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## FROM THE BENCHES AND TRENCHES

### JUSTICE IN RED HOOK

GREG BERMAN AND AUBREY FOX

This paper is an effort to tell the story of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, an innovative, community-based court, and its relationship with the local community. Along the way, we seek to tease out the tension between the two sides of the Justice Center's identity—"community" and "justice"—and to articulate the lessons that the Justice Center's model of neighborhood engagement offers to other neighborhoods and other fields of endeavor, such as health, education, or the environment.

Red Hook is a low-income neighborhood in southwest Brooklyn with a complicated and often unhappy history with local government. In addition to being home to one of New York's oldest and largest public-housing projects, Red Hook was cut off from the rest of Brooklyn by an elevated highway built by Robert Moses in the 1940s over neighborhood protests.

Despite (or because of?) this history, in recent years Red Hook residents have resisted, through a variety of formal and informal means, neighborhood projects they have not wanted. On thirteen separate occasions, plans to open another waste transfer station in Red Hook have been defeated by organized community opposition (Raver, 1998). An attempt to create a business improvement district never made it past the local community board (Sexton, 1996). And an artificial turf soccer field donated to Red Hook by the government of Norway was set aflame and destroyed after only ten days of use, according to the *New York Times* (1994).

Like most neighborhoods, Red Hook is not a monolithic, homogenous community. Although the majority of local residents are black and Latino, Red Hook contains several distinct subpopulations and interest groups: public-housing tenants, industrial business owners, artists, private homeowners, and real estate developers. Disputes among these groups have often burst into public view, most notably in recent years over waterfront development plans for large box stores (Ikea, Fairway) that have pitted public-housing residents interested in job development against single-family homeowners concerned about traffic and congestion. Residents have even fought over what to call the neighborhood, with some trying (unsuccessfully) to change the name to "Liberty Heights" to avoid Red Hook's reputation for drugs, crime, and disorder.

There are, however, exceptions to this history of neighborhood fragmentation and resistance to new ideas. One example is the Red Hook Community Justice Center. In the spring of 2000, the Red Hook Community Justice Center began operations in a refurbished Catholic school just off Red Hook's central park. The nation's first multijurisdictional community court, the Justice Center offers a coordinated

approach to criminal, civil, and family problems typically addressed in multiple, fragmented courthouses. A single judge hears cases, involving quality-of-life crimes, domestic violence cases, and landlord-tenant disputes, that would under ordinary circumstances go to three different courts in three different courthouses, as the civil, family, and criminal courts are housed in different buildings in downtown Brooklyn. Offenders and litigants are linked to a wide range of on-site services—drug treatment, job training, GED classes—and mandated to pay back the neighborhood through visible community restitution projects, such as painting over graffiti, cleaning local parks, and fixing broken windows. At the same time, the Justice Center is the hub for an array of unconventional programs beyond the courtroom that engage local residents in “doing justice,” including community volunteer, youth development, and employment programs.

Before opening its doors, the Justice Center went through an arduous six-year planning process that included formal public review and democratic approval by the local community board, the Brooklyn Borough president, and the New York City Planning Commission, as well as extensive consultation with local residents through focus groups, town hall meetings, and individual interviews. Three years into operation, the Justice Center appears to enjoy widespread community recognition and support. For example, a 2001 door-to-door survey of 1,100 local residents found that 68 percent felt positively about the Justice Center. This is in stark contrast to the 10 percent of Red Hook residents who rated the courts positively in a similar survey completed before the Justice Center opened (Operation Data Survey, 2001). Approval ratings for courts in general have also increased in Red Hook. For example, from 1996 to 1997, positive perceptions of courts increased from 10 to 30 percent (Paik, 2001).

How has the Justice Center managed to achieve these numbers? Why was the Justice Center—a criminal justice project that, among other things, keeps offenders in the neighborhood—approved by the Red Hook community when so many other projects have been rejected? How has the Justice Center navigated the various factions that make up Red Hook? These are just a few of the questions that the Justice Center raises for those interested in the relationship between government and citizens. Another set of questions concerns boundaries: What roles do Red Hook residents play in the ongoing operation of the court? And how does the court balance community interests with traditional judicial principles of neutrality and evenhandedness? In the pages that follow, we seek to answer these questions.

