

RED HOOK COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

SILVER
medal winner



2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

This is an excerpt from:

Creative Community Building: 2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

Bruner Foundation, Inc.

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with

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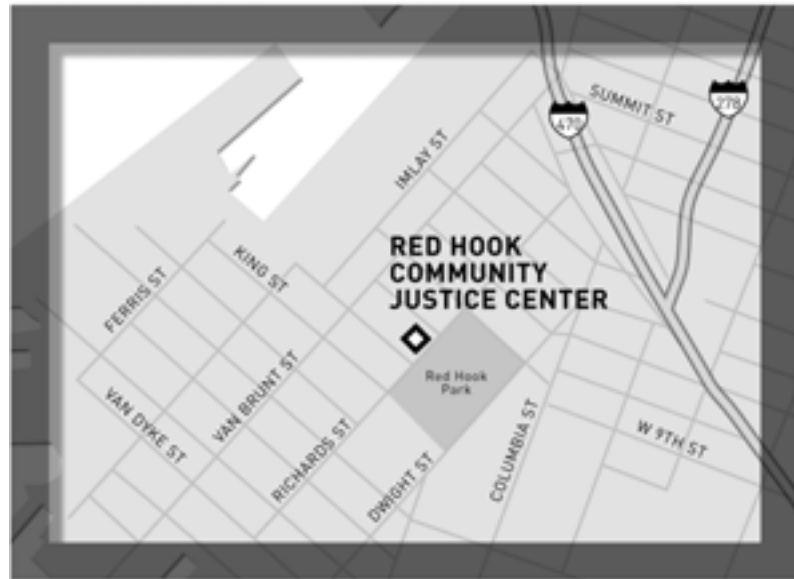
2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

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RED HOOK COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER AT-A-GLANCE

WHAT IS THE RED HOOK COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER?

- A community court with many other services in an isolated, low-income area of Brooklyn.
- A set of community outreach programs including a neighborhood “safety corps” (AmeriCorps), youth court, school, and others.
- Adaptive re-use of an abandoned parochial school building with historical significance and character.

PROJECT GOALS

- To improve an isolated, troubled neighborhood using the court system as the means of intervention.
- To make the community a safer and better place to live – thereby improving participants’ and community members’ perceptions of safety and of the justice system.
- To bring the court and the community together to solve local problems including drug use, juvenile delinquency, family dysfunction, landlord-tenant disputes, and quality-of-life crimes.
- To address fundamental questions about the fairness and accountability of the justice system.
- To redefine the relationship among justice agencies, and between those agencies and society.
- To allow the court to address the issues that bring people before it (on mostly relatively minor offences) through rehabilitation and a resulting reduction of recidivism;

- To improve the administration and effectiveness of the justice system.
- To replicate and extend the Midtown Community Court model.
- To be a laboratory for new ideas and to apply those that work to the New York court system and beyond.

PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

1992

Patrick Daly, beloved principal at the local Red Hook elementary school, is murdered by rival drug gangs.

1993

Center for Court Innovation (CCI) opens Manhattan Community Court in Times Square.

1994

District Attorney Hynes commits to intervening in Red Hook; CCI initiates planning.

1995

Community outreach starts with Public Safety Corps.

1998

Youth Court begins.

1999

Groundbreaking; construction begins.

2000

Construction complete; Criminal Court opens.

2001

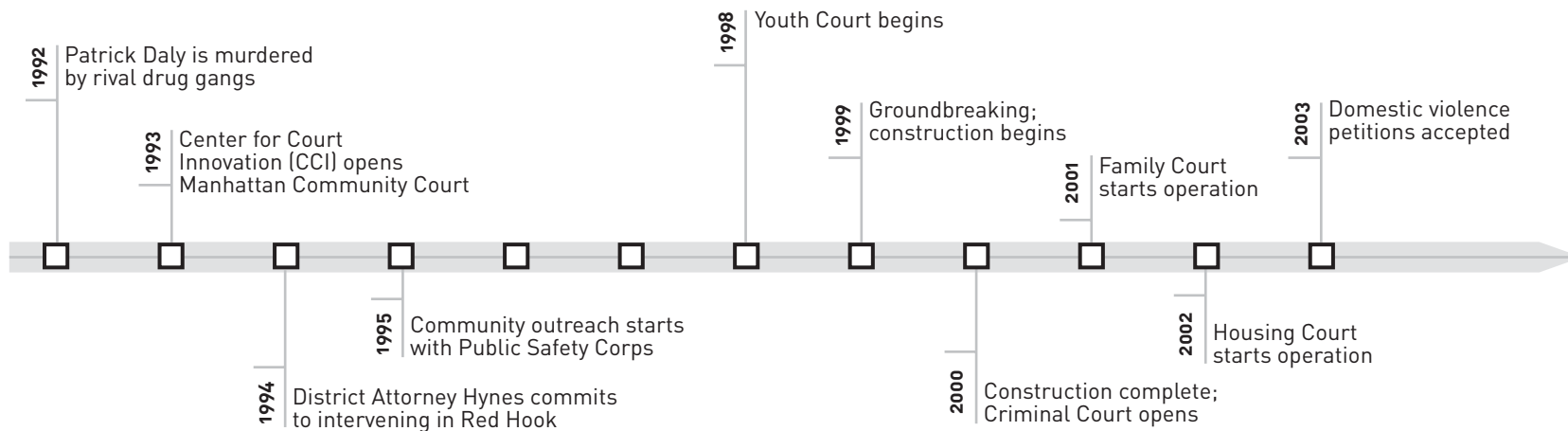
Family Court starts operation.

2002

Housing Court starts operation.

2003

Domestic violence petitions accepted.



