

# **Evaluation of the Hartford Community Court**

**By: The Justice Education Center, Inc.**  
**Date: December 2002**

## **Acknowledgments**

The Evaluation of Hartford Community Court was conducted by the Justice Education Center, Inc., for the Connecticut Judicial Branch. The Center gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the Community Court personnel for their tremendous cooperation and support throughout the evaluation process. Judge Raymond Norko and Court Planner Chris Pleasanton's doors were always open. Their assistance in providing data to The Center's research team and enabling team members to utilize the Community Court facility both during and after hours for interviews and focus groups was of immeasurable value and indicative of the openness and flexibility of the Court as a whole.

A tremendous debt of gratitude is also extended to Harold Moan, the Judicial Branch's Official Court Reporter and his staff for allowing The Center to use the recording and transcription equipment of the Court. Transcribing the focus group discussions could not have been accomplished without the excellent services of Susan Frederick, Administrative Assistant of the Superior Court. Also, special thanks are extended to Community Service Coordinator Christopher Mena and his entire staff of field supervisors in assisting with the coordination of client exit interviews, and to all Community Court marshals for their day-to-day cooperation. Extended thanks are given to the hardworking team of focus group facilitators and exit interviewers: Brian Smith, Gabriela Campos, Hector Ortiz, and Victor Alvaladero.

Further, The Justice Education Center wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Robert Price, Project Coordinator, whose extraordinary efforts in managing the evaluation process, conducting interviews and co-facilitating focus groups were critical to the success of the project. The Center also wishes to extend its deep appreciation to Eleanor Lyon, Ph.D. of Lyon & Associates, and Ivan Kuzyk of the Trinity College Cities Data Center, for their extensive efforts in reviewing and evaluating the Court date, and to Janet Shute, writing consultant whose contribution to the editing of the report was invaluable.

The numbers of community leaders and residents who took time from their busy schedules to discuss their perspectives on Hartford's Community Court was invaluable. Most particularly, the Center wishes to thank Rae Ann Palmer, Coordinator of Community Programs for the Hartford Police Department, Linda Behr and the membership of Hartford 2000, and Marchita Morgan of Hartford's Weed and Seed Program.

Throughout the evaluation process, The Center had the opportunity to meet with the leadership and rank and file of the Hartford Police Department. The Center greatly appreciates the efforts of Chief Bruce Marquis and the Department's officers who provided their unique perspectives on the role of the Court in improving public safety.

The Center also gratefully acknowledges the input of Mayor Eddie Perez, and Calixto Torres, Executive Director of the Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum. Their insights into the history and evolution of the Community Court and its impact on the quality of life in Hartford were of tremendous value.

Without the cooperation of these individuals and agencies, this study would not have been possible. The Justice Education Center hopes that the information contained in this evaluation will be a valuable tool for the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the Hartford Community Court, and the City and citizens of Hartford in improving the quality of life for Hartford residents.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Success of the Community Court

This evaluation demonstrates that Hartford's Community Court has successfully addressed the principles on which it was founded, as measured two ways: by the clear support of the Court's constituencies, and by the ways in which the Court has addressed the needs of all of its 17 neighborhoods equitably.

### Strong support for Community Court by the Hartford community

Three separate methodologies were used for this evaluation:

- **Focus groups** with Community Court judicial and social services staff, police, neighborhood and community partnerships, and local business groups.
- **Stakeholder interviews** with key court and social services staff; political, religious, business and community leaders; and city and state government representatives.
- **Exit interviews** with 186 Court clients as they finished their community service.

By large margins, the responses from each of these groups, independent of one another, were supportive of the Court's work. Even 96% of the defendants/clients said that Community Court was a "good idea." It is interesting to note that, while the clients of the Community Court might have been expected to have a different and more critical view of the nature, process, and operation of the Court, the themes they voiced were remarkably similar to those of the stakeholder and focus group participants. The fact that the findings and patterns of results across the three separate groups and methodologies were similar and mutually reinforcing gives credence not only to the findings of the evaluation, but also to this report's recommendations for the future direction of the Community Court.

### Credibility of the Court in addressing neighborhood needs

One of the key reasons Hartford's Community Court is so well respected by Hartford's constituents is because of the way the Court has responded to and addressed the needs and concerns of each of Hartford's defined 17 neighborhoods. Community service is being performed throughout the city. Moreover, this evaluation shows that the client population profile of the Court is quite reflective of the City's demographics. "Equal justice for all" and "No one gets off" were recurring, positive themes in this evaluation.

### Key strengths of the Court, as seen by the community and the clients alike

Several themes were prominent in describing the unique and important role that the Community Court plays in Hartford:

- The project is the result of a comprehensive community partnership
- The Court is proactive in its ongoing design and implementation of programs and protocols to address community concerns
- The Court bases its work on the concept of restorative justice – having clients "pay back" the community for crimes that have been committed
- The Court is committed to helping offenders begin to lead crime-free lives, and works to accomplish this through a synergistic balance of sanctions and social services.

While this evaluation shares participants' suggestions for areas for improvement and areas of future challenges for the Court, it is overwhelmingly clear that Hartford's Community Court is a stable and important force in the community.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

**Principles**

**Sentencing Policy**

**Numbers and Types of Cases**

**Outreach, Community Liaison and Programming**

**Development of New Protocols and Programming**

## BACKGROUND

The Hartford Community Court has its roots in the federally funded Comprehensive Communities Partnership program, which seeks to improve coordination among criminal justice agencies and Hartford neighborhoods. The effort initially focused on community policing and anti-gang initiatives, but community leaders and residents also wanted to address low-level crimes. For this reason, the Community Court concept was enthusiastically endorsed by community and business leaders who recognized the importance of focusing attention on quality-of-life crimes in the city as a strategy for reducing the incidences of serious crime in the city. Through its inception, development, and growth it has had its share of “growing pains”, but the level of enthusiasm for the Court’s mission and the trust the Court has engendered within the Hartford community remains. What follows is a qualitative evaluation of this unique public/private partnership.

Planning for the Community Court began in 1996 and included the enactment of state legislation to mandate alternative sentences for ordinance violations.<sup>1</sup> The Court was the product of collaboration among the City of Hartford, the State’s Attorney Office for Hartford, and the Connecticut Judicial Branch. Substantial federal funds from the U.S. Department of Justice as well as state and city monies were earmarked prior to the Court opening its doors.

During its planning and into the implementation phases, strong emphasis was placed on obtaining citizen input into the establishment of court policies and practices and the identification of potential community service sites.<sup>2</sup> After two years of intensive planning, the Court began taking cases in November of 1998. It was the third of its kind in the nation, following the Midtown Community Court in New York City and the Community Court in Portland, Oregon, and was the first to focus on an entire city.

Hartford’s effort was unique in six ways:

1. Much of the initial planning was conducted with collaboration among the city’s leaders, residents and the judge<sup>3</sup>.
2. The court stands as the first Community Court to serve an entire city (120,000 citizens from 17 neighborhoods).
3. The Court has the ability to mete out alternative sanctions for ordinance violations (cases that previously almost always received a small fine or were unilaterally dismissed in the geographical area court).

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<sup>1</sup> *The Community Court Session at Hartford: An Historical Perspective 1998-2003* by the Honorable Raymond R. Norko and Chris Pleasanton

<sup>2</sup> Quintin Johnstone, *The Hartford Community Court: An Experiment That Has Succeeded* (2001). Connecticut Law Review, volume 34, pp. 123-156

<sup>3</sup> Judge Raymond R. Norko was appointed as a superior court judge by Governor William O’Neill in 1985, and was selected by the Honorable Aaron Ment, Chief Court Administrator in 1997 to oversee the development and implementation of the Hartford Community Court.

4. Community Court staff includes not only Judicial Branch personnel, but employees from city, state, and private social service agencies.
5. The Court responds to each of Hartford's 17 neighborhoods by working closely with their problem-solving committees in order to articulate priorities for each neighborhood, and sends a representative to the Court's advisory board.
6. The Court sends community service crews to every neighborhood and, when possible, sends clients back to perform community service in the same neighborhood where their arrest and/or summons was made.

## PRINCIPLES

At its core, the Community Court concept has developed nationally since 1993, and in Hartford since 1998. It addresses proactively the Broken Windows theory that eliminating small problems will reduce more major problems in the future – that targeting low-level crimes will result in fewer incidents of serious crime. The Hartford Community Court targets these kinds of quality of life misdemeanors: *e.g.*, public nuisance crimes (loitering and excessive noise); prostitution; small quantities of marijuana possession; public drunkenness; and petty larceny. In traditional courts, judges are often forced to choose between a few days of jail time and nothing at all – sentences that fail to impress the victim, the community or defendants that these offenses are taken seriously, and that, in turn, fail to meet the needs of these populations.

1. Restoring the community through recognizing that communities are victims. Using punishment to pay back the community; combining punishment with social services/treatment help, giving the community a voice in shaping restorative sanctions; and making social services at the Court open to all community residents.
2. Bridging the gap between communities and courts by making justice visible, accessible, and proactive, in addition to reaching out to victims.
3. Knitting together a criminal justice system by using the authority of the Court to link criminal justice agencies, makes social service providers and criminal justice professionals work together, and explore crossing jurisdictional lines.
4. Helping offenders deal with problems that lead to crime by putting problems first, using the court as a gateway to treatment and remaining involved beyond disposition of the immediate case.
5. Providing better information to the Court by making as much information as possible available at the defendant's first appearance, and using current information to enhance accountability.
6. Designing the courthouse so that it is a physical expression of the Court's goals and values, so that it is more than a courtroom, in that all key functions are under one roof: both judicial (bail, adjudicative, prosecutorial) and social services (intake and referral and community service).



## SENTENCING POLICY

Consistency in judicial decision making is an important foundation for the Court. Whether the offense is a statutory crime or a municipal violation, there has been a congruity in sentencing process that has helped to clarify and reinforce the Court's overall mission, as well as its approach to individual clients.

**State statutes:** Below is a listing of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, the Municipal Codes of the City of Hartford, and the informal parameters established by Judge Norko<sup>4</sup> for sentencing the majority of Community Court defendants charged with statutory crimes.

### State Statutory Crimes and Informal Sentencing Guidelines<sup>5</sup>

Offense	Statute	Sentence
Breach of Peace	53a-181	One day community service
Larceny	53a-125b	One day community service
Simple Possession of Marijuana	21a-279c	Two days community service (First time charge only)
Interference (no injury to the officer)	53a-167a	One day community service
Prostitution	53a-82	Continuance 30 to 60 days, assessed for protocol; if not suitable, 8 days of community service or jail depending on case
Solicitation	53a-83	Men's health class, mandatory STD testing, five days of community service
Disorderly Conduct	53a-182	One day community service
Threatening	53a-62	One day community service
Criminal Mischief	53a-117	One day community service
Illegal Possession of Fireworks	29-357a	One day community service
Criminal impersonation	53a-130	One day community service
Littering	22a-250	One day community service
Minor Possession of Liquor	30-89b	One day community service
Illegal Liquor Purchase	30-89a	One day community service
Illegal alcohol sale	30-74b	One day community service
Liquor Control Act	30-133	One day community service

<sup>4</sup> *The Community Court Session at Hartford: An Historical Perspective 1998-2003* by the Honorable Raymond R. Norko and Chris Pleasanton

<sup>5</sup> Warrants are issued for defendants who fail to appear for community service, there are no second chances or warnings.

2. Defendants charged with illegal sale of liquor must plead guilty and earn an unconditional discharge for the Department of Liquor Control investigation.
3. Defendants charged with any crime occurring in a hospital emergency ward have their sentence increased automatically (usually doubled).
4. Defendants who have prior criminal histories (e.g. charged with the same offense) are sentenced to additional community service.
5. Some high school and most college student defendants are required by the judge to write an essay about their court experience in addition to their performance of community service.

**Municipal codes:** The following is the Municipal Code of the City of Hartford and the informal guidelines established by Judge Norko for sentencing the majority of Community Court defendants convicted of the following municipal violations, with explanatory notes by Prosecutor Glenn Kaas.<sup>6</sup>

**City of Hartford Ordinance Violations and Informal Sentencing Guidelines**

<b>Offense</b>	<b>Statute</b>	<b>Sentence</b>
Public Nuisance	24-2	One day community service
Loitering	25-8	One day community service (PROSECUTOR’S NOTE: In order to prosecute this violation, it is not sufficient that the defendant simply be standing or sitting in the same place for a period of time. The offender must also be an impediment or interference with the street, sidewalk, or other public area and it must be indicated so in the police report for prosecution.)
Public Drinking	4-3	One day community service (PROSECUTOR’S NOTE: In order to prosecute this violation, the offender must actually be on public property (i.e. highway, sidewalk, park, etc.), not simply publicly visible. Standing on private property while drinking is not a prosecutable offense.
Excessive Noise	23-1	One day community service
Littering	15-3	One day community service
Public Indecency	25-2	One day community service
Vending Violations	27-28	One day community service
Curfew	25-4	One day community service

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<sup>6</sup>Glenn Kaas is a Connecticut Assistant State’s Attorney. He has been the primary prosecutor assigned to the Hartford Community Court since the Court’s inception in 1998.

## NUMBERS AND TYPES OF CASES

Hartford's Community Court targets quality of life misdemeanors and infractions: *e.g.*, public nuisance crimes (loitering and excessive noise); prostitution; possession of small quantities of marijuana; public drunkenness; and petty larceny. The numbers and types of cases handled by the Court are impressive in both the number of referrals and diversity of the caseload.

In 2001, the number of arraignments in Community Court was higher than for any other court in the state.

### Statistics from the inception of Community Court

The overall statistics from November 10, 1998 to November 30, 2002 include:

Total # of cases processed	31,047
Total # of community service hours performed	119,954
Total # of social services referrals	9,721
Total # of referrals to HAMP (mediation)	1,458

### Community Court monthly caseload statistics

The monthly caseload statistics from 1998 to 2002 include:

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
January		333	403	732	530
February		430	306	806	537
March		655	441	744	590
April		636	388	478	737
May		508	364	577	818
June		780	465	777	695
July		595	520	1,041	722
August		981	688	1,216	518
September		722	584	879	736
October		684	654	863	991
November	301	656	782	627	749
December	543	479	652	494	626
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>7,459</b>	<b>6,247</b>	<b>9,234</b>	<b>8,249 (32,033)</b>

### Types of crimes seen by Community Court

Clients clearly are being brought to Community Court for quality of life type crimes, as is the purpose of the Community Court. The Court sees the most minor level of misdemeanors and infractions. The most common offense was loud noise, followed by possession of marijuana. Loud noise and public drinking alone constituted over a quarter of all the cases. Nearly 82% of the cases brought before Community Court in this sample were for loud noise, possession of marijuana, public drinking, trespassing, interference with a police officer, shoplifting, loitering, and prostitution-related offenses. Gambling, disorderly conduct, breach of peace and other low levels of illegal behavior accounted for the remaining 18%. The table below is representative of exit interviews conducted in summer, 2002.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Loud Noise	31	16.9
Possession of Marijuana	21	11.4
Public Drinking	20	10.9
Solicitation/Prostitution	16	8.7
Interference	17	9.2
Trespassing	17	9.2
Shoplifting/Larceny	15	8.2
Loitering	14	7.6
Other	11	6.0
Disorderly Conduct	9	4.9
Breach of Peace	6	3.3
Gambling	4	2.2
Fighting	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Community Court monthly community service hours performed

**HARTFORD COMMUNITY COURT MONTHLY STATISTICS**

\*NUMBER IN PARENTHESIS REFLECT THE DIFFERENCE FROM SAME MONTH DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR

MONTH	SUMMONS/ARREST	COM. SERVICE HOURS
Dec-02	626(+152)	3678(+700)
Nov-02	749(+122)	3894(+1860)
Oct-02	991(+128)	3906(+1226)
Sep-02	736(-143)	3000(+795)
Aug-02	518(-698)	3459(+441)
Jul-02	722(-319)	4434(+2169)
Jun-02	695(-82)	1218(-612)
May-02	818(+241)	4170(+1228)
Apr-02	737(+259)	1890(-972)
Mar-02	590(-154)	2232(-628)
Feb-02	537(-269)	1608(-522)
Jan-02	530(-202)	3108(+79)
	<b>8249</b>	<b>36597</b>

Social Services interview/referral statistics

**SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT INTERVIEW/REFERRAL STATISTICS**

December 1, 2001 to November 30, 2002

NAME	# INTERVIEWS	# REFERRALS MADE	#REFERRALS NOT NEEDED
December	341	131	188
January	510	180	259
February	390	151	208
March	443	173	234
April	567	325	257
May	586	338	305
June	510	276	304
July	555	291	339
August	412	264	169
September	576	350	258
October	715	345	317
November	618	348	280
Totals	6223	3172	3118

**Mediation statistics**

Mediation has been a strong component of the Community Court. During FY2001-02, the Hartford Area Mediation Program (HAMP) handled 380 Community Court cases and resolved 47% of those cases; during the first six months of FY 2002-03, HAMP handled 240 cases, with 57% resolved.

**Charges:** For FY2001-02 cases, charges were: 186 breach of peace; 62 criminal mischief; 48 threatening; 48 disorderly conduct; 16 larceny; 8 criminal trespass; 7 interfering; 1 assault, and 4 "other."

**Race/ethnicity of defendants:** African-Americans: 79 female (21%) and 69 male (18%); Hispanic: 95 female (26%) and 75 male (20%); Caucasian: 34 male (9%) and 16 female (4%); Other: 10 male (3%) and 2 female (.5%).

## **OUTREACH, COMMUNITY LIAISON AND PROGRAMMING**

### **Outreach and community liaison**

One of the strengths of the Court's design and administrative structure is its flexibility and commitment to respond to emerging community problems identified by law enforcement, neighborhoods, and/or members of the Court's informal advisory committee.

The Community Court interfaces with the community through a number of mechanisms, one of which is its informal advisory committee. The committee consists of: representatives from the Court, including the presiding judge; the director of the City of Hartford's Comprehensive Communities Partnership (CCP); representatives from each of the 17 neighborhood problem-solving committees who sit on the advisory committee for CCP; police; representatives from the Neighborhood Revitalization Zones and from merchant/business associations that are actively involved. In tandem, these groups provide an ongoing assessment of community conditions and Court activities.

The "open door" policy of the Court can be witnessed on a regular basis. As an example, during one of the discussions the evaluation team was having with the Court Planner and Judge, a representative of the West End Civic Association dropped by without an appointment to discuss the regionalization of the Court. Both the Judge and the Court Planner made time to discuss the issues of concern and encouraged the representative to return whenever necessary. They clearly made themselves available for any association meetings that would be appropriate or helpful for them to attend.

### **Social Services and Programming**

One of the most important aspects – if not the pivotal aspect – of the Community Court was the development of a collective effort among municipal and state agencies relating to the provision of comprehensive social services for clients. Protocols and waivers had to be put into place to enable state and city agencies to share information; procedures for working together had to be established.

From its inception, Hartford's Community Court was designed to utilize a wide array of government and non-profit human services agencies to meet the needs of the offenders who come before it. Every defendant is required to be interviewed by a member of the Hartford Community Court social services team, which consists of members from the City of Hartford Human Services Department, the State Department of Social Services and the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The social needs of the defendant are assessed and appropriate assistance is provided. Team members provide a wide array of services and referrals. Defendants can receive job training and education referrals from the City of Hartford Human Services Department staff; medical cards and food stamps from the State Department of Social Services; and substance abuse and mental health treatment when necessary from the State's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

The Court also allows community members at-large to access in-house services, which include mediation, employment counseling, HIV/AIDS education and testing, GED and nutritional classes, and mental health and substance abuse assessment and referral. The Court also has created numerous partnerships with the private sector to bridge the gaps between service needs, budget constraints and service delivery.

## DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROTOCOLS AND PROGRAMMING

### **Protocols**

Unlike traditional courts, Hartford's Community Court has actively designed a number of protocols to address specific problems in the city. Often these protocols have been developed in response to needs raised by citizens, police, and community leaders.

#### **Prostitution Protocol**

The reduction of street prostitution in Hartford continues to be a concern of law enforcement, the city's neighborhoods, and the courts. Prostitution not only victimizes the neighborhoods in which it occurs by lowering the quality of life, but very often leads to an increase in more serious crimes such as drug related offenses, larceny, and in some cases an increase in violent crime.

In response to community demands and the need for public safety, Hartford police increased the enforcement of street prostitution and the Court developed a program to productively address those cases. The Community Court piloted a limited Prostitution Protocol program in September 1999 to address the needs of women involved in prostitution and to reduce the unacceptably high recidivism rate for women convicted of prostitution.

Women involved in prostitution possess a unique set of legal, educational, and social service needs that often impede successful rehabilitation and lead to continued recidivism. Women who have been arrested for prostitution need to break their cycle of arrest and then returning to the street – a lifestyle that often includes a history of drug and alcohol dependence, victimization, violence and retribution from authoritative street figures, and physical and mental illness.

As of November 2002, the Community Court had graduated 142 women from the pilot Prostitution Protocol program. Only 44 of the 142 graduates have returned to the Court on a charge of prostitution, a recidivism rate of 31%, significantly below the national recidivism rate for prostitutes not receiving any treatment, which is over 90% (according to the Paul & Lisa Program, national leaders in prostitution protocol development).

The Community Court's Prostitution Protocol Program seeks to empower women to choose and maintain a productive and healthy lifestyle by addressing the underlying causes that drive women into a life of prostitution. Participants in the program are required to attend five training sessions designed to educate, build self-esteem and offer treatment alternatives for physical and mental health and substance abuse. These five sessions specifically address the following crucial issues for recovery: physical care; stress management; self-esteem; life goals; and individual counseling. Participants are also required to perform five days of court-supervised community service upon completion of the training sessions.

#### **"John" Protocol**

In addition to handling prostitution cases within the Hartford Judicial District, the Community Court also presides over cases of those who are charged with soliciting prostitutes for their services. "Johns" who solicit prostitutes contribute heavily to the deterioration of neighborhoods by fueling the economy of this illegal business practice. It also draws accessory criminal activity, such as illegal drug sales, to the area. Many prostitutes also carry diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis, which can be transferred through sexual activity. "Johns" can contract these and other diseases from the prostitutes and then transmit them. The Community Court developed a "John" Protocol designed not only to punish the perpetrators, but also to educate them about the impact their behavior has on both their health and the community.

#### **STD Testing (Sexually Transmitted Disease) Protocol**

The Community Court recognizes that many defendants arrested or summonsed to the court are at high risk of STD's, for contracting and transmitting STDs due to direct involvement in a sexually related crime and/or impaired judgment resulting from substance abuse that may affect their conduct. In cooperation with the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health STD Control Program, Communicable Disease Division, City of Hartford Health Department, and, Office of City Manager, Comprehensive Communities Partnership, the Court mandates certain defendants to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These defendants are tested by and, if necessary, treated by the City of Hartford Health Department. Due



to statutory limitations, the court considers, but cannot mandate, STD testing for certain defendants charged exclusively with drug offenses or those known to have a substance abuse problem (*i.e.*, no sexually related charges).

## **Programming**

One of the Community Court's strengths is its development of new initiatives and partnerships with Hartford-area groups interested in improving Hartford and providing services to those who are in need.