## PLANNING THE COURT

The Red Hook Community Justice Center was born out of tragedy. In 1992 a popular school principal was murdered in Red Hook in a drug-related shoot-out while searching for a truant pupil. The shooting was covered extensively by the local press and fueled the perception of Red Hook as a neighborhood plagued by crime and neglected by city officials. (For example, one *New York Times* article was titled “Life in

Brooklyn's Forgotten Section" [Gonzalez, 1992].) Soon after, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes began exploring the idea of launching a new public safety initiative in Red Hook. New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye quickly seized on the idea, asking the Center for Court Innovation, the New York court system's independent, nonprofit research and development arm, to investigate the possibility of opening a community court in the neighborhood.

Working with Chief Judge Kaye and other criminal justice officials, the Center for Court Innovation had recently helped to create the nation's first community court in Midtown Manhattan. The Midtown Community Court addresses "quality-of-life" problems in the Times Square neighborhood—prostitution, drugs, shoplifting, illegal vending, and other crimes—that had previously received very little attention in the downtown, centralized court. Offenders are given community and social service sentences that are actively monitored by the judge. In the three years following the court's opening, prostitution arrests in the neighborhood dropped by 56 percent and illegal vending by 24 percent, according to independent evaluators.

With the backing of Kaye and Hynes, as well as the City of New York, planners from the Center embarked upon a comprehensive planning process in Red Hook to explore whether a community court might be a feasible solution to some of Red Hook's public safety problems. Court planners quickly realized that earning the trust and confidence of local residents would be no easy task. At the time the planning process began, Red Hook's population had fallen from over 20,000 people in the 1950s to less than 11,000 according to 1990 census figures. The median household income in Red Hook was \$9,500 (far below the city median of \$30,000); more than 78 percent of the children in Red Hook lived in households lacking one or both parents; only 6 percent of residents over 25 had college degrees; and over 30 percent of the working-age men in Red Hook were unemployed. Nearly 8,000 of Red Hook's 11,000 residents, or over 70 percent, lived in public housing. The sense of distrust and disconnection from city decision makers ran deep.

Recognizing this, Justice Center planners devised a variety of means to solicit neighborhood input. The planning team organized a series of meetings with residents, including focus groups held at the local library with community leaders, social service providers, young people, and single mothers—a wide variety of informants that went beyond the "usual suspects" of established local leaders. Planners also conducted dozens of individual interviews; organized bus trips to the Midtown Community Court; attended many community meetings, which were held at precinct councils, PTAs, civic associations, tenant groups, and local churches; and convened town-hall-style meetings that attracted hundreds of participants.

These interactions, both formal and informal, provided plenty of opportunities for back-and-forth. The planners of the Justice Center presented a disciplined, two-part message. The first part was a broad explanation of what they hoped a community court could achieve in Red Hook: improving the safety of the neighborhood and enhancing the legitimacy of the justice system in the eyes of local residents. Within

these parameters, the court's planners expressed a willingness to contemplate different programming ideas suggested by the community. Along with this message of openness, planners communicated certain limits: that the Justice Center would be part of the New York court system and subject to the same rules as other courts. This meant that residents would not choose the judge or play prosecutor or vote on sanctions for offenders. Planners delivered this news clearly and consistently in an effort to avoid misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and neighborhood backlash.

With these basic ground rules in place, Justice Center planners were able to solicit much community feedback. They learned that Red Hook residents faced a paradox common to many working-class, urban neighborhoods: fear of crime combined with a deep distrust of the criminal justice system. Participants in initial focus groups indicated their desire to reduce neighborhood crime, telling planners that "Red Hook is lawless" and that the principal problems in Red Hook were "lack of knowledge of the law, lack of respect for the law, lack of respect for neighbors" (Jacoby and Ratledge, 1994). They reported feeling unsafe in public-housing lobbies, elevators, and hallways, as well as on local streets. The lack of faith in the criminal justice system was particularly striking. One focus group participant put it this way: "the criminal justice system doesn't work here." This anecdotal impression was confirmed by a Justice-Center-sponsored door-to-door survey in Red Hook, in which no more than 14 percent of respondents gave "excellent" or "very good" ratings to the police, district attorney, or the courts (Paik, 2001).