KEY PARTICIPANTS

(all were interviewed)

The Center for Court Innovation (CCI):

Greg Berman,
Director
Robert Feldstein, Project Director,
Red Hook Community Justice Center
Adam Mansky,
Director of Operations

City and State Government:

Jonathan Lippman,
Chief Administrative Judge,
New York State Unified Courts
Charles J. Hynes,
Kings County District Attorney and
his counsel, Anne J. Swern
John Feinblatt,
New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator
(former director of CCI)
Amanda Burden,
City Planning Commissioner
(former planner at CCI)
Brett Taylor,
Legal Aid Attorney
Gerianne Abriano,
Assistant District Attorney
Captain Tom Harris,
Commanding Officer, 76th Police Precinct
Leroy Davis,
Court Officer

Community Organizations:

Craig Hammerman,
Community Board 6 Manager
Pauline Blake,
Community Board 6 Member
Jerry Armer,
Committee Chair, Community Board 6 Member
Barbara Ross,
South Brooklyn Health Center
Brad Lander,
Fifth Avenue Committee
Millie Henriquez-McCardle,
Good Shepherd Services
Elsie Felder, Red Hook resident
Bette Stoltz,
South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation
Roberto Julbe,
Community Organizer
James Brodick,
Coordinator of Operations
Emma Broughton, Red Hook resident

Justice Center Staff and Volunteers: (some are CCI staff)

Judge Alex Calabrese
Alice Tapia, Community Outreach Coordinator
Kelli Moore, Research Associate
Shona Bowers, Director of the Safety Corps
Kechea Brown, Safety Corps Team Leader
Patronia Russell, current Safety Corps member
DeCosta Johnson, second year Safety Corps member
Leticia Reyes-Velazquez, Director of Youth Programs
Adeja Kirk, Senior Youth Court member
Sabrina Carter, Senior Youth Court member
Alta Indelman, Architect

Various anonymous residents, defendants, and Justice Center users

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

THE COMMUNITY COURT AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER CONCEPTS

The Red Hook Community Justice Center (RHCJC) is a project of the Center for Court Innovation (CCI). CCI is a unique organization; in part it operates as the research and development arm of the New York state courts, but is also funded by foundations and grants, including some from the federal government. Although CCI receives partial funding from the state courts, it is independent, allowing it to function as a laboratory to test ideas that are not yet ready for uniform application across the court system. The prior work of CCI includes the Midtown Community Court which sought new ways to approach community justice, principally through dealing with quality-of-life crimes such as drug use and prostitution. Other goals entailed bringing justice closer to the people, demonstrating more immediate and effective consequences of minor crimes, and linking offenders to social services rather than just locking them up.

A community court differs from a traditional court in a number of ways. The community court focuses on two targets at the same time and seeks to find a balance between them. One, understandably, is protecting the rights of all parties while administering justice. The other is to address the root causes of an individual's offense and offer the opportunity for change (e.g., by getting the person into an education or drug treatment program). In a traditional court, for

the types of offenses most commonly seen in a community court, the more likely outcome is a plea bargain for the short time already served between arrest and appearance. The community court, in seeking to address the causes of criminal behavior, tries to stop the "revolving door" cycle that may lead to an individual doing "life in prison, 30 days at a time." Jonathan Lippman, Chief Administrative Judge of the New York state courts remarked that this is a "whole different approach to justice," compared to a tradition-bound court. The community court cares about the community and justice, not just about "processing a deluge of cases."

Paradoxically, the community court is actually likely to set a more difficult sentence and to keep the offender under its jurisdiction longer to ensure that the sentence is followed. The community court utilizes a wider variety of dispositions and services. It also carries out much more intensive monitoring of the defendant who may be required to appear in court as often as monthly, where he or she may be praised for doing well or, alternatively, may be sanctioned for failure to complete the prescribed program.

The community court integrates the operations of independent agencies (including courts, police, district attorney, public defender Legal Aid Society, and social service agencies) which are not always known for cooperating well with each other. And, in New York, it also cuts horizontally across the state's strong boundaries of specialization in court jurisdictions to be able to hear a wide variety of cases in front of the same judge (an important fact for Red Hook, but not so significant in other states).

The community justice center concept goes a step beyond a community court by locating the various agencies and services within the court building, by fine-tuning and broadening the mix of cases heard to respond to the needs of the local area, and by offering programs and services responsive to those needs. Thus, many programs under its auspices are located outside of the justice center within the community and, reciprocally, a number of community programs are given space within the justice center.

The Red Hook approach provides a new vision of the relationship between crime and society, and between the courts and the justice system. The new model is restorative, community-based, and sees crime as both an individual responsibility and the result of social conditions, seeking remedies on both levels. It is interesting to note that other elements of the justice system have had longer traditions of reform and more widely recognized recent initiatives than have the courts. The police, for example, have pursued community policing. Prisons have a long history of reform including emphases on rehabilitation, punishment, reflection, incapacitation (through incarceration) and more recently “new generation” designs. Prosecution has placed an emphasis on victims’ rights and protections as well as restorative justice. As CCI realized, the time had arrived for these concepts to be applied to the courts and for an integrative approach across institutions and agencies to be established.

There are four “big ideas” underlying the justice center concept.

- One is the “**broken windows**” theory of crime prevention which suggests that if the small but sometimes pervasive indicators of urban disorder – such as broken windows are taken care of and



Public Safety Corps at work

if relatively minor crimes receive an appropriate response, then more serious crimes are deterred. It also implies that any crime should have a proportional response (unlike the more prevalent current condition where, due to pressures of volume, minor crimes are ignored and innocent people are encouraged to plea bargain – “cop a plea” to a minor crime – in exchange for release with time served).

- A second is “**problem-solving justice**” which shifts the focus of criminal justice from process – *e.g.*, how quickly defendants can be churned through the system – to outcomes – attempting to break the cycle of crime by addressing the offender’s underlying problems (mental illness, drugs, homelessness, lack of education and skills, unemployment). Since many of a community’s most troubled individuals – those most in need of services – pass through the court, it is seen as a logical point of intervention. By contract, the “standard” court is more limited in its dispositions, which tend to focus on release without service or jail time. Red Hook’s problem-solving approach also seeks to improve the effectiveness of outcomes. The Justice Center’s rigorous compliance monitoring protocols help ensure that offenders complete the sentence that they have received.
- The third concept is to **engage local residents** and social institutions in their community on the theory that when they are involved and feel connected, rather than alienated, they are more likely to voluntarily obey laws and social norms.
- The fourth deals with the **perception and reality of community justice**. It strives to make justice more visible locally and to counteract the perception of the justice system as something

remote and played out downtown. If justice is perceived as being part of the neighborhood, then the reality of safety and security are more likely to be achieved. And if people feel that their neighborhood is safe (or getting safer), this will contribute to a climate of optimism and contribute part of the basis for neighborhood revitalization.

URBAN CONTEXT

There were a number of factors — strengths as well as needs and weaknesses — that led to the selection of the Red Hook neighborhood as the location for the justice center. It seems that both the Brooklyn (Kings County) District Attorney and CCI



Red Hook waterfront

contributed to the choice. In 1994, they agreed that Red Hook would make an ideal location for a community court. District Attorney Hynes had advocated for the community justice center because he saw that the Red Hook community needed help and CCI supported it because Red Hook fit their model of a community where a new concept could appropriately be tried (see Planning Process).

