



Surveying Communities

A Resource for
Community Justice
Planners

Monograph

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Contents

Introduction	1
Community Surveys	3
Needs Assessment	3
Community Support	4
Outreach	4
Partnerships	5
Evaluations	5
Funding	6
Survey Process	7
Design	7
Collection	8
Analysis	9
Red Hook Survey	11
Design	11
Collection	11
Analysis	13
Conclusion	15
Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire	17
Appendix B: Sample Survey Report	23
Sources for Further Information	27

Introduction

Over the past several years, community justice initiatives around the country have sought to redefine the relationship between criminal justice agencies and citizens. Community justice advocates a problem-solving approach to crime and safety issues that calls on judges, prosecutors, defenders, police, and probation officers to do more than churn cases through the criminal justice mill. Community justice calls on criminal justice agencies to pursue new goals instead of simply responding after a crime has occurred. Among these goals are preventing crime, increasing community involvement and neighborhood safety, and handling complex problems (e.g., drug abuse and family dysfunction) that often fuel criminal behavior.

For this approach to succeed, however, community justice practitioners need information. They need to know a community's strengths and weaknesses; what local residents want from the criminal justice system; and most important, what neighborhoods identify as their priorities. Are youth gangs the most pressing problem for local residents? Is drug dealing? Or are their concerns more prosaic—teenagers loitering, a noisy nightclub, or litter in an empty lot?

There are many ways to identify a community's concerns. One approach is to interview neighborhood leaders such as clergy, the heads of business groups, and school principals. Another way is to hold focus groups that bring together citizens—teenagers, single mothers, members of various ethnic groups—to discuss their neighborhood. These methods, however, only reach a small segment of the community. To build on this information and develop the most complete picture possible, many community justice planners use another tool: community surveys.

This monograph, *Surveying Communities: A Resource for Community Justice Planners*, shares the experiences of those who have conducted successful surveys that helped to develop the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, New York. The lessons learned from the preparation, administration, and analysis of this community survey can assist other jurisdictions in achieving a better understanding of community needs and delivering more responsive programs to meet those needs.

—Robert Victor Wolf, Director of Communications, Center for Court Innovation

Conducting a survey requires time, manpower, and the ability to design a scientifically sound questionnaire and analyze its results. Although this monograph cannot provide community justice planners with time and staff, it can give planners a head start on how to craft and conduct a survey.

Community Surveys

When asked to coordinate a survey of the Red Hook community in Brooklyn, New York, the initial reaction was, “Why?” The planning team had already conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with community residents and leaders; it seemed that little could be gained by the labor-intensive task of distributing and analyzing hundreds of questionnaires. But now, after organizing an annual survey in Red Hook for the past 4 years, the value (and the challenges) of a community survey are apparent.

Although a survey does not replace the knowledge gained through focus groups and individual interviews, it does deepen a planner’s understanding. Adam Mansky, coordinator of the Red Hook Community Justice Center (Justice Center), explained, “Surveys underscore certain ideas that planners might have, letting them know what the community does or doesn’t want. It’s another way to ensure that your project is responding to real community needs.”

John Perry, the director of planning for the Vermont Department of Corrections (which conducted a statewide survey about its department), finds that

Community surveys can give planners a detailed picture of a community’s priorities, expectations, and self-image. A survey—whether conducted by phone, on the street, or from door to door—gathers information from hundreds and potentially thousands of stakeholders. Surveys also sort data in a form that is perfect for analysis. Rather than gathering anecdotal impressions during a focus group, a well-designed survey crystallizes information into quantifiable data. For instance, a statewide survey in Vermont found that only 37 percent of residents had a favorable impression of the state’s Department of Corrections, but 93 percent would support the creation of reparative boards (panels of citizens who oversee probation terms for nonviolent offenders). The results of this survey gave planners valuable information that helped them make the case to funders and elected officials that reparative boards were worth trying.

—Robert Victor Wolf

surveys offer the same benefits to community justice planners as to businesses researching a product’s appeal: “We just did what businesses do all the time. It’s called market research. It’s what any successful company in America does.”

A survey can enhance a planner’s work in a number of key areas.

Needs Assessment

When a project is in the initial planning phase, the most important

function of a survey is to give a program its fundamental shape. Questions are addressed to set parameters, such as:

- What problems should a program focus on?
 - Drugs?
 - Gangs?
 - Theft?
- What kinds of solutions are most desirable?
 - Targeted law enforcement?
 - Greater emphasis on offenders paying the community back?
 - More services to help offenders find legitimate work?
- What community resources are available to support the program?
 - Church groups?
 - Civic organizations?
 - Ad hoc volunteers?

With answers to these questions, planners can build a program that best meets the community's needs. Also the survey elicits feedback from everyone—not just a handful of the neighborhood's most vocal citizens. According to Manky, "There are about 15 or 20 leaders at every community meeting, but how do you reach beyond

them to the average person on the street? A survey is the perfect tool for this. It offers some reassurance that community leaders are accurately representing the needs and interests of their constituents."

