary for \$400, 000 in 1984. Plans for redevelopment of the site were

halted by pleas to then-Mayor Goode and all proposals were rejected for commercial use. In 1988, the first limited tours were given at the abandoned prison. The Pew Charitable Trusts held fundraisers to obtain financial resources for the preservation of the National Historic Landmark. These efforts began in 1991. (Easterner. Org, n. D.) The trickle of money into the preservation and restoration of the prison filtered in at a snail's pace.

With the help of another fundraiser, the Eastern State raised over \$5 million dollars in 2009. According to Annie Major, author of " Do We Really Still Need the Eastern State Penitentiary? ", states \$2 million dollars of the \$5 million was spent " to conserve the prison synagogue, the Brillion millions, the print-shop roof, ND sections of the floor, perimeter wall and lights. " (Major, 2011). (One of the reasons the prison closed was due to the electrical systems needing repair. She expresses concern with the constant money pit of renovations, just to keep the prison alive for the sake of tours. She feels at this rate, " the Eastern State could be a century-long, multi-million dollar project; one that will leave in our midst a fully restored, inoperative 19th-century prison. " The plan is not to re-build the prison but the end goal is to keep it in a " maintainable" ruin. According to the website, Radiochemical. Mom, the prison is a " safe place to be since it is so old it has no lead paint or asbestos. " (Radiochemical. Com, n. D.).

Imagining the repairs that were completed with \$2 million dollars, it isn't difficult to figure out that the costs of bringing the prison back to a full-scale operational facility would take less monetary resources than building a completely new prison. With the absence of asbestos and lead, thereby depleting the need for even more financial resources, bringing the prison

back to handle over-crowding in other locations may not take as much money as once suspected. However, that isn't what is currently planned for the state of Pennsylvania. Why build new facilities?

The current Governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Corbett, and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Went have allocated \$400 million dollars on two 4, 100-bed facilities and construction has already begun. The elder prison these two are replacing, Aggregated, had accepted the inmates from Eastern State. Governor Corbett and Secretary Wendell will not release the figures it would take to renovate Aggregated, only stating that the state of Pennsylvania will " save money by alluding more efficient facilities. " (Decelerate PA, n. D.). The monetary costs of renovating the Eastern State Penitentiary has also been withheld.

In the sass's, when the decision was made to close the structure, the future prison population was unforeseen. Although, based on Eastern State's experience with over-crowding, officials at that time knew there would not be enough space to house the influx of inmates. Yet, looking into the possibility of turning the Eastern State Penitentiary into a " super-Max" prison or a facility house only those on Pennsylvania death row would have been reviewed. The Eastern State prison could also have been used to house only those individuals for short-term prison sentences or the most violent, repeat offenders the state of Pennsylvania has witnessed.

Now, there are two existing structures that could very well be renovated at a fraction of the costs of two new facilities. One is still in operation and the other is only open for public tours. Factor in the yearly operating costs

statewide of all Pennsylvania prisons, there is a need to drastically curb waste and prevent unnecessary correctional structures. The fiscal year of 2010 brought about a \$1.6 billion dollar price tag for Pennsylvania prison expenditures. 22% of this figure was outside of the normal prisons operating costs. (Vera. Org, 2012).

The average cost, per year, to house over 48,000 inmates was \$42,339 per inmate. Adding to the \$1.6 billion dollars is the \$400 million for two new facilities, thereby costing the average taxpayer over \$3,000. (Vera. Org, 2012). Looking at other ways to significantly decrease the burdens placed on the taxpayers by housing, feeding, educating, and reforming the ballooning prison population, there needs to be a more thorough examination into allocating millions of dollars for new prisons instead of renovating existing structures. What are the plans for abandoned U. S. Prisons?

Numerous prison facilities nationwide have been closed and/or abandoned in favor of more modern and spacious correctional facilities. Some of these locations have turned into utter wastelands. Take for instance, the Old Essex County Prison in Newark, N. J. As a testament to time, the unabated decay has turned into a haven of drug addicts finding refuge in the old prison cells. Condemning the property will not prevent serious injury or death and its negligence is far too severe to be restored structurally. Another location that sits idle is the former Missouri State Penitentiary.

This prison opened its doors in 1831 and was fully operational for 168 years. (Longer than the Eastern State Penitentiary.) It finally closed its doors in 2004. The monetary confinements by the state prevented any type of

serious renovations and public tours began in 2006. (As of 01 October 2013, the public tours have been suspended due to a site assessment finding mold in sections of the prison.) Due to the state of Missouri losing the title to the property and a dwindling economy, the future looks very bleak for " the bloodiest 47 acres west of the Mississippi. Lastly, the West Virginia State Penitentiary in Mountainside, W. V. Opened for operations 1876. Through its history, the West Virginia State Penitentiary made the United States Department of Corrections Top Ten Most Violent Correctional Facilities. In 1986, the West Virginia State Supreme Court ruled that the ex. foots cells were deemed cruel and unusual punishment. 9 years later, in 1995, the West Virginia State Penitentiary closed its doors for good. Today, public tours of the facility are the only operations occurring at this once notorious prison.

As structures age and the prison population continues to increase, more and more facilities are being ushered in to deal with this revolving door off problem. Left in the wake are structurally sound buildings with very little to no use to the state or the cities they sit in. Other than daily public tours and haunted houses every Halloween, these buildings could have potential to save the taxpayers of the state millions of dollars annually. Instead of wasteful spending to build new facilities, existing ones an be renovated to comply with current federal and state laws at half the cost.