The features that characterize Red Hook can best be understood by briefly reviewing its geography, history, and demographics. Red Hook is physically isolated and thus clearly delineated in a way that many urban neighborhoods are not. It is surrounded by water on three sides and the elevated Gowanus Parkway separates it from the balance of Brooklyn. As Greg Berman states (in *Red Hook Diary*, page 2), “In a well-defined community like Red Hook, it is easier for a demonstration project like a community court to have a concentrated impact. It is also simpler for researchers to measure that impact.”

Access to the water and the protruding “hook” of land which provides its name made Red Hook a natural port, and it thrived for many years until the 1960s when containerization took over and the ports moved to New Jersey, abandoning Red Hook. During the years when the port thrived, it attracted many Italian- and Irish-American dockworkers. The physical fabric was very mixed, and it is not uncommon to see industrial and housing uses on the same block, although there are also many blocks of modest red brick row houses facing onto cobbled streets.

Red Hook was colorful, even picturesque, which made it an appropriate setting for the film *On the Waterfront*. Today, with many of the docks in ruin, those portions of the area are still picturesque in their way – but it is largely a picture of decay and disinvestment, with many abandoned buildings. On the other hand, in the last few years, artists, high tech firms, and production company back lots (e.g., for Blue Man Group) have been converting warehouses into studio and office space. They are attracted by the low rents, flexible space, and proximity to Lower Manhattan. There are plans for a major supermarket (Fairway) and possibly an Ikea. The area is reported to have been without restaurants when CCI



Red Hook Houses

began its work, and now there are several. We visited Sunny's Tavern, run by Sunny Bolzano, a local artist who returned to the neighborhood to reopen his parents' bar which is now a haven for artists and writers who come from Manhattan and even farther away for occasional readings.

The demographics of Red Hook have also changed over the years, largely as a result of the construction of one of the largest public housing projects in New York (and in the nation). The Red Hook Houses are home to about 8,000 of Red Hook's 11,000 residents, mostly poor minority group members (largely African-American and Latino). Red Hook Homes became a locus for drug dealing and



Red Hook Houses

one of its blocks was referred to as "The Pharmacy." Not surprisingly, an ongoing issue in the community is social polarization between the earlier residents ("old" immigrants, many of whom owned their homes, and who occupy the "back" of the neighborhood toward the docks) and the "new" public housing tenants (who outnumber the originals more than two-to-one and who live in the "front" of the neighborhood).

This community is reported to polarize around planning issues (such as the supermarket and the Ikea), though not always on a "front" versus "back" neighborhood basis. Apparently this was not the case with the Justice Center. This is an interesting and even surprising situation, given that poorer communities often view cops and courts with great suspicion and mistrust, seeing them as the enemy, arbitrary in their treatment, and not available or responsive when needed.

By the early 1990s, the neighborhood was suffering from very serious problems including deterioration of its physical fabric, abandoned buildings, illegal dumping of trash, disinvestment, poverty, and rampant drug sales – with its attendant violence. *Life* magazine is said to have featured Red Hook as one of the nation's ten worst neighborhoods and called it "the crack capital of America". Into this challenge marched the Center for Court Innovation, with its eyes wide open and a well conceived strategy for intervention.

DESIGN AND PLANNING

PLANNING PROCESS

Planning for the center began with the notion that a community court might be appropriate for this area of Brooklyn. This was part of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes' response to the 1992 shooting of a well-loved local elementary school principal, Patrick Daly, who was killed in the crossfire between rival drug gangs in 1992. In our interview with District Attorney Hynes, it was clear that he feels a responsibility "to enforce public safety, not just to prosecute cases brought by the police." Thus his approach to prosecution stresses the consequences of crime and reduction in recidivism – with treatment and community service for minor, repetitive criminals but prison for the more serious ones. It followed naturally for Hynes' office to partner with CCI to explore the possibility of locating a community court in Red Hook.

In 1994, funded by a small planning grant from the New York Public Housing Authority, Greg Berman began meeting with neighborhood representatives. Among other efforts, he organized a number of focus groups to discuss neighborhood issues and to begin to define what a community court might do. Over 50 community leaders, social service providers, youth, and single mothers met in these groups. People were skeptical about the courts and justice system. One said "The court system has failed us [Offenders] go through revolving doors." (*Red Hook Diary*, page 3). Berman was, however, surprised by the general acceptance of the idea of a community court and by the strong ideas the community

held. They felt that the justice center's emphasis should be on social services – not only for defendants after the fact, but proactively for other community members as well, to address the problems that lead to crime in the first place and that affect victims and the community as a whole. In this notion – that services would be broadened to include the larger community – the community court was transcended and the concept of the community justice center was born.

As the planning process proceeded, the community began to get the idea that its members would be listened to, a perception reinforced by subsequent events. CCI worked to develop relationships, spending much "face time" with community representatives. It also found an institutionalized vehicle for local input in the form of Community Board 6 which established a special task force for the justice center that functioned as an ongoing advisory board (we met with three members who made it clear that they had played a substantive role). Strong community participation undoubtedly helped the project pass through the review process without objection by the Community Board, the Brooklyn Borough President and the City Planning Commission. And community involvement did not cease when planning was completed. CCI made the community advisory board permanent, with membership expanded to about 40 people including residents and leaders of community and service organizations (tenants associations, churches, medical clinic, community and economic developers, and the like). This group continues to assist in setting direction for the Center and identifies needs and priorities for programs.

An important early initiative (1995) was the establishment of the Public Safety Corps. This AmeriCorps program (partially funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service) is a joint project of the Justice Center, Safe Horizon (a victim assistance program), and the Brooklyn District Attorney. Each year 50 local residents enroll. Most are young but a wide range of ages is represented. In return for their year of service, they receive training, experience, a small stipend, and a grant at the end that can be used for education or further training (see the discussion of impacts below for examples of how participants' lives have been affected).



Red Hook Public Safety Corps members

There are three kinds of activities carried out by the Safety Corps. One is to work with the housing authority to make improvements at the Red Hook Houses. Members conduct safety inspections, make minor repairs, remove graffiti, and assist with safety patrols. Another team works with the police on domestic violence prevention, a strategy that includes offering programs to school children. A third team works on conflict resolution. Additional activities include running a baseball league, putting on community events and celebrations, and carrying out neighborhood cleanups. Some volunteers work at the Justice Center. Having this type of resource allows the Center to address substantive problems of disorder and safety in ways that the courts cannot.