### **Third Age Initiative – Life Skills Program for Troubled Teens**

The Community Court, in partnership with Leadership Greater Hartford's Third Age Initiative, launched a new educational curriculum in the fall of 2002 for offenders between the ages of 16 and 21. The Community Court "Life Skills Program" consists of five weekly classes focusing on consumer skills, financial fitness, physical and mental health, and enhancement of employability and socially appropriate behavior. Through the curriculum, instructors hope to teach the youths the practical skills they need to survive as independent, responsible citizens.

***SIDEBAR** "I see too many kids in court who don't have even the most basic skills needed to survive as responsible members of. Whatever the circumstances are that have affected their lives, they haven't learned how to balance a checkbook, how to interview for a job, or about nutrition. We intend to introduce these concepts into their lives."*

*Judge Raymond Norko  
Presiding Community Court judge*

Members of the Third Age Initiative approached the Community Court in Hartford the spring of 2002 to determine whether there was a population in need and a forum in which they could help others through teaching. After several discussions, both parties saw an opportunity to help young offenders. The Third Age Initiative volunteered for the program, at no cost to the state. Retired educators, professionals, and others interested in sharing their knowledge comprise the Third Age Initiative, and volunteers from the organization teach the classes.

Youths who enter the program are culled from the Community Court docket by the Court, or on the recommendation of the prosecutors, social services staff, or bail commissioners. Offenders who complete the program have a formal graduation ceremony, complete with diplomas. Third Age Initiative Coordinator Janice Vissoe said. "We hope that they will use this information not only for themselves but with their family and friends, so that a 'ripple effect' of this information will get out into the community."

### **Hartford Transitional Learning Academy (HTLA)**

The Community Court and Hartford Transitional Learning Academy (HTLA) have enjoyed a successful partnership formed under unlikely circumstances. Located three buildings from the Community Court, HTLA and the Community Court initially coexisted with little interaction. In fall 2000, several HTLA students harassed the community service work crew members who were cleaning behind the respective facilities. Instead of reporting the incident and pursuing disciplinary action, the community service work crew supervisor put the Court and HTLA in touch in an effort to find a better solution to the students' hostility. After much discussion, the Court and HTLA officials thought the students' behavior stemmed from negative experiences they had had with the Court, both for themselves and their family.

In order to promote a better understanding of the legal system, the Community Court began hosting visits from HTLA students during which they would meet with Judge Norko, ask questions about the Court, have their picture taken with the Judge, and then watch a Court session from the jury box. At times, a Hartford Police K-9 Officer brings his K-9 partner to visit with the students. An Educational Case Manager for the Hartford School system supervises the students. Dozens of HTLA students visited the Community Court throughout the 2000-2001 school year. In addition to their regular visits, the HTLA students and Community Court also participated in several special events. On January 28, 2001, the HTLA students held a breakfast in honor of Judge Norko at the student-run Miracles Café located within the HTLA facility.

On May 1, 2001 the HTLA students conducted their own trials in the Community Court courtroom in honor of Law Day 2001. With assistance from Court staff, the students used the knowledge they gained from their visits to run trials, with students acting as judge, jury, prosecutor, and public defender.

During the school year, the Educational Case Manager noticed that many of the students who participated in the Court visits began to show both behavioral and academic improvement. To honor their efforts, a graduation ceremony was designed for those who participated in the visits. At the graduation, the students were presented with diplomas from Judge Norko.

### **Community Service**

One of the Community Court's primary missions is to develop new initiatives and partnerships with Hartford area groups interested in improving Hartford and providing services to those who are in-need. The Community Court is approached by numerous organizations within and outside of the Hartford area requesting the assistance of its community service work crews. While it is unrealistic to meet every request several successful partnerships have been formed.

### **Foodshare**

Foodshare gathers food from restaurants, grocery stores and private donations and then distributes it to the hungry. Its trucks deliver the food to local community centers. However, due to union constraints, their drivers only unload the food outside the centers. Since 1999, the Community Court has arranged to have its community service work crews meet the Foodshare trucks at the community centers each Friday morning. The crews unload the trucks, carry the food into the centers, and prepare it for distribution to the needy.

### **Ebony Horsewomen**

The Community Court has developed a relationship with the Ebony Horsewomen where community service work crews can perform their duties and be exposed to an educational and healing environment. The Ebony Horsewomen, Inc., a nonprofit group founded in 1984, works with Hartford's young people. It involves them in innovative equestrian programs to empower them to become positive citizens and to deter destructive behavior. The organization provides a variety of programs designed for youth including a "Learn to Ride" course involving kids in a curriculum that includes basic equestrian skills, animal husbandry, and agricultural sciences.

After meeting with representatives from the Ebony Horsewomen and inspecting their facilities first-hand, the Community Court's Community Service Director developed a plan to have the Court's community service work crews perform various tasks at the equestrian facility including cleaning the stables, washing and brushing the horses, and helping with such maintenance tasks as lining fences. The first community service crews to work at the stables responded positively, commenting on how it benefited Hartford area children, and how it was a new experience in a constructive environment that taught them new skills.

### **Hartford Economic Development Commission (HEDC)**

In early 2002, the Community Court embarked on a partnership with the Hartford Economic Development Commission (HEDC) in which the Commission recruited local business owners to clean their property at the same time the Court's community service work crews were cleaning sites in the area. The first clean up event took place on Farmington Avenue on February 27, 2002.

"This collaboration is unprecedented and clearly provides solidarity between the Court, the city, the police, HEDC, and the community," Judge Norko said. "Each of us is committed to improving our community through the enforcement of quality of life crimes and maintaining a clean and safe environment for residents. It goes to the heart of the 'Broken Windows' theory the Court is based upon."

HEDC also produced magnetic stickers displayed by local businesses saying, "If you loiter, litter or panhandle, YOU will be cleaning with the community service work crews."

"We've noticed positive results already in the first two weeks of distributing the stickers," said Harry Freeman, Executive Director of the Hartford Economic Development Commission, after the program began. "Business owners want a safe, clean environment for their customers and they want a prompt response when they have a complaint. The stickers have helped make that happen."

"The Court maintains its policy of not cleaning private business properties," Judge Norko added. "We are still cleaning sites the community sanctions committee wants cleaned with the added bonus of having area businesses join in. It is an excellent way of involving businesses in cleanup efforts and we are very excited about this partnership."

### **City of Hartford Clean Up**

Due to personnel shortages at the City of Hartford Department of Public Works (DPW) combined with the growing demand from citizens to have several major thoroughfares cleaned throughout the city, the Community Court has agreed to participate with the DPW in a weekly clean-up initiative. Each Monday, the Court sends its community service work crews to those sites where they clean and remove debris. The DPW meets the work crews upon completion of their duties to remove the debris. In order to promote the safety of the Court's work crews in these high-traffic locations, the Court has purchased flashing safety lights for each of their community service trucks for use in these locations.

### **Shelters**

There are several shelters throughout Hartford providing services to the homeless and/or destitute. While the shelters provide a safe haven and meet basic needs such as food and clothing for their clients, the social and economic pressures affecting this population provide a stimulus for quality of life crimes to occur. The primary quality of life crimes associated with the homeless population are Public Drinking, Trespassing, Larceny, and Breach of Peace. It is estimated that the shelters release over 400 clients from their care each morning (most shelters do not have in-house day programs). These clients return to the streets with nowhere to go, and little or no economic means of support. As such, many frequently run afoul of the law and are summonsed to the Community Court. While there are limited resources available to both the Court and the shelters, both continue to work together to assist this in-need population to improve their lives and reduce criminal involvement with the legal system.

Since the Court's inception, the Community Court and the shelters have had a positive working relationship. The Court faxes its dockets to each shelter, which then posts the dockets for their clients to review. In addition to the daily dockets, the Community Court faxes a weekly "wanted" list of defendants who had warrants issued during the past week. It is the goal of the Court, through these notifications, to remind the shelter population of their obligation to appear in Court if charged with a quality of life offense, to increase compliance, and to reduce the failure to appear rate.

The Community Court has hosted several forums with the shelters to discuss the issues the homeless population causes for the shelters and the community alike. During these meetings, both parties have been able to find common ground for partnership and have worked together to better serve this population. The social workers from several shelters have worked with court staff to assist individual clients with acute needs. In the process, this has both expanded the services available to the client, and increased the rate of compliance for many of these individuals.

### **Legal Aid**

Prior to his nomination to the Judiciary, Judge Norko served as director of the Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA) from 1975 to 1985. The GHLA provides legal assistance to those unable to represent themselves or to pay for an attorney. In this spirit, Judge Norko contacted GHLA to inquire if they could provide legal help to women involved in the Court's Prostitution Protocol program. Prostitution Protocol participants have a wide array of legal issues, many of which center on custody of their children. In several cases, the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) have removed children from the custody of the parents involved in prostitution, for the safety of the child. One of the primary goals of many graduates from the Prostitution Protocol program is to regain custody of their children. Due to their economic situations and the complexity of their legal histories, this often proves difficult. GHLA has agreed to meet with interested Prostitution Protocol graduates to advise them of their legal rights and ensure they are properly represented before the Courts.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

**Methodology:**

**Context for Qualitative Research Results**

**Section 1:**

**Focus Group/Stakeholder Interviews**

**Section 2:**

**Client Exit Interviews**

## METHODOLOGY

### Context for Qualitative Research Results

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#### Summary of study methodology

In order to obtain diverse yet representative data about the impact of the Community Court from a variety of constituencies, the consultants implemented three separate methodologies

**Community Court client exit interviews**, to provide responses from a representative sample of the broad client population that is served by the Court.

**Focus groups**, to provide in-depth, qualitative perspectives on the workings and impact of the Community Court from a wide variety of carefully selected groups of people: Community Court judicial and social services staff; police; neighborhood and community partnerships; and local business groups<sup>1</sup>.

**Stakeholder interviews**, to provide a supplementary and more intensive picture from particularly knowledgeable leaders within a field or community: key court and social services staff; political, religious, business and community leaders; and city and state government representatives.

**The fact that the findings and patterns of results across the diverse groups and methodologies were similar and mutually reinforcing gives credence not only to the findings of the evaluation, but also to this report's recommendations for the future direction of the Community Court.**

Section 1 reviews the responses of the focus group and stakeholder interviews. Participant responses have been merged and summarized, and thematic consistencies have been noted and referenced with representative interview excerpts. Section 2 reviews the responses of the 186 clients who were interviewed as they exited community service.

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#### Key finding

For urban planning purposes, Hartford defined seventeen designated, diverse neighborhoods. This evaluation was designed to measure perceptions of the impact of the Community Court on these Hartford neighborhoods: the effectiveness of the collaboration between the Court and the community, the expectations of the community residents and the clients, and the extent to which those expectations were met by the Court. One of the commonly perceived strengths of the Hartford Community Court was its ability to address the needs of the entire city.

The response of all participants in the Community Court evaluation – clients, staff, and community members and leaders – was overwhelmingly positive. While the clients of the Community Court, for example, might well have been expected to have a different, and perhaps more critical, view of the nature, process, and operation of the Court than other community members and Court staff, the themes voiced in this study – both positive and negative – were remarkably similar among the three groups. The fact that the findings and patterns of results across the three separate groups and methodologies were similar and mutually reinforcing gives credence not only to the findings of the evaluation, but also to this report's recommendations for the future direction of the Community Court.

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## Description of the three methodologies

### Client exit interviews (186 interviews)

The interview process with Community Court clients was designed to obtain information about client experiences with the arrest incident that had brought them to the Court, their encounters with the full range of court staff, their reactions to the Court experience, and background information that might add perspective to their responses. The questions were developed by The Justice Education Center staff and consultants, following observations of the Court and discussions with Court staff. The questions were reviewed by key Court personnel.

### Representative client profile

Exit interviews for 186 clients were completed during the two-month period of May and June, 2002. Since court records show that 1056 clients were involved with the Court during this period, the sample represents 17.6% of the total. Further analysis showed that the sample was reasonably representative of the clients seen during this period.

- Gender:** The sample was 83% male, compared to 81% of the total clients. Specifically, 152 males were interviewed; 31 females; three did not identify their sex.
- Residence:** Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the sample were Hartford residents, compared to 73% of the total clients.
- Race/ethnicity:** Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the sample described themselves as African American, Black, or African (compared to 40% of the clients), 45% of the sample said they were Puerto Rican, Latino, or from a specific Spanish-speaking country (compared to 43.5% of the clients in court records <sup>7</sup>), 10% described themselves as white, Caucasian, or from a European country (compared to 15% of the clients), and 6.5% described themselves as having multiple racial or ethnic backgrounds<sup>8</sup> (compared to 1% of the clients listed in court records as “other”).
- Disposition:** Although the sample was drawn for clients who were serving community service, they did not differ on gender, residence or race and ethnicity from those who were sent to the Court for mediation:

### Recruitment

Community service crew coordinators, coupled with social service staff<sup>9</sup>, were trained to help provide general guidance to this evaluation effort, including oversight for the controlled random client selection process, scheduling of interviews, and oversight of the day-to-day implementation of the study. Clients were recruited each day by the Community Service supervisor. Those clients who volunteered to participate in a short (approximately 45-minute) confidential interview were released upon its conclusion and, as incentive, did not have to return to the work crew for the afternoon shift. This procedure avoided any discussion between clients as to the nature of the interview or questions being asked. Participants were assured that the interviews were voluntary and that their responses were confidential, in an attempt to encourage honest and candid responses. They signed an “informed consent” that was retained and stored apart from completed questionnaires.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on police designations in arrest reports

<sup>8</sup> Primarily Black and Latino

<sup>9</sup> Community Partners in Action is the social service agency responsible for coordinating all community service work assignments, and it is their social staff who were most helpful to this effort.

### **Process**

Interviews were conducted with clients during the lunch periods of their community service day. Since virtually all clients who are not ordered to mediation are ordered to perform community service, this approach contributed to obtaining a representative sample. Care was taken to conduct interviews on each day of the week, to avoid any bias that might be associated with the day on which the community service was actually performed. Spanish-speaking researchers were available, and conducted interviews with the 40% of clients whose primary or preferred language was Spanish. Clients were assured that the evaluator was not a Court or government employee. All interviews were conducted individually in a private office at the Community Court.

### **Stakeholder, or “Key Informant” Interviews (24 interviews)**

Stakeholders were interviewed to provide a supplementary and more intensive picture from particularly knowledgeable leaders within a field or community. Individual interviews were conducted with people who brought extensive knowledge of their community’s issues and concerns. Persons included legislative and city leaders, the Court’s prosecutor and public defender, other court staff, community and business leaders.

### **Participant profile**

The 24 people interviewed included:

**Court staff (5)**, including the Court’s primary judge, court planner, bail commissioner, social services supervisor, and court prosecutor

**Hartford police department representatives (3)**, including two high ranking officers, and one member of the Community Response Division

**City officials (5)**, including the mayor

**Social service representatives (6)**, including two homeless shelter administrators, three agency program staff, and one educational representative

**Government stakeholders (3)**, including a Connecticut state senator, councilman and representative

**Religious leader (1)**, a member of the greater Hartford faith-based community

**Hartford community leader (1)**, a prominent community organizer; other community leaders’ comments were captured through focus groups.

### **Process**

Informal interviews were conducted in person by consultant staff, and ranged in duration from one-half to just over two hours. The interviewees included fifteen people who had been involved with the Court since its inception – eleven of whom had been actively involved in its planning. While there were core questions asked of all participants, each interview was customized to the particular stakeholder, based on his or her role in the City or with the Court. People were assured of confidentiality.

### **Focus Groups (7 groups)**

Focus groups were designed to provide in-depth, qualitative observations about the workings and impact of the Community Court from a wide variety of carefully selected groups of people. They were recruited through Comprehensive Community Partnership (CCP) and Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZ) and other neighborhood and urban planning organizations. Community leaders reflecting Hartford's diverse populations, including Hispanic, African-American and others were contacted to contribute possible names for the focus groups or were interviewed directly.

#### **Composition of focus groups**

Hartford has 17 defined neighborhood groups: 15 residential and two commercial/industrial zones. As can be seen by the focus group chart that follows later in the narrative, these neighborhoods are often distinguished by solid ethnic, religious and class segmentation. Every attempt was made to include representation from all neighborhoods in the focus groups. This was in addition to representation from the Court process itself.

**Judicial Branch staff (1)** of the Community Court

**Social services staff (1)** of the Community Court, including state & city agency employees

**Hartford Police Department (1)**, comprising a selection of officers representing various duties on the force, including Community Service Division and Community Service Officers

**Hartford community/neighborhood representatives (2)**, drawing from many of Hartford's designated seventeen neighborhoods.

**Hartford community organization network (1)**, comprising representatives from Hartford's Comprehensive Community Partnership.

**Hartford business/ merchants (1)**, primarily from the Parkville section of the city.

#### **Demographic profile of focus groups**

All focus group participants were asked to complete a brief anonymous questionnaire that provided information about their backgrounds: age; sex; ethnicity; where they live; home ownership; and whether employed. This basic demographic information from participants provided a statistical basis for review of the degree of broad representation of the project's participants. A summary of focus group participant demographics includes:

##### **Residence**

54% of focus group participants lived in Hartford.

Focus group participants who were Hartford residents lived in 10 of Hartford's 17 residential neighborhoods, including Asylum Hill (4), Barry Square (1), Blue Hills (1), Clay Arsenal (2), Northeast (1), South Green (1), Southend (5), Southwest (1), Upper Albany (2) and the West End (2).

Sixty-five percent (65%) of participants owned their own homes. All renters were Hartford residents. All police officers owned their own homes.

##### **Gender**

Seventeen (17) males and 19 females reported their gender, with one not responding



### **Race/ethnicity**

Participants were asked to identify their race and ethnicity from a set of choices. They were able to select more than one designation.

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>
White	16
Puerto Rican	14
Black	9
West Indian	2
Black/West Indian	1
Black and Hispanic	1
Hispanic/Latino	1

### **Education**

Out of 36 respondents, only two lacked a high school degree. Three participants had a high school diploma. Eighteen (18) reported having completed 16 years of education.

### **Process**

The seven focus groups were all held at the Community Court, utilizing the recording and transcription services for overall documentation purposes. Most sessions were co-facilitated and the facilitators were bicultural and bilingual when appropriate.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected to capture demographic data from each targeted grouping. Participants were assured that, although each session was being recorded, their responses were confidential. Each signed an “informed consent,” vouching that they understood the project and that they gave consent to being audio taped. The consent form (See Appendix B) was retained and stored apart from completed questionnaires.

Each focus group ran from one to one and half hours. The questions were tailored to obtain as much detailed information as possible about the workings of the Court (See Appendix B for sample questions). With each group, the facilitators tried to acquire a sense of participants’ awareness of the Community Court, their own and their community’s sense of safety and well being, and the degree to which they have felt welcome and invited to become more closely involved.

### **Adaptations to original focus group design**

The Justice Education Center initially designed sixteen (16) focus groups which were based on demographic data provided through the Trinity College Cities Data Center. “Like” neighborhoods were paired with one another based on characteristics such as arrest rates, home ownership, and racial and ethnic composition. This was developed to provide a comprehensive picture of the perception of the effectiveness of the Community Court.

Two factors constrained The Center’s ability to obtain detailed qualitative information from the full number of groups originally planned:

- Constituency-building organizations often overlapped and sometimes competed with one another
- Concern over the proposed integration of cases from other geographical area courts to the Hartford Community Court interfered with citizens’ willingness to participate in this evaluation..

At the same time that this evaluation began, the Judicial Branch made the determination to fully integrate quality of life cases from suburban towns located within the Hartford Judicial District (Avon, Bloomfield, Canton, Farmington and West Hartford). The level of concern among the members of the CCP (Comprehensive Community Partnership) and NRZs (Neighborhood Revitalization Zones) about the Court’s expansion beyond Hartford proper was quite high and emotionally charged. Hartford’s leaders (both lay and elected) viewed the Court as “their Court” and resented any effort to expand its field of authority or responsibility.

This resentment, in fact, impacted the willingness of key stakeholders to participate in this evaluation. Their willingness to look at the past three years of the Court’s existence was superseded by this new concern. Ironically, the public uproar and animosity that regionalization of the Court evoked can be interpreted positively, as reflective of the level of commitment and dedication that exists on the part of the community to keeping Hartford as a “Community Court.”

To help the reader understand the complexity and diversity of the Community Court constituency, the original breakdown of neighborhoods, as it appeared in the initial funding proposal, may still be informative.