Residents articulated broad aspirations for a community court. They told Justice Center planners that they wanted it to do more than adjudicate cases: they wanted it to make education, job training, and youth development programs available to the community. Indeed, the very name "Red Hook Community Justice Center" came out of conversations with local residents who felt that "community court" did not accurately convey the project's commitment to programming outside the courtroom.

In addition to the interviews, focus groups, town hall meetings, and community surveys, Justice Center planners asked the local community board—the smallest, most local unit of government in New York City—to create a special task force as a formal vehicle for community input. The task force met regularly, reviewing program plans and helping to select the site for the Justice Center: a former parochial school that had been vacant since the 1970s. This site had a number of important symbolic meanings. The school had once been a valuable community resource, but now stood as a symbol of Red Hook's woes: vacant, boarded up, and full of broken windows. Just as important, the former school was located in neutral territory, in between the public-housing development and Red Hook's waterfront, which is dominated by single-family houses and industrial warehouses. In symbolic terms, this meant that the Justice Center could not be claimed by one community faction over another. With the active support of the community board, the Justice Center passed through several layers of formal regulatory review as part of the city's "uniform land use review process," a rigorous process designed to ensure that unwanted government projects

are not dumped into unsuspecting neighborhoods. This included several public hearings, at which the Justice Center proposal passed without objection.

As important as it was, asking local residents for input only got the Justice Center so far in terms of winning local support. After all, Red Hook residents had heard their fair share of empty promises and ambitious plans that never came to fruition. To sustain local enthusiasm during the long planning and construction process of the Justice Center, planners decided it was important to deliver something tangible to the neighborhood. In 1995 the Center created an AmeriCorps community service program in Red Hook that put fifty area residents to work on local community service projects, including fixing broken locks in the Red Hook's public-housing projects (known as the "Red Hook Houses"), providing security at local schools, and escorting senior citizens to public transportation. In exchange, after completing 1,700 hours of service, members received a small living stipend and an educational grant. The Red Hook Public Safety Corps operated out of a ground floor apartment donated by the New York City Housing Authority. Clad in bright red shirts, the Public Safety Corps became a visible neighborhood presence. Perhaps most importantly, the Public Safety Corps was an early win for the Justice Center, building its credibility with a skeptical neighborhood that had seen other government initiatives come and go.

## DOING JUSTICE IN RED HOOK

The Justice Center officially opened in June 2000 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by local and state notables, including New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, Brooklyn district attorney Charles J. Hynes, New York State chief judge Judith S. Kaye, and Legal Aid Society president Danny Greenberg. Based on the priorities and programming ideas unearthed during the planning stages, the goal of the Justice Center is to help address neighborhood problems, such as chronic low-level offending, drugs, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, and landlord-tenant disputes. It has a five-pronged approach to improving public safety:

*Promoting Accountability:* By making sure that low-level offenders receive some form of sanction (typically community restitution) instead of nothing, the Justice Center sends the message that all crime has consequences.

*Repairing Conditions of Disorder:* By addressing conditions of local disorder like graffiti and broken windows (through supervised offender work crews and other community service projects), the Justice Center seeks to create a neighborhood climate that deters more serious offending.

*Solving Underlying Problems:* By linking offenders and litigants to drug treatment and other on-site social services, the Justice Center seeks to help prevent these individuals from coming back to court again and again.

*Engaging the Community:* By building stronger links to citizens and community groups, the Justice Center seeks to improve confidence in the justice system and to promote voluntary adherence to social norms in Red Hook.

*Making Justice Visible:* By locating a courthouse and other programs in the community, the Justice Center aims to reduce fear and improve public perceptions of neighborhood safety.

What role does the community play in this agenda? The relationship between the Justice Center and local residents is multifaceted and mutually beneficial. The Justice Center relies on the community for its *raison d'être*, its sense of mission and identity. It depends on community residents to serve as the program's eyes and ears, to nominate problems to be addressed, and to help identify solutions. Meanwhile, the community relies on the Justice Center for jobs, services, meeting space, and the tools and expertise it brings to the task of solving local problems. But this description just scratches the surface. What follows is a more complete description of the various points of intersection between the local community and the Justice Center. Residents interact with the Justice Center in a variety of capacities.