Starting this program five years before the Justice Center facility opened gave CCI and the Center a base in the community. Long before the doors were opened, the red and white RHCJC logo was seen throughout the community on tee-shirts worn by volunteers, and became associated with their positive accomplishments. This helped establish its credibility and contributed to its acceptance. It also kept awareness of the center alive during the years when little about the planning process would have been visible to the community.

SITE SELECTION

The team evaluated a substantial number of alternative sites within Red Hook. Because of the depressed economy and flight of population and business, many vacant and abandoned properties were available. Following a bus tour of the eight most viable



Red Hook neighborhood door

options with the Community Board task force, abandoned Visitation School emerged as the task force's clear favorite. It was strategically located near the center of the community, in a neutral zone that was not identified as the turf of either the Front or the Back. In addition, it had real character, with its castellated parapets typical of the collegiate gothic schools built around the turn of the 20th Century, and a great deal of significance to the neighborhood. In the course of our visit, we met many current residents who had attended the school. While this site was not the planners' first choice (due to anticipated costs of renovation and limited size), they bowed to strong community sentiment in its favor.

FACILITY PLANNING AND DESIGN

Despite its historic qualities, the building posed a number of challenges. While the structure was in generally good condition, the interior was seriously deteriorated. Water had penetrated the roof, the windows were beyond repair, and there were accumulated bird droppings, asbestos, and deteriorated and inadequate systems. All of these were capable of remediation, given adequate funding. But the limited size of the building – just barely adequate for the planned functions – posed a continuing design and operational challenge. There were simply more functions than could fit comfortably into the available area. The result is that many spaces are multi-functional with alternating uses over the day or week and many workstations are smaller than might be desired. There are very few private offices, and cubicles are rather small (though some argue that this leads to more interaction and communication).

The historic character of the building (recognized as a valuable asset, though not a city landmark or listed in the State or National Register of Historic Places) was treated with respect during restoration. The stone was cleaned and repointed and replacement

windows in the façade were sympathetic with the period (wood-framed double hung windows, with true divided lights and muntins, “the best we could afford”).



Red Hook Community Justice Center entrance



Justice Center construction

Given the key objectives of making the facility user-friendly and accessible – a place that people would want to go to rather than shun – decisions about space planning and location of elements were crucial. A major and costly one was to lower the entry lobby to street level for ease of access. Originally, there had been separate entrances for boys and girls, each leading directly into a stairway to the upper levels, without a real lobby. To create a lobby at street level required that the floor in the front portion of the building be removed and reconstructed, leaving an area in the basement with a low ceiling, even though the floor was excavated several feet (it is used for storage). Now, one enters into a space that is one-and-one-half stories tall, with abundant windows and an open, airy feeling.

Prime space at the front of the building on the main floor is given over to two important public functions. On one side is the youth court/community meeting room and on the other is the child care area. The courtroom and related justice offices take up the balance of the floor. On the upper floor are administrative offices, the judge's chambers, social service offices, and group rooms (used for the school and other treatment programs). The client waiting area features a crock pot with soup for those who may have just been released from custody or are otherwise hungry, a detail that speaks volumes about the thoughtful, service-oriented approach.

Care and attention were paid to material choices and detailing in service of the facility's objectives. Generally, materials are light in color and strike a balance between moderately high quality and a feeling of comfort or accessibility. For example, wood trim and



Reception at the Justice Center



Red Hook Youth Court

judges, here the judge uses the same corridors as everyone else. This was not only to save space, but an intentional gesture toward accessibility – and appropriate for a judge who plays basketball with neighborhood kids and eats in the local restaurants.

On the lower level, a partial basement with high windows, there are two completely separate functions. On one side are community service offices serving the Public Safety Corps, youth court and other functions. On the other, separated by a solid masonry wall, are holding cells for in-custody defendants who are brought from jail for their appearance in court. In an explicit attempt to consider



Red Hook courtroom

the needs and concerns of the defendants, these follow current “new generation” correctional design precepts, using glazed cell fronts (with natural light from the corridor), privacy panels screening the toilets, individual seats rather than hard benches, pay phones for defendant use, and the like. There are also interview booths and law enforcement security areas. Circulation for prisoners, however, is entirely separate from other lower level functions. Prisoners have their own secure entrance at the rear of the building as well as a separate staircase connecting to a back door to the courtroom. It was not felt to be desirable to the community, or conducive to their own dignity, to see handcuffed inmates being paraded in and out of the Center or even through its hallways.

The Center’s logo and other graphic design elements were provided pro bono by Pentagram, an internationally known New York firm. Done early on, they appear on signs, banners, stationary and tee-shirts, and provide a very strong identity and image for the Center.

For architectural design, CCI selected Alta Indelman, with whom they had worked before (on the Midtown Community Court) and who knew their values and concerns. While the Center may not be as innovative architecturally as it is operationally, the design does reinforce intentions, function effectively, and convey the desired message to its users.

A DAY IN COURT

The Red Hook court hears as many as 80% of the cases filed within its jurisdiction (which covers not only the 11,000 residents of Red Hook, but a total of 200,000 residents within three police precincts). In essence, it processes all cases except major felonies and civil trials (and those arrested on Friday or Saturday nights – for this reason it does not hear many prostitution cases). It handles arraignments for misdemeanors and minor felonies, juvenile and family cases (including domestic violence), and housing matters. It is a high volume “people’s court,” with a lot of cases heard but only a relatively few minutes spent on each one. Each year about 5,000 are arraigned (first appearance following arrest) and there are another 10,000 to 12,000 appearances for a total of about 16,000 cases heard (or about 80 per day). Cases still under the court’s jurisdiction are reviewed by staff weekly.

During the site visit, we were afforded the opportunity to observe courtroom proceedings, even spending a little time sitting next to the judge listening in as he conferred with the parties and their counsel. In some ways, of course, this court is not unlike any other. There are uniformed bailiffs, a flag, and the judge wears a black robe. But there are many ways in which Red Hook is different from a regular court.

One is in its technology. While computers are finding their way into many courtrooms, CCI designed a special case management system for this court that differs from the norm in two ways. First, it is accessible (with appropriate limitations on the information

accessed) by all the justice system agencies. Thus, the court, probation, prosecutor, and defense can all track a defendant’s case and progress. Second, for defendants who have received a disposition, it tracks his or her performance in meeting the requirements set by the court. Thus, the judge, social services, and the other parties all can see at a glance whether or not he or she is attending classes, going to drug treatment, or showing up for community service.

