

## RED HOOK COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER: DOCUMENTED RESULTS

The Red Hook Community Justice Center is a community court that seeks to advance a coordinated response to local problems such as drugs, crime, and landlord-tenant disputes. The judge has an array of sanctions and services at his disposal, including community restitution, educational workshops, GED classes, drug treatment, and mental health counseling. The Justice Center is located in a geographically and socially isolated neighborhood in southwest Brooklyn that is home to one of New York's oldest and largest public housing developments. The Justice Center serves three police precincts with about 200,000 residents. Documented results include:

**Caseload.** Each year, the Justice Center handles roughly 3,000 misdemeanor criminal cases, 11,000 summonses, 500 housing court cases, and 175 juvenile delinquency cases. Among criminal cases, the most frequent charges are drug possession, traffic violations, trespassing, public drinking, and minor assault.

**Reduced Incarceration.** The Justice Center has reduced the use of jail in misdemeanor cases by 50 percent.

**Fairness.** More than 85 percent of criminal defendants report that their cases were handled fairly by the Justice Center – results that were consistent regardless of defendant background (e.g., race, sex, education) or case outcome.

**Accountability.** Compliance rates with court orders average 75 percent – a 50 percent improvement on the standard at comparable courts.

**Increased Public Trust.** Approval ratings of police, prosecutors and judges have increased three-fold since the Justice Center opened.

**Decreased Levels of Fear.** Since 1999, the percentage of Red Hook residents who say they are afraid to go to the parks or subway at night has dropped 42 percent.

**Public Support.** A door-to-door survey revealed that 94 percent of local residents support the community court. Before the Justice Center opened, only 12 percent of local residents rated local courts favorably.

**Community Restitution.** Each year, the Justice Center contributes approximately 70,000 hours of community service to Red Hook—about \$500,500 worth of labor, based on the minimum wage.

**Recognition.** The Justice Center has served as a model nationally and internationally, including replications in New York, Dallas, Hartford, Portland, Seattle, Newark, Liverpool (England), Melbourne (Australia) and Vancouver (Canada). The project has received numerous awards, including national prizes from the National Criminal Justice Association, the American Bar Association, and the Rudy Bruner Foundation. In addition, the Justice Center was the subject of an acclaimed PBS documentary, *Red Hook Justice*.

**Further Reading** (available at [www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org)):

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- Swaner, R. 2010. *Community Perceptions of Red Hook, Brooklyn: Views of Quality of Life, Safety and Services*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.
- Swaner, R. and White, E. 2010. *Drifting between Worlds: Delinquency and Positive Engagement Among Red Hook Youth*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.
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