<b>FOCUS GROUP POPULATION</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS<sup>ii</sup></b>	<b>WHY GROUPED TOGETHER?</b>
<b>NEIGHBORHOODS (7)</b>	<b>Hartford’s 17 neighborhoods will, for purposes of this study, be combined into the following seven (7) focus groups.</b>	
<b>1 Northeast Clay Arsenal  21,000 residents</b>	<b>Overwhelmingly minority; predominately Black. Among the poorest neighborhoods in the city. Higher than average arrest and crime rate in the city.</b>	<b>These communities are contiguous and share a consistency in their populations.</b>
<b>2 Parkville Charter Oak/ Zion (Neighborhood also known as “Behind the Rocks”)  20,000 residents</b>	<b>Predominately Hispanic and White. Well-integrated neighborhood. Lower than average crime rates.</b>	<b>The communities are contiguous, with similar housing stock. These well-integrated neighborhoods share similar crime rates.</b>

<p>3 Sheldon/Charter Oak Frog Hollow South Green</p> <p>20,000 residents</p>	<p>Predominately Hispanic (although Sheldon/Charter Oak has a large public housing complex which is Black). Lower levels of home ownership.</p>	<p>These three neighborhoods are predominately Hispanic. They are grouped because of the similarity of their populations and the fact that they are contiguous.</p>
<p>4 South West South End</p> <p>15,000 residents</p>	<p>Predominately White and Hispanic (higher percentage of Whites than elsewhere). High rate of owner occupancy, especially in single or two-family homes. Among the lowest arrest rates in the city.</p>	<p>These two communities share a common population base and have a high level of home ownership. They share the lowest arrest rates in the city of Hartford.</p>
<p>5 Barry Square</p> <p>15,000 residents</p>	<p>Diverse population; primarily Hispanic and older White.</p>	<p>This is a diverse area; its character has changed during the last 10 years. It has sufficient diversity and size to stand on its own as a single focus group.</p>
<p>6 Blue Hills Upper Albany</p> <p>20,000 residents</p>	<p>Predominately Black</p>	<p>These two neighborhoods are predominately Black and are geographically contiguous. Albany Avenue intersects as a major thoroughfare.</p>
<p>7 West End Asylum Hill Downtown</p> <p>25,000 residents</p>	<p>Mix of business and residential. Relatively well integrated, homogeneous population</p>	<p>This is perhaps the most mixed environment – both in terms of businesses, types of housing, and range of populations. There is more integration as one moves into the West End. Because these communities are intersected by Farmington Avenue, they share many of the same problems.</p>
<p>OPTIONAL CONFIGURATION: #s 6 and 7 6 Blue Hills West End</p> <p>22,000 residents</p>	<p>Blue Hills (predominately Black middle class); West End (predominately White middle class). High rate of home ownership; little high density housing. Relatively low crime rates.</p>	<p>Although the racial composition of these two areas is markedly different, these two communities show similar demographics relating to a high rate of home ownership and relatively low rate of crime, although they abut areas that have high crime rates.</p>
<p>OPTIONAL CONFIGURATION: #s 6 and 7 Upper Albany Asylum Hill Downtown</p> <p>25,000 residents</p>	<p>Mix of business and residential. High minority population High percentage of home owners and professionals. One of the highest crime rates of the city.</p>	<p>This is perhaps the most mixed environment – both in terms of businesses, types of housing, and range of populations. The three neighborhoods share one of the highest arrest/crime rates of the city, and share low rates of home ownership.</p>
<p>BUSINESS (1)</p>	<p>One (1) focus group of local business persons will be held:  1) Business merchants in the city proper.</p>	<p>The central city and the North/South Meadows are zoned commercial and industrial, so have little in the way of population. The patterns of crime are different – primarily property crime.</p>

POLICE (3)	<p>Three (3) focus groups of Hartford police officers will be held:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) One group of community service officers;</li> <li>2) One randomized selection of police officers;</li> <li>3) One group of representatives of police task forces (vice, gang, drug).</li> </ol>	<p>Although police officers tend to reorganize, it is important to find representatives who are currently tasked specially in these three very relevant, but different areas.</p>
SOCIAL SERVICE (2)	<p>One (1) focus group of representatives of social service agencies who work in the Community Court will be held, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social service workers who are serving the Community Court, including representatives from the prostitution support protocol.</li> <li>• community service crew leaders and staff who coordinate and work with the clients of this program.</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>One (1) focus group of representatives of social services agencies who work outside the Community Court, to include such agencies as: drug treatment; homeless shelters; Hispanic health council; employment training and welfare-to-work programs.</p>	<p>These workers share parallel interests and activities in their attempts to serve both clients and the court.</p>
CAREFULLY SELECTED PEOPLE FROM THE COMMUNITY (2)	<p>Two (2) focus groups of carefully chosen people from the broader community who might bring perspectives to assist in supplementing the above groups' participants will be held:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Adults from the general population who would be identified and referred to enhance current findings and to fill any gaps in community representation.</li> <li>2) Adults from the Hispanic-speaking general population, since Hispanics comprise approximately 40% of Hartford's population, yet are highly mobile and are traditionally under considered. Most are not aware of government agencies and social services available to them and may not be aware of the Community Court.</li> </ol>	<p>The Justice Education Center will look at the demographics of city and arrange a focus group that reflects a broad representation of the general population of Hartford – those who are not direct stakeholders or representatives of the community or of the court. These people will be identified through churches and other community organizations.</p> <p>The Spanish-speaking focus group will comprise leaders, citizens and clergy who are aware of the issues and who will be representative of the views of the entire community.</p>
ADVISORY COMMITTEE	<p>One (1) focus group of the members of the Comprehensive Community Partnership, who represent the 17 neighborhood problem-solving groups, will be held.</p>	

Opportunities for additional feedback through structured radio show call-in opportunities were explored with the primary radio stations targeting 16-22 year olds. However, The Center was unsuccessful in securing support from the major broadcasting systems that focus on this population demographic.

**Section 1  
FOCUS GROUP/ STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS****Summary of Focus Group/Stakeholder Findings**

- **Strengths of Community Court**
  - **Impact of Community Court: on Clients, the Community and Police**
  - **Areas for Improvement in Court Operations**
- **Future Challenges**

## FOCUS GROUP/STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS: Overview Section 1

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### Primary finding

The Court is strong and plays a key and unique role within both the city's judicial structure and within its neighborhoods.

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### Summary of focus group/stakeholder findings

#### I. Strengths of Community Court

Hartford Community Court constituencies, including the Court's defendants/clients, were in agreement about the unique characteristics and strengths that the Court brings to the community. The Court was developed with input and investment from all parts of the community: judicial, state and city social services, and citizen representation from all of Hartford's 17 designated neighborhoods. From the outset, the Court has worked closely with the community to identify what types of crimes should be addressed – the crimes that impact the quality of life concerns of neighborhood residents and cause citizens to fear for their safety – and has developed new protocols and programming that begin to address those concerns.

The synergistic balance between sanctions and social services, especially as those ingredients have an impact on the prevention of future crime, was seen as a positive and critical component. There was agreement that it is important that quality of life offenses which are ignored elsewhere in the crush of Court business are taken seriously, and that early intervention can help to prevent more serious crimes. The Court's commitment to restorative justice and community service – having clients “pay back” the community (“the victim”) which they have wronged – is also seen as fundamental to the strength of the Court.

#### II. Impact of Community Court: on Clients, the Community and Police

Community Court has had a significant and positive impact on the broader Hartford community.

**Clients:** Community service is acknowledged as a deterrent to future crime on the part of clients, especially younger clients who are often embarrassed and humbled by their experience. The Court provides and/or refers social services and treatment resources to clients quickly in order to address underlying causes of negative behaviors. The Court has reached out to at-risk populations (especially clients involved with prostitution, troubled teens, and the homeless) and has worked proactively to develop programs that are helping to prevent future quality of life crimes.

**Community:** Neighborhoods feel they have a voice – that they are being heard about quality of life concerns. Moreover, they actually see clients working in their neighborhoods providing services. Participants reported an increased sense of both safety and comfort (increased cleanliness, less public drinking, loitering, noise, etc.).

**Police:** Police feel encouraged and empowered that a court is actually responding to the arrests they make on behalf of these neighborhood concerns. The fact that arrests are being taken seriously helps stabilize neighborhoods and fosters trust between police and citizens.

### **III. Areas for Improvement in Court Operations**

Areas for improvement focused on both internal and external operations. The primary area of perceived need was improved interaction and communication between the judicial and social services sides of the Court. The need for a strong social services coordinator was also voiced – a person who should be independent of the city and state agencies which contribute staff to the Community Court (City of Hartford Human Services Department, the State Department of Social Services and the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction). This person should also oversee improved social service documentation and follow-up on social service referrals. Staff overload was also a concern. Physically, improvements need to be made in terms of cell holding space, central communications systems, and court transportation systems.

### **IV. Future Challenges**

The community and clients alike strongly supported the notion of Community Court. In order for the Court to survive, however, a number of challenges were raised. Among them:

Continuing to strengthen ties to the community

Maintaining community energy and investment after recent Court regionalization expansion

Continuing to improve police/community relationships and police allocations

Working within new city and state budgetary resources/limitations

Addressing leadership concerns after judicial transition of the founding judge

I. Strengths of Community Court	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual strengths</li> <li>• Programmatic strengths</li> <li>• Judicial structure</li> <li>• Community outreach</li> </ul>

### Conceptual strengths

Community Court grew out of the desire of Hartford communities to have recourse for quality of life offenses – low-level misdemeanors and city ordinance violations. The goals of the Court were to: sanction offenders; improve local community quality of life by reducing low-level crime; provide restitution to neighborhoods where the criminal activity occurred; and provide social services that would help prevent future crime.

Several themes were prominent in the responses of focus groups and stakeholder interviews about the different and important role that Community Court plays in Hartford, especially as compared with other courts. Respondents agreed about the following positive components and unique characteristics of the Community Court.

- **Design and policy of the Court were driven by the community:** Response to community need is what has driven the design and the policies of the Court. From the outset, the Court has worked closely with the community to identify what types of crimes should be addressed – what crimes impact the quality of life concerns of neighborhood residents and cause citizens to fear for their safety. It is interesting how “safety” is perceived by many citizens. While citizens do not downplay the importance of robbery or burglary or homicide, neighborhood residents are much more troubled on a day-to-day level about such issues as excessive noise, prostitution, and garbage. The Court has been responsive to the needs and concerns expressed by its citizens, judicial and social services staff, and police. When a new problem has come before the Court, it has been addressed: *e.g.*, the Prostitution Protocol was developed after the inception of the Court, as was the Life Skills Program for Troubled Teens.
- **Comprehensive community partnership:** This project evolved from, and was designed to be, a comprehensive community partnership. As stakeholders and focus group members concurred: *“The grassroots community groups are the real heroes.”* Community input has driven the policies of the court and the issues they tackle: input by police, neighborhoods, businesses and social services agencies. The fact that all 17 identified neighborhoods of the City of Hartford are involved and are receiving community service is impressive.
- **Proactive versus reactive:** The fact that Community Court and police are now able to *“put teeth into”* the response to low-level crimes that negatively affect quality of life in neighborhoods was raised repeatedly by respondents. There was consensus that this is instrumental in preventing more serious crime. Many respondents believed that low-level offenses, if not addressed, both contribute to negative perceptions of the safety of particular areas and create an impression of tolerance for disorder that may invite more serious crime.



- **Restorative justice:** The Court’s commitment to restorative justice – having clients “pay back” the community (“the victim”) which they have wronged – is seen as fundamental to the strength of the Court. Assigning community service as a sanction provides two benefits: i) evidence to communities that the Court is responding to community crime problems; and ii) visible compensation to the community for some of the harm suffered from low-level crime. Restorative justice comes not only through community service, but also through mediation settlements.
- **Balance between sanctions/social services:** The balance/synergistic relationship between sanctions and social services -- especially as those components relate to the prevention of future crime – were seen as critical. Community stakeholders and staff alike felt that a key strength of Community Court was its commitment to addressing the immediate concerns and needs of the community about quality of life crimes, while providing services for clients that likely will prevent future crimes.
- **Accountability/equal justice:** The Court is widely respected for its adherence to the concept of equal justice for all. As one police officer observed, *“That’s another thing that’s very inspirational for us as officers... Community Court doesn’t care who you are...the Community Court holds you to the line. They’ll [politicians and/or suburban young people and college students] be out there doing their six hours just like everybody else.”* Even 61% of the clients in the exit interviews agreed that all people were treated equally at Community Court.
- **Freeing up other court time:** The broader court system has benefited from the Community Court’s effort to remove processing of low-level misdemeanors and ordinance violations from their caseloads, freeing up court resources to deal with more serious cases.

**“The most important feature of the Court is the application of social services to a criminal problem. You move people from the judicial system to the social service system so that, ultimately, they don’t commit another criminal act.”**

**“[Clients] are given an opportunity to take advantage of programs that will help address [social service] issues. They are also given the privilege of having the case dismissed which can mean a big difference in their lives, especially if this was an isolated incident or if they really do want to turn their behavior around.”**

These themes are reflected in the Court’s programmatic structure, its physical and communications infrastructure, and its outreach efforts to the broad community which it serves – neighborhoods, businesses and social service agencies. Underlying all of this was the theme of humanity and concern for the individual client that is evidenced by the Court, and agreed on even by defendants. ‘Control with compassion’ was an underlying thread.

### **Programmatic strengths**

Most respondents felt that a major strength of the Court was the availability of social service programming for clients – both on-site and off-site. There are currently 146 service agencies to which social services staff can refer clients. Respondents felt that this range of programming served to address and ameliorate the underlying causes of client criminal activity in a timely manner. There was consensus about and endorsement of the positive benefits of programming in two arenas:

- **General benefits:** The positive impact that access to immediate service and treatment resources and referrals has on the client
- **Effective program elements:** Discrete program elements that are having an effect on both client recidivism and improved community quality of life concerns and issues.

### General benefits

Certain general themes about the benefits of the Court concept and actual operation came up over and over again – not only in the focus groups and stakeholder interviews, but also in the client exit interviews:

- Provides intervention with compassion and control
- Focuses on the whole person
- Provides opportunities for a second chance
- One-stop shopping for services
- People care about the clients
- Provides a client-centered social service delivery system, integrating both state and city agency services.

**Stakeholder interviewees** felt that the Court’s judicial services program not only has the potential for, but is actively having an impact on decreasing future client involvement in the criminal justice system:

*“All the services are available right there [at Court]. That’s why this Court is so different. In fact, this has been so good that people in the suburbs want it now too.”*

*“We’ve come across a lot of people who need services, [who] normally we wouldn’t have anything to do with unless they reached a crisis level of need...”*

**Community Court judicial staff** were equally supportive of the social services side of the Court, and spoke at length of the importance of providing clients an opportunity to take advantage of programs that might address behaviors or problems that contributed to the clients’ crimes.

**Police** talked about arresting people who appeared ready for change: *“We’ll talk to people and they’ll say, ‘I don’t want to be out here doing this any more.’ Well, this is the perfect place for you to go to...The judge, he’s got more options than we have.”*

### Effective program elements

The Court has many tools and resources available to it, ranging from mental health to substance abuse treatment programs. However, focus group and stakeholder participants identified the following service elements as the strongest programs of the Court:

- Preventive youth programs
- Prostitution-related protocols
- Outreach to the homeless/ shelter population
- Mediation efforts.

**Youth prevention/equal justice:** Many of the people who were interviewed felt that the Community Court has done an excellent job in serving as an early intervention – or “wake-up call” – for young people about law enforcement issues. One business merchant observed:

*“As far as the Community Court itself goes, in my opinion, of what I’ve seen...it’s the youth...you’re getting young kids and changing their valuations. Their opinions are being remolded thanks to the Community Court system.”*

The Community Court was seen as an effective way of addressing negative behaviors on the part of young people and sending them a message that their criminal activity was being taken seriously. The hope was that this would prevent future criminal activity as they became adults.

This message is not limited to young people who are at the lower socio-economic level. College students coming out of college bars, and upper/middle class suburban young people who disrupt neighborhoods when they leave rock concerts are also arrested and sentenced to community service.

*“...a lot of public drinking,”* observed one Neighborhood Revitalization Zone participant, *“...we have some college bars, etc. Those cases would never be seen [in GA14], but yet the neighbors were always up to 2:00-3:00 o’clock in the morning because people were raising a ruckus and they were up the following morning cleaning up all the broken glass...When those people were arrested and brought to court, we saw a dramatic drop in that type of behavior in our [West End] neighborhood.”*

These clients -- often much to their surprise -- are sentenced to community service to work side by side with inner city youth and the homeless. A police respondent noted:

*“...often times their mother or father is very well to do or is an executive or a lawyer...so they feel that the laws, that the system, really doesn’t affect them, and then they come here and they realize that this is like a steel trap, and once they’re in here they’re not getting out until they do their six hours...”*

**Prostitution protocol:** Prostitution is a major concern in city neighborhoods. In response to this concern, three protocols were established: one for prostitution, one for solicitation (the “John” protocol) and one for STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease). *“The Prostitution Protocol was well discussed with the community. And [when it was implemented] you saw less [prostitution] on the streets within 60 to 90 days.”* As the police said before the Prostitution Protocols were developed, *“We locked them up, but what can you do?”* This is a population that needs myriad services, and the Court is there for the women who want to take advantage of those services. These protocols have enabled sanctions that include community service, education classes, medical testing, and, in appropriate cases, jail time. Jail

**“The cost effectiveness of the program is extraordinary. Just think about the prostitution protocol alone. Since I have been in office, over one year, I have not received one phone call on prostitution. The impact on the suburbs is significant as well. The protocol for solicitors (Johns) has helped reduce the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and that has a significant impact on community health and family issues.”**

**Hartford Mayor Perez**

time is mandated primarily for drug-addicted prostitutes who need a “drying-out” period. It is widely agreed that the prostitution protocol has led to less recidivism.. Police in particular felt the prostitution protocol has had a “*dramatic impact*” on recidivism. When a focus group of police were asked whether there were any changes that should be made in the Prostitution Protocol, participants said, “*I can’t imagine that you can make it any better than it is.*”

### **Homeless population:**

Residents of the Hartford homeless shelters are responsible for myriad quality of life offenses. Approximately 50-60 clients from just one Hartford shelter go through the Community Court on a monthly basis. The Judge knows them by name. Most of these clients are so alcohol and drug dependent that they are incapable even of completing community service. They are released from the shelters in the morning with nowhere to go. Public urination, public drinking and loitering offenses bring these clients into Court repeatedly. Before Community Court, there were no avenues for dealing with the complex problems of this population. For many, the Court provides their only hope for services and treatment.

<p><b>“We catch a lot of people who would otherwise fall through the cracks. It’s a chance to offer services, for example, to lots o homeless people who don’t necessarily go looking for them.”</b></p>
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**Police**

<p><b>“The Court reaches the client where we can’t.”</b></p>
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**Police**

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### **Judicial structure**

The activities and atmosphere of the Court were perceived positively by respondents, and there was consensus that the Community Court has succeeded in freeing up significant time for other court systems. But response to the Court went beyond that. Participants agreed that even the physical facilities and computer technology of the Court are different from other criminal courts in ways that enhance the administration of justice.

**Physical facility:** The courthouse was carefully designed architecturally to meet the needs of the goals of this new Court -- to make the facility welcoming to the client and the community; to encourage communication between social services and judicial staff; and to provide capacity for on-site social services. While some physical and programmatic impediments to effective communication between judicial and social services staff have developed as the Court has evolved, the overall response by focus groups, stakeholders, and Court clients was positive. One judicial focus group participant who had worked in other courts captured an important, representative and positive element of this structure: “*[There isn’t an] ‘us vs. them’ mentality here. It’s more – ‘How can we cooperate to try to do the best?’*”

Not only was the physical structure of the Court carefully designed, but the location of the site itself bodes well for the success of the Court. The court is accessible by public transportation and the proximity of Community Court to Superior Court, state police, and many social service agencies has yielded clear benefits for rapid client access to services and treatment.

**Computer technology that enables communication:** The Court has impressive access to computer technology. The judge has a laptop with the docket, caseload data (*e.g.* histories of clients’ prior court appearances), and relevant statistical information available. This coordinated and comprehensive information enables effective tracking and monitoring of the clients. Several focus group/ stakeholder respondents felt that this type of technology should be expanded to other court environments.

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**Community outreach**

The Court has developed channels of communication and connections with Hartford's communities – through contact with the police; monthly problem-solving meetings with the Comprehensive Community Partnership; monthly publication of a Court newsletter; and regular attendance by the judge and the police at community and Neighborhood Revitalization Zone meetings. This outreach has had a number of benefits: support of the concept and activities of Community Court by businesses and citizens; creative problem solving within communities; and reinforcement of the Court's restorative justice mission.

II. Impact of Community Court	
•	Clients
•	Community
•	Police

Responses about the impact of the Court have been grouped into three areas: impact on clients, the community and the police. Each of these sections includes discussion of the degree to which participants perceive that Community Court has had an effect on prevention of quality of life crimes and recidivism. However, it is important to provide a general caveat for readers of this evaluation. The reader should not take recidivism as a critical measure of the impact of Community Court. Although reduction of recidivism is an important goal, given the nature of the Community Court population, it is only realistic that “recidivism” will be a reality. This is especially true, *e.g.*, for the homeless population who must leave the shelters in the morning and are on the streets during the day with no alternative resources. Serious behavioral, health and social problems can not be solved with a single court visit or social service referral. The Court views a certain degree of recidivism as affording additional opportunities to provide needed social services.

### Impact on clients

Most clients stay in Community Court. They do not ‘graduate’ to regular criminal court, observed several stakeholders. The impact on clients was discussed in two primary ways: i) the effect of the Community Court experience on particular target populations, and, more specifically, ii) the explicit role community service has played in deterring future crime.

#### Community Court effect on crime prevention among particular populations

Focus group participants and stakeholders felt strongly that prosecuting quality of life offenses and providing services for clients have a particularly strong deterrent effect for five discrete populations:

- **Homeless:** The Court provides one of the only sources of refuge, service referral and hope for this population. Clients are known to the Court and are handled with firmness, but with compassion. As noted above, before Community Court existed there were few venues for police to process shelter clients through the system by means of police arrest. The ability to process the homeless through Community Court provides access to services and counseling did not exist previously.
- **Young offenders:** Community service is seen as a particularly positive and humbling experience for young offenders. The fact that suburban offenders are treated with equal justice and are interacting with inner city offenders is deemed a positive and educational experience for all. *“They end up working with some of the folks who fell on hard times here in the city, and they work side-by-side in cleaning up the problem, whatever it is, and it sends a strong message. The Community Court, from what I see, doesn’t let anybody off the hook.”*

The Court’s role in explicitly designing preventive programs is exemplified by its collaboration with the Hartford Transitional Learning Academy (HTLA). Students come to observe the Court process. The judge and Court staff attempt to educate at-risk youth about the negative effects that quality of life offenses have on their home communities and caution them that engaging in such behaviors might result in ‘hard-

core' work assignments. On a more positive note, the social services arm of the Court works with HTLA for job placement and program referral purposes.

- **Prostitution/soliciting:** Prostitution is an area of major concern to communities, but there have been positive results. Prostitution has declined, and only 30% of the graduates of the Prostitution Protocol program have been rearrested on a prostitution charge in Hartford. *“The underlying issue is that they have deep-seated drug problems,”* said focus group participants. Court referral to a 45-day jail sentence for “drying out” and to a \$5,000 cash bond have been instrumental in responding to the needs of prostitutes. “Johns” being arrested in front of witnesses has also sent a strong message to their communities that this is not exemplary behavior.
- **Noise violators:** Arrests encouraged positive behavior on the part of defendants in other specific ways. For example, clients arrested for noise violations related to their vehicles often had their muffler systems fixed before coming into court.
- **Public drinking:** Several participants commented on a decrease in public drinking. *“People would hang out and drink in the streets...Rarely will we see them any more because they know there are consequences to that...they know it’s not right to do in public any more.”*

#### **Impact of performance of community service on recidivism**

Community service is seen across the board as having a deterrent effect on future criminal activity. The embarrassment of engaging in community service is real. One representative police officer observed: *“They would almost rather get arrested for a felony than do community service, and that’s just the way it is.”* Staff reported such typical comments from clients as:

*“I’m done with Community Court. I don’t want to do any more community service.”*

*“Please, anything but Community Court. Do anything you can. Take me to jail, whatever, but don’t put me out there cleaning and sweeping streets and whitewashing.”*

### **Impact on the community**

Three primary themes emerged around questions about the impact of Community Court's efforts on neighborhoods, citizens, and businesses: i) the positive benefits of restorative justice; ii) giving citizens a voice and a feeling of control; and iii) decreased visibility of quality of life crimes in many areas.

#### **Restorative justice**

Interviews indicated that, overwhelmingly, neighborhoods, businesses and citizens supported the concept of restorative justice – of people giving back to their communities. One focus group participant supported this fundamental concept:

*“The most important thing about Community Court is the restorative justice...You can actually do the community service... and not have to deal with the one mistake for the rest of your life.”*

Citizens said for the most part that they had seen improvements in quality of life in their neighborhoods and business areas because of the Court's existence. *“You can see it in noise, litter, loitering, prostitution – all down. And people are more satisfied with the quality of life in their neighborhood – that it's improving or OK – more than Hartford as a whole.”*

#### **Giving people a voice**

The notion of “giving people a voice” can be seen in two ways: i) in the sense that citizens finally feel they have a venue for being heard; and ii) in the sense that the Court responds to staff and citizen concerns on an ongoing and fluid basis.