The availability of this information is linked to another major difference in this court. There is an intense, even intimate, relationship between the court and the defendant. This judge often knows the people who appear before him – or, if they are there for their first appearance, takes the time to talk to them, understand them, and consult with a social services staff member who has reviewed their history and is familiar with available and



Judge Calabrese at work

appropriate treatment options. The Bruner Foundation team observed how the court handled the case of a seventeen year old arrested for possession of a small amount of marijuana. The judge learned that his mother was in court and called her to the bench where he could tell immediately that she was involved and concerned. They discussed her son and his issues, one of which was a lack of things to do during the day. He had dropped out of school and did not have a job. They agreed (as did his defense attorney, with only a mild plea for a lighter sentence) that he would attend GED classes and the Phoenix House drug treatment program. She was very surprised to learn that both programs were offered right there in the building. The young man was told to report upstairs immediately to sign up and would start the programs that day or the next.

This is in marked contrast to what usually happens in a case like this. If heard downtown, as a first offense, he would have been sentenced to time served between arrest and appearance (one day) and released. Even if he had been sentenced to a program, he would have been told to appear several weeks later at a place distant from the court and likely also from his home (he happened to live across the street from the Justice Center). The probability of his showing up would be far less than it is here. And the likelihood that the court would find out – or that there would be further consequences – if he didn't, would be much lower. A report of his failure to appear might not come back to the sentencing judge until several months had passed.

Here, instead, the judge required that he report back to the court at a specific time each month and, when he does, the records of his compliance and progress will be available. Thus, there were immediate, proportional, and effective consequences for his actions (this is often taken to be a key underpinning of effective justice). While the outcome for this particular case will not be known for some time, other evidence suggests that it is more likely to be positive. And, if he does succeed, the conviction will be removed from his record (see Outcomes section).

On the other hand, these markedly different results raise some challenging questions, and all of the players we spoke to were very aware of them. Principal among them are fairness, impartiality, and potential for conflicts of interest. While this case's disposition may indeed be in the best interest both of the defendant and society, in effect he will be under the jurisdiction of the court for much longer than he would be in a conventional court setting and will be engaged in a much more challenging program. If he fails, he may be subject to a sentence of jail time. A related issue concerns the generally cooperative relationship between what are traditionally adversarial parties, and the constant concern that they not abrogate their designated responsibilities. In a meeting with police, district attorney, and defense counsel we observed a demonstration of the fine line they tread in attempting to arrive at what all believe to be the best and most appropriate result, though this is not always involvement in a program. If the individual is a repeat offender and has failed to avail himself of remedial programs, jail will likely be recommended. Still, you will see the police and prosecutor agreeing to treatment and, in another case, defense counsel agreeing that it is

appropriate for his client to spend some time in jail. In this court, the defendant's mother may ask the judge to order additional services and the defendant may thank the court officer or bring in a friend who is in need of assistance.

Because of this cooperative and effective setting, where the participants can see the often positive results of their actions, the Justice Center is described as a very desirable place to work, despite the large caseload and long hours. Each staff member we spoke with expressed a strong preference for working here rather than in downtown Manhattan or Brooklyn.

SERVICES OFFERED AT THE CENTER

The following services are offered on site (the text, with brief explanations, is abstracted from a RHCJC handout):



Red Hook softball team

Free Child Care For everyone who comes to appear in court or to use services, the Justice Center offers child care services in a secure, dedicated area.

Mediation Available to all community residents, mediation can be used to settle youth, family, housing and neighborhood disputes.

Drug Treatment In partnership with others, Phoenix House provides a short-term treatment readiness program and referrals to long term treatment for youth and adults.

Housing Court Resource Center Free legal information and referrals are available to landlords and tenants with housing issues, including court cases, code compliance and rental assistance.

Domestic Violence Counseling Safe Horizon provides an on-site domestic violence counselor to assist in the procurement of orders of protection, make referrals to community-based services and address other issues related to domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Support Group Park Slope Safe Homes runs weekly domestic violence support groups and provides individual counseling for victims of domestic violence.

Mental Health Clinic staff can link clients to counseling and other mental health services for adults and juveniles, family members and all local residents.

Youth and Family Services A Good Shepherd Services social worker is on-site to provide crisis intervention, clinical mental health

assessments, and referrals to neighborhood-based services for youth and families.

Adult Education The Justice Center hosts GED classes run by the Board of Education available to all who are 17 and older.

Job Placement Resume writing and job development services are available to both litigants and walk-ins through a job developer employed by the Fifth Avenue Committee.

Red Hook Youth Court Trains youth to serve as judge, jury and attorney, hearing real cases of other youth (ages 10-17) who admit responsibility for low-level offenses such as truancy, turnstile jumping and disorderly conduct. In the process, the Youth Court works to develop youth into leaders of their community and engage them in positive activities.

Mentoring and Internships The Red Hook Youth Court sponsors internships with agencies in Red Hook and other parts of New York City and coordinates a mentoring program that matches local youth with caring, responsible adults.

Red Hook Public Safety Corps Every year, 50 residents commit to a year of community service in Red Hook, fixing locks, aiding victims, tutoring children. In return, Corps members receive job training, a living stipend, free child care and an educational grant of \$4,725.

In addition, there is space for a **health clinic**, which we were told would soon resume operations after closing temporarily.

FINANCES

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

Funding for this project came from a number of sources. Seed money for the initial community outreach and feasibility assessment was provided by the New York City Housing Authority. CCI then obtained a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance to cover Red Hook's "soft" costs (planning, design and construction management). This played an important role in helping to raise local support, which came from the Chief Judge of New York Unified Courts, Judith Kaye, and Mayor Giuliani. By agreement between the court system and the city, the city paid for construction, which was fully funded. The site and building are leased from Catholic Charities for 30 years at a nominal rate. Project costs are shown in the following table.



GED class

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND COSTS

Development Sources and Costs	
Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance	
Architectural Fees & Expenses	\$488,484
Construction Management Fee	\$95,000
City of New York, Department of Design and Construction	
Construction Management Expenses	\$550,000
Construction Costs	\$4,355,466
TOTAL:	\$ 5,488,950

OPERATIONS

The table below shows where operating funds come from and how they are spent. Some money is also (or has been) received from foundations, including the Schubert Foundation, the Fund for the City of New York, and the Scherman Foundation. It is important to note that the operations costs for the most part reflect a reallocation of resources from the downtown centralized court and would be incurred in the cost of running any courtroom – e.g., the cost of judge, court officers, court administrators and clerks; police, probation and public defenders.

**TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET;
 FISCAL YEAR 2003 - SOURCES AND USES**
 (October 1, 2002 to September 30, 2003)

Personnel	
NYS Unified Court System	\$1,700,000
<i>(Judge, Court Attorney Clerks, Court Officers, Interpreter, Reporters)</i>	
City of New York	650,000
<i>(Police, Probation, Public Defenders)</i>	
Kings County District Attorneys Office	430,000
<i>(4 Assistant District Attorneys and support staff)</i>	
Center for Court Innovation	1,000,800
<i>(Administration, Clinic, Alternative Sanctions, Community Programs, Research)</i>	
Subtotal, Personnel	\$3,780,800

Other Than Personnel (OTPS)	
NYS Unified Court System	200,000
<i>(Supplies, Technology)</i>	
City of New York	150,000
<i>(Utilities)</i>	
Center for Court Innovation OTPS (with indirect costs)	497,000
<i>(Program and operation supplies)</i>	
Subtotal, OTPS	\$847,000

TOTAL:	\$ 4,627,800
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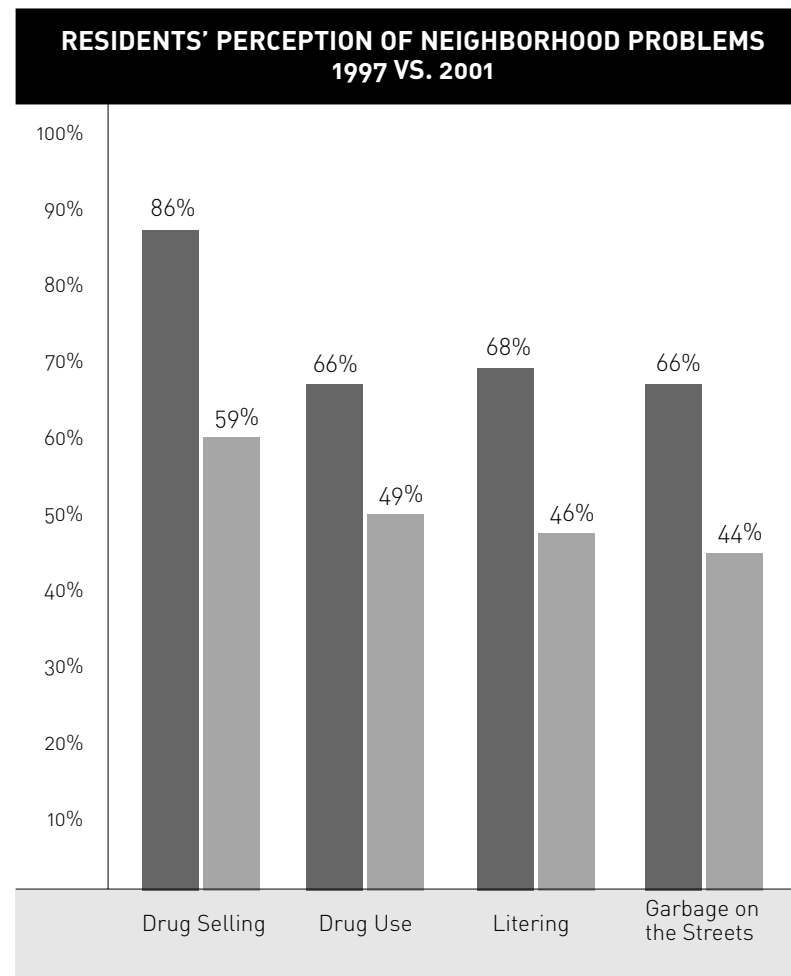
IMPACTS

CCI has made serious efforts to measure outcomes of its projects, including the RHCJC. CCI (and other partners) conducted a formal evaluation of the Midtown Community Court, and the results were generally very positive, concluding that process improvement goals were being met and that attitudes about justice and neighborhood impacts were much improved (see References). There is also an outcome evaluation of Red Hook underway, sponsored by National Institute of Justice and being carried out by Columbia University.

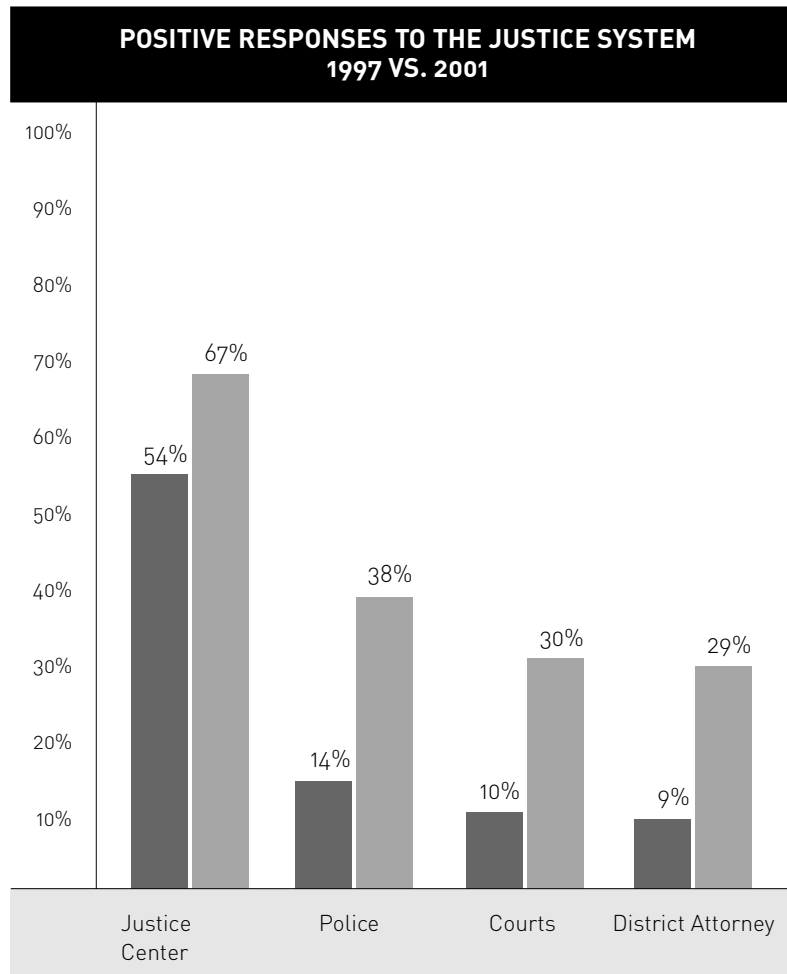
CCI has shown its commitment to monitoring and evaluation through inclusion of a research director on the Center's staff and by conducting an annual survey. About 1,000 surveys are completed each year. These are distributed by the Public Safety Corps, with some effort expended toward training Corps members about selecting subjects and asking questions in a non-leading manner – though they are encouraged to get as many respondents as they can. Questions are asked about residents' perceptions of safety and quality of life issues in the neighborhood as well as about the various components of the justice system. While the number of surveys is quite large, the "convenience sampling" raises doubts about the representative nature of the data, since surveyors may well select a set of respondents which does not reflect the overall makeup of the community. Nevertheless, the results are quite positive and some of them are illustrated below (charts provided by CCI).