Community Support

A survey sends a clear message to community stakeholders that their opinions matter. This is especially important in neighborhoods that are wary of government intervention and suspicious of outsiders. By conducting a survey, planners show that their project will be different: it will not be an unwanted government program. Rather, the project will be tailored to the community's needs and concerns. The annual survey used by the Justice Center is designed to last 20 minutes, but it can take longer. This design shows the community that you are interested in their concerns by taking time to listen. James Brodick, the director of community programs at the Justice Center, relates his experience: "I think it shows that when you reach out, people are willing to talk with you. We might spend an hour chatting with elderly residents. They can't believe that we are interested in hearing what they have to say."

Outreach

A survey offers an opportunity to educate a community about a new project. Every time a surveyor makes a connection with a citizen, it creates

an opportunity for dialog and a chance to shape public opinion about the project. If surveyors are properly equipped with information about the initiative, they can and should answer citizens' questions. In Red Hook, for example, surveyors tell the people they are interviewing about the Justice Center and invite them to visit. Kechea Brown, a surveyor, recounted one such experience: "A woman stopped to do the survey but wasn't mentally there. I asked if she was okay and she started talking about how she was losing her apartment, having problems with welfare, etc. I told her that I knew a place where you can get help: the Justice Center. I gave her the bus route, telephone number, and names of people to talk to. She got on the bus straight to the Justice Center."

Partnerships

Partnerships are a key component of any community justice project. Survey results can help identify potential partners and convince them that their cooperation is needed. If the community identifies a need such as job training, affordable housing, or drug treatment, planners can begin to forge relationships with the appropriate agencies. To deal with crime in a housing project, it may make sense to partner with the local housing agency or community development organization. To respond to drug abuse, a drug treatment provider is a logical partner. In West Palm Beach, Florida, for instance, community court planners surveyed residents approximately 6 months

before the court opened. Tom Becht, coordinator of the court, said that the survey showed that trash and litter were by far the top concerns. Realizing this was a community priority, the court's community service crews focused on cleaning up the neighborhood. Planners also used the survey data to convince the city to get involved. "The city now is adopting a plan where they're going to clean up property and bill the landlords after giving them a notice that they need to clean up the property themselves," Becht said.

Evaluations

Any project, especially one that is new or experimental, needs to be evaluated. Questions to consider include the following:

- Is the project achieving its goals?
- Are things working as intended, or have unanticipated obstacles required a change in strategy?
- Is the public satisfied with the results so far?
- How have the public's attitudes changed over time?

A survey can help answer these questions, especially if it is readministered on a regular basis as are the Red Hook and West Palm Beach surveys. In addition, a survey can reveal if the public is aware that the community justice program exists



and give a sense of what they think about the program. For example, a year after the community court in Minneapolis opened, a telephone survey was conducted to measure community awareness and satisfaction levels with the court. Court officials learned that only 20 percent of residents in the catchment area had heard of the Hennepin County Community Court, which suggested that more could be done to educate citizens about the court's existence and its role in the neighborhood. However, officials were encouraged to learn that a large majority of residents supported the court's key features, such as having offenders perform community service and linking offenders with court-monitored drug treatment.

Although a survey can offer a sense of whether progress has been made in public opinion, the results may not stand up to scrutiny from academic researchers. A survey designed to

cultivate community support for a project cannot vigorously measure public opinion. In other words, a surveyor cannot say, "This is a great project," and then ask community members for their opinion of the project without potentially biasing the results. Even with this caveat, however, it still makes sense to track community attitudes. Survey results will help with program design and help planners gauge their progress.

Funding

Funders like to support projects that meet a community's needs. A survey can help persuade a potential funder that the need for a new program is genuine. Survey results can also help show that the community supports a project and that a project has had a tangible effect on residents' attitudes about crime, safety, and the neighborhood in general.

Survey Process

The survey process can be broken down into three major steps: design, collection, and analysis.

Design

The design phase involves the actual writing of the survey. First and foremost, a survey needs to be clear: use plain language and simple sentences to reduce the chance for confusion. Experience also has taught that multiple-choice questions with preset answers (e.g., yes or no and multipoint scales, such as *big problem*, *problem*, and *not a problem*) are more useful than questions that invite open-ended responses (such as *in your own words* and *describe what you think about*). Preset answers are easier to use to code responses and analyze data, and people seem to prefer multiple-choice questions to help organize their thoughts.

Available Resources

The nature of a survey also depends on available resources. Staff size, time, money, and survey expertise determine whether a survey:

- Is best administered by phone or in person.

- Should be mailed out and filled in by respondents on their own or filled in by trained surveyors.
- Should cover one topic or several topics.
- Should be conducted in-house, by consultants, or by volunteers.

