

# Community Justice Center Facilitated Community Conversations



# Summary

The 2020 Dane County budget included funding for a needs assessment, engagement, and planning for a community justice center. A community justice center incorporates procedural fairness, restorative justice, and community centered transformative justice. Community justice centers include social services available for community members, regardless of their involvement with the criminal justice system. For more information, please see: [Community Justice Centers – What It Is/Is Not](#) , or view the [community conversation on community justice centers](#), held in late October 2020.

Prior to the needs assessment, Dane County was interested in hearing from a diverse group of residents to begin conversations around this innovative and restorative concept in the criminal justice system.

Dane County retained seven community organizations to complete facilitated conversations with their clients and partners, which allowed for candid responses and better engagement. This was a first step to inform the needs assessment and planning process for a community justice center. As this process unfolds, the consultant completing the needs assessment will continue critical community conversations and engagement.

Dane County partnered with the following organizations:

- Centro Hispano of Dane County
- Charles Hamilton Houston Institute
- Families Back to the Table
- JustDane
- Nehemiah
- The Hmong Institute
- Urban Triage

The County Board Office provided a facilitators' handbook with resources on community justice centers, topics for guided conversation, and the structure and prompts for the final report and presentation.

The facilitated discussions took place throughout December 2020, and January and February 2021 concluding with the organizations' final reports and presentation to the Criminal Justice Council and interested stakeholders.

This document includes the reports of each of the organizations.

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## **Community Justice Centers Facilitated Community Conversations**

The following report is a summary of three focus group conversations that Centro Hispano hosted as part of a partnership with Dane County. The focus groups were with the purpose to gather input from our community related to criminal justice reform, with focus on a potential community justice center. Centro conducted two meetings in English and one meeting in Spanish. Centro translated into Spanish the questions and the informed consent. Centro translated the notes taken in the meeting into English. We were, however, unable to translate the Community Justice Center videos or handout into Spanish. Since our Spanish speaking group was the group with the most contact with the justice system, we recommend that for future conversations the county translates into Spanish at least some of the material. There were other organizations that had similar conversations around a community justice center to provide a diverse perspective.

### **A. Meeting Participation**

Centro Hispano of Dane County Conducted three focus group meetings. Participants of the first two focus groups were recruited from Centro Hispano program participants who are bilingual or spoke English. The third focus group was hosted in collaboration with Unidos Against Domestic Violence. This last meeting was held in Spanish. Questions and consent were translated by Centro Hispano and used to facilitate the focus group in Spanish. Video and other Community Justice Center (CJC) material were not available in Spanish, which limited the information shared with the community, and more specifically for this third focus group.

- January 29, 2021 – This meeting was attended by 10 community members. **Participants** of this focus groups were current or past Caminos graduates. All participants are bilingual; eight were Spanish speakers, and two spoke European or African languages. All participants had at least some college credits. Participants had no direct personal experience with the criminal system.
- February 3, 2021– This meeting was attended by 10 community members. **Participants** of this focus groups were current or past ReGeneracion youth/students including 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year at UW Madison, and some are students at various High Schools around Dane County. Some participants had direct personal experience with the criminal system. The participants who discussed their direct experience with the criminal system shared that they were victims.
- February 5, 2021 – This meeting was attended by 8 community members. **Participants** of this focus groups were current or past Unidos Against Domestic Violence participants to the women’s group. Additionally, there were also two victim advocates. While participants from Centro Hispano’s New Routes for Adults, a jail diversion program,



were outreached and some were interested in participating the scheduled meeting conflicted with work schedule. All eight were Spanish speakers.

## **B. Answers and Feedback to Questions**

1. The report should also include your reaction to the meetings from the standpoint of the facilitator. In this section, include questions that were asked, themes that continued to arise, and overall tone of the sessions.

The justice system is composed of many agencies that collectively form part of the system. Many Dane County residents do not have a clear idea, especially many immigrants, what these agencies or parts are and how the system is supposed to work. This theme underlies answers throughout all three focus groups, and across the answers to several questions in each focus group. There were repeated suggestions and recommendations for information and education about justice system issues that have a big impact on immigrant communities: traffic tickets, laws and regulations that impact youth, immigrants, etc. Another example of the need for additional knowledge desired has to do with understanding the various police enforcement agencies that are part of the system.