*As advisers:* The Justice Center has a Community Advisory Board, composed of more than three dozen community representatives (for example, tenant leaders, clergy and civic leaders, as well as representatives from local institutions like the schools and the police), that meets regularly to inform Justice Center staff about local conditions and propose new programming ideas. For example, at the advisory board's behest, the Justice Center created a summer internship program for fifteen local youth and is working with a local health center to create an integrated substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention program aimed at teens.

*As Evaluators:* In addition, the Justice Center turns to residents for regular feedback on court operations. Each year, the Justice Center sponsors a household survey of local residents. The survey reaches a significant proportion of residents—for example, 1,100 residents (10 percent of the population) were interviewed in 2000. The survey is designed to collect three major types of information: how people perceive the Justice Center, how safe they feel in their neighborhood, and what their public safety priorities are. No other court in the country regularly asks these questions.

*As Problem Solvers:* The Justice Center has created an experiment, called Operation Toolkit, to test whether the court can work with community residents to solve discrete safety problems that typically do not result in court cases. The goal is to convene both local residents and government agencies to create collaborative solutions to these problems, like illegal dumping and abandoned cars. For example, in an effort to address crime and disorder in a local park, the Justice Center helped create "Friends of Coffey Park," a group of over fifty residents and community leaders that organizes clean-up efforts and produces cultural events; the group was recently awarded "Group of the Year" in Brooklyn by the City Parks Foundation. Another project focused on improving tenant patrol in the Red Hook Houses. Close to sixty residents have been recruited to sit on tenant patrols in seventeen buildings in Red Hook; the police have agreed to send officers to support the project. They have also donated cell phones for the use of tenant patrol members.

*As Volunteers:* As mentioned above, the Justice Center puts fifty full-time AmeriCorps volunteers to work each year on community improvement projects. To date, the Public Safety Corps has produced over 300 graduates of the AmeriCorps program (graduation occurs when individuals complete 1,700 hours of community service), most of whom come from Red Hook and surrounding neighborhoods. Post-program surveys show that 85 percent of AmeriCorps graduates in Red Hook go on to full-time employment or school—a significant figure given that many are on public assistance when they join the program. In addition, hundreds of local residents turn out for Justice Center-sponsored events, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and National Night Out Against Crime.

*As Coproducers of Justice:* The Justice Center runs a youth court in which young people (ages 10-15) who have committed low-level offenses like truancy, fare evasion, and disorderly conduct appear in front of a peer court composed entirely of other teenagers from the neighborhood who have been trained to serve as judge, jury, and attorneys. The hearings are entirely staffed and led by teens, who mete out sanctions like community service, letters of apology, and anger management to their peers. Compliance stands at 80 percent, well above comparable family court rates. From 1998 to January 2004, the youth court heard 448 cases and trained 200 local youth as members. These young people are, in effect, establishing and enforcing standards of behavior for their peers.

*As Service Providers:* Several community-based organizations are also located at the Justice Center. For example, Good Shepherd Services, a local social service and youth development agency, assigns a social worker to assess young people and link them and their families to a range of needed services; the 5th Avenue Committee, a community development organization, provides an on-site job developer; and the South Brooklyn Health Center has placed an HIV/AIDS outreach worker who provides health education for prostitutes and other criminal defendants. In addition, AmeriCorps members help Safe Horizon, the local victim service agency, run a child care facility at the Justice Center that offers drop-in services for local residents.

*As Service Recipients:* The on-site social services at the Justice Center are available to both those referred by court referrals and to community walk-ins. From June 2000 to January 2004, 5,592 defendants have been mandated to social services; an additional 3,026 were sentenced to at least one day of community service. The Justice Center also provides drop-in services to the community, free of charge on a voluntary basis. It houses on-site GED classes, a job developer, drug treatment, counseling, mentoring/internships, mediation, entitlement assistance, and drop-in child care, and it also runs a youth baseball league that each year serves more than 125 boys and girls.

*As Employees:* Eight Red Hook residents work as full-time employees at the Justice Center in a variety of capacities, including community service supervisor, AmeriCorps director, housing resource specialist, and case manager. One-third of the



Center for Court Innovation's employees at the Red Hook Community Justice Center are Red Hook residents.