*“I think the purpose this Court serves is that it gives the public a voice, and they feel that when they make a complaint about something that seems minor in the grand scheme of things is a real pain in the neck to them because they're living with it day-to-day, they get some response...It gives the public a chance to vent, and even if the results aren't totally what they like, someone's listening to their complaints and someone is at least taking some action for it.”*

#### **Decreased visibility of crime**

Police, business and the general community say that, as a result of Community Court, crime is less visible. Offenders exercise more control over their actions, since they know that there are now consequences for their actions if they are stopped by police. Business owners and residents alike are appreciative of the difference Community Court has made. One merchant and resident observed: *“I never was afraid [before] in Parkville. I've been there over 42 years, but I was afraid...these guys were hanging out, laughing, loud...making gestures...I said, my God, is this my neighborhood?...it's a hangout, brazen, loud music, garbage strewn over...This was 5:30 at night! I'd never experienced that before.”* Community Court has helped to promote an enhanced sense of safety for this kind of behavior.

**Police** observed, *“You get less loitering and public drinking. As soon as you pull up, they know. They don't want to go and do community service. Absolutely NO.”*

Those who are arrested often receive immediate services and/or treatment which help prevent future criminal activity.

**Business merchants** who are focused on upgrading the neighborhoods where their businesses are located, noticed positive improvements. *“When I first became involved, the graffiti was wide spread in our area, all over the place. It made the town look bad. I think the Court has helped a lot in keeping that kind of thing from*



*coming back...I don't think it's as bad now as it had been before."* Merchants also commented on the improvement in quality of life as it relates to prostitution/solicitation crimes. *"They're also addressing the 'Johns' so it's a two-way thing."*

**Citizens** evinced a strong positive response to Community Court. One community member captured the broad sense of this impact: *"...the prostitution, the litter on the streets and the noise, and the public drinking, these are the types of crimes that aren't that serious in the bigger scheme of things and if this Court didn't exist the police officers wouldn't be issuing tickets for it because they would get swallowed up across the street [at Superior Court]."*

One citizen commented on the importance of Community Court to the demographics of the City. *"Certainly all the quality of life issue crimes that the Community Court handles are very important. We've found that in our neighborhood we're really losing our middle class because those types of things will drive people away very quickly. If we can turn that around, then we can hold our middle class in the neighborhood and so Community Court is the only thing we can see that's going to save us as far as improving first of all the quality of life for all the citizens of the City of Hartford."*

#### **Impact on police/ police perspective**

Prior to Community Court, police had no recourse for people committing low-level quality of life crimes: the habitual loiterers, trespassers, public drinkers, prostitutes, noise violators. Police could send them to GA14, the primary criminal court, but it was clear that these issues were lost in the face of more serious crimes. *"[Clients] knew they'd get nolle through the mail, and they'd kind of laugh. 'They're gonna nolle this'. They knew it was a joke, we knew it was a joke, but you had to keep on trying. This way there's repercussions for what they do."*

Many police agreed that, before Community Court, they had given up issuing tickets, knowing that clients' cases would be nolle. *"...I'm not even going to waste my time anymore, so it was a vicious circle...individuals on the street that were drinking and carrying on realized that the officers viewed these types of crimes as a lower level of importance and it allowed that type of activity just to grow and develop and ultimately begin to take over the streets."* Many police officers did not believe that Community Court would work. One merchant who was involved from the outset of Community Court was talking to police officers about the concept. *"Our own CSO said 'Ha. Ha. Never work. That's a joke. They'll go through the same revolving door.' Well, his attitude has completely changed."*

#### **Responsiveness of Community Court**

Police representatives in the focus group were supportive of the development of the Community Court. *"The Community Court has allowed the police department to show some responsiveness."* Several commented that they were pleased that the Court takes action in response to their arrests. The fact that arrests are being taken seriously helps stabilize neighborhoods, especially as it relates to drug possession. Before Community Court, there was widespread concern and frustration that, even if clients were arrested for quality of life crimes, they were out of court before the police could even get back to their neighborhoods. *"There are lots of arrests that involve the same people. But I think recidivism is lower. People recognize that there's enforcement."*

*"...in my nearly 23 years of service it has been the best tool that I've seen come down the pike for police officers."*

### **Prevention of more serious crimes**

There was consensus among police and other respondents that arresting people for loitering, public drinking and trespassing makes it more difficult for clients to become involved in other types of crimes. People are less likely to carry guns and drugs if they know they may be arrested for quality of life offenses. When the Court began, many neighborhood residents and police felt that this wasn't a criminal court, *"that it didn't have any bite, but they soon realized that that was the furthest from the truth..."* Failures to appear, everyone discovered, were taken seriously. There is strong community recognition that this Court is designed to respond to quality of life offenses that threaten public safety, and that the services and interventions offered by the Court will prevent clients from behaviors that might lead them to committing more serious crimes.

### **Fostering trust between the community and the police**

Community Court has encouraged trust between the police and the community. Police collectively were pleased that crime is less visible, and that their efforts in tandem with the Community Court have had an impact. *"There's only so much you can do, but your success is in the pride that you have in your neighborhood and the neighborhood you patrol, and the thanks that you get from the community."* Officers were pleased that *"people now call police about small things."*

### **Pros and cons of increased police arrests**

There was some concern registered among focus group participants that police were 'over-arresting' individuals. This concern ascribed both positive and negative motives. On the positive side: *"...I have heard police officers say...they know there are social services in the court, so they may give someone a ticket and know that they're going to go through this Court because they know that they're going to be seen through social services."* On the negative side, participants were concerned that people were being targeted and profiled because of Community Court – especially African-American men. This reflected, in particular, a sense that there were different standards in different neighborhoods, and that there were over zealous police officers.

Social services staff felt that some police needlessly ticketed people so clients would come to the Court for services. *"In a number of cases because the officers don't know where to get these people help, so they figure they'll get them over to Community Court."* Others felt ticketing was done to bolster numbers. *"...they don't even have to give them a ticket. We've made it very well known that they can walk in the front door and get any services that are available in this Court, so it might be more education to the police officers that you don't have to give this person a ticket if they need help. You can just bring them in the front door... I do think they like the numbers – that the officer thinks that if there's a number attached to it, it's better for the Court."*

### III. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN COURT OPERATIONS

	<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judicial/social services interaction</li> <li>• Staffing issues</li> <li>• Communication mechanisms</li> </ul>
	<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of the scope of the Court program</li> </ul>
	<b>Court design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical layout</li> <li>• Facilitation of day-to-day court operations</li> </ul>

Respondents were asked specifically about what changes or additions might be made that would improve the work of the Court. Following is a discussion of issues and concerns that suggest areas for improvement, coupled with recommendations for future action.

#### Internal

##### Judicial/Social services interaction

Interaction and communication between the judicial and social services sides of the Court needs to be improved. This is the primary concern registered among judicial and social service staff. Many participants talked about the overall need for all employees to work together as a team. Difficulties occur in part because the social service workers are not Court employees. The Court does not have authority over these key workers. Many evaluation participants were also concerned about the low percentage of clients being referred by social services staff to programs. In turn, social services staff do not have access to all judicial files and data and are not part of the initial client interview process; there are indications that they feel this interferes with their productivity.

##### Staffing issues

Two thematic areas emerged: i) the point at which staff become involved in the judicial process of the Court; and ii) more traditional staffing concerns: numbers, staff support, training and evaluation.

##### Social services interaction with the Court

While there was great accord about the need for improvement in judicial/social services communication, there was some variation in the degree to which respondents agreed on the point at which social services staff should be involved. Some felt the need for social services staff to be involved up front – either to be present during the actual court room hearings or at least to interview the client before determinations were made by the Judge and the prosecutor. Others felt that this was an inefficient use of time – that not only can judicial court staff provide sufficient information from the initial client interview to help the judge responsibly determine the need for social services follow through, but that social services interviews at intake would jam the system. A procedure, referred to as a “social services pass,” has been available by which the State’s Attorney can recommend that no criminal prosecution is warranted and instead an individual should be sent directly to social services, *e.g.*, where deep-rooted problems such as drug or alcohol abuse exist. Consensus among participants was that there needs to be clarification of the role social services plays, and the point at which social services staff become involved in the judicial process.

### **Increased staff, staff support and staff evaluation**

Two issues of concern were clear: i) staff overload, and attendant lack of staff support, training and evaluation; and ii) absence of a person to provide supervision and to guide social service coordination. There was much discussion about the implications of not having enough staff to address the mandate and mission of the Court.

#### **Staff overload/ Lack of staff support**

It was clear among social services staff in particular that there should be more of a commitment to social services staffing. The Court judge has little control over the social services staff resources available to the Court, since much of that staff is assigned to the Court through city and state agencies. However, consensus was that mechanisms be institutionalized to assure that staff are not so overloaded that they get 'burnt out'.

*"I think staffing is always going to be an issue to make sure that everything is running correctly and that staff aren't just getting burnt out."*

*"Heaven forbid if someone is out on vacation and someone calls in sick or someone has a doctor's appointment; the whole office is empty."*

#### **Need for increase in staffing**

It was apparent from a wide variety of participants that the following staff should be added:

A social worker should be assigned to lockup.

A dedicated, full-time interpreter should be assigned to Community Court.

A full-time mental health worker should be available, especially to serve as liaison with shelter clientele.

A full-time probation officer should be assigned to Community Court to secure correct information quickly, to maximize processing time, and to monitor and enforce client follow through.

#### **Increased staff training and evaluation**

A formalized program for orientation of new staff should be developed., and staff assessment standards should be formalized, to include performance measures and assessment, goals/objectives, and evaluation

#### **Social services supervision**

There was also concern that the social service supervisory function had declined over the life of the Court, partly due to staffing and turnover issues. *"I think a strong coordinator in the social service area that's not connected to any of our departments, just to oversee things out there, would make a major difference in...how this court runs."* Several people cited the need for strong leadership in the social services component of the Court. It was clear from respondents that there should be a commitment to hiring an independent social services coordinator who could work well with the myriad state, city and private non-profit agencies involved in the operations of the Court, to open lines of communication and help ensure that Community Court staff are aware of the resources available; and to coordinate said services among judicial, state social services, DMHAS, the local CPA staff and city

human services. This person should also oversee improved social service documentation and follow-up on social service referrals.

### **Communication mechanisms**

Internal court communication systems need to be enhanced. While respondents praised the computer capability of the Court, many felt that there needed to be refinements and/or improved access that would bring the system to greater capacity. In particular, improved computer access and increased data entry systems to track client process should be developed, especially as they relate to client follow-through with ongoing social services.

In tandem, many wished that the 'old-fashioned' methods of communication would be revived. Several staff were unclear as to why monthly meetings with department heads had been discontinued, a practice which many staff felt had two benefits: i) these meetings facilitated accurate and up-to-date information on the part of line staff and made them feel more involved; and ii) this exchange of information decreased confusion and speculation about any changes in policies and procedures. There was also staff support for weekly meetings among key players to review client caseload.

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### **External**

#### **Expansion of the scope of the Court**

**Expand the scope of services:** Representative respondents wanted to expand, reinstate, and/or add services to the Court. In particular:

**Expand:** Develop more workshops for clients about how to access services and the range of resources available: *e.g.*, employment, health, housing, and treatment.

**Reinstate:** Discussion occurred around returning to the system of people from the City Work Program coming to talk with clients during the community service lunch hour about available training and job opportunities.

**Add:** Many respondents encouraged business and large corporations to become more involved: to sponsor programs; and to offer community hours to kids to expose them to new ways of thinking about their futures. Several participants also encouraged faith-based organizations to become creatively involved.

**Additional statutes:** Some police felt that there should be a city statute for urinating in public; others wanted to see a change in vending ordinances. Respondents felt that there should be legal clarification of certain offenses, *e.g.*, for noise violations. While for cars, it is reasonable that police and citizens respond to a plainly audible level of disturbance within a certain foot-range; for other situations, there needs to be a defined decibel standard.

**Housing:** Several felt that quality of life offenses should be extended into housing issues. *"I would love to see him [landlord] cleaning the area around where he rents these apartments. That would be excellent."* Others were concerned that, if Community Court became engaged in such offenses as rat enforcement and

excessive trash, the number of referrals might overload the Court and jeopardize its ability to fulfill its original mandate.

**Homeless:** The Building Commissioner should work intensively to find more shelter beds. Also the Court strongly recommends provision of a daytime “place to go”, such as a drop in center for the homeless population.

**Youth:** Many felt strongly that Community Court should be addressing offenses by young people under the age of 16 (who are currently part of the juvenile court system). Citizens said: *“We have some youth that get into trouble and unfortunately once they get a record it carries over with them for the rest of their lives...Some offenses, especially while they’re still young, should go through Community Court...to embarrass them.”* This was also seen in participant encouragement of youth outreach and prevention programs. *“There need to be more youth programs...trying to break that cycle, this mentality of not caring and not following a chain that we’ve been accustomed to...understanding, accepting responsibility, developing respect.”*

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## **Court layout**

During the planning phase of Community Court, a great deal of time was spent on designing the physical layout of the court building itself. In many ways the space works well. However, two areas around the physical structure of the Court and its operations were cited as needing improvement: i) changes in the actual physical layout of the court itself, including expansion of lock up holding space; and ii) improvements in day-to-day court operations.

### **Physical layout/improvements**

Two structural needs were identified: i) changes in the layout and flow of office space to enhance communication, coordination and interaction among judicial staff, social services staff and the community; and ii) more cell holding space.

#### **Office space**

Responses indicated that the current architectural layout provides artificial boundaries between judicial and social services staff. There should be less physical delineation between judicial and social services offices, and more interactive space that would encourage communication, coordination and interaction among judicial staff, social services staff, and the incoming community – clients, families, walk-ins and community agencies. Social services staff in particular felt that spatial alterations would increase effectiveness in two ways: i) by making social services staff feel they are a greater part of the process; and ii) by making social services more accessible to the judicial staff and to the community.

There was also concern that the current architectural design does not allow for privacy between clients and social service workers. Conversations can be overhead, and clients are aware of this. This has a negative impact on how honest the client is with the staff in imparting information, and, in turn, on the level of trust that can be established between the client and the staff. Structural changes need to be made to allow for expanded interactive space to encourage private communication and coordination among judicial staff, social services staff, and the community.

#### **Cell holding space**

Current cell holding capacity in the Community Court facility is eight: two cells that hold four people each. This capacity is lowered when one takes into consideration the need to separate men from women. Consensus among court staff and police was

that it is imperative that holding cell space be expanded beyond the current capacity of eight.

### **Facilitation of day-to-day Court operations**

Participants noted that day-to-day Court operations could be significantly improved by two changes:

#### **Central phone system.**

The lack of an integrated telephone system is seen as a major problem *“There is a lot of wasted time in court productivity because of physically having to walk all over to get anybody. if there was a paging system on the phone...”* There should be a central phone system, both for staff and for citizens who call for information. This would reinforce the accessibility of the Court.

#### **Client transportation to court**

When designed, the Court did not anticipate so many clients being held in lockup. Because lockup space is insufficient, overflow clients are often held at the GA14 Court across the street. The time delay that occurs when clients must be brought over to Community Court impedes the working of the Court.

- *“We’re at the mercy of the transportation across the street and they’ll call to have somebody brought over and it may take an hour or an hour and a half to get them over here, and you could literally walk them across the street in five minutes.”*
- *“The judge is waiting to go on...and you can’t do it because the bodies aren’t here.”*

<b>IV. Future Challenges</b>
• Strengthening ties to the community
• Maintaining community investment after regionalization
• Police/community relationships and police allocations
• Budgetary resources/limitations
• Ongoing leadership after judicial transition

The community and clients alike supported the notion of Community Court. In order for the Court to survive, a number of challenges were raised, primarily:

#### **Strengthening ties to the community**

Communication with the community is critical to the survival of the Court. This is a two-way street..

**Outreach by the Court:** Many of those interviewed expressed concern that outreach to the community was no longer as active as in the early stages of the Court. This lack of outreach has been exacerbated by the expansion of the courts jurisdiction to West Hartford and surrounding towns. Interviewees reinforced the critical importance of working to sustain the energy and interest of the community after the Court's opening momentum, and of being vigilant in ongoing attempts to strengthen the role of and links to the community. Two concerns in particular were raised: i) that the consistent information and reporting of statistics that was being shared with communities early on in the process is not happening now; and ii) that judicial representation at community events and CCP meetings, which originally took place every month, has tapered off. This is perceived to have diminished the engagement and positive give and take with the community that has given the Court such strength and support in the past.

**Input from the community:** Several participants commented on the decrease, in turn, on community involvement. One judicial staff member noted: *"...not to discredit the community because it was the community who ended up getting this type of Court here, but we could get a little bit more input from the community. Now that this Court's been up and we've been here four years and we're doing community service we don't see as many block club captains, homeowners, community organizers or merchant strip coordinators coming over and attending meetings..."*

#### **Maintaining community investment after regionalization**

There is concern that linkages between the Court and its original Hartford neighborhoods have been significantly diminished since regionalization was proposed and implemented – that there has been an attendant loss of community investment. While it is encouraging that outlying geographic areas have seen the benefits of Community Court and have welcomed it into their neighborhoods, it is critical that the Judicial Branch find ways to expand the Community Court system with integrity. As one participant said: *"Hartford is a unique court. We [community residents] are very connected to this Court. We were there from the ground up, and we take it personally."*



### **Police/community relationships, and police allocations**

There is a perception of disparities across neighborhoods – loitering and littering have decreased in some places, but increased in others. Problems with police allocation is perceived as a part of this. To the distress of neighborhood citizens, city and state budgetary cutbacks have some times resulted in layoffs or reassignment of the Community Police Officers who are critical to the effective functioning of Community Court. One participant summed up the concern of many: *“The Community Court is only going to be as effective as the police. If the police department is going to pull out CSOs [community service officers] and CRDs [community response division], then Community Court is not going to be effective in the City of Hartford.”* Citizens would like to see police more visible in more places, such as in youth recreation centers, and would like to see police officers in neighborhoods at times when quality of life crimes are most apt to be committed. While Community Court has no authority in areas of police allocation, staff forward these neighborhood concerns on a regular basis.

While the police garnered high marks from a majority of clients about how they as clients were treated, and while many focus group and stakeholder interviewees praised the melioration of police/community relationships, concerns remained around issues of trust levels between police and community, especially as they relate to community perception of police bias and over-arresting. Several participants from the community felt that there needed to be ethics and behavioral modification classes for police that were designed to address police rudeness and overreaction to neighborhood situations.

### **Refining and defining consequences of non-compliance**

Several focus group participants and stakeholders were concerned that the Court does not follow through sufficiently in monitoring client outcomes and/or ensuring that clients are meeting their judicial obligations (community service, mediation and social services requirements). Moreover, given the current City and State budget cuts, there is a concern that, in fact, client needs can not be fully addressed – that there are service referrals beyond the capacity of the social services arm of the Court. It is important to reaffirm that in spite of these cuts, the Community Court is willing to be an ongoing resource and referral service center for clients after they have completed the requirements of their sanctions.

An interesting variation on the theme of compliance was raised during a focus group session which discussed what kind of a “stick” the Court has for those who do not take their experience seriously. One judicial staff member expanded on the importance of the Court being seen not just as a criminal Court, but indeed as a Community Court:

*“[I think it is important that clients] understand the seriousness of the Court and what we’re trying to do – not to just think that...we’re trying to bully you, we’re an extension of the police department or we’re an extension of the long arm of the law...It’s very important that they realize we are human beings. Some of us do live in Hartford; we do care about what we’re doing...This is a people type of place. This is a Community Court.”*

### **Budgetary resources/limitations**

City and State budget cuts have had a double-edged impact on the Court: in its ability to deliver services, and in its perception in the community. One of the powerful advantages of the Court has been that it helps put resources where the problems are. However, given City and State budget constraints, the reality is that resources for the Court have been restricted: psychiatric beds are limited; fewer people are receiving veterans’ administration assistance and therefore receiving fewer medications; the numbers of homeless clients have escalated; and substance abuse treatment has been curtailed. If more clients are seen on the street because of lack of services, the perception is fostered that the Court is not effective. Structural support for the Court is critical even in the midst of the State’s fiscal crisis.

**Transition issues**

In the eyes of the community, perhaps the greatest challenge for the future of the Community Court is the departure of Judge Raymond Norko, the founding judge. He is widely acknowledged – by players and clients alike – as having been a critical force in the instigation, shaping, administration and evaluation of this Hartford Community Court. Over and over participants talked of his strong level of commitment to the Court and to the clients. There is widespread regret and concern that he is leaving. One of the great strengths of his leadership, however, is that he has set a foundation, a precedent, a stability and a tone that will enable the ongoing success of the Court.

**1. “The Judge is terrific – he knows the community and how to talk to people.”**

**2. “He treats everyone with respect, but on that same expects that you should be behaving like you deserve.”**

**3. “Judge Norko – he’s my man. I don’t say nothin’ bad about my man!”**

**Section 2**  
**RESULTS OF CLIENT EXIT INTERVIEWS****Summary of Exit Interview Findings****II. Demographic Characteristics****II. Police and Arrest Process****II. Court Process****II. Perceptions of Court Experience****II. The System: General Opinions**

## EXIT INTERVIEWS: Overview

### Section 2

#### Primary findings

The most important theme of these interviews -- consistent and prominent throughout -- was the humanity of the Community Court and the way the Court responded to clients as individuals.

- *“I was treated like a human being.”*
- *“They were not rude to me.”*

The clients were supportive of the concept of Community Court and of community service, and felt for the most part that their sanction was a fair response to their offense.

#### Summary of exit interview findings

#### II. Demographic Characteristics

See Tables 1-11

The clients of the Community Court face myriad and complex socio-economic, housing, educational, cultural, and language-related problems and issues. Hartford is one of the ten poorest cities in the country. It is no surprise, therefore, that Community Court clients evidenced few stable life circumstances: for example, only 12% of the sample clients were married; only 12% owned homes; 17% had lived in a shelter, halfway house or treatment center within the past year; and only 57% of the 16-17 age group lived with their family. The ability to address these social concerns represents both the challenge and the strength of the Community Court, with its complementary sanctions/services approach. The Court is committed to the double goal of focusing on individual client concerns and addressing their needs in ways that will prevent further criminal activity, while providing sanctions for the clients' negative behaviors to ensure that community and victim issues are treated seriously.

Data showed that most of the clients of the Community Court lived in Hartford (77% of the Community Court sample client group and 73% of the total Community Court population), and comprised the oldest and the youngest clients. The 23% of the sample client group who lived outside of Hartford tended to be middle-aged, and were better educated than the Court's general clientele (60% of the college graduates came from out of town). There was a strong relationship between education and employment. Of those clients who had less than a high school diploma (55%), 43% were defined as employed full or part time (48% when including those who reported being self-employed). Of those clients who had a high school education or more, 57% were employed full or part time (66% when including those who reported being self-employed). Of the 16-17 year olds, 46% were unemployed high school dropouts.

#### II. Police and Arrest Process

See Tables 12-17

Clients clearly are being brought to Community Court for the types of quality of life type crimes that define the purpose of the Community Court -- the most minor level of misdemeanors and infractions. Nearly 82% of the cases brought before Community Court in this sample were for loud noise, possession of marijuana, public drinking, trespassing, interference with a police officer, shoplifting, loitering, and prostitution-related offenses. Gambling, disorderly conduct, breach of peace and other low levels of arrests accounted for the remaining 18%. Loud noise and public drinking alone constituted over a quarter of all the

cases. Clients frequently (39%) did not even know they could be arrested for the offense with which they were charged; in particular, 68% of those who were arrested for noise violations said they did not know they could be arrested for that as an offense. Many clients had willingly corrected the reason for their offenses by the time they appeared in court – *e.g.*, fixing a malfunctioning muffler that was the cause for the noise offense. Police were reported as having treated clients fairly and respectfully in a majority of cases.