### **a. What is your feeling-or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?**

The facilitator observed a difference in how participants expressed that they felt about the criminal system; the focus group where participants had not had direct experience with the criminal system were more positive and expressed, they felt safer. Participants who reported direct personal experience with the criminal system reported feeling less positive about the criminal system or their sense of safety. All the participants who reported having direct personal experience with the criminal system reported they were victims.

These themes were repeated throughout all three focus groups:

#### Discrimination or racism:

Focus group participants in all three focus groups reported that they had experienced or heard of experiences of people receiving different treatment because of race, ethnicity or inability to speak English well. Developing from this larger theme of discrimination and racism, there were themes of feeling lack of respect, support, safety as well as feeling dehumanization.

Participant quotes or shared experiences:

- A focus group participant heard from a coworker that was in jail *“that his experience wasn’t that bad because his family was here and helped him get out as soon as possible but he was in jail with others whose experience wasn’t so nice. This individual has another friend of mixed race who had a volunteer experience where they saw that people of color are not treated with respect.”*
- Another focus group participant who didn't feel criminal justice system handles thing well stated. "I know people who have had situations involving the system where they have been misunderstood or mistreated. They were not given the same treatment as lighter skinned/White people. I know people who have been treated drastically different in the same situation where the only difference was skin tone." Additionally,

and because of a personal incident this person feels that the system failed to protect this person. As a result, this person doesn't feel supported, does not feel safe going out and does not feel comfortable calling police or talking to them.

- Another focus group participant shared growing up with the fear of police. This person shared that in Monona, this summer there was a black family staying in a home in the suburbs with the permission of the homeowner and they had the police called on them. There were many police on the scene. It is not the first time this person hears of situations like this.
- One focus group participant shared about recently getting pulled over for the first time. This young adult shared with the parents what happened, and the father indicated that the way that it was handled was not right. Instead of fighting the ticket received, the participant decided to pay it to avoid problems with the criminal justice system.
- A participant shared that family members who have gone through situations where they wanted to reach out for help but they feel that their humanity is not going to be recognized in the situation. The individual and their family evade the police because they do not feel that they are going to be helped. One of their siblings had an incident where they accidentally called the police because of the set-up of the emergency button on their phone. The police officer got upset and told them they wasted their time on them because they were "playing around". The officer told the sibling to stop laughing when they were nervously chuckling. The officer felt it was okay to talk to someone in that manner.

**b. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?**

The facilitator observed generally a cautious positive attitude towards the proposed community justice center. Some consistent themes across the three focus groups were:

*1-the need for cultural competency, humanity and respect that is best achieved by having members of the community staff the center.*

- *"To be a success, the workers in the center from the attorneys to the judges should be educated on how to treat people. They should treat everyone as humans."* - This person had an issue with the police where the officer treated her well but her husband who is a Black man, had a drastically different experience that was not positive.
- Listening to the people in the community. Take classes to learn about other people's culture. Be patient and get educated. Most of the criminal justice system is White. It is the government's duty to educate themselves with basic knowledge.
- See people as people. Throughout our existence, we've been seen as less because of skin color, appearances, culture, but they need to listen to our needs.
- Focus on culture competency not just with law enforcement officers and first responders but judges, clerks, and anyone who provides support. Knowing the history of the justice systems and their bias and discrimination against people of color is important to acknowledge and go beyond that scope of White supremacy that is being upheld and has been upheld in the past.
- Rebuilding trust with the community. Reviewing the things that have broken the trust such as (police) officer accountability if you want people to feel supported by the community justice center.
- You have to understand where people are coming from. They have to know and be aware of what other people are going through. They need to get to know people, have

empathy and help them rise. We cannot assume things about people because of the way they dress or look. The system will not change. We need to change from the inside to create change within the community.