Regardless of the method used, a survey should be simple and short. Remember that you are asking citizens to volunteer time; do not keep them any longer than absolutely necessary or you may cause resentment. Some surveyors conduct a survey test run with a few community members and then ask for their feedback. Sample feedback questions include the following:

- Were there questions you did not like or that did not make sense?
- Was the wording confusing?
- Were there questions missing that you wish had been asked?

Types of Questions

In general, community justice planners rely on three types of questions:

1. Those that relate to specific program components (e.g., Would you support allowing low-level offenders to perform community service in the neighborhood? If so, what kinds of projects would you like to see them perform?).
2. Those that solicit opinions about neighborhood strengths and weaknesses (e.g., Do you think local schools or churches or social services agencies are doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job?).
3. Those that obtain overall impressions about the community and provide a baseline for future surveys (e.g., Do you feel safe in your home, in the subway, or in the park? What is the most pressing issue facing the community—drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, crime, housing problems, or something else?).

Planners can get ideas for questions by looking at other surveys, including the National Crime Victimization Survey—a telephone survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (for more information, visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict.htm)—and the Red Hook survey (see appendix A). In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Weed and Seed national evaluation includes a survey that measures community perceptions of neighborhoods, public safety, and the criminal justice system.

Collection

There are many different ways to administer a survey. The Denver district attorney’s community prosecution program sponsored a survey in which teenagers who were members of a special youth empowerment team asked 225 of their peers about things they liked and disliked in their neighborhood. In West Palm Beach, Florida, community court planners adapted the Red Hook survey to meet their community’s needs—sending staff to conduct 60 interviews among targeted residences and businesses in the catchment area and repeating the survey every year to track changes over time. Others partner with local universities: Memphis’ Community Court contacted the University of Memphis’ Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, which used graduate assistants to conduct both phone and in-person surveys during the course of a semester. Some hire outside consultants: Vermont’s Department of Corrections hired a private market research firm to conduct a statewide telephone survey about the department and its proposed reparative probation program. Similarly, the community court project in Minneapolis hired a local survey research firm to do a targeted telephone survey within the court’s catchment area. The survey asked residents about their knowledge and opinion of the project and its various components (e.g., community service, job training, and drug treatment).

Training

Whether the survey relies on volunteers or paid professionals, everyone conducting the survey should receive basic training that covers how to ask the questions, fill out the survey form, and make the experience pleasant and productive. The goal of training is to make surveyors comfortable with the forms and the target area. For example, some volunteers may be nervous about asking questions and *bothering* people. More experienced surveyors may be anxious about going into a new neighborhood, especially if certain areas seem dangerous. Training can include role plays of different situations, discussions about safety precautions, and practice runs of the survey to allay these concerns.

Volunteers

Community members make the best survey volunteers. In Red Hook, citizens were more willing to stop and take time to answer questions if the surveyor was also from the neighborhood. In this way, Red Hook volunteers were able to break down a traditional barrier that stands between surveyors and participants and foster the trust needed to engage participants. “The majority of the times, people come to the door and know me. They say, ‘Oh it’s you, Natasha, I’ll do your survey,’” said Natasha Richie, a Red Hook surveyor. “They feel better and more secure in talking to me.”

Target Area

A successful survey also needs a clear target area. This can be a geographic boundary or a demographic group, such as teenagers, the elderly, single parents, or other groups. In Red Hook, the target area is clearly defined by an elevated highway that physically divides the neighborhood from the rest of Brooklyn. This target area is subdivided into different geographic zones, and surveyors are assigned to each zone and work together to ensure adequate coverage of their area. Similarly, West Palm Beach divided its catchment area into six subareas and completed 10 surveys from each area to ensure a representative sample.

Analysis

The extent to which planners can use survey results depends in large part on their ability to analyze the data. Some projects have turned to experts—a graduate student familiar with statistical research or a local college professor. This document does not detail how to analyze data. Instead, here are a few pointers.

- When selecting a software package, keep in mind the complexity of the survey and the number of questionnaires. To analyze small surveys, like the 60 questionnaires collected in West Palm Beach, a basic spreadsheet such as Lotus or Excel should be sufficient. Larger surveys in which hundreds of

questionnaires are completed every year, such as Red Hook's, probably will require a more flexible program such as Access or even SPSS.

- Establish protocols for data entry. For example, those entering the data need to know what to do if more than one answer is circled.
- Another important point to remember is that a survey can go beyond simply tabulating responses to questions. The survey data allow for comparing responses between subgroups or examining trends over time. This kind of analysis can help planners answer key questions such as the following:

- How has the percentage of residents who see public

drinking, drug use, litter, loitering, or another specific problem as a very serious problem changed from year to year?

- Do older residents have a different assessment of the seriousness of local crime than younger residents?
- Do men and women want different types of services?
- Do African-American residents approve of police performance more or less than Latino residents?