**II. Court Process** **See Tables 18-39**  
(Point of contact; Sheriffs, Bail Commissioner, Prosecutor; Lawyer, Interpreter, Judge)

Again, the humanity of the court comes through in the interview responses to the questions about court process. Most of the clients talked positively about the staff “treating you like a person,” “being polite,” and “not being rude.” The findings reflect a picture of a Court that works at a rapid pace. In particular, there is confusion on the part of the clients about the process and the role that various court members play – especially around the role of the bail commissioner and around issues of legal representation. Clients were unclear about whether they had seen a prosecutor, public defender, or general lawyer. Nonetheless, despite their confusion, a large percent of clients reported that they felt they were being treated humanely, fairly and with respect by the judge and by the court, social services and community service supervisory staff.

**III. Court Experience** **See Tables 40-61**  
(Perceptions of Court; Social Services; Community Service)

Clients overwhelmingly (96%) thought that Community Court was a good idea; 92% felt that community service was an appropriate and productive way to deal with many crimes; and 89% said that their community service job was useful to the community. Most clients (78%) felt that all people were treated equally at Community Court. In addition, the overwhelming cumulative response was that the Community Court staff, the relevant court players, and the community service supervisors treat clients with a great degree of respect and provide effective counseling and moral support. When asked whether they felt that their sentence was fair, 73% of the sample clients responded affirmatively. Many explicitly acknowledged that their offense could, in a different court, have led to jail time.

**IV. The System: General Opinions** **See Tables 65-71**  
(Opinion questions; Political awareness; Investment in Hartford)

Given that the Community Court is attentive to quality of life issues, questions were designed to tap feelings about how desirable Hartford was as a community in which to live, and to ascertain how invested clients felt in being Hartford residents. Overall, 70% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they liked their neighborhood. In line with these quality of life concerns, clients were also asked a series of questions about what crimes should be categorized as major or minor offenses. Clients felt that the kinds of crimes addressed by Community Court were, for the most part, appropriate (although two-thirds of clients thought prostitution should be treated more seriously than it was). The distinctions clients made in answering these questions were thoughtful and took into account what was good for their communities. Clients reinforced their support for the importance of the Community Court concept of giving back to one’s own community when the community has been violated in any way.

<b>II. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS</b> <b>Tables 1 - 11</b>
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**Gender****See Table 1**

The predominant number of clients in the Community Court interview sample are male: 83% vs. 17% female.

**Age****See Table 2**

Of the sample client population, 27% are age 20 or younger; 29% fall between the ages of 21-30; and 44% are 31 or older.

**Race/ethnicity****See Table 3**

The highest proportion of clients in the sample were Hispanic/Latino – 45%. This was followed by 39% African-American, 10% Caucasian and 6% who self-reported a combination of race/ethnicity.

**Language spoken at home****See Table 4**

English was the predominant language spoken at home: for 60% it was the primary language; for 21% both English and Spanish were spoken. For 13%, Spanish was the language spoken at home. When the Spanish-speaking homes are combined with the 21% who spoke both Spanish and English, over one-third of the clients were found to speak Spanish at home to some degree. The remaining 6% speak a variety of other languages at home, including Portuguese and Arabic. This represents a challenge to the court and indicates the importance of bilingual and bicultural court staff.

**Education****See Table 5**

Of the sample clients interviewed, 44% had less than a high school diploma; 42% had graduated from high school; and the remaining 14% had some college experience. Just over 3% were college graduates. In short, clients in Community Court show some educational deficits, although it is important to note that some of that is attributable to the age of the client – *e.g.*, 79% of the clients who were under the age of 18 did not have a high school diploma. Nonetheless, 41.5% of the sample over age 18 had not graduated from high school.

**Marital status****See Table 6**

Just over 12% of the sample clients were married at the time of the interview; 8% had domestic partners; and 72% were single. The remaining 8% were divorced, separated or other.

**Work status****See Table 7**

Employment data showed that: 49% were employed full or part-time; 28% were unemployed; 5% reported being self-employed; 5% were students; 5% were disabled; and 8% reported some “other” work status. Men were more likely than women to be employed; 52% of the men were employed, in contrast to just 35% of the women. Breaking these figures down by age yielded interesting information. The group most likely to be employed was that aged 21-25: 63% of this age group were employed part or full time. This was a higher percent than was found for ages 31 and older (47%). It is disturbing that 46% of the 16-17 year-olds who were not students were unemployed; in short, 46% of this age group were unemployed high school dropouts.

**Residency****See Tables 8-10**

At the time of this evaluation, Community Court had not been regionalized (to include West Hartford and surrounding areas, as discussed in the introduction). Nonetheless, not all Hartford Community Court clients resided in Hartford. The demographics of clients’ living situations at the time of the evaluation shed light on the social service needs of the Court.

**Hartford residents:** Over three-quarters of the Community Court client sample lived in Hartford; 23% came from surrounding towns. There was a strong relationship between age and where people lived. Hartford residents represented the youngest and oldest of the Community Court population. High percentages of those who were over 41, and high percentages of those who were 20 years old and younger – and who had no college experience – lived in Hartford. People living out of town were more apt to have some college education, and 60% of those who were college graduates came from out of town.

**Living situation:** Just 10% of the clients owned homes. The largest group to own their own home was those who were 26-30 year olds (19%). The majority (57%) lived in an apartment. The remaining clients lived in other people's homes or locations, including 22% who lived in the home of their parents or other family members. However, only 57% of the 16-17 age groups lived with their family, which may be another indicator of social instability in this group. Clients in the sample from outside Hartford were more likely to own their own home (19%) and less likely to live in an apartment (38%).

**Alternative living situations:** Seventeen percent reported that they had lived in a shelter, halfway house or treatment center, compared to 24% of sample clients from outside Hartford. Caucasians were twice as likely as others to have been in a shelter, halfway house, or treatment center; this was especially true for Caucasian 16-17 year olds. The largest group to have been in a shelter were those aged 31-40. Over a third had been in a shelter during the last year. There were no differences between men and women. There was not a statistically significant relationship between alternative living situations and education, although 55% had less than a high school diploma. This lack of residential stability may be a reflection of a lack of stable life circumstances, which argues for the social services provided by the Community Court.

#### **U.S. citizenship**

**See Table 11**

When asked "Are you a U.S. citizen," 9% said they were not citizens; 91% were citizens. While there was some association between citizenship and language there was no relationship between citizenship and race/ethnicity – none who had Portuguese or Arabic as their primary language at home, for example, were citizens – there is no relationship between citizenship and race/ethnicity.

**II. POLICE and ARREST PROCESS**  
**Tables 12 - 17**

**Nature of arrest**

**See Tables 12-13**

**Type of arrest:** Clients clearly are being brought to Community Court for quality of life type crimes, as is the purpose of the Community Court. The Court sees the most minor level of misdemeanors and infractions. The most common offense was loud noise, followed by possession of marijuana. Loud noise and public drinking alone constituted over a quarter of all the cases. Nearly 82% of the cases brought before Community Court in this sample were for loud noise, possession of marijuana, public drinking, trespassing, interference with a police officer, shoplifting, loitering, and prostitution-related offenses. Gambling, disorderly conduct, breach of peace and other low levels of illegal behavior accounted for the remaining 18%. The table below is representative of exit interviews conducted summer, 2002.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Loud Noise	31	16.9
Possession of Marijuana	21	11.4
Public Drinking	20	10.9
Solicitation/Prostitution	16	8.7
Interference	17	9.2
Trespassing	17	9.2
Shoplifting/Larceny	15	8.2
Loitering	14	7.6
Other	11	6.0
Disorderly Conduct	9	4.9
Breach of Peace	6	3.3
Gambling	4	2.2
Fighting	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100.0</b>



### Demographic patterns related to incident of arrest:

**Hispanic:** Clients who were most likely to be arrested with loud noise charges were Hispanic (81%). Hispanics also comprised 60% of the public drinking arrests in this sample.

**African-Americans:** Clients who were most likely to be arrested for the following types of offenses were African-American: possession (62%); soliciting and prostitution (60%); trespassing (47%); shoplifting (60%), and loitering (64%).

**Caucasian:** Disorderly conduct cases were predominantly Caucasian (56%).

**Age/sex patterns related to arrest:** Possession of marijuana arrests were overwhelmingly male (over 95%), and 76% were of clients 25 years of age or younger. Of the clients arrested for public drinking, 56% were 41 years of age or older; 85% of the group was male. Older clients were arrested disproportionately for public drinking, shoplifting, and soliciting. Interference with a police officer was associated with youth; 82% of those arrested for this offense were 25 or younger. Women were twice as likely as men to be arrested for shoplifting.

**Residency patterns related to arrest:** Hartford residents were disproportionately more likely to have been arrested for the following charges:

Loud noise	(19% vs 9.5%)
Interference	(11% vs 2%)
Shoplifting	(9% vs 5%)
Loitering	(9% vs 2%)

People who live outside of Hartford were disproportionately more likely to have been arrested for the following charges. In short, just over half of the people in the sample who don't live in Hartford were appearing in Court for one of the following three charges:

Possession	(24% vs 8%)
Soliciting	(17% vs 6%)
Disorderly conduct	(10% vs 4%)

**Other patterns related to arrest:** People with less than a high school education are more likely than others to have been arrested for loud noise. People who are employed full time are disproportionately more likely to have been arrested for loud noise and soliciting.

**Did clients know they could be arrested for the offense?** Of the sample, 39% claimed that they did not know they could be arrested for the offense that brought them into Community Court. In particular, 68% of those who were arrested for noise said they did not know they could be arrested for that as an offense. As one commented: *"My car has a factory radio. If music isn't illegal, why am I being arrested? They should let people know. They should say somewhere 'Don't blare your radio.'"*

### Knowledge of Community Court

See Table 14

As part of the interview, defendants were asked whether they knew about Community Court before their experience with it: 44% said they did; 56% said they did not. Those who did were asked how they knew about it. The primary groupings included:

- They had been there before
- Friends or family had been there before
- They knew it from publicity or from seeing people perform community service.

### Police

See Tables 15-17

Interviewers asked three questions about the way clients were treated by police: “Did the police treat you fairly?”; “Did the police treat you respectfully?”; and “Did the police explain the reason for arrest?” Of those from the client sample who responded, 58% reported they were treated fairly by police; 69% reported they were treated respectfully; and 69% of the clients said that the police explained the reason for the arrest. Latinos and African-Americans were more likely to say they had been treated fairly by the police than Caucasians. 61% of Latinos and 59% of African-Americans said they were treated fairly, in contrast with only 44% of Caucasians. Older clients (31+) were also more likely than others in the sample to say they had been treated fairly.

**Those who felt they were treated fairly (58%) and respectfully (69%):** When asked to explain these clients responses had three primary themes: the police were not rude; they were calm and didn’t yell; and they explained things. For example:

- *“He let me explain myself and he listened. I did not give them any problems and they gave me no problems.”*
- *“They could have taken me to jail because I had no ID, but they came to my house and just left me there.”*
- *“They were not rude. They talked to me like a regular person, not a criminal.”*

**Those who did not feel they were treated fairly (42%) or respectfully (32%):** Clients concerns focused on the following areas: not being able to tell their story; verbal abuse; physical abuse; and other complaints about treatment:

**Not being able to tell their story:** Some clients said they had not been listened to – that police didn’t let them tell their story when they disagreed with the charge or the reason they were being arrested at all. For example:

- *“They don’t let you speak. They are all authority. They think you gotta respect them and they don’t respect you.”*
- *“They don’t let you talk. You can’t defend yourself. One little word out of line and well, ya know, it’s in their report, and you get in more trouble.”*
- *“Don’t listen. The police where I be at they are just ---holes. I was going to the store in the plaza. I stopped to talk to someone. They came and asked me why I was standing there. And they gave me a ticket.”*

**Verbal abuse:** Some clients described being threatened and yelled at. *“There was a lot of verbal abuse and excessive force.”*

**Physical abuse:** Six of the sample clients said they were hit or beaten; one more reported being hit by a door.

**Other complaints:** Clients commented that the official police report was inaccurate or that the police had lied. Some said that they had had money or property taken from them which was not returned.

**Reason for arrest:** The interviewers asked the clients what the police had told them about the reason for their arrest and about Community Court. The range of comments included:

- *“They didn’t say anything.”*
- *“They explained the process and that I would have to do community service.”*
- *“They just said I had to go there, where it was and to be on time.”*

### III. COURT PROCESS

<b>Tables 18 - 39</b>
(Point of contact; Sheriffs; Bail Commissioner; Prosecutor; Lawyer; Interpreter; Judge)

#### Clients held in lock up

See Tables 18-19

There were two questions concerning how clients came to court: “Did the sheriffs bring you to court?”; and “Did you spend time in lock up?” Slightly over 20% were brought to court by the sheriff. This means that they were coming to court directly from lock up either in Hartford Community Court or other jail or court cells. While 58% spent *some* time in lock up, most of those were released before it was time for their court appearance.

The interviewers asked those who had been locked up what the experience was like. Most reported that they did not like being in lock up. Many comments included the theme of “I wouldn’t want to have to do that again.” Common complaints were that lock up was boring and cold. The range of comments about the experience itself focused on three areas: conditions of the lock up, clients’ state of mind; and the way clients were treated:

**Conditions of the lock up (Hartford Community Court and:** Several focused on specific conditions:

- *“I slept on a metal bench.”*
- *“I slept on a board that was uncomfortable for two days.”*
- *“I was in a cell with benches, a toilet and six other people.”*

**Clients’ state of mind:** Clients reported a range of emotional reactions to lock up.

Some seemed relatively untroubled:

- *“It was all right. It wasn’t like prison. You could go outside and stuff, but it is a lock up.”*
- *“It was not as bad as you think”*

Others described more dramatic and negative reactions:

- *“It was awful. I was in heroin withdrawal at the time so it was a nightmare.”*
- *“It was the most crucial experience of my life. I never want to go through it again.”*

**Manner of treatment:** Again, there was a broad range of responses:

- *“They don’t treat you human in jail; they treat you as if you were beneath them.”*
- *“They treated me with respect and I felt like I learned something.”*
- *“Not the most pleasant, but not abusive.”*

- *“Cruel and inhuman.”*

### **Sheriffs**

**See Tables 20-21**

The sheriffs were overwhelmingly seen as being helpful to clients (83%) and as treating clients fairly (96%). Clients commented that sheriffs treated clients like human beings, that they were courteous, and that they explained the process. For example:

- *They told me where to have a seat and they did not treat me like a criminal.”* “
- *They told me what to do and what will happen and what is expected.”* “
- *They looked at me and seemed concerned for me.”* “
- *They’re always cool. They don’t be talking garbage. They be straight. Some of them joke with you and talk with you.”* “

### **Bail commissioner**

**See Tables 22-24**

Most of the clients were released on a Promise To Appear (PTA), which means that they did not need to meet with a bail commissioner. Fifty nine clients said they met with a bail commissioner; of those, 55 responded to questions about their treatment. Ninety-one percent of the respondents said they had been treated fairly and respectfully – that the bail commissioners had listened to them, that they were polite and that they treated the client like a person. Again, the humanity of the Community Court came through. Of those who said they had not been treated fairly, most felt that their bond was too high – *“out of proportion to the offense.”* While most felt that the bail commissioner had treated them well, 59% revealed that they in fact did not understand the bail commissioner’s role.

### **Prosecutor**

**See Tables 25-27**

When clients were asked whether they had met with a prosecutor regarding their case, 65% said “Yes.” Of those clients who reported that they had met with a prosecutor, 76% said that the prosecutor was fair, and 60% said that the prosecutor had allowed them to explain their case.

**Of those who said the prosecutor was fair (76%):** The major themes were that the prosecutor listened, was polite and explained the process and the options. For example:

*“He gave me the chance to speak my piece and told me what the judge would do and told me it was my decision how to plead.”*

*“He was fair because he listened and fair because he helped me weigh all the options.”*

*“He told me that I was going to do community service and he told me what days to show up.”*

*“He was cool and very fair.”*

*“He explained what I could get and addressed me politely.”*

**Of those who said the prosecutor was not fair (24%):** Two themes emerged: clients did not have an opportunity to explain themselves, either because the process moved along too quickly or the prosecutor did not listen; and the prosecutor was not sympathetic. Example:

*“ He doesn’t let you say anything. He says go see the judge, and he doesn’t care about me. He didn’t want to hear about the missing money. He asked if I wanted to work or see the judge.”*

*“He didn’t even want to hear what I had to say.”*

*“He did not let us talk about what happened; they just gave us five days.”*

### Lawyer

See Tables 28-33

Most of the clients in the sample reported that they did not have any legal representation (79%), although 84% felt that they needed a lawyer during Court proceedings . Of those who did report that they had representation, 42% felt they were well represented and that their lawyer had done his or her job and was helpful – that s/he explained things to them and, in turn, explained to the court accurately what the client had told the lawyer. People who did not find their lawyer helpful (58%) felt, simply, that the lawyer didn’t do too much.

*“He just stood there and said nothing.”*

*“He was not for me. He was not looking out for my best interest.”*

### Interpreter

See Tables 34-35

Only 16% of the client sample said they needed an interpreter. Of those who said they needed one, 87% received interpreter services. 100% of clients get an interpreter if requested or needed.

### Judge

See Tables 36-39

A series of questions were asked about the presiding judge:

**Did the judge ask about problems or needed help?** Seventy-nine percent said he did not. Because the judge works from staff reports which outline client problems and needs, clients may well have perceived that the judge was not concerned about problems or needs. Some clients did report that the judge asked about their drug problems and mental health issues.

**Did the judge give you a chance to explain?** 54% said that the judge did not give them a chance to explain their case; 46% said that he did.

**For those who did not feel he gave them a chance to explain (54%),** there were two major themes:

- **He only asked about the facts:** *“He just asked me guilty or not guilty.” “He just said what was going on, and that’s it.” “He just asked if I know that I should not put film in my pocket. Then I said yes, and then he gave me a sentence.” “I felt railroaded.” “He wasn’t mean, but he didn’t let me talk.”*
- **He didn’t explain the situation fully:** *“It was a guy standing up there... [asked] if I knew about the community service and what I had to do. He told me if I didn’t show up I would get arrested.”*

**For those who did feel he gave them a chance to explain (46%),** there were three major themes:

- **I had nothing to explain:** *“I had nothing to explain because I was guilty.”* A parallel theme came from those who were ‘regulars’. *“He already knew me because I had been there before.” “He always allows me to explain myself.”*
- **He gave me a chance to explain my case and asked if I understood why I was there:** The consensus of this group was that the judge asked quick but targeted questions about the degree to which they understood their offense, why they were there, or whether they had a statement to make. For example: *“He asked am I aware why I am here and told me what my responsibility was.” “He just asked me what happened [this was a harassment/ abuse situation] and said, ‘It’s hard breaking up but you still got to stay away.’”*
- **The judge was fair:** *“He was nice and gave me fair warning and was pretty lenient.” “Yes, he gave me a break.” “The fact was that I was wrong, and if you were wrong, you pay the price.”*

**Did the judge treat you with respect?**

Clients overwhelmingly (91%) felt they were treated with respect, even if they didn’t have a chance to explain their case. The prominent themes included reference to the judge’s demeanor and manner, and especially the fact that he listened to them. They commented, for example, that he behaved professionally, nicely, used their name, made eye contact, and was “not rude.” *“I felt like he did not treat me like a criminal and he explained [community service] to me.”*

<b>IV. PERCEPTIONS OF COURT EXPERIENCE</b>
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<b>Tables 40 - 61</b>
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(Perception of Community Court; Social services; Community service)
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**Sentencing fairness****See Table 40**

First-time clients are usually sentenced to one or two days of community service, depending on the offense. Repeat offenders, or those who did not show up for previous community service, can be sentenced to up to five days. When asked whether they felt that the sentence was fair, 73% of the sample clients responded affirmatively. Of those who said their sentence was fair, many explicitly acknowledged that their offense could have led to jail time.

**For the majority of the clients (73%) who said sentencing was fair**, and who realized that their offenses could have led to jail time, comments focused on the fact that their sanction was appropriate. They acknowledged that they had been wrong. Representative comments included:

*“I knew what I did was wrong.”*

*“It was better than the alternative.”*

*“It could have been worse. Especially better than fines or jail.”*

**For clients who said that their sentence was not fair (27%)**, there were three major themes:

**They were not guilty:**

*“I did not have my music loud.”*

*“We weren’t doing anything”*

**They didn’t have a chance to explain:**

*“I did not plead my case or explain it”*

*“I didn’t have a chance to explain.”*

*“I should have been allowed to explain the case further.”*

**The sentence was too harsh:**

*“Five days is a long time. I would learn the same in two.”*

*“The two days was not fair, but I learned my lesson.”*



### Social Services

See Tables 41-43

Just over half (54%) of the client sample reported that they had spoken with social services staff. Of those, a high percentage (87%) said the social service workers seemed interested.

**Of those who said that social services staff seemed interested and helpful (87%),** the following themes emerged: the staff asked questions; they took time with the clients; they offered advice; and they provided health, employment and social service referrals, *e.g.*, to the doctor, to the Y, or to substance abuse treatment and anger management classes.

*“She gave sound advice.”*

*“He offered to help me find a job.”*

*“I had a very good conversation with that person. It was a wise conversation. He explained what I had to do step-by-step.”*

However, for those who talked with social services, only 44% said that staff were able to offer specific help, especially as it related to job referrals.

**Of those who felt that the social services staff did not seem interested/helpful,** the complaints were not very specific. They felt staff were too perfunctory, or that their help was not needed.

*“All she did was give me a book to read and a business card.”*

*“I had a job at the time so it was not necessary.”*

### Community Service Experience

See Tables 44-49

Clients were asked about their general experience and reaction to their community service experience, since community service is the most frequently mandated sanction. Community service staff received high praise for their direct work with clients – both because they performed physical labor along with them, and offered counseling and moral support.

**Was the community service job useful to the community?** The overwhelming majority (89%) of clients said that it was. The primary community service jobs assigned were clean-up (cleaning the streets; picking up trash; sweeping and raking the streets; cleaning public gardens) and food-related activities (helping in kitchens and food distribution programs; baking and clean-up; food distribution programs).

When asked to explain why it was useful, most of the comments focused on the benefits of cleanliness, safety, and giving back to the community for their offenses:

*“Cleaning the city is a good thing.”*

*“We went out to clean up the parks so that children could play there safe.”*

*“It’s good to clean up the papers off the streets. I don’t want to do it again but it was a good thing.”*

*“It’s good to be giving back.”*

*“I contributed something.”*

Several noted that community service saved a lot of people from going to jail. The only people who said that the work they did was not useful observed that *“it’s just going to get dirty again.”*

**Physical conditions of the experience:** The physical conditions of the community service experience were cited as positive. Transportation services were considered as “excellent, good, or OK” by 93% of the client sample. The work crew supervisor was viewed as respectful by over 96% of the clients. Clients also reported that neighbors from the communities in which they were working had positive responses to their efforts, and indeed tried to help them: *“One lady was pleased and showed us where the trash should go.”* Most even gave high marks to the lunch served. While clients said that there were reactions to the work crew from passerby (51%), it appears that much of that response was from people the crew members knew from their neighborhood.