Nor is this the end of the community engagement story. The Justice Center has sought to become a responsible institutional citizen in Red Hook, and no picture of it would be complete without an understanding of the informal interactions that take place between court staff and residents daily.

Community engagement is embedded into the DNA of the project. This is reflected in the building's architecture. In contrast to the centralized courthouses in each borough of New York City—imposing structures with elaborate security procedures and labyrinthine floor plans—the Justice Center is a three-story building with a welcoming design, highlighted by abundant light and the use of warmer building materials instead of granite and marble. The building uses architecture to send a message of respect and decency rather than intimidation. One small example is that the height of the judge's bench has been reduced to ensure that when offenders approach the bench, they are eye-to-eye with the judge rather than looking up. While this may be a small detail, it's an important symbol of the Justice Center's desire to open its doors to the community. On any given day, a visitor might find dozens of residents in the building—adult students attending GED class, school children being tutored by court officers, or local organizers using conference rooms for meetings.

This type of collegiality also extends past the courthouse doors. Justice Center staff members regularly attend after-hours community meetings, such as police precinct council meetings and tenant councils; a schedule of events is posted prominently at the Justice Center, and staff are assigned to make sure that these events are covered. For staff, community engagement is an explicit part of the job description, and no one is spared this duty—even court officers or presiding judge Alex Calabrese, who attends many neighborhood meetings to learn more about the context from which court cases emerge. Regular attendance at community meetings becomes an accountability measure in itself—staff expect to hear from community residents if problems are not addressed from meeting to meeting.

Finally, on countless occasions, staff interact informally with community members. In fact, Judge Calabrese, who is greeted regularly picking up lunch at the local deli or on his way home in the evening, likens Red Hook to a “small town” in terms of the amount of regular contact he has with residents. The Justice Center also sponsors a youth baseball league, an idea suggested by a local resident, an AmeriCorps member who felt the neighborhood lacked youth recreational opportunities, and court officers, defense attorneys, and local prosecutors coach the teams. And these examples represent only a fraction of what goes on in Red Hook daily.

Whether formal or informal, the goal of the Justice Center's engagement with the Red Hook community is to help close the gap that has emerged between the criminal justice system and the community. Evidence suggests that the safest neighborhoods are the ones where residents feel connected to one another and to local institutions like schools and churches (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). The

emerging social science research on “collective efficacy” documents that neighborhoods where residents trust each other and have confidence in local institutions are safer than those without such attributes, even holding factors like race and poverty constant. The Red Hook Community Justice Center is testing the extent to which the criminal justice system can spark these kinds of connections.

## BOUNDARIES

The Justice Center was intentionally designed to push the boundaries of government-community collaboration. Indeed, its stated goals of improving neighborhood quality of life and public confidence in the justice system set it apart from the judicial norm. However, it is part of a larger “community justice” movement in which courts, police, probation, prosecutors, and public defense organizations across the country have begun to reach out to community members in new ways (Berman and Fox, 2001).

A wide variety of practice and opinion exists under the “community justice” umbrella. At one end of the continuum are those who seek to alter the balance of power—and the division of labor—between criminal justice agencies and communities. For example, some argue that citizens, not judges, should have authority to sentence and supervise offenders through initiatives such as reparative justice boards. This view raises the specter of vigilante justice, as captured by Judge Morris Hoffman in the *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Hoffman (2002:2094) fears that new experiments like the one in Red Hook “[destroy] what small vestige of independence . . . judges may have left . . . (and) abdicate sentencing authority to self-described community leaders.”

At the other end of the spectrum are programs that are engaged in community relations rather than meaningful change. These projects, which might involve sending criminal justice officials to a handful of neighborhood meetings or inviting local clergy to participate in a discussion or two, run the risk of invoking community for symbolic purposes rather than substantive purposes. Anthropologist Victoria Malkin notes the possibility that collaboration can be a one-way street, with government agencies enjoying the benefits of community support without addressing the “real” issues that residents are concerned with—turning community engagement into a “performance of accountability for public consumption” with little substantive effect.