Red Hook Survey

Much of the information contained in this monograph is drawn from the experience of planners who worked on the development of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a multijurisdictional community court in the heart of a low-income, high-crime neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York.

Planning for the Justice Center started in 1994, and in 1995, the center launched its first program. The Red Hook Public Safety Corps (Corps) is an AmeriCorps program with 50 participants from the community who work on crime-prevention and victim-assistance projects. For their work in the Corps, participants receive a small stipend, an education award, and valuable work experience.

Design

The team quickly seized onto the Corps members as a potential vehicle for completing a comprehensive community survey. Greg Berman, the original planner of the Justice Center, recalls, “We had obtained a pretty good picture of community needs from interviews and focus groups, but we wanted more. We wanted to reach a broader segment of the community. The Corps allowed us to make sure

that what we were hearing was truly representative of the entire neighborhood’s concerns.”

Berman and the rest of the team created an ambitious questionnaire—9 pages with approximately 170 questions—that was designed to take 20 minutes to administer. Although the survey is long, community residents have been supportive. Shona Bowers, a life-long resident of Red Hook who now runs the Corps, says, “Before becoming involved with the Corps myself, I remember seeing Corps members walking all over the neighborhood with clipboards. I’d think, ‘Look, they’re back for that survey.’ It felt good to see them coming back to ask us what we, as residents, wanted for our community.” Bowers is not the only resident who knows about the survey: In the 2000 survey, 37 percent of the respondents stated that they had participated in previous surveys.

Collection

This survey, which is now known as “Operation Data,” serves two principal purposes: to measure community perceptions of neighborhood safety and to spread the word about the

program. To meet these goals, surveyors speak to as many people as possible in a 2-week period. With 50 full-time interviewers, the survey reaches hundreds of people each year. In 2000, for example, 960 people were interviewed, which represents 9 percent of Red Hook's 10,846 residents (or 18 percent of households). With so many questionnaires to enter and numbers to process, the entire process takes about 5 months from the first day of surveying to the dissemination of a final report. The bulk of this time is devoted to entering data; each questionnaire takes approximately 20–25 minutes to enter into the database.

Training

Because most Corps members have had no experience in administering a survey, surveyors undergo a full day of training. This training covers, among other things, interviewing techniques (including tone of voice and speaking slowly and clearly), safety procedures (interviewers are told always to travel in groups and never go inside an apartment), and role plays of difficult scenarios (hostile, unresponsive, or nervous participants). Members perform a 2-hour test run that covers a small target area. After the test run, Justice Center staff give feedback on interviewing techniques and the volunteers have a chance to discuss any issues or problems that come up.

Corps members are divided into 10 groups of 5 members each. Each group has two pairs: one person asks the questions while the other records the answers. The fifth member serves as the group captain to oversee the day's work. The captain fills out a building log to track which households have been contacted and is responsible for troubleshooting when problems arise. By reviewing the daily building logs submitted by each team captain, program staff can ensure that the surveyors are covering the targeted area in a comprehensive and effective manner.

Obstacles

Over the years, the Red Hook survey has faced two main obstacles: language barriers and timing.

A significant number of residents speak only Spanish, making the survey difficult to complete for surveyors who speak only English. This problem is addressed by making sure the survey teams have both Spanish- and English-speaking members.

The other major challenge is finding people at home. People often are not at home when surveyors come. Therefore, the survey is done both during the day and in the evening. Surveyors also go to more than just apartment buildings; they visit the local health center, businesses, banks, supermarkets, and housing development offices during rent time.

Analysis

The annual Red Hook survey is a massive undertaking that requires the time and attention of numerous staff—managers, researchers, and others at the Justice Center. While the effort is significant, so are the benefits. The survey has gone a long way toward building local support for the Justice Center and shaping Justice Center programs. Mansky, the coordinator of the Justice Center, says that “Operation Data is like a map. It tells us where we’ve been, where we are, and where we’re going. Mayor [Edward I.] Koch used to go around the city asking people, ‘How’m I doing?’ Well, this is our way of going around the neighborhood and asking folks how the Justice Center is doing.”

Over the years, the survey has yielded a number of surprises. Despite Red Hook’s “Wild West” reputation as a place where drugs and gun violence rule the streets, the residents who participate in Operation Data are also concerned about quality-of-life conditions. Each year, more than 60 percent cite garbage, littering, poor street lighting, and rundown parks as major neighborhood problems.

Less surprising but equally distressing, Operation Data revealed high levels of fear in the neighborhood, especially in the early years. Although residents report feeling safe in their apartments, the moment they step outside their doors, their feelings change dramatically. One out of three feels unsafe in the elevator or the building lobby.

Survey participants respond to real problems they face every day—urine in their elevators, graffiti in their stairwells, and lights broken by drug dealers eager to work in darkness. Many feel these conditions create an atmosphere where more serious crime can flourish.