**Supervision:** Overwhelmingly (96%), clients said that the community service site supervisors treated them respectfully.

*“They were nice and talked to us like normal people.”*

*“They treated us like humans and in fact was outside helping us.”*

*“They seemed concerned and interested.”*

#### **Loss of income to clients**

**See Tables 50-51**

The majority of the sample clients were positive about the benefits of Community Court and community service. The one negative aspect that emerged in response to questioning was the loss of income as a result of community service and/or appearance time in court.

**Loss of income due to community service:** A little over one-third of the clients claimed they lost some money due to the time they spent performing community service. Two-thirds of those who were employed full-time, one-third of those employed part time, and 56% of those who were self-employed said they had lost money during their time doing community service. Caucasians and Latinos were substantially more likely than African-Americans to report that they had lost money because of community service. Men were twice as likely as women (38.9% vs.19.4%) to say they had lost money because of community service obligations. Of clients in the 20-40 year old age group, between 40-50% said they had lost money because of community service.

**Loss of income due to time in court:** The clients in the sample were slightly less likely (30%) to report that they had lost money due to their time in court. Half of the people who were employed, one-third of the people employed part time, and 44% of the people who were self-employed said that they had lost money because of their time in court. As with community service, Latinos and Caucasians were more likely than African-Americans to have lost income because of time in court: approximately one-third of Latinos and Caucasians vs. 25% of African-Americans. Again, twice as many men as women reported loss of income: 33% of men vs. 16% of women. The patterns regarding age were the same as those seen above with loss of income due to community service.

**Is the concept of Community Court positive?**

See Tables 52-57

A series of questions were asked about clients' reaction to the concept of Community Court, and whether their experience with Community Court had changed their view of courts in general. About one-third of the clients had been to Community Court before, and over half had been to another court because of another arrest (56%). Those who actually had experience with other courts were also asked how their experience with another court was different from their experience with Community Court.

**Is Community Court a good idea? Is community service a good way to deal with certain crimes?** The responses to these questions were overwhelmingly positive: 96% of clients said that Community Court was a good idea; 92% felt that community service was a good way to deal with certain crimes. Only 26% said that Community court was making NO difference to quality of life in the City.

**Is the Community Court concept a good idea?** Men (97%) were more likely than women (90%) to say Community Court was a good idea. When asked why they thought it was a good idea, responses contained the following primary themes:

**It helps the community:**

*"Because it deals with community issues."*

*"It helps an offender understand that the crime committed was against the community."*

*"It's a good lesson cleaning up the community."*

**Your record is erased after you comply with court orders:**

*"Because it erases from your record after 30 days."*

*"It gives you a second chance."*

**Sanction was more in keeping with client offenses, or was fair in other ways:**

*"Because hanging out in the street and drinking in the street is no reason to go to jail."*

*"It's based on your crime."*

**Good alternative to jail or paying fines:**

*"Because some people can't afford fines."*

*"Families who are low-income have a chance."*

*"It keeps people in check and keeps people from going to jail on minor things."*

**Efficient court functioning:**

*“It helps out the big court – lets them handle the big cases.”*

*“I think they are better than superior courts for lower crimes and cheaper and more conservative.”*

**The experience can be educational:**

*“I guess it helps people not to do it again. Think before you do things. They’re like giving you a warning.”*

*“I enjoyed the work. I feel like I did something good and it was educational.”*

Of the eight people who did not feel that Community Court was a good idea, half had been arrested on either loud noise or prostitution-related charges. They were concerned that the court was addressing crimes that should not be enforced in the first place (*“loud music is not an issue”*) and that community service doesn’t help (*“They got you cleaning up stuff other people did and it will be back that way again.”*).

**Is it a good way to deal with certain crimes, and what should those crimes include?** Clients agreed with the crimes that are covered by Community Court at this point. Although some went so far as to say that community service was appropriate for *“every crime except murder or rape,”* most agreed that major crimes, including violent crimes, should not be included. Only a small proportion suggested expanding community service as a response to felony charges. The fact that clients were making distinctions among types of crimes and were not simply saying that courts should respond more leniently to all types of charges was impressive.

**Had Community Court changed their feelings about courts in general?** Most clients said it had not: 56% vs. 44%. However, even those who said that it had not changed their view of courts were positive about the concept of Community Court and community service. Comparing people who said that it had changed their view of court with those who said it had not:

**Of those who said it had not changed their feelings (56%), reasons included:**

**They had nothing to compare it with:**

*“I haven’t gone to other courts.”*

*“Never been in court. Don’t know.”*

*“Nothing to compare it to.”*

**They did not like the criminal justice system or courts under any circumstances:**

*“I really don’t care for the court system. A court is a court no matter what.”*

Those clients who said it had not changed their feelings about courts overall were still very positive about Community Court itself: 89% said Community Court was a good response to crime, 96% said Community Court was a good idea; and 86% said their community service job was useful. Of these respondents, 63% were new to Community Court; 52% had been to another court.

**Of those clients who said it had changed their view of courts (44%),** 95% said that Community Court was a good response to crime; 95% said Community Court was a good idea; and 92% said their community service job had been useful. Seventy-seven percent (77%) were new to Community Court; 59% had been to another court.

### **Which clients experienced a change in their view of courts?**

**By charge:** Sixty-three percent (63%) of clients appearing for prostitution-related charges said “Yes,” that their Community Court experience had changed their view of courts, compared to 39% of clients arrested for loud noise, 37% for possession of marijuana, 35% for public drinking, and 29% for interference.

**By race/ethnicity:** Caucasians were most likely to say that Community Court had changed their view of court (81% did), compared to 48% of Latinos and 34% of African-Americans.

**By gender:** Half of the women said that Community Court had changed their views, compared to 43% of the men.

**By age:** The older the clients were, the more likely they were to say that Community Court changed their feelings about courts in general: from 36% of 16-17 year olds to 53% of clients older than 41 years of age.

**By employment status:** There was very little difference in response by employment status.

When asked to explain how their experience had changed their view of courts, their responses fell into the following categories. Clients said that Community Court:

#### **Gave them a second chance:**

*“It’s changed my whole life to not go to jail. If I get locked up again I might not come out. It just changed my life to do the right thing.”*

*“It’s a humbling experience, a good second chance for some people, and appropriate for victims of crimes.”*

#### **Taught them that courts could be respectful:**

*“It just seems like people treat you with more respect here.”*

#### **Helped the community:**

*“It made me aware and pays back the community.”*

**Was more efficient than other courts:**

*“Here they operate faster and get you in and out.”*

*“It’s a better way to educate minor offenders.”*

**Was not as tough as other courts** that dealt with felonies, was more helpful, and was fairer. However, most clients were clear that they did not want to return to court:

*“I don’t want to come here anymore.”*

*“I learned not to make that same mistake.”*

*“I will not be here again.”*

**Is Community Court helping Hartford neighborhoods?** A strong majority (83%) responded affirmatively. These clients talked about helping through cleaning, giving back, making their neighborhoods safer, and encouraging personal change.

**Cleaning:**

*“Community Court tries to keep Hartford clean.”*

*“It’s sending people out to clean. The streets are looking better than they did before.”*

*“Me personally, I like living where it’s clean, where it’s agreeable, where there is no stench.”*

*“They’re cleaning the whole city. Put forty people cleaning the streets every day. By the end of the year the whole city will be clean.”*

**Giving back:**

*“The people who cause problems have to give back to the community by cleaning the streets and stuff.”*

**Community safety:**

*“Little kids don’t get stuck with needles and shit. It’s cleaning up, you know.”*

*“The neighborhood is cleaner and it’s stopped a lot of foolishness.”*

*“It creates a safer environment.”*

**Helping neighborhoods by changing people:**

*“Because the community needs to be cleaned up and people need to be educated and through community service you have a better chance to be a good person and encourage change.”*

*“It’s keeping some of these people out of trouble, especially these young guys. It will teach them not to want to spend time in jail.”*

*“I know that it’s cut down on repeat offenders.”*

*“It keeps people in check. It starts off with minor things and keeps building up.”*

*“They take people who are doing bad and make them do good to make Hartford a better place.”*

Again, a very small proportion said that, while a neighborhood might be cleaner in the short run, there was no long-term improvement, and people were not stopped from repeating their offenses.

### **Community relationships**

**See Tables 58-60**

It was important to the evaluation to know the degree to which Community Court has been able to enhance or improve justice/community relationships and to further fair treatment of judicial clients.

#### **Have police improved relationships with the community within the last three years?**

While a majority of clients felt they had been treated fairly and respectfully by police, as has already been discussed, only 28% of clients think police relationships with the community have improved within the last three years, while 27% were neutral and 45% disagreed. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of those who said they were treated fairly by police agreed or strongly agreed that police relationships had improved, vs 14% of those who said they had not been treated fairly. Thirty-three (33%) of those who said they were treated respectfully by police agreed or strongly agreed that police relationships had improved, vs 15% of those who said they had not been treated fairly.

#### **Of those who did not think police/community relationships had improved (45%):**

*“There are dirty cops.”*

*“There should be communication with the police. All there is is abuse. They should let you talk.”*

*“Most of the guys who are on the force don’t live here, so that sets up bias.”*

*“The cops can mess you over for anything and do, so that does not help the relationship.”*

*“They can be over zealous with minor offenders.”*

*“They discriminate against the Spanish-speaking people.”*

*“They still don’t make it to my area fast enough.”*

**Of those who felt police/community relationships had improved (28%):**

*“Before there were a lot of gangs. Now the streets look cleaner without gangs.”*

*“Because crime is down and there are better programs.”*

*“I see the outcome of making people take responsibility and it helps the city.”*

*“The environment in Hartford feels safer and the police have a lot to do with that.”*

Caucasians and Latinos (approximately one-third of each) were more likely to think relationships had improved, compared to 23% of African-Americans. While 30% of the men felt that relationships had improved, only 21% of the women agreed. Employment status was not a predictor.

**Are people treated equally at Community Court?** Sixty-one percent agreed that all people were treated equally at Community Court, with less than one-quarter (22%) disagreeing or disagreeing strongly. Those who disagreed felt that people were treated unequally based on socio-economic status and color of skin, and that these issues influenced differences in both the original charge (a police issue) and sentencing (a court issue). Perceptions about equal treatment based on race/ethnicity, gender, and employment status include:

**Race/ethnicity:** Latinos (68%) and Caucasians (61%) were most likely to agree that people were treated equally, compared to 52% of African-Americans. Of those sample clients who disagreed with the notion that there was equal treatment, Caucasians comprised 28%; African-Americans 25%; and Latinos 17%. The largest group to feel neutral about this issue was African-American.

**Gender:** Women were much less likely to feel that people were treated equally by Community Court: 47% believed there was equal treatment, in contrast to 64% of the men.

**Employment status:** Unemployed clients were most likely to feel there was equal treatment: 70% of the unemployed, compared to 56% of full-time employed.



<b>V.</b>	<b>THE SYSTEM: General Opinions Tables 61 -74</b>
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(Views of crime seriousness; Political awareness; Investment in Hartford)
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**Views of crime seriousness****See Tables 61-64**

Clients were asked a series of questions about how certain kinds of crimes should be categorized: as a major or minor offense, or not as an offense at all. More than one-quarter felt that possession of small amounts of marijuana should not be counted as an offense, and 59% believed it should be a minor offense. Loud noise in public should not be an offense, according to 52%, and should be a minor offense, according to 44%. Two-thirds believed that loitering should be a minor offense, with 29% believing it should not be an offense at all. In contrast, two-thirds thought prostitution should be a major offense, with only 6% believing it should not be a crime.

**Political awareness****See Tables 65-71**

A series of questions were asked to reveal clients' political awareness and involvement.

**Judge's name:** Only 15 people out of the 186 sample clients questioned ventured a guess as to the judge's name. Fourteen (93%) of them gave a variation close to Judge Norko.

**Mayor's name:** Of the 51% who said they knew the mayor's name, 74% were correct. Fifteen percent cited the former mayor, and 4% cited the state's governor.

**Police chief's name:** Only 12 out of 186 clients said they knew the police chief's name. Of those, nine (61%) were accurate (with variations).

**Voting record:** Only 17% of the total sample client population voted in the 2000 Presidential election. Even after taking into account the clients who were ineligible to vote – those who were under 21 and those who were not citizens – only 23% voted. Clients over the age of 41 were most apt to have voted. There were no significant racial/ethnic patterns to those who had voted, although Caucasians were a bit more likely to have voted than African-Americans. One-third of those with an eighth grade education or less voted, compared to 12% who had some high school but didn't graduate. By charge, clients arrested for prostitution were most likely to have voted, while none arrested on gambling did.

**Investment in Hartford as a place to live****See Tables 72-74**

Given that the Community Court is attentive to quality of life issues, questions were designed to tap feelings about how desirable Hartford was as a community in which to live, and to ascertain how invested clients felt in being Hartford residents.

**Place to raise a family:** Whether Hartford is a good place to raise a family brought divided opinions: approximately 33% agreed that it was; 41% disagreed; and 26% were neutral.

**Occupation:** By occupation, 28% of those who were employed full-time; 26% of those working part-time; 44% of those who were self-employed; and 46% of those who were unemployed agree that Hartford is a good place to live.

**Racial/ethnic responses:** Thirty-six percent (36%) of Latinos and 35% of African-Americans agreed it was a good place to raise a family, compared to only 6% of Caucasians.

**Has the overall quality of life in Hartford improved?** Clients were divided as to the degree to which life in Hartford is improving for its residents: 35% agreed or strongly agreed; 40% disagreed or disagreed strongly; and 25% were neutral. However, overall, 70% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they liked their own neighborhoods.

These findings are consistent with other public polls, in particular the 2001 *City of Hartford Customer Satisfaction Survey*. Of the respondents to this survey, 39% felt that the quality of life had gotten worse in the past year, as compared with 33% who said it had gotten better and 25% who said it had stayed the same. However, when asked to rate the overall quality of life in their own neighborhood, 40% of respondents rated their neighborhood as “very good/excellent.” Only 21% rated quality of life in their neighborhoods below average.

These findings are consistent with this evaluation’s overall findings. Communities strongly support the Hartford Community Court in its ability to address and respond to quality of life offenses within neighborhoods. Hartford Community Court helps ensure that both the perception and the reality of neighborhoods being safe and livable are achieved.

## Community Court Exit Interviews – Results

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

(Tables 1 – 11)

#### 1. Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	31	17.0
Male	152	83.0
Total	183	100.0

#### 2. Age

	Frequency	Percent
20 or younger	50	27.0
21-30	52	29.0
31 or older	80	44.0
Total	182	100.0

#### 3. Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	45	45.0
African Amer/Black	72	39.0
Caucasian	18	10.0
Combination	12	6.0
Total	147	100.0

#### 4. Language Spoken at Home

	Frequency	Percent
English	111	60.0
Spanish	24	13.0
Eng & Span	39	21.1
Portuguese	3	1.6
Arabic	3	1.6
Other	5	2.7
Total	185	100.0

#### 5. Education

	Frequency	Percent
Up to 8 years	15	8.2
9 – 11	67	36.2
HS Graduate	77	41.6
Some College	20	10.8
College Grad.	5	2.7
Post-Grad.	1	.5
Total	185	100.0

### 6. Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Married	23	12.4
Single	133	71.9
Divorced	5	2.7
Domestic Partner	14	7.6
Separated	5	2.7
Other	5	2.7
Total	185	100.0

### 7. Work Status

	Frequency	Percent
Employ FT	62	34.2
Employ PT	27	14.9
Unemployed	50	27.6
Self Employed	9	5.0
Student	9	5.0
Disabled	9	5.0
Other	15	8.3
Total	181	100.0

**8. Do You Live In Hartford?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	141	77.0
No	42	23.0
Total	183	100.0

**9. Where Do You Live?**

	Frequency	Percent
Own Home	22	11.9
Apartment	98	53.0
Parents/Family	40	21.6
Others Home	19	10.3
College Dorm.	1	.5
Other	5	2.7
Total	185	100.0

**10. Have You Slept In A Shelter, Halfway House or Treatment Center Within The Past Year?**

	Frequency	Percent
No	153	82.7
Yes	32	17.3
Total	185	100.0

### 11. Are You a U.S. Citizen?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	167	90.8
No	17	9.2
Total	184	100.0

## **POLICE & ARREST PROCESS**

(Tables 12 – 17)

### 12. What Were You Arrested For?

	Frequency	Percent
Loud Noise	31	16.9
Possession of Marijuana	21	11.4
Public Drinking	20	10.9
Solicitation/Prostitution	16	8.7
Interference	17	9.2
Trespassing	17	9.2
Shoplifting/Larceny	15	8.2
Loitering	14	7.6
Other	11	6.0
Disorderly Conduct	9	4.9
Breach of Peace	6	3.3
Gambling	4	2.2
Fighting	3	1.6
Total	184	100.0

**13. Did You Know You Could Be Arrested For That?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	109	60.9
No	70	39.1
Total	179	100.0

**14. Did You Know About Community Court Before You Came Here?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	80	44.0
No	102	56.0
Total	182	100.0

**15. Did The Police Treat You Fairly?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	105	8.0
No	76	42.0
Total	181	100.0

**16. Did The Police Treat You Respectfully?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	124	68.5
No	57	31.5
Total	181	100.0



**17. Did Police Explain Reason For Arrest?**

	Frequency	Percent
No	56	30.9
Yes	125	69.1
Total	181	100.0

**COURT PROCESS**  
**(Tables 18 -39)**

**18. Did The Sheriffs Bring You To Court?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	20.7
No	146	79.3
Total	184	100.0

**19. Did You Spend Time In Lock Up?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	102	58.3
No	73	41.7
Total	175	100.0

**20. Were The Sheriffs Helpful?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	134	82.7
No	28	17.3
Total	162	100.0

**21. Did The Sheriffs Treat You Fairly?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	148	95.5
No	7	4.5
Total	155	100.0

**22. Did You Meet With The Bail Commissioner?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, They Met	59	35.8
No, They Did Not Meet	98	59.4
Don't Know	8	4.8
Total	165	100.0

**23. Did The Bail Commissioner Treat You Fairly & Respectfully?  
(Of Those Clients Who Responded)**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	50	90.9
No	5	9.1
Total	55	100.0

**24. Do You Know Why The Bail Commissioner Is There?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	40.7
No	54	59.3
Total	91	100.0

**25. Did You Meet With The Prosecutor Regarding Your Case?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	109	65.3
No	58	34.7
Total	167	100.0

**26. Did The Prosecutor Allow You To Explain Your Case?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	59.6
No	44	40.4
Total	109	100.0

**27. Was The Prosecutor Fair?  
(Of Those Who Said They Met With The Prosecutor)**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	93	87.7
No	13	12.3
Total	106	100.0

**28. Did You Have A Lawyer?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	21.0
No	139	79.0
Total	176	100.0

**29. Was It Your Own Lawyer/Public Defender?  
(Of Those Who Said They Had A Lawyer)**

	Frequency	Percent
Lawyer	7	20.0
Public Defender	28	80.0
Total	35	100.0

**30. Did You Find Your Lawyer Helpful?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	41.7
No	28	58.3
Total	48	100.0

**31. Did Your Lawyer Explain Your Choices?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	14	28.0
No	36	72.0
Total	50	100.0

**32. Did Your Lawyer Say What You Wanted?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	35.8
No	34	64.2
Total	53	100.0

**33. Do You Feel You Needed A Lawyer At Community Court?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	16.2
No	109	83.8
Total	130	100.0

**34. Did You Need An Interpreter?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	16.2
No	149	83.8
Total	173	100.0

**35. Did You Get An Interpreter?  
(For Those Who Said They Needed One)**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	83.3
No	3	12.5
No Response	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

**36. Did The Judge Ask About Problems Or Needed Help?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	30	18.2
No	132	80.0
Don't Know	3	1.8
Total	165	100.0

**37. Have You Appeared Before The Same Judge Before?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	24.2
No	122	75.8
Total	161	100.0

**38. Did The Judge Give You A Chance To Explain?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	72	45.6
No	85	53.8
Lawyer Did The Talking	1	0.6
Total	158	100.0

**39. Did The Judge Treat You With Respect?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	141	91.0
No	14	9.0
Total	155	100.0

**COURT PROCESS**  
(Tables 40 - 60)

**40. Was The Sentence Fair?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	122	73.1
No	45	26.9
Total	167	100.0

**41. Did Social Services Talk With You?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	93	53.7
No	74	42.8
Don't Know	6	3.0
Total	173	100.0

**42. Did Social Services Seem Interested?**  
(For Those People Who Talked With Social Services)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	79	87.0
No	12	13.0
Total	91	100.0



**43. Did Social Services Help You?  
(For Those Who Talked With Social Services)**

	Frequency	Percent
Helpful	36	44.0
Did Not Help	45	56.0
Total	81	100.0

**44. Was The Community Service Job Useful To The Community?**

	Frequency	Percent
Useful	158	89.0
Not Useful	20	11.7
Total	178	100.0

**45. How Was The Transportation To/From The Community Service Work Site?**

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent or Good	117	77.0
Just OK	34	22.4
Bad or Very Bad	1	0.6
Total	152	100.0

**46. Were There Any Reactions To Your Work Crew From Passersby?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	50.9
No	86	49.1
Total	175	100.0

**47. Was The Work Crew Supervisor Respectful?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	50.9
No	86	49.1
Total	175	100.0

**48. Did You Know Any People On The Work Crew?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	72	39.1
No	112	60.9
Total	184	100.0

**49. How Was Lunch?**

	Frequency	Percent
Good or Very Good	86	48.6
Just O.K.	75	42.4
Not Edible	16	9.0
Total	177	100.0

**50. Did You Lose Money Due To Community Service?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	66	36.1
No	117	63.9
Total	183	100.0

**51. Did You Lose Money From Your Time In Court?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	30.4
No	128	69.6
Total	184	100.0

**52. Do You Think Community Court Is A Good Idea?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	173	95.6
No	8	4.4
Total	181	100.0

**53. Have You Been To Community Court Before This Case?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	57	32.6
No	118	67.4
Total	175	100.0

**54. Have You Been To Another Court For Arrests?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	103	56.0
No	81	44.0
Total	184	100.0

**55. Has Community Court Changed Your Feelings About Courts?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	75	44.1
No	95	55.9
Total	170	100.0

**56. Is Community Court Helping Hartford Neighborhoods?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	142	82.6
No	30	17.4
Total	172	100.0

**57. Is Community Service A Good Way To Deal With Certain Crimes?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	166	91.7
No	15	8.3
Total	181	100.0

**58. Community Court Is Making NO Difference In The City**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	13	7.1
Agree	34	18.6
Neutral	30	16.4
Disagree	83	45.4
Strongly Disagree	23	12.6
Total	183	100.0

**59. All People Are Treated Equally At Community Court**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	7.6
Agree	98	53.3
Neutral	31	16.8
Disagree	30	16.3
Strongly Disagree	11	6.0
Total	184	100.0

**60. The Police Have Improved Relationships With The Community Within The Last 3 Years**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	7.9
Agree	36	20.2
Neutral	48	27.0
Disagree	43	24.1
Strongly Disagree	37	20.8
Total	178	100.0

**THE SYSTEM: GENERAL OPINIONS**  
(Tables 61-74)

**61. Possession Of Small Amounts Of Marijuana Should Be...**

	Frequency	Percent
Major Offense	22	12.2
Minor Offense	107	59.1
No Offense	52	28.7
Total	181	100.0

**62. Playing Loud Music In Public Should Be...**

	Frequency	Percent
Major Offense	7	3.9
Minor Offense	78	43.8
No Offense	93	52.3
Total	178	100.0

**63. Loitering Should Be...**

	Frequency	Percent
Major Offense	9	5.0
Minor Offense	119	66.5
No Offense	51	28.5
Total	179	100.0

**64. Prostitution Should Be...**

	Frequency	Percent
Major Offense	123	67.2
Minor Offense	49	26.8
No Offense	11	6.0
Total	183	100.0

**65. Do You Know The Judge's Name?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	8.6
No	170	91.4
Total	186	100.0

**66. The Judge's Name**

	Frequency	Percent
Judge Norko (or a variation close to Judge Norko)	14	87.4
Sheinberg	1	6.7
Other	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

**67. Do You Know The Mayor's Name?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	91	51.1
No	95	48.9
Total	186	100.0

**68. The Mayor's Name**

	Frequency	Percent
Eddie Perez (or a variation close to Eddie Perez)	68	74.7
Mike Peters (former mayor)	14	15.4
Governor Rowland	4	4.4
Other	5	5.5
Total	91	100.0

**69. Do You Know The Police Chief's Name?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	12	6.5
No	174	93.5
Total	186	100.0



**70. The Police Chief's Name**

	Frequency	Percent
Marquis	9	75.0
Bruce	1	8.3
Other	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0

**71. Did You Vote In The 2000 Presidential Election?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	17.2
No	154	82.8
Total	186	100.0

**72. Hartford Is A Good Place To Raise A Family**

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	61	33.5
Disagree	74	40.7
Neutral	47	25.8
Total	182	100.0

**73. Life In Hartford Is Improving For Its Residents**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	8	4.9
Agree	55	34.2
Neutral	46	28.6
Disagree	52	32.3
Total	161	100.0

**74. I Like My Neighborhood**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	27	15.2
Agree	98	55.1
Neutral	16	9.0
Disagree	20	11.2
Strongly Disagree	17	9.5
Total	178	100.0

## **Appendix A**

### **Sample Focus Group Questions**

**Hartford Community Court Evaluation Project**  
**Focus Group Questions for Community-at-Large**

What has your experience been with this Court? (get examples of first-hand experiences, i.e., seeing community service, newspaper articles, attending meetings, brochures, etc.) Impression of how/what it's doing. Is that what it should be doing? Staff?

