So the PRISON is built and the prisoners arrive and the town waits to see what it will become. “It flatly introduces money and the desire for profit into the imprisonment policy debate, because you’ve got an entity in Wisconsin, a private entity, with a strong financial interest in keeping people in prison and having them sentenced to prison.”

Walter Dickey—former Wisconsin state corrections chief.

One website, JailBedSpace.com, connects renters with sellers. “It’s a good marketing tool,” says Lt. Robert LeFever of the Putnam County Correctional Facility, which rents out an average of 60 beds per day.

Sanilac County, MI hopes it will get about $900,000 in revenue this year from renting beds.

In Mendota, CA where the FBOC wanted to build a prison “corrections complex,” the environmental impact statement was available only in English despite the fact that 84% of the local population speaks Spanish. Eventually a Spanish-translated 10 page summary of the 100 page document was provided.

In Reeves County, Texas issued 3 bonds over 15 years, $90 million, to build 3 facilities in the dying oil town of Pecos. Judge Jimmy Galindo, the driving force behind the deal says, “...we live in a part of the country where it’s very difficult to create and sustain jobs in a global market. [Prisons] become a very clean industry for us to provide employment to citizens.”

Dr. Susan Johnson, 1998-1999, Marshalltown, IA

In Anytown U.S.A., where prisons are seen as economic saviors, leaders find a way to approve them despite whatever reservations the locals may have.

A Florida D.O.C. task force found that local zoning laws hinder acquisition of land for new facilities. In response, the legislature passed the Correctional Reform Act of 1993, which gave the state the authority to override local governments in selecting sites for correctional facilities.

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