New Programs

In response, the Justice Center has dedicated a team of Corps members to make physical improvements in and around the Red Hook Houses. Working with the New York City Housing Authority, team members repair broken locks and hallway lights, conduct safety inspections, and organize graffiti cleanups. “Our work makes a direct impact on living conditions for people in the Houses. Take our safety inspections: by immediately reporting when an elevator ceiling lock has broken, we prevent kids from riding on top of the elevators for fun, which can be extremely dangerous,” remarks Roberto Julbe, a former Corps member who is now on staff at the Justice Center.

Safety inspections and repairs by Corps members are examples of how the survey results can affect Justice Center programs. Another example is the Red Hook Youth Court. Over a period of 2 years, community residents cited youth crime as a problem and expressed concern about the lack of services and jobs for youth in the neighborhood. In response, the Justice Center turned these concerns into a program for local teenagers. Opened in April 1998, the Red Hook Youth Court

addresses low-level juvenile offenses by training teenagers to serve as judges, jurors, and advocates for their peers. This court determines sanctions for offenders involved in infractions such as truancy, graffiti, and disorderly conduct. Because these sanctions are designed in part to pay back the community harmed by these quality-of-life offenses, the 1998 survey asked citizens what sanctions they would like the Youth Court to use. Based on the residents' opinions, Youth Court sanctions now include community service projects (e.g., community gardening and park cleanups), essays, and letters of apology.

The next year's survey (1999) allowed the Justice Center to track whether the Youth Court had made its presence known in the community. That survey showed that the majority of residents (54 percent) had heard about the program, and more than 75 percent of that group was satisfied with it.

Partnerships

The survey's impact, however, goes far beyond programming. It has strengthened partnerships with other agencies. For example, residents' consistently high demand for mediation convinced Safe Horizon, the largest provider of mediation services in New York City, to provide a staff person at the Justice Center.

Mansky explains, "The survey drove home the point that there was a community need for mediation." This demand, expressed through the survey, made mediation a prominent component of the Justice Center. The mediation office is located centrally on the main floor and across from the courtroom. If needed, a judge can easily send a case across the hall for mediation.

As planners had hoped, the Red Hook survey has also become a vehicle to promote the Justice Center's programs among local residents. In addition to soliciting answers to survey questions, Corps members discuss the purpose of the Justice Center. Throughout an interview, Corps members take the opportunity to describe the project and its services, inviting participants to the Justice Center to see what is happening. The survey is valuable when planners craft community presentations, respond to press requests for information, and complete funding applications. The survey results also are disseminated to the Justice Center's partners as part of its collaboration-building efforts. In addition, these results are used as part of an independent evaluation of the Justice Center that is being conducted by Columbia University's Center for Violence Research and Prevention.

Conclusion

In many ways, the circumstances in Red Hook were ideal for conducting a large survey. A large cadre of community members was ready to go door to door. It is a relatively small, well-defined community, making it easier to reach every corner of the neighborhood. Further, on-staff researchers were available to help design the survey and analyze the results.

However, it is possible to conduct a survey with far fewer resources. There are numerous ways to approach a survey—from a professional project conducted by consultants (as in Vermont) to less formal initiatives (like the youth survey carried out by teenagers in Denver). In West Palm Beach, Florida, a survey of 60 residents helped community court planners develop a community service program. Likewise, the youth survey in Denver helped highlight teenagers' top community concerns: crime (including graffiti, gangs, and shootings) and

quality-of-life problems (such as cleaner alleys, better street lighting, and improved traffic controls). In response, members of the Denver district attorney's youth empowerment team are trying to have more stop signs installed in the neighborhood and are organizing neighborhood cleanups.

When it is well executed, a survey can build planners' knowledge about a community, cultivate the goodwill of stakeholders, nurture partnerships, and measure a program's effectiveness over time. Combined with other methods of community outreach—such as convening focus groups, attending meetings of neighborhood organizations, and creating community advisory boards—a survey can help ensure that a community justice project makes the neighborhood safer by building stronger ties between criminal justice agencies and the communities they serve.

Appendix A:

Sample Questionnaire

The following is a shortened version of the survey administered annually by the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, New York. Questions address quality of life, personal safety, community resources, and justice system issues.

Red Hook Public Safety Corps—Operation Data COMMUNITY SURVEY

Opening Remarks: Hello, my name is _____. I'm with the Red Hook Public Safety Corps. We're conducting a survey to learn about the strengths and problems of your neighborhood. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential. This information is for research purposes only. The survey will take about 20 minutes.