*2-Appropriate funding to ensure root causes of the issues impacting crime are addressed. This theme is highlighted more specifically in the answers to subsequent questions in the focus group.*

- There needs to be an evaluation of the needs in the community. They need to start from the roots. Then, based on that, they need to propose programs to prepare the people in the system. If someone does not have access to schooling, provide workforce training to help them. Make people feel that they are part of the community. Provide materials in different languages and take into account other communities like the Hmong and Indigenous people and not just Latinos.

*3-Language and cultural accessibility. This theme is repeated and amplified throughout the three focus groups.*

- Support. Many people get misunderstood because they don't speak good English. Places don't hire good translators. Hire people of color, people who can understand and relate to the struggle. Hire people who make sure individuals actually receive the help they are looking for.
- Truly for and by the community. Best when the people running it are part of the community because the community knows best what they need.

**c. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?**

Focus group participants were generally cautiously positive towards the proposed community justice center. Participants indicate that actions will allow communities to see the positive changes.

- It will change a lot. The participant gave an example from their home country where someone stole crops from a farm because they were hungry. That person was in jail for 6 years. Imagine if there was something that was able to address the root of the problem like trauma, hunger, living wage jobs. When people come out of jail, they might not have a job, food, housing and so they go back to jail because they don't have access to many things. It would be good to have a center that could get to the roots.
- Helpful for the most vulnerable in the community.
- A justice center can give positive opportunities for people who have committed crimes. Some people have health issues or mental health issues, and a center can help them and help make a better and stronger community.
- In the long scheme it will not change much. In one capacity, if there is a switch over from punitive justice to restorative justice, it will be a step forward in the system. To what degree, depends on the success of the Justice Center. To ensure that a father isn't separated from their child, that a child doesn't have to worry about where to sleep, a mother doesn't have to steal food. Ensuring that people get what they need and not just going through the system. Making sure there are resources available.
- Actions matter the most. The criminal justice system is bad. Maybe over time it can change but not soon.

- If the community members see something happen, it will make them trust law enforcement more.
  - Sometimes law enforcement officers abuse their power. The thought of them having to be trained again to use their power is unfortunate because it is something they should already know. By having more resources and the right people as well as people that are passionate about helping others and helping make connections will make a better change.
  - Opening of justice center is not enough. It is the actions that follow that matter.
- d. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.**

Participants from all three focus groups shared that they would like to see services that address the needs and root-causes for people's involvement in the justice system. Strengthen and foster community building as well as provide positive opportunities such as art and cultural events. Some of the needs shared were: health services, including mental health; victim advocates, therapists and social workers; English, personal finance, civic and technology classes; job training; culturally and linguistically appropriate services; GED; culture and art opportunities. Another important service was support for parents such as: financial support for families that due to public charge or other similar concerns are unable to access services that provide family stability.

- Offering ESL for free. Having people explain things to you is beneficial but being able to understand on your own by learning English is better. It makes sense for everyone to know English living in the U.S.
- School tutors in different languages. Tutors in the school are only in English and a few in Spanish. Some parents find it difficult to find support for their kids and it is difficult to find tutors if you only speak Spanish. You get put on a waitlist because there are limited people who can help you in Spanish. If working with an English-speaking tutor, it is difficult to communicate as a parent with the person who is assisting your child.
- *Information about rights and responsibilities.*
  - Hispanic people and people from other countries need more information about what to do when they get a traffic ticket. They should hold meetings, maybe one a week, to get more information about what to do in certain cases that happen in the everyday. Also include topics like what to do if something bad happens at work. People don't know what to do. Many people don't speak English very well. Many come from countries where there is no snow and so there are experiences that they are not familiar with.
  - Another participant spoke about when people have accidents and they don't know how to handle it. They wait it out, and eventually the justice system gets involved especially when it involves a White person.
  - Educational programs to be informed about what the Criminal Justice system is. Classes to learn about the law. Especially for people who are immigrants and youth to know their rights. Classes for youth to get involved in the community and learning something that will benefit them.
- Social workers and resources for them to better help community needs.