Have you had any opportunities to offer opinions or make suggestions about how the Court works or how well it's doing before this meeting?

Community Court is supposed to work with police and people in the community to improve the "quality of life" - How well do you think that's going? Is it working like a partnership? Can you give examples? How could that be made to work better?

Is the Court doing what you hoped it would do? What changes have you seen that you think have happened because of the Court? Best aspects? Problems?

Any suggestions for change: To make the court respond more effectively to residents' needs. Better "rehabilitation" for people who break the law in the "little" ways that affect how it feels to live there. Better communication with the neighborhoods. Better relationships with Community Service Officers.

How would you re-evaluate the Community Court's mission statement?

Where else are there collaborative opportunities between Community Court and community organizations?

How can the Community Court strengthen community awareness programs?

Is there enough follow up from Community Court with client base on legal problems, annual reviews, and identification of contributing factors?

How else can the Community Court provide assistance to the community outside of the offender population?

What do you think the city can do to make your neighborhood better?

How can the Community Court be of assistance with the juvenile offender population?

As an employee of the Community Court, what do you need to be better empowered?

Do you feel the judge is involved with your job at Community Court? Too much? Too little?

How is the interaction between the departments of Community Court?

How would you change or improve the day-to-day operational flow of business at Community Court?

Is there enough/appropriate follow up procedures in place for referrals?

What would be your suggestions for improvement?

How can Hartford's faith based organizations be community sponsors/mentors as city advocates for client services?

How can an incentive program be put into place to work with the homeless for educational / occupational opportunities?

## **Hartford Community Court Evaluation Project**

### **CCP Focus Group**

#### **Welcome:**

Thank you for participation

Demographic/Census questionnaire & consent form  
Complete tent card w/neighborhood name  
Introduction of facilitators  
Explain scope/purpose of project  
“Ground Rules”  
Start tape recorder

**Icebreaker:**

Identify neighborhood and years in Hartford. How did you first learn about the Community Court? Probing: What was your impression of it and what it was supposed to do?

**Questions:**

Which specific crimes are the most important to address in Community Court?

What is your impression of how well Community Court is doing?

How responsive has the court staff been, i.e., social services and judicial?

How well do you think the police and community have been working together? (Cite examples) How can it be improved upon?

Do you think people in Hartford feel more involved in the court system because of this Court? More of a sense of “justice”? (Examples)

Is the Court doing what you hoped it would do? What changes have you seen that you think have happened because of the Court? Any changes to specific targeted offenses?

Do you think there should be any changes in how the court responds? Community Service, Social Services, Assessment and Referral”

Some of the groups have expressed concern that some neighborhoods are being better served by Community Court than others. True? What should be done about it? How can that perception be addressed?

Anything else?

**Wrap up:**

Thank again  
Invitation for additional feedback  
Additional recruiting  
Stop tape recorder

**Hartford Community Court Evaluation Project  
Questions For Police**

**Welcome:**

Thank you for participation

Demographic/Census questionnaire & consent form  
Complete tent card w/neighborhood name  
Introduction of facilitators  
Explain scope/purpose of project  
“Ground Rules”  
Start tape recorder

**Icebreaker:**

How long have you been on the police force? What is your current assignment? (CSO??)  
How did you first hear of Community Court? Impressions?

**Questions:**

Which “quality of life” offenses are the most important from your perspective?  
Which do you get the most calls about?

Have you had any opportunities to offer opinions or make suggestions about how the Court works or how well it’s doing before this meeting? If so, what were they and how did that go? Do you know other people who have?

Community Court is supposed to work with **police and people** in the community to improve the “quality of life” B How well do you think that’s going? Do you think the police and the community are working together on this? Can you give examples? How could that be made to work better? Have you noticed any changes? (From a CSO perspective: a) is this a collaborative effort?, b) Are people calling on you appropriately?)

Do you think people in Hartford feel more involved in the court system because of Community Court? Is there more of a sense of “justice”? (Cite examples)

What impact has the existence of Community Court had on police work in Hartford? Has expectations of police changed because of Community Court? (CSO & General responses)

Have you seen any changes in patterns of crime/quality of life or other aspects of life in Hartford that you would attribute to Community Court?

Do you think the community service sanctions are working? How? Examples.

Any recommendations on change in Community Court, i.e., point of arrest, priority offenses, other offenses added or deleted, relationship/structure with the community (neighborhood organizations)?

From a police perspective, what, if any, are your concerns about how Community Court is operating? Do you feel you have an opportunity for your concerns to be heard?

Do you think any other special programs can/should be developed (e.g. Prostitution Protocol)?  
Other targeted offender populations?

**Wrap up:**

Thank again  
Invitation for additional feedback  
Additional recruiting  
Stop tape recorder

**Hartford Community Court Evaluation Project  
Focus Group Questions**

Icebreaker: Identify neighborhood and years in Hartford. How did you first learn about the Community Court? Probing: How did you first learn about Community Court? What was your impression of it and what it was supposed to do? Did you think Hartford needed a “Community Court”? -- Are “quality of life” issues important to you? To people in Hartford (your neighborhood?) in general?

The community court targets the following offenses (quality of life crimes). Which specific crimes are the biggest problem in your neighborhood?

Do you feel safe/comfortable in Hartford? Do you think it has a problem with crime?

What connection have you had - What has your experience been with this Court? (get examples of first-hand experiences, i.e., seeing community service, newspaper articles, attending meetings, brochures, etc.) Impression of how/what it’s doing. Is that what it should be doing? Staff? Clients?

Have you had any opportunities to offer opinions or make suggestions about how the Court works or how well it’s doing before this meeting? If so what were they and how did that go? Do you know other people who have?

Community Court is supposed to work with police and people in the community to improve the “quality of life” - How well do you think that’s going? Do you think the police and the community are working together on this? Can you give examples? How could that be made to work better?

Do you think people in Hartford feel more involved in the court system because of this Court? More of a sense of “justice”? (Examples)

Is the Court doing what you hoped it would do? What changes have you seen that you think have happened because of the Court? Any changes to specific targeted offenses? Examples: noise, littering, etc. Are these important?

Any suggestions for change: To make the court respond more effectively to residents’ needs. Better “rehabilitation” for people who break the law in the “little” ways that affect how it feels to live there. Better communication with the neighborhoods. Better relationships with Community Service Officers.

**Community Group Questions:**

Ask about meetings they have attended

Their CSO’s responsiveness B Any problems

Do they feel their neighborhood is well-served

Specific examples of changes that the court has brought about in their neighborhood B Changes in particular types of crime? Focus on some more than others, i.e., prostitution, loitering, noise, etc.

Do they feel their neighborhood gets “it’s share”? -- Are some neighborhoods “left out”?

--

How can Hartford's communities have direct input with helping the court determine what the sanctions should be? Are there sanctions that you think would be more effective than the ones currently being used?

How would you re-evaluate the Community Court's mission statement?

How can your community organization take better control over Community Court to direct and broaden the scope of community service work?

Where else are there collaborative opportunities between Community Court and community organizations?

How can the Community Court strengthen community awareness programs?

Changes in crime. Changes in people. Changes in environment.

**More Specific (selected audience) Questions:**

Is there enough follow up from Community Court with client base on legal problems, annual reviews, and identification of contributing factors?

How else can the Community Court provide assistance to the community outside of the offender population?

What do you think the city can do to make your neighborhood better?

What are the three most difficult things (quality of life issues) for you as a Hartford resident?

How can the Community Court be of assistance with the juvenile offender population?

As an employee of the Community Court, what do you need to be better empowered?

Do you feel the judge is involved with your job at Community Court? Too much? Too little?

How is the interaction between the departments of Community Court?

How would you change or improve the day-to-day operational flow of business at Community Court? Is there enough/appropriate follow up procedures in place for referrals?

What would be your suggestions for improvement?

How can Hartford's faith based organizations be community sponsors/mentors as city advocates for client services?

How should an incentive program be put into place to work with the homeless for educational / occupational opportunities?

**Appendix B**



-

**Consent Forms & Questionnaires**

**Questionnaire for Community Resident Focus Group**

1. Do you live in Hartford?     Yes     No     If No, where? \_\_\_\_\_

-

**2. If Yes, what neighborhood do you live in?**

- |                                       |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum Hill  | <input type="checkbox"/> Barry Square                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Behind the Rocks | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Hills       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clay Arsenal | <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Frog Hollow      | <input type="checkbox"/> Meadows (N or S) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast    | <input type="checkbox"/> Parkville                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheldon Charter  | <input type="checkbox"/> South End        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Green  | <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Upper Albany     | <input type="checkbox"/> West End         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ |   |   |

**3. Gender**

- Male       Female

**4. How long have you lived in Hartford?**

- Less than 2 years       2 to 5 years       between 5 and 10 year       Over 10 years

**5. Please choose the category/categories that best describe/describes your race and/or ethnicity.**

- |                                      |                                   |  |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black       | <input type="checkbox"/> White    | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> European | <input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

**6. In your present home, do you rent or own?**

- Rent       Own       Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you presently live alone or with someone else in your household? (Check all that apply)**

- |   |                                       |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone          | <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse       | <input type="checkbox"/> Children         | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other relative | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-relative | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |

**8. How many years of school have you completed? \_\_\_\_\_**

**9. Which best describes your age?**

- Under 18       18 to 24       25 to 39       40 to 55       Over 55

- 
- I have been informed that the purpose of this focus group is to learn about my opinions and my experiences with the Hartford Community Court.
  - My participation is a part of a study designed to evaluate the Court and potentially make recommendations to improve it and to help the Community Court understand how Hartford's citizens and clients, like myself, feel about the Court's work.
  - I understand that this research will not be of any direct benefit to me, personally.
  - I understand this session may be audio taped for transcription purposes only and that the notes prepared from the audiotape will not include my name.
  - I have read or listened to the above information, I understand what is being asked of me, and I have decided that I will release the information for the research project described.
- 

Name (Please Print)

Date

Signature

**THANK YOU!**

## EVALUATION OF THE HARTFORD COMMUNITY COURT

### -INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM-

- I have been informed that the purpose of this interview is to learn about my opinions and my experiences with the Hartford Community Court.
- My participation is a part of a study designed to evaluate the Court and potentially make recommendations to improve it and to help the Community Court understand how Hartford's citizens and clients, like myself, feel about the Court's work.
- I understand that this research will not be of any direct benefit to me, personally.
- I understand this session may be audio taped for transcription purposes only and that the notes prepared from the audiotape will not include my name.
- I have read or listened to the above information, I understand what is being asked of me, and I have decided that I will release the information for the research project described.

---

Name (Please print)

Date

---

Signature

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

--

**Evaluacion De Le Corte De La Comunidad De Hartford  
Forma De Autorizacion Del Cliente**

Yo he sido informado que el proposito de esta entrevista es para aprender sobre me opinion y mis experiencias con la Corte Comunitaria de Hartford. Mi participacion es parte de un estudio designado para evaluar la corte y potencialmente para hacer recomendaciones a entender como los ciudadanos y clients de Hartford como yo, se sienten sobre el trabajo de las cortes, especificamente:

- Yo entiendo que se me preguntara especificamente sobre mis antecedentes personales: como los cargos y las ofensas que me trajeron a mi a la Corte Comunitaria, observaciones y opinions del proceso de corte asi como mis experiencias con los servicios sociales y comunitarios.
- La informacion que usted nos de a nosotros sera mantenido en estricta confidencialidad. He sido informado que para los propositos de este estudio yo sre identificado solo por un numero y que mi nombre no aparecera en este estudio en ninguna manera. Ademas, que esta entrevista no afectara mi caso y que otros individuos tomando parte en este programa no seran informados de los resultados.
- Yo entiendo que mi participacion es voluntaria. Yo tambien entiendo que negarme a participar no me afectara en ninguna manera en el proceso de mi caso en corte o completar este programa.
- Yo entiendo que este estudio no tendra ningun beneficio directo para mi, personalmente.
- Yo he leído y escuchado de la nofmracio arriba indicada. Yo entiendo lo que se me ha preguntado y he decidido que voy a proveer la informacion para el estudio o proyector descrito. Yo entiendo que la seccion puede ser grabada en audio para propositos de transcripcion solamente y que estas notas que se preparen del audio grabado no incluiran mi nombre.

---

Nombre (letra de molde por favor) Fecha

---

Firma

---

Firma de la persona obteniendo el consentimiento Fecha

**EVALUATION OF THE HARTFORD COMMUNITY COURT**

**-CLIENT CONSENT FORM-**

I have been informed that the purpose of this interview is to learn about my opinions and my experiences with the Hartford Community Court. My participation is a part of a study designed to evaluate the Court and potentially make recommendations to improve it and to help the Community Court understand how Hartford's citizens and clients, like myself, feel about the Court's work. Specifically:

- I understand that I will be asked questions specific to my personal background; the charge(s)/ offense(s) which brought me to Community Court, personal observations and/or opinions of the court process as well as my experiences with social services and community service.
- The information you give to us will be kept in the strictest confidence. I have been told that for the purposes of this study, I will be identified by a number only, and that my name will not appear on this research in any way. Further, that this interview will not affect my case and other individuals taking part in the program will not be made aware of the results.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that refusing to participate will in no way affect the outcome of my case in court or my completion of this program.
- I understand that this research will not be of any direct benefit to me, personally.
- I have read or listened to the above information, I understand what is being asked of me, and I have decided that I will release the information for the research project described. I understand this session may be audio taped for transcription purposes only and that the notes prepared from the audiotape will not include my name.

---

Name (please print) Date

---

Signature

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

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## **Appendix C**

### **Client Exit Interview Questionnaire**

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### Community Court Exit Interview

- Explain purpose of interview and confidentiality. Mostly Yes / No questions, some probes to help stimulate discussion. Participant should feel free to explain.
- Ask participant to sign consent form.

General Information:		Interviewer:		Date:	ID#
1.	How old are you?	2.	Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
3.	How would you describe your race and ethnicity? What race or culture do you most identify with?				
4.	What language do you speak at home?				
5.	How many years of school have you finished?				
6.	Are you working?				
	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, are you employed full-time?			<input type="checkbox"/> Are you employed part-time?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> If no, then are you:		<input type="checkbox"/> Retired		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled		<input type="checkbox"/> Student		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Are you getting money from somewhere else, ex. Worker's comp., unemployment, welfare?)		
7.	Marital Status				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Single (never married, no partner)		<input type="checkbox"/> Married		<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Partner
	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced		<input type="checkbox"/> Separated		<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (ex. Dating long time, but not living together)				
8.	Do you live in Hartford?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, for how many years?	
9.	If no, have you ever?: How long?				
10.	<input type="checkbox"/> Your own home <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment	<input type="checkbox"/> Group Facility <input type="checkbox"/> College Dorm.	<input type="checkbox"/> Your parents or other family members <input type="checkbox"/> Other Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other (ex. Motel, homelessness)		
11.	Have you slept for at least one night in a shelter, halfway house, or treatment center during the past year?			<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
12.	Are you a U.S. citizen?			<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

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Charge/Offense			
13.	What were you arrested for?		
14.	Did you know you could be arrested for that?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
15.	What is your sentence? What did the Court tell you that you had to do?		
16.	Did you know anything about Community Court before you came here?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

	If yes – how did you know? What did you know?		
17.	Did the sheriff's bring you to Court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Self	<input type="checkbox"/> Sheriff
18.	Did you spend any time in lock-up?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	If yes, how long were you held?		
	If yes, what was lock-up like? ( <i>please probe</i> )		

Police			
19.	Did the police treat you fairly?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
20.	Did the police treat you respectfully?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	Please explain:		
21.	Did the police explain why you were arrested or given a summons?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
22.	What did the police tell you about Community Court?		

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<b>Bail</b>			
23.	Did you meet with someone from the Bail Commission? Where? <i>If interviewee says "don't know", please ask if anyone in court talk to anyone about whether they could stay at home rather than in jail before their court date.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> DK
24.	Did the Bail Commissioner treat you fairly and respectfully?	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
	Please comment (ex. Were they PTA'd or explanation for being treated fairly or respectfully)		
25.	<b>(Only ask questions 25 and 26 if explanation not already provided)</b> Do you know what the Bail Commissioner is there for?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
26.	If yes, what?		

<b>Prosecutor</b>			
27.	Did you meet with the Prosecutor about your case?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> DK
28.	Did the Prosecutor allow you to explain what happened?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
29.	Did the Prosecutor treat you fairly and respectfully	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
30.	Please explain		

<b>Sheriffs</b>			
31.	Were the Sheriffs at the Community Court helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
32.	Did the Sheriffs treat you fairly and respectfully	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
33.	Please explain		

--

<b>Access to Counsel</b>			
--------------------------	--	--	--

34.	Did you have a lawyer at Community Court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
35.	If yes, was it your own lawyer or a public defender?	<input type="checkbox"/> PD	<input type="checkbox"/> Own
36.	If yes on 34, Did you find the lawyer to be helpful w/your case?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
37.	Please explain yes or no		
38.	If yes on 34, Did your lawyer explain your choices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
39.	If yes on 34, Did your lawyer say what you wanted them to say to the Judge?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
40.	If N for 34, Do you feel you needed a lawyer at Community Court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

<b>Language</b>			
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41	Did you need an interpreter at Community Court to understand what was going on in court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
42	If yes, Were you provided with an interpreter?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

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Judge			
43	Did the Judge ask you about any problems you have or help you might need? If yes, please explain.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
44	On your court date, how long did you wait before your case came up?		
45	Have you appeared before this Judge in Community Court before?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
46	Did the Judge give you a chance to explain your case?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	Please explain		
47	Did the Judge treat you respectfully	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Please explain ( <i>probe, what about was or was not fair?</i> )		

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Social Services				
49	Did someone from social services talk with you after you were seen in court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> DK
50	Did the social service person seem interested in your needs, did they seem like they care about your needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
	Please explain			
51	Did social services help you in any way	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
	If yes, please explain the help they gave you. <i>(If not responsive, please probe with did they give you the names of people or places to call for help?)</i>			

Community Service				
52	What was your community service job?			
53	Did the Community Service work seem useful to the community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
	Please explain:			
54	How was transportation to and from your Community Service work site:			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent or Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Just OK	<input type="checkbox"/> Bad or Very Bad	
	Please explain:			
55	Did you notice a reaction to your work crew from people walking or driving by your work site?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
	If yes, What kinds of reactions? <i>(Probe: positive or negative)</i>			
56	Did your Supervisor treat you respectfully?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
	Explain:			
57	Did other work crewmembers treat you respectfully?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	

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58	Did you know any people on Community Service work crews?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	If yes, how did you know them? From where?		
59	Was the lunch provided to you at Community Court?	<input type="checkbox"/> Good or V. Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Just OK
			<input type="checkbox"/> Not edible
60	Has this Community Court experience changed how you feel about courts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	Can you explain why? ( <i>Probe</i> )		

61	Did you lose money because of your time doing community service? Please explain:	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
62	Is community service work a good way to deal with certain crimes? Can you explain why? ( <i>Probe</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	If yes, can you think of other crimes which should have community service as a part of a sentence? If so, which ones?		

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<b>The court (Current and Past Experience)</b>			
63	Did you lose any money because of the time you spent in Court? If yes, please explain:	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
64	Is the Community Court a good idea?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	Explain:		
65	Do you think that Community Court is helping to make Hartford neighborhoods better places to live	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
	Explain:		
66	Have you ever been to Community Court before	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
67	If yes, what were the charges before and was your experience any different than it is now? How?		
68	Have you been to another court for other arrests?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
69	If yes, what were your arrested for?		
70	If yes, how was your experience there different than in Community Court? ( <i>probe</i> )		

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<b>Attitudes:</b> The next questions are about your feelings and opinions, it is important to answer them honestly, not with what you think I want to hear. Remember your name will not be connected with your answers.					
71	Possession of small quantities of marijuana should:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a major offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a minor offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not be an offense.		
72	Playing loud music in public should:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a major offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a minor offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not be an offense.		
73	Loitering should:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a major offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a minor offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not be an offense.		
74	Prostitution should:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a major offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be treated as a minor offense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not be an offense.		
75	Community Court in Hartford is making no difference at all in the city.				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
76	All people are treated equally at the Community Court.				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
77	Please explain, for disagree.				
78	The way the Hartford Police Department relates to the community has improved in the last 3 years:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
79	Please explain:				
80	Do you know the name of the Mayor of Hartford?		<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
81		If yes, what is the Mayor's name?			
82	Do you know the name of the Hartford Chief of Police?		<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
83		If yes, what is the Chief's name?			
84	Do you know the name of the Community Court Judge?		<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	
		If yes, what is the Judge's name?			
85	Did you vote in the 2000 Presidential elections:		<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> DK
86	Hartford is a good place to raise a family.				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree

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87	Life in Hartford is improving for its residents?				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
88	I like a neighborhood that I live in.				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

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THANK YOU





## **Appendix D**

### **Demographic Impact**

## The Impact of Hartford's Demographics and how they relate to the Community Court

This demographic discussion takes into account Hartford before the regionalization of the courts. As a part of the evaluation process, The Justice Education Center developed a detailed demographic sketch of the city based on 2000 census data. This is the most accurate picture to date of the changes that have occurred in Hartford over the past decade. Based on this analysis, The Center has reviewed the demographic data associated with the defendant exist and stakeholder interviews and focus groups. These are critical factors because they provide the Court with a more thorough understanding of the stakeholder and defendant constituencies they serve.