The following chart shows a decrease of one-quarter to one-third in the number of residents identifying Red Hook as having certain

problems. (It could be argued, of course, that about half the residents still perceive these as problems and that not enough has yet been done. Likely, CCI and the Center would agree that much is still to be done in addressing these issues. Still, perceptions in the area have clearly improved.)



The next table shows how residents' positive perception of various elements of the justice system have improved, with dramatic increases for those elements that were previously granted little positive response (and yet, again, with much room for



improvement). Interestingly, the Justice Center started with more than half the people positive about it and that has increased to two-thirds. Anecdotally, Alicia Tapia, a resident who works at the Center said, “now the cops show up” when they are called. She also indicated that at first the court was viewed as just another way to “put our kids in jail,” whereas now it is seen as an integral part of the community that is also contributing to its improvement.

There are also a number of important justice system indicators such as reduction in crime and recidivism. However, these are very difficult to measure and to attribute to a specific cause (such as the Justice Center). Crime, for example, has been dramatically reduced all over New York and nationally (until recently). In addition, it is very hard to measure recidivism; the standard outcome is whether the person re-offends and is arrested again within three years, but it is impossible to know how many criminals are not caught or if they have moved out of the area and been rearrested in another jurisdiction. Despite these difficulties, there is some evidence concerning the Justice Center’s impact.

In terms of crime reduction, the Bruner Foundation was provided with some recent statistics by the Brooklyn District Attorney’s office covering the three local precincts that comprise Red Hook’s catchment area and comparing them to all of South Brooklyn (of which Red Hook is a part) The results are somewhat mixed, but they generally show greater or much greater decreases in the Red Hook precincts in arrests for such crimes as burglary (which decreased from 30% to 50% compared to 38% overall) and

weapons possession (which decreased from 22% to 65% in two Red Hook precincts and increased in one compared to an overall increase in South Brooklyn).

There is also reported to be less recidivism at Red Hook as measured against other, related courts (for example, at the experimental drug courts, the recidivism rate is approximately one-third compared to over two-thirds without it). In addition, defendants are reported to be more accountable. At Red Hook, 75% comply with sanctions versus 50% at the downtown court. A study of New York's drug court system, done by the Center for Court Innovation, found that "in six sample jurisdictions, including three in New York City, the re-arrest rate among drug offenders who had completed a court-monitored treatment plan was 29 percent lower over three years than the rate for the same type of drug offenders who opt for prison time without treatment." (see References: Zielbauer)

Red Hook is reported to be more efficient in that it handles cases faster than downtown and makes less use of expensive jail and prison capacity. There is also more community restitution (these are potential savings or cost offsets, but difficult to measure). Even defendants report feeling that they were treated fairly and prefer to have their cases heard here.

Another impact is on the justice system agencies themselves. At Red Hook they exhibit more cooperative attitudes and practices with much more trust of each other than they report to have elsewhere.

While they are still appropriately adversarial and advocacy-based, their focus is both on protecting society and on rehabilitating the individual. Even the police captain we spoke to described "falling in love with the program – because it works."

The Center affects people who work there. A young person said that court officers act differently there than they do downtown – where mass justice and an "us-versus-them" attitude prevail. By contrast, at the Center even criminals are viewed as part of the community – which they are, since they will be returning there after release.

Many people told us that it is inspiring to work in the Center where they feel part of something positive, and that they are having an impact and making a difference. This is in marked contrast to how they had felt when working in a more typical court. Individuals ask



Judge Alex Calabrese signing autographs

to be assigned to the Center, even though work hours may be longer there. Clearly, the Center has succeeded in creating a culture of change. There is a great contrast between the Center and the downtown courts which were viewed with “dread” and described as a “hellhole.”

The impacts on people participating in programs such as Youth Court and the Public Safety Corps are also striking. The Bruner Foundation team met with a number of them and heard their stories. They come from the community and are taking advantage of opportunities that would not have been available to them without the Center. A single mother of four has better housing. A young man will be going on to a better job and college. The table below shows what Safety Corps graduates do after they finish the program, and 85% are either employed or in school.

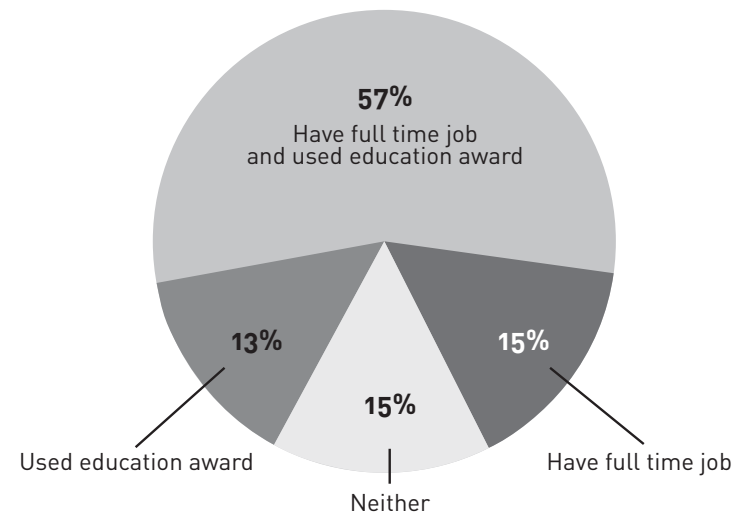
Youth Court participants, too, have achieved considerable benefits. Two hundred so far have been trained to play a variety of roles (judge, prosecutor, defender). The participants we met are thinking about how the experience will help with their college applications and some of them talked about becoming lawyers.

It is harder to measure impacts of the Center (and related improvements in public safety) on economic development, but people who would be in a position to know (e.g., the head of the local economic development agency) feel these impacts are significant. In addition, there are actual jobs provided at and by the Justice Center (at least a dozen) and the Safety Corps (two hundred so far, plus many employed graduates).

There are also many intangibles. As Community Board members said in expressing pride about the Center, “what was promised has been delivered”, with impacts “far beyond expectations.” They stated that Red Hook is a “legacy” felt and used by a community which is now more engaged and feels an enhanced sense of pride and ownership. The community is also said to feel, and in fact to be, more interconnected, because the Center has provided a forum for formerly disconnected people and service agencies to come together.