1. First, I have a few basic questions. What is your relationship to this neighborhood?

- 1 Resident
- 2 Merchant
- 3 Worker
- 4 Other: _____

2. How many years have you lived or worked in this neighborhood?

(If less than 1, put 0) _____

3. In general, how do you feel about this neighborhood as a place to live or work?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Somewhat satisfied
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Somewhat unsatisfied
- 5 Very unsatisfied

4. Over the past year, how would you rate the quality of life in the neighborhood? Is the quality of life:

- 1 Very poor
- 2 Poor
- 3 Okay
- 4 Good
- 5 Very good

5. In the past year, do you think the quality of life in the neighborhood has improved, stayed the same, or declined?

- 1 Improved
- 2 Same
- 3 Declined

6. Let's talk about the problems that may exist here. After each issue that I state, tell me whether it is a:

- 1 - Very big problem 2 - Big problem
- 3 - Minor problem 4 - Not a problem

- 1 2 3 4 Public drug sales
- 1 2 3 4 Fighting in public
- 1 2 3 4 Public drug use
- 1 2 3 4 Public drinking
- 1 2 3 4 Mugging
- 1 2 3 4 Littering
- 1 2 3 4 Prostitution
- 1 2 3 4 Begging and panhandling
- 1 2 3 4 Domestic violence
- 1 2 3 4 Child neglect or abuse
- 1 2 3 4 Residential burglary
- 1 2 3 4 Vandalism
- 1 2 3 4 Shoplifting
- 1 2 3 4 Garbage on the streets
- 1 2 3 4 Graffiti
- 1 2 3 4 Rundown parks/green areas
- 1 2 3 4 Poor street repair/poor street lighting
- 1 2 3 4 Abandoned property

7. When I say a location, tell me whether you feel very safe, safe, unsafe, or very unsafe during the day:

- 1 - Very safe 2 - Safe
- 3 - Unsafe 4 - Very unsafe

- 1 2 3 4 On the street
- 1 2 3 4 In your home
- 1 2 3 4 In your lobby
- 1 2 3 4 In the elevator
- 1 2 3 4 In the stairways
- 1 2 3 4 On the way to and from the subway
- 1 2 3 4 At the local subway
- 1 2 3 4 In the stores
- 1 2 3 4 In the parks

8. For the same locations, tell me whether you feel very safe, safe, unsafe, or very unsafe at night:

1 - Very safe

2 - Safe

3 - Unsafe

4 - Very unsafe

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | On the street |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In your home |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In your lobby |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In the elevator |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In the stairways |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | On the way to and from the subway |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | At the local subway |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In the stores |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | In the parks |

9. In what other places do you feel unsafe? _____

10. A: I want to stress again that all of your responses will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Have you been a victim of any of the following crimes within the past 12 months?

Yes No

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | Mugging/robbery |
| 1 | 2 | Rape/sexual assault |
| 1 | 2 | Domestic abuse |
| 1 | 2 | Child abuse |
| 1 | 2 | Burglary of home |
| 1 | 2 | Burglary of car |
| 1 | 2 | Theft of money or personal belongings |
| 1 | 2 | Assault |
| 1 | 2 | Shooting |
| 1 | 2 | Stabbing |
| 1 | 2 | Other: _____ |

B: CORPS MEMBER: If participant answers yes to any of these questions, ask, "Was the offender under 18 years old?"

Yes No

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | Mugging/robbery |
| 1 | 2 | Rape/sexual assault |
| 1 | 2 | Domestic abuse |
| 1 | 2 | Child abuse |
| 1 | 2 | Burglary of home |
| 1 | 2 | Burglary of car |
| 1 | 2 | Theft of money or personal belongings |
| 1 | 2 | Assault |
| 1 | 2 | Shooting |
| 1 | 2 | Stabbing |
| 1 | 2 | Other: _____ |

11. What other problems is the neighborhood facing? _____

12. Are the following items strengths or weaknesses of the neighborhood?

Identify each as:

1 - Very strong

2 - Somewhat strong

3 - Not strong or weak

4 - Somewhat weak

5 - Very weak

1 2 3 4 5 Tenant association or block association

1 2 3 4 5 Churches

1 2 3 4 5 Soup kitchens

1 2 3 4 5 Health clinics/medical centers

1 2 3 4 5 Afterschool programs

1 2 3 4 5 Economic/business development programs

1 2 3 4 5 Recreational centers

1 2 3 4 5 Schools

1 2 3 4 5 Parks/public spaces

1 2 3 4 5 Stores

1 2 3 4 5 Social services agencies

1 2 3 4 5 Red Hook Public Safety Corps

13. What other organizations/leaders/programs in the neighborhood do you consider strengths or weaknesses of the community?

14. In your experience, is police response excellent, good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in your neighborhood?