The Red Hook Community Justice Center purposefully falls somewhere in between these two extremes. It has sought to find new ways to bring a court and community together. At the same time, it has been careful to draw some clear distinctions, highlighting where the role of the community ends and the formal justice system begins. How does it strike that balance? It has done so by looking to the community to play a significant role in projects outside of the courtroom—AmeriCorps, Operation Toolkit, and the like—while preserving the sanctity of the courtroom process.

Visitors who sit in the courtroom in Red Hook are often surprised to discover that every defendant is represented by counsel and that the prosecution stands up on every case. On a typical day, the majority of the offenders who plead guilty to low-level crimes like drug possession, shoplifting, and prostitution in Red Hook end up receiving alternative sanctions like community restitution, job training, or treatment. But a typical day in Red Hook also finds a handful of cases dismissed because the prosecution has not presented a convincing case. And a typical day also sees a few cases receiving jail sentences because the judge deems the offenders a risk to public safety. What this suggests is that the Justice Center's community orientation has not affected the court's ability to weigh the merits of each case—or the ability of advocates to do their jobs. On the contrary, a problem-solving court like the one in Red Hook gives judges and attorneys the information and sentencing options they need to provide more individualized justice to defendants.

Perhaps the most important thing the Justice Center has done is to make the community the basis for measuring its success instead of simply counting the number of cases it handles. The Justice Center works to obtain information about the court's impact on Red Hook's quality of life through crime statistics, the annual door-to-door survey, intermittent focus groups, and day-to-day interactions with court users. By changing the measure of success—by articulating a clear sense of mission for the court—the Justice Center has profoundly altered the approach of everyone in the building.

## LESSONS

After three years of operations in Red Hook, it is possible to argue that an enhanced focus on community participation has not only restored a measure of public trust and confidence in government but also improved court effectiveness. Put another way, community engagement at the Justice Center is not just a “feel-good” initiative—it allows the Justice Center to accomplish some important goals that it could not otherwise. These include:

*Better Decisions:* Judge Calabrese and other decision makers make better decisions and get better results when they understand local conditions. For example, unlike many housing court judges who have never seen a public-housing project, Judge Calabrese has personally visited public-housing units to inspect repairs. The first time Calabrese went on an inspection, the local public-housing superintendent told him, “I’ve been doing this for over 20 years, and I’ve never seen a judge come to the houses. You must be from the new court.” Now the public-housing authority is quick to make repairs, in large part because they want to avoid another visit from the judge. Another example of how the judge makes better decisions is seen in trespass cases, which are extremely difficult to adjudicate in Red Hook with its ninety-six public-housing buildings because distinguishing between legitimate visits to friends and family from illegal attempts to buy drugs is almost impossible. However, Judge

Calabrese's knowledge of local conditions—for example, that the building known as the “pharmacy” is a notorious drug den while the one across the street is not—allows him to make more nuanced decisions about these cases.

*Solving Problems:* The Justice Center's community ties allow it to solve problems that would otherwise go unaddressed. Take the example of Operation Toolkit's most recent target—a group of abandoned cars that had been illegally dumped in a nearby alley, breeding garbage, rats, and other problems. Residents who complained about the problem through the usual channels quickly discovered that no one would take responsibility—not police, not the sanitation department, not the landlords who collectively own the property. Frustrated, several residents brought the problem up to staff at the Justice Center. After a series of brainstorming sessions facilitated by the Justice Center, residents and government officials implemented several solutions. The neighbors pooled together their money to have the cars towed by a private contractor. Further, the neighbors agreed to erect a gate to the alley in an effort to prevent further incidents. And the police promised to monitor the situation closely—and to respond immediately if and when a new car was abandoned in the alley. This is the kind of problem that would never come to an ordinary courthouse; after all, no arrest had been made and no lawsuit had been filed.

*Changing Sentencing Practice:* The involvement of community residents has pushed the Justice Center to change sentencing practices. The views of Red Hook residents mirror national surveys: while citizens do not want crime to go unpunished, they do (strongly) support alternatives to incarceration that attempt to keep people from returning to court again and again. Through the aggressive use of community restitution and social service mandates, the Justice Center has reduced the use of both short-term jail and “walks,” where an offender receives essentially no sanction.