This project has gained support and had impacts at the highest levels of the city and in the state courts, as represented by the state’s chief administrative judge, the mayor’s criminal justice advisor, and

208 INDIVIDUALS HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE RED HOOK SAFETY CORPS SINCE 1995



the head of the city's planning commission. The sense of ownership of Red Hook is very broad, and includes the public officials just mentioned as well as the district attorney.

Finally, this project has been characterized by remarkable growth and advancement of its planners. Greg Berman served as project planner of the RHCJC and became the director of CCI. Robert Feldstein was assistant project planner and became the director of RHCJC. Adam Mansky was the first director of RHCJC and became the director of operations of CCI. John Feinblatt was the director of CCI and became the mayor's criminal justice director. Amanda Burden was a project planner for CCI and became the chair of the City Planning Commission. This suggests both that the success of the project has led to growth for these individuals and also that this project was able to attract highly qualified and motivated staff.

IS IT A MODEL?

Is the Red Hook Community Justice Center a model for cities and states across the country? Should there be one in every community in New York City, the state or the nation? CCI and the New York state courts view Red Hook more as a laboratory than a prototype to be rolled out in a large number of locations. This is not to say that Red Hook will not be emulated. The community court and drug court concepts have already been applied in other communities, especially where the kinds of problems RHCJC addresses are prevalent. These types of courts will be developed rather broadly in New York state. There are said to be over 20

operational community courts and another 10 in planning across the country (in about 15 states) and the British intend to replicate the Red Hook model. Just after the site visit, a press release from the British Home Office stated, in part:

“The Home Secretary David Blunkett and the Lord Chancellor Derry Irvine today announced plans to support the development of pioneering US-style community courts in Britain. The New York-based Center for Court Innovation will help to develop plans for pilot community justice centres in England and Wales. These will ultimately aim to shift the focus of the criminal justice system to engaging more in crime prevention and problem-solving in the community in addition to bringing perpetrators to justice.”

A later press release (and related stories carried by BBC online) identified Liverpool as the site and indicated that funding had been committed to initiate the project. (See References.)

Through the laboratory provided by CCI, the New York state court system has the opportunity to test concepts that may be applied more broadly, including in its general jurisdiction courts. For New York, one of the main issues is its rather extreme specialization – with 11 different case-type jurisdictions – each of which hears only a single type of case. Red Hook is unique for New York in that it is multi-jurisdictional, hearing at least four types of cases. The state system will move toward this type of integration, but only gradually, as resistance is structural and strong.

Red Hook is also more costly (about a million dollars more per year compared to a similar court), at a time when resources are not plentiful. It provides and pays for facilitators, mediators, and case managers (social services are not included in its budget, but are provided by partner agencies). However, to render a fair judgment about its cost-effectiveness, it would be necessary to accurately measure its benefits including costs that are avoided or saved as well as positive human and social impacts. Some of the economic benefits that could conceivably be measured are: more expeditious case processing with far less lag time between arrest and sentencing, increased compliance with sanctions and an attendant reduction in recidivism which would result in many broad savings to society such as lessened costs of crime (to victims), reduced demands on law enforcement and the courts, and increased productivity of individuals when they leave the justice system.

It is also important to recognize that the community justice center is not an easy approach to implement. It requires a major commitment of effort and resources and entails the application of skills, such as community organizing and outreach, which are not usually associated with the courts.

FUTURE PLANS

In Red Hook, CCI will continue to respond to community needs, as voiced through surveys and input from its advisory committee. As the director indicated, if a legitimate need is identified, they will attempt to develop a program to meet it.

In the New York court system, changes tried at Red Hook will be rolled out, if slowly. More courts will probably become multi-jurisdictional and more drug courts, community courts and a few community justice centers will be developed.

Nationally, and even internationally (with the work initiated in Britain), it appears that the models of community court and community justice center will be emulated and applied, with appropriate modifications for local conditions.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS

MEETING PROJECT GOALS

This project has achieved remarkable success in meeting its goals.

- *To demonstrate innovation, both in the justice system and for community development.*

The justice center has demonstrated innovation. Within the court and justice systems it is on the leading edge of integration and accountability. Using the justice system as a strategy for community development and improvement represents a unique and innovative approach.

- *To attempt to solve important problems of crime and society.*

The justice center shows vision in boldly trying to solve very important problems of crime and society, many of which have

largely been given up on by the agencies whose primary mission is to deal with them.

- *To emphasize community involvement.*

There was during the planning phase, and continues to be during implementation, very considerable community involvement. CCI adopted a smart strategy of coming in early with the Safety Corps and outreach has pervaded its approach.

- *To improve the perception and reality of safety and the quality of the community.*

The level of improvement in the community, and the perception and reality of safety, are tangible, if difficult to quantify. The Red Hook neighborhood, as someone said, may be “about to be poised” to take off.

- *To have a significant impact on people's lives.*

The justice center appears to be having a significant impact on people's lives – the participants, the agencies, the community, and even its own planners.

- *To be a laboratory and model for innovative ideas in the courts, justice system and community planning.*

The justice center is having an impact as a laboratory for N.Y. State courts, nationally and even internationally, generating wide interest in its model.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The selection committee was impressed with many aspects of the Justice Center. Like Camino Nuevo, the Center is effecting social change, and transforming lives and the urban environment through an extraordinarily innovative model program. The center's approach to using the justice system for social change and urban revitalization and its willingness to tackle a truly distressed neighborhood were regarded with great appreciation. The committee valued the thoroughness with which the model was implemented, being particularly impressed with the mediation element and the use of computers to track participants and to achieve accountability. While perhaps more “top-down” than Camino in its origin, it was also exemplary in involving the community in planning and management. The committee praised the center for providing a catalyst and opportunity for its management and staff to grow within organization and to find new opportunities beyond it.

The selection committee also had some reservations about the Justice Center. While some evidence was presented about the impacts of the center on its community, they would have preferred more definitive information than is currently available (though they also appreciated that a formal evaluation is under way). While the graffiti clean up and the reductions in crime are likely attributable to the center's work, it is more difficult to credit it with other changes like restaurants opening or artists moving in – and the overall change in the local economy was neither clear nor clearly due to the center. The committee also felt that the center's architectural design was modest, but realized that the design was intentionally understated in order not to intimidate participants.



Red Hook Safety Corp painting fence

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Center for Court Innovation web site: www.courtinnovation.org

SILVER MEDAL WINNER

Red Hook Community Justice Center