Prior to the creation of the Community Court, the Hartford police engaged in very little enforcement of quality-of-life crimes. In the mid-1990's, a spate of shooting related to gang activity provoked widespread fear and despair among city residents. The governor approved the assignment of State Police troopers to perform joint patrols with Hartford Police officers. The high rates of serious, violent crime in the city made it difficult to advocate that scarce police and court resources should be appropriated to address relatively minor incidents of crime.

Nonetheless, community policing and enforcement of quality-of-life crimes continued to have broad support across the city. There was a growing recognition that establishing a decent quality of life in the city required a greater emphasis on those crimes that contributed to a neighborhood's inability to build a decent place to live and a safe place to raise children. By all measures, the Hartford Community Court became central to these efforts.

The importance of policing quality-of-life laws can be understood by looking at the high concentration of people living in the city of Hartford. Hartford has approximately 120,000 inhabitants and the city's borders enclose an area of just over 17 square miles. Using these figures, the population density of Hartford is about 7,200 people per square mile. This density rate is at least twice, and often much greater, than that of other towns in its proximity.

The high concentration of people into such small areas is a feature of urban life in Hartford<sup>10</sup> that is not well appreciated in the State's predominantly suburban towns. With 10,000 or 15,000 people living in such close proximity, behavior such as excessive noise, public drunkenness and disturbing the peace have a particularly significant social impact that is less acute in more sparsely settled communities. A car stereo played loudly in a suburban town may disturb several dozen people; in a city like Hartford the same activity may affect hundreds.

### Background

Since the 1950's, Hartford's population has been in steady decline and today the bulk of the region's residents live in the surrounding, relatively affluent suburban towns. Over the last 30 years, city residents have watched taxes rise, public education decline, infrastructure and housing-stock deteriorate, rising crime, loss of jobs and economic activity, and a host other negative factors. People looking for reasons to leave Hartford do not have to look far. Those who remain face significant challenges in their struggle to maintain and protect the norms of a decent and enjoyable civic life.

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<sup>10</sup> Viewed at the census tract level, Hartford residents are densely settled: In 2000, six (Hartford?/US/Federal) census tracts had population densities of over 20,000 people per square mile. 66% of Hartford residents lived in areas where the population density was over 10,000 inhabitants per square mile. In comparison, the towns of West Hartford and East Hartford had average population densities of about 3,000 inhabitants per square mile. Newington and Wethersfield had population densities of about 2,000. Towns like Avon, Farmington, South Windsor and Glastonbury had density rates of less than 1,000 residents per square mile.

Hartford has been one of the poorest cities in the United States for almost 20 years, yet it is centered in one of the most affluent metropolitan regions in the country. Hartford's population has eroded from a high in 1950 of 170,000 people to about 121,000 residents today. In the last 10 years alone, the population declined by 13%. As one commentator noted, rather than face high crime rates, failing schools, an unresponsive city government and high taxes, "people with alternatives (have chosen to) vote with their feet."<sup>11</sup>

Although the Census portrays a dismal picture of Hartford, these figures obscure the reality that the city itself is surprisingly diverse. Within its borders, Hartford has quiet neighborhoods, hard working families, an engaged citizenry, organizations devoted to community and cultural affairs, and a strong commitment to address the myriad of serious problems facing city residents. The statistical sketch that follows is based primarily on the last US Census data.

#### Poverty and Income

As reported in the 2000 Census, Hartford continues to rank among the poorest cities in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Although only 12% of Hartford County families live in Hartford, the city is home to 49% of the country's poorest families.

	Number	Percent
Families in poverty	7,748	28.8%
Families w/children under 5 in poverty	3,175	39.1%
Female heads of household, no husband present	5,535	40.8%
Female heads of household, no husband and children under 5	2,433	49.2%

In 1999, only 24% of Hartford families earned more than \$50,000 per year, median family income was \$27,051 and the per capita income of residents was \$13,428. In comparison, the median family income in Hartford County in 1999 stood at \$62,144.

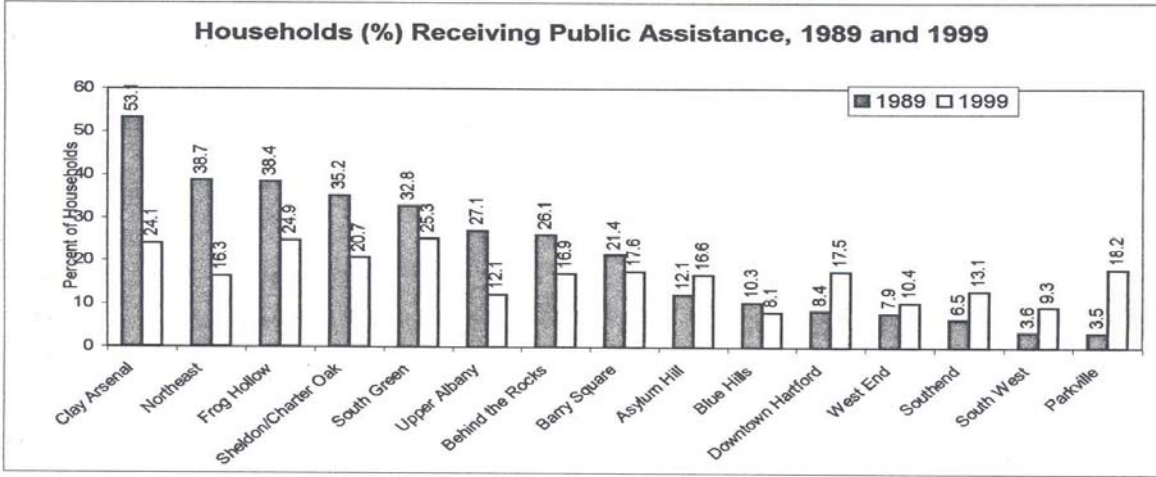
In certain areas of Hartford, the concentration of poverty is even higher than the citywide figures indicate. In 1989, the percentage of families receiving public assistance across the city varied widely. In the Clay Arsenal neighborhood, 53% of families received some form of public assistance. In other areas of city, less than 10% of families received assistance.

Although the city has demolished several large housing projects over the last decade, Hartford continues to have area where extremely high concentrations of poor people can be found.

In 2001, the State Board of Education reported that 68% of Hartford public school children qualify for free or reduced meals. Statewide, only 24% of public school children qualify.

<sup>11</sup> Toni Gold, "Where Hartford's Leaders Went," The Hartford Courant, April 1, 200.

<sup>12</sup> Because these rankings are generally based on percentage totals and not on individual totals, these listings should be used cautiously since they may not accurately reflect the circumstances of a city like Hartford. The U.S. Census, for example, reports that the percentage of Hartford families living below the poverty level increased by 3% between 1990 and 2000. In fact, the city saw a small net decrease in the actual number of families living in poverty over the last 10 years. This small decrease was obscured by a 13% drop in Hartford's population, from over 132,000 in 1990 to less than 122,000 in 2000.

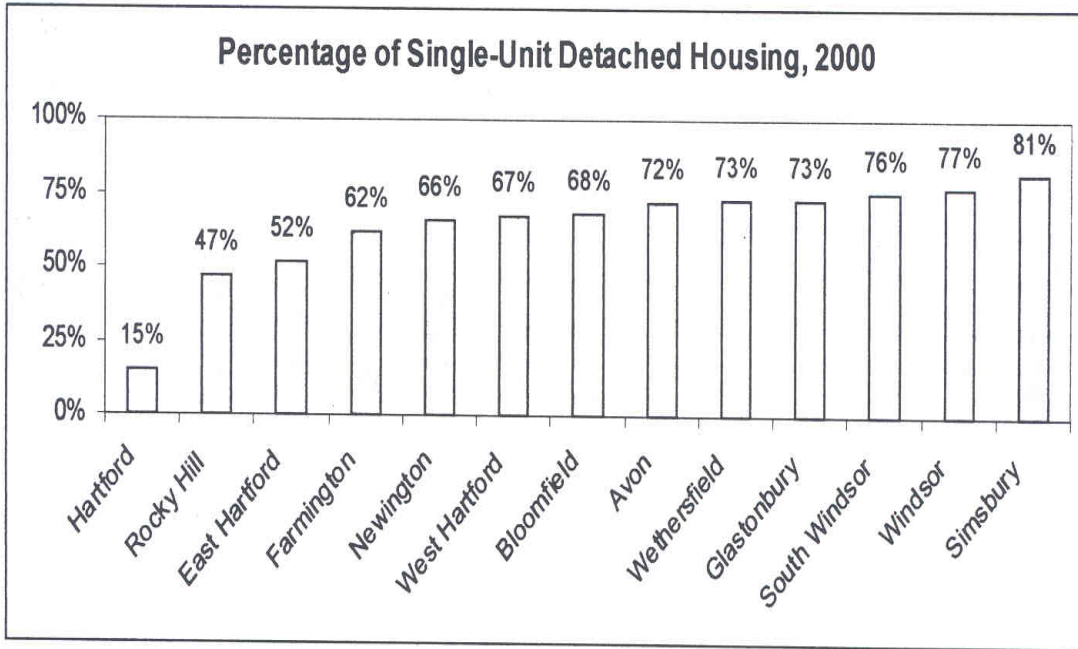


Source: CREN

*Housing*

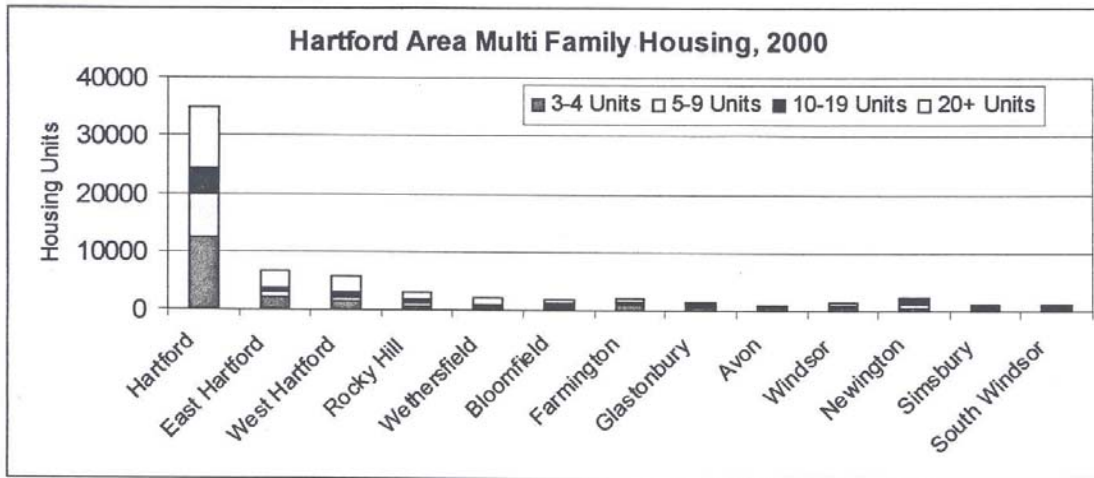
Hartford is predominantly a city of renters. While less than 25% of the housing stock in the city is owner-occupied, statewide the owner-occupancy rate is about 67%. Although increasing owner-occupancy rates have been identified as a priority by Hartford's city government, the current level of home ownership in Hartford has remained relatively constant for decades.

Hartford's housing stock is a major reason for the city's low home ownership level. Single-unit detached homes make up only 15% of Hartford's housing stock. In contrast, 67% of the housing in the surrounding towns consist of single unit detached homes.



Although the rate of home ownership in the city increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, Hartford lost 11,000 homeowners during the decade and the average age of homeowners in the city increased from 32 in 1990 to 42 in 2000. Hartford's whites have the highest rates of home-ownership (33%), followed by Blacks (26%) and Asians (17%). Only 12% of Hispanics own homes.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Mayor's Task Force on Home Ownership, 2002



Within Hartford, owner occupancy rates vary significantly from area to area. In the city’s South End, South West, and Blue Hills neighborhoods, owner-occupancy rates are roughly comparable to rates in some of the surrounding older suburbs. These areas also contain the highest concentrations of single family homes and two and three-family structures. In other areas, owners occupy less than 10% of the house stock.

**Table 2. Owner-occupancy rates for selected Hartford Census tracts in 2000**

	Total Units	Owner occupied	Renter occupied	% Owner occupied
Census Tract 5047, Southwest	1,093	596	497	54.50%
Census Tract 5023, South End	1,970	1,054	916	53.50%
Census Tract 5044, West End	1,775	443	1,332	25.00%
Census Tract 5012, Northeast	838	92	746	11.00%
Census Tract 5028, Frog Hollow	904	98	806	10.80%
Census Tract 5003, South Green	912	94	818	10.30%
Census Tract 5009, Clay Hill	753	59	694	7.80%

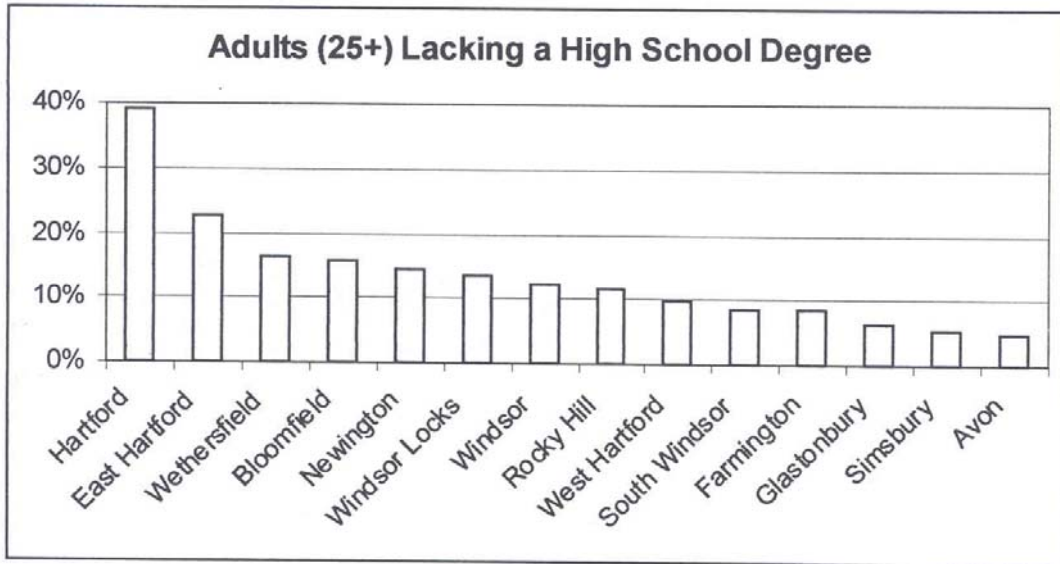
Hartford’s housing stock is significantly older than in the surrounding towns. In 2000, 78% of the city’s 50,644 housing units were over 30 years old. In fact, very little residential building has occurred in the city in over 20 years. In the early 1990’s, Hartford’s commercial and residential real estate markets virtually collapsed. Although housing prices are reported to be recovering, between 1990 and 2000, Hartford lost almost 10% of its housing units, including over 1,000 units of public housing. Most of the remainder was lost to abandonment.

With its large number of renters, high occupancy rate, it is not surprising that Hartford's householders move more than in the surrounding towns. In 2000, 28% of Hartford households reported moving into their current residences between 1999 and March 2000. Statewide, 44% of households report moving into their residences between 1995 and March 2000. For Hartford, 61% of households report moving into their households during the same period.

### Education

Public education in Hartford is in crisis. Hartford school children continually find themselves near the bottom on a wide range of measures including standardized test scores, graduation rates, percentage of students pursuing higher education and standardized test scores. In 1996, the State Supreme Court ruled in *Sheff v. O'Neil* that the high degree of racial segregation that exists between Hartford schools and their suburban counterparts constitutes a basic denial of constitutional rights to the city's school children. Although the state has moved to reduce segregation through charter and magnet school initiatives, Hartford schools remain extremely segregated. Minority children make up 94% of city's public school children.

Hartford's adult population lags significantly behind the state in measures of educational attainment. In 2000, 39.2% of the city's adults over the age of 25 lack a high school degree. Statewide, 17.6% of adults lack a high school degree. In contrast, 29.4% of the state's adults have a 4-year college degree or higher. In Hartford, only 12.4% of adults have a college degree or higher.



Over the last decade, the number of adults over the age of 25 declined by 10,655 people. Although the percentage of adults with a high school degree or greater increased slightly, 39% of Hartford's adult population still lacks a high school degree.

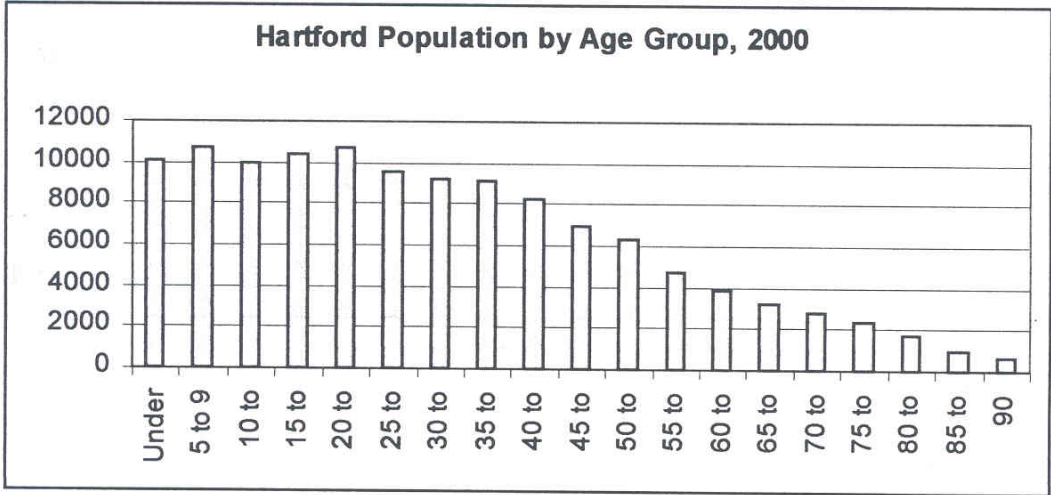
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Among Hartford Adults (25+) – 1990, 2000				
	1990	1990	2000	2000
Persons 25 years and over	80,523	100.0%	69868	100.0%
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	14,493	18.0%	11541	16.5%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, no diploma	18,169	22.6%	15821	22.6%
High school graduate	22,750	28.3%	21240	30.4%
Some college, no degree	10,009	12.4%	9931	14.2%
Associate degree	3,474	4.3%	2671	3.8%
Bachelor's degree	6,771	8.4%	5030	7.2%
Graduate or professional degree	4,857	6.0%	3634	5.2%

Several years ago, the National Institute for Literacy published a report that estimated that 41% of adults in Hartford read at the lowest competency level for literacy. According to the study, persons reading at the lowest competency level would have difficulty reading a sports article in the newspaper or completing a job application.

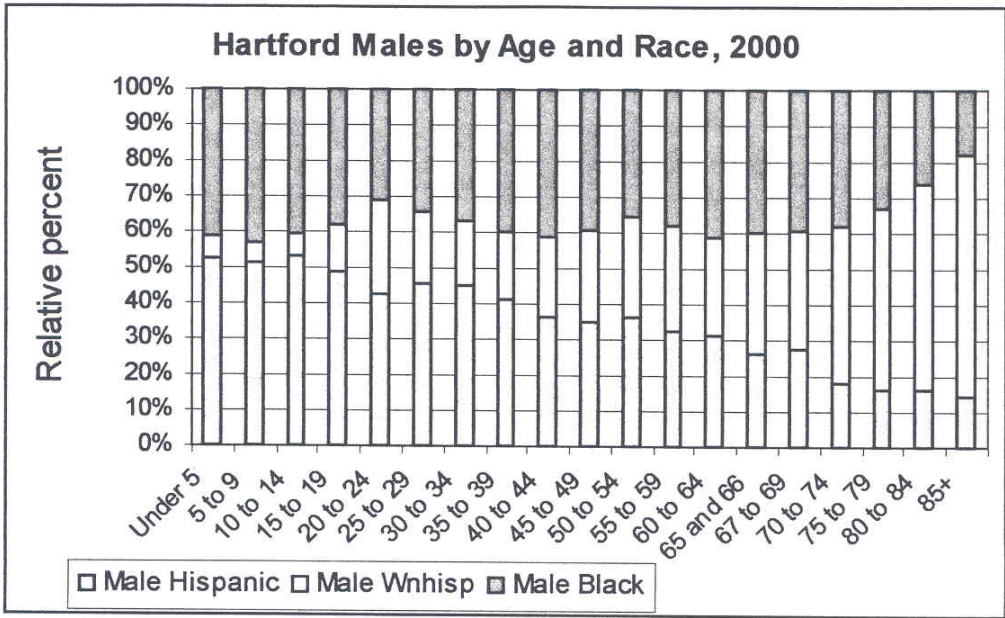
#### Age and Race/Ethnicity

Hartford's population is significantly younger than is found in the rest of the state. According to the U.S. Census, the median age of Hartford is 29.7, for the state it is 37.4. Hispanics are the largest ethnic group in the city. In 2000, Hispanics – predominantly Puerto Ricans – made up 40% of the city's population. Blacks and African Americans accounted for 38% of the city's population. Non-Hispanic Whites stood at about 17%. The median age of Hartford Hispanics is 24.5 for Blacks it is 29.9 for White non-Hispanics, the median age is 43.





Although Hispanics make up only 36% of the over 18-population, they comprise 51% of the city's under-18 population. White Non-Hispanics make up the largest ethnic group among residents over 65.



Most of the city's Hispanics (74%) live in neighborhoods located in the southern half of the city. 75% of the city's Black and African Americans live north of the city's downtown.

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<sup>i</sup>It is important to note that a focus group of individual “victims” was not chosen. Rarely do individuals or businesses come before the Court for these kinds of crimes, however in the Court, the community is often viewed as “the victim.”

<sup>ii</sup>For evaluation purposes, race/ethnicity is based on the U.S. 2000 Census terminology and categorization. “White” includes Caucasians or non-Hispanic Whites. “Black” includes Blacks or African-Americans. “Hispanic” includes Hispanics and Latinos.