- *Culturally competent and respectful services.*
  - One focus group participant shared going to JFF to look for a social worker to send papers to Dane county about her income and the social worker was rude.
  - More cultural competence for the system. The staff in the proposed community justice center and other supporting services should know about culture and have bilingual people.
  - More cultural competency workshops. Just because they look like us does not mean they have our best interest in mind.
  - They should have these conversations about how class and other forms of discrimination effect the system.
- Jobs and job's training. They should have informational sessions pertaining to jobs. This individual has gone to jobs where she wasn't paid or was disrespected and didn't know what could be done. There should be a place where people can learn about what they can do.
- We need more education about technology. This person had an issue with a person in a parking lot and due to COVID has had to handle everything through Zoom or forms that are online as well as having to send paperwork online. Technology it is an important part of life now and not just because of COVID. People do not know how to access information or make payments online and can make mistakes. If you do not know where to go for a ticket, you can go to the computer and find more information if you have more knowledge about how to use technology.
- Basic personal finance classes would be beneficial. People struggle to save money or how to budget which can lead to issues with the criminal justice system when they do not have money. This is an important class for many people, especially young people.
- Support for families who need help to navigate the criminal justice system when their child is an offender. One of the participants shared an example of parents she knew who didn't know they could see their child in jail because they weren't made aware.
- GED
- AODA and rehab services. Addiction problems and other minor problems are the reason why people of color are not feeling connected.
- Having a rehab program would be helpful to support people. Some people commit crimes due to their addiction.
- Culture and art. We need to connect people to culture through art, dancing, etc.
- Services for mental health such as therapists and counselors; especially for times like now that we are in a pandemic. It is a need that has increased. Often times, in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities, it has been stigmatized. These services are important for the present and for healing of generational trauma as well.
- *Community and capacity building.*
  - Having police officers take time to volunteer in the community as a mandatory requirement so they can be open-minded about the people they serve and the purpose of their job.
  - If the city needs a garden in a park tended to and there are limited funds, offenders can give back with community service. MATC has programs such as cooking; if they could allow or rent the facilities to train people to get into the job market, that would be nice.

- Institutions or businesses to provide internships for individuals to gain experience and get into the workforce.

**e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?**

The facilitator notes that this question as stated did not seem to be well understood by focus group participants. Given that the first focus group had no responses, the facilitator changed the question to: ***How can Dane County prioritize the needs of the community as it relates to the proposed community justice center?*** The responses highlighted community building and humanizing community members and participants.

- We need to work more on community building activities. It can be as easy as judges coming to community meetings, greeting people by their name, etc. Talking to people as people and not as a case.
- Like the video, a judge attended a community meeting. It was something easy to do but not common. Make people of power available in community spaces and it makes it easier to communicate with them and more approachable.

**f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?**

Focus group participants consistently across all three-focus group highlighted the need to communicate: to share information, ask and to listen, often about the development and implementation of proposed community justice center to the impacted community, the community at large, and finding opportunities for community to engage as staff, volunteers and to participate in programming. The proposed community justice center is an opportunity to create and strengthen community.

- Dane county justice center needs to make sure that people in the community know what they are doing.
- Make sure that everyone knows about them well. They need to advertise. Even if you are never going to use them, it's important to know so that you can suggest it to people you know who may need it.
- It's important to let people know about their plans and programs. The community could get engaged in some of the activities or propose programs. Programs where people who are in trouble can give back to the community by working on projects and engage in the community.
- Transportation for the community to have more participation in the programs. It is hard for the community to be involved in programs. It is easier now because it is all online right now but more people need to participate.
- If they allow the community to speak their opinion and thoughts it will create a bigger impact on the center because they can reflect and get feedback from the community on what is lacking and what they can work on.
- Reach out to the community to get their feedback through social media. The way they can provide feedback is accessible through multiple languages. Provide information for the community about when it is open, etc.
- Letting the floor be open for the public whether that be through making board meetings or executive meetings available to folks. It is important for the center to know what the

community wants and the community to be able to give feedback and additional support to the center.

### **C. Additional questions**

#### **g. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?**

Bilingual focus group participants watched the video prior to the focus group. Spanish speaking group watched the video during the focus group. All three focus group participants recognized and appreciated the humanity exemplified