1 Excellent

2 Good

3 Satisfactory

4 Unsatisfactory

5 No opinion

15. Would you characterize the relationship between the police and your community as:

1 Very positive

2 Somewhat positive

3 Neutral

4 Somewhat negative

5 Very negative

16. Would you characterize the district attorney's office's response to complaints and issues raised by the Red Hook community as:

1 Very positive

2 Somewhat positive

3 Neutral

4 Somewhat negative

5 Very negative

17. Would you characterize the relationship between the court system and your community as:

- 1 Very positive
- 2 Somewhat positive
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Somewhat negative
- 5 Very negative

18. Have you heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, the community court? (If no, skip to #74)

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

19. Where did you hear of the Red Hook Community Justice Center? From a:

- 1 Friend
- 2 Family
- 3 Local organization (If yes, which one? _____)
- 4 Newspaper/poster
- 5 Red Hook Public Safety Corps
- 6 Other: _____

20. In general, how do you feel about having a community-based justice center in your community or nearby?

- 1 Positive
- 2 Neutral
- 3 Negative

21. If they were available to you at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, would you use the following services?

Yes No

- 1 2 Entitlements and housing advocacy assistance
- 1 2 Medical care, including HIV, STD, and TB testing
- 1 2 English as a second language classes
- 1 2 Drug treatment
- 1 2 GED classes
- 1 2 Job training and job referral services
- 1 2 Neighborhood legal services for defendants
- 1 2 Childcare for court users
- 1 2 Mediation/conflict resolution

22. What other services would you want or use in the center? _____

23. What gender are you? CORPS MEMBER: You can answer this from observation.

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

24. What ethnic/racial group do you consider yourself a part of? (optional)

- 1 Black
- 2 White
- 3 Native American
- 4 Asian
- 5 Latino
- 6 Other: _____

25. How old are you?

- 1 18 or under
- 2 19 to 25
- 3 26 to 40
- 4 41 to 60
- 5 61 or over

26. How many people are there in your household? _____

27. How many of them are children? _____

Comments? _____

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B: Sample Survey Report

To give a sense of the types of reports that can result from this data collection, the following are excerpts from the Red Hook survey report produced in 2000, using data collected in 1999. This report includes findings over time and has a format that is readable and accessible. It attempts to summarize the findings and also present them in a way that will allow readers to draw their own conclusions about the data. This flexibility adds to the credibility of the report's data.

A. Summary

In October 1999, 50 members of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps, an AmeriCorps community service program, administered a communitywide household survey in Red Hook, Brooklyn, for the fifth consecutive year. Known as Operation Data, the survey focused mainly on residents' perceptions of neighborhood public safety and quality of life, existing community resources, and the criminal justice system. The 50 members of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps (the majority of whom are Red Hook residents) completed 968 interviews—a sizeable sample of a community with only 10,846 residents. The survey

reached 9 percent of the community or 18 percent of the households in Red Hook (the respondents reported a median household size of two people).

In teams of five people, the Corps covered all major geographical areas in Red Hook—the Red Hook Houses, businesses, and private residences. Team members went door-to-door to houses and, in some cases, to various organizations (e.g., the Housing Authority management office and the local health clinic) to find residents who were not at home. They administered the survey in both Spanish and English.

The data suggest the following conclusions:

Satisfaction with Red Hook is leveling off. The percentage of people who are satisfied with Red Hook (50 percent) has decreased slightly from a peak of 57 percent in 1998. In addition, after 4 years, this year marks the first decrease in the percentage of people who feel the quality of life in Red Hook is improving. In the 2000 report, 51 percent said the quality of life was better than last year, compared to 62 percent in the 1999 report, 63 percent in the 1998 report, and 34 percent in the 1997 report.

Violence in Red Hook is a big problem. Violence seems to be on the rise in Red Hook. The percentage of people who report fighting and mugging as a major problem has increased steadily since 1996—from 42 percent to 62 percent for fighting and from 40 percent to 51 percent for mugging. In addition, more than 35 percent of the participants report carrying a weapon as a safety precaution.

Fear in Red Hook is down. At the same time, the level of fear seems to be decreasing substantially. In 1998, more than 65 percent reported feeling unsafe at night in subways, lobbies, and streets, and only 45 percent reported feeling unsafe in similar areas in 1999.

Improved perceptions of the criminal justice system. For the fourth straight year, the percentage of respondents who rated the police, courts, and district attorney as positive increased. Between 1996 and 1999, positive perceptions of criminal justice agencies increased from 14 percent to 38 percent for the police, from 10 percent to 30 percent for the courts, and from 9 percent to 28 percent for the district attorney.

B. Neighborhood Quality of Life

For the fourth straight year, quality-of-life issues still dominated the participants' responses as the biggest

problems in Red Hook. While drugs remain the most prevalent problem (selling at 82 percent and using at 72 percent), littering, garbage, public drinking, public fighting, and graffiti were all identified as problems by more than 60 percent of the participants. Child abuse/neglect, panhandling, burglary, prostitution, shoplifting, and mugging were cited less frequently.

Over the 4 years, it seems violence is on the rise: 62 percent felt that public fighting was a big problem, up from 42 percent in 1996. Concerns about mugging and burglary increased by more than 5 percent. In addition, more than 35 percent reported carrying a weapon, either sometimes or always, as a safety precaution. In contrast, fewer participants cited streets and abandoned property as problems compared to the last 2 years.