*Improving Accountability:* Compliance rates with intermediate sanctions at the Red Hook Community Justice Center consistently average 75 percent—a 50 percent improvement on the national standard. Unlike the conventional practice in state criminal courts, Red Hook's presiding judge, Alex Calabrese, actively monitors defendants post-sentence, often requiring them to appear regularly before the bench to report on their progress in treatment or their compliance with other court mandates. Prosecutors, defense attorneys, and court staff assigned to the Justice Center collaborate with the judge to craft individualized service and treatment plans for each defendant. The idea is that judicial monitoring increases the chances that a defendant will successfully complete treatment and other sentence mandates and reduces the likelihood of rearrest; it is supported by studies of other courts that use such monitoring. A recent study of drug courts in New York found that the Queens Drug Court cut the new conviction rate in half over a three-year period, an unusually long evaluation period, while drug courts in Brooklyn and the Bronx showed similarly positive effects. In addition, sentenced offenders, along with AmeriCorps members and Youth Court respondents, contribute more than 79,000 hours of service to the neighborhood each year. Based on the minimum wage, this translates into \$408,000 worth of labor annually.

*Access to Services:* The Justice Center has shown that it is possible to use a courthouse as a hub for social services. Not only has the Justice Center succeeded in bringing new services like job training, GED classes, and drug treatment into an under-resourced neighborhood, it has also demonstrated that it is possible to overcome the stigma of the criminal justice system. Each year, hundreds of Red Hook residents seek services voluntarily at the Justice Center.

*Reducing Fear:* By improving the visibility of justice, the Red Hook Community Justice Center has helped reduce levels of fear in the neighborhood. For example, door-to-door surveys reveal that 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. This finding is particularly noteworthy in a time when perceptions of fear in general are on the rise despite the reality of reduced crime nationally.

*Legitimacy:* Finally, the Justice Center builds institutional legitimacy through its closer community ties. The crisis of faith in democratic institutions is something to take seriously—it is a real problem when courts are viewed as remote, aloof, or racist. For example, surveys of public attitudes toward the courts show that African-Americans are more likely than members of other groups to report that courts are unfair and treat court users with insufficient respect (Rottman, 2003). Without community buy-in, courts cannot organize juries, get witnesses to testify, or ensure that court orders will be followed. One tangible sign that the Justice Center has had a positive effect on public confidence comes from the 68 percent approval rating it received from local residents in the 2001 household survey. And support for the Justice Center may have also spilled over into support for other criminal justice institutions. According to door-to-door surveys, approval ratings of police, prosecutors, and judges have increased threefold since the Justice Center opened.

There is much still to learn about the Red Hook experiment. Among other things, researchers are looking at whether the Justice Center succeeds in reducing recidivism, improving court efficiency, fostering community efficacy, achieving criminal justice cost savings, and laying the foundation for neighborhood economic development.

While the research continues in Red Hook, the Justice Center has already shown that “community” and “justice” are not in fact oppositional forces. They are not always in perfect harmony, but the truth is that there is significant overlap between the interests of local residents and justice agencies. No resident wants to live in fear in a community overrun by drug dealers. And no criminal justice official wants local residents to view them with suspicion. In truth, everyone has a stake in making the criminal justice system more responsive to neighborhood concerns.

The Justice Center has attempted to mine these areas of goal congruence between government and community, in the process raising some fundamental questions: Does this amount to a new model of democratic governance, or is it simply an example of good government within the existing framework? How important is Red

Hook's small scale to the experiment? Is it possible to replicate the Red Hook model in other places, and in other areas of government endeavor?

Although it is too soon for definitive answers to all of these questions, Red Hook provides an interesting test case for a consideration of how collaboration can produce tangible benefits for both government and community. Red Hook is a very different place in 2004 from what it was in 1994. Crime is down, as are levels of fear. Businesses have moved in, and Red Hook is attracting notice as an "up-and-coming" neighborhood. There is a new sense of hope in Red Hook, highlighted by the news that Red Hook did not experience a single murder in 2003 for the first time in thirty years. While the Justice Center cannot take all the credit for Red Hook's rebirth, it is a significant part of the story. And at the end of the day, given the community's troubled history with government, this is no small accomplishment. jsj

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