Victimization. Indications that violence is on the rise are further evident in terms of victimization. Looking over the past 5 years, the percentage who report knowing someone who was a victim of violent crime has increased. The greatest increases were in domestic abuse (more than 20 percent in 1999 compared to 10 percent in 1996), rape/sexual assault (15 percent in 1999 compared to 6 percent in 1995), and child abuse (more than 16 percent in 1999 compared to 11 percent in 1996). More than 18 percent said they knew a victim of a shooting, assault, or robbery.

C. Community Resources

This section is crucial to any community justice survey in that it shows that you care about what the community thinks about your programs that operate in the neighborhood.

Red Hook Public Safety Corps. The Corps' work in the community is becoming better known. Knowledge of the Corps increased 7 percent—from 61 percent who had heard of the Corps in 1998 to 68 percent in 1999. Of those who had heard of the Corps, most knew from friends (41 percent) and family (24 percent). More than 60 percent said they were satisfied with the Corps, down slightly from 67 percent the previous year.

In terms of the services offered by the Corps, the most well known are the most visible or long-term projects, such as the Red Hook Youth Baseball League (85 percent), Coffey Park clean-up activities (82 percent), community gardens (80 percent), and graffiti removal projects (79 percent). Mediation remained the least known project of all the Corps' services during the fourth year.

Red Hook Youth Court. In only its second year, the Youth Court—a program that trains youth to serve as judges, jurors, and attorneys to hear cases of youth who commit low-level offenses such as truancy and fare evasion—has made its presence known in the community. More than 58

percent of the survey participants had heard of the Youth Court. When asked about their satisfaction with the program, 68 percent reported being satisfied or very satisfied, a slight decrease from 76 percent a year earlier.

Other community services. Although the majority of respondents rated several community agencies (e.g., the Corps, schools, afterschool programs, and churches) as strengths, this still represents a lower percentage of people than in 1998. The biggest changes from the previous year were the percentage of those who felt soup kitchens were strengths (increased from 31 percent to 44 percent); social services agencies were strengths (increased from 35 percent to 45 percent); and economic/business development programs were strengths (increased from 37 percent to 46 percent).

D. Criminal Justice

When participants were asked about their opinion of various criminal justice agencies, they were most positive about the Red Hook Community Justice Center, followed by the police, judicial system, and district attorney. Overall support for the justice system has increased substantially since 1996: the percentage who feel positive increased for the police (from 14 percent to 38 percent), for the judicial system (from 10 percent to 30 percent), and for the district attorney's office (from 9 percent to 28 percent).

More people are hearing about the Justice Center. Almost 60 percent of the survey participants had heard about the Justice Center—up 5 percent from the previous year. When asked if they would use services at the Justice

Center, more than 80 percent said yes to all of the listed services. The service that was seen as most helpful was job training, followed by daycare, law-related education, and a landlord/tenant resource center.

Sources for Further Information

Center for Court Innovation

The winner of an Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the Center for Court Innovation is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts can solve difficult problems like addiction, quality-of-life crime, domestic violence, and child neglect. The center functions as the New York State Unified Court System's independent research and development arm, creating demonstration projects that test new approaches to problems that have resisted conventional solutions. The center's problem-solving courts include the nation's first community court (Midtown Community Court in New York) as well as drug courts, domestic violence courts, youth courts, family treatment courts, and others.

Nationally, the center disseminates the lessons learned from its experiments in New York, helping courts across the country launch their own problem-solving innovations. The center contributes to the national conversation about justice by convening roundtable conversations that bring together

leading academics and practitioners and by contributing to policy and professional journals. The center also provides hands-on technical assistance, advising court and criminal justice planners throughout the country about program and technology design.

For more information, call 212-397-3050 or e-mail info@courtinnovation.org.

Bureau of Justice Assistance

810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
202-616-6500
Fax: 202-305-1367
Web site: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA

Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-688-4252
Web site: www.ncjrs.org

Clearinghouse staff are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. eastern time. Ask to be placed on the BJA mailing list.

Bureau of Justice Assistance Information

For more indepth information about BJA, its programs, and its funding opportunities, requesters can call the BJA Clearinghouse. The BJA Clearinghouse, a component of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), shares BJA program information with state and local agencies and community groups across the country. Information specialists are available to provide reference and referral services, publication distribution, participation and support for conferences, and other networking and outreach activities. The clearinghouse can be reached by:

- Mail**
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
- Visit**
2277 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850
- Telephone**
1-800-688-4252
Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.
eastern time
- Fax**
301-519-5212
- BJA Home Page**
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA
- NCJRS Home Page**
www.ncjrs.org
- E-mail**
askncjrs@ncjrs.org
- JUSTINFO Newsletter**
E-mail to listproc@ncjrs.org
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type:
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U.S. Department of Justice
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Washington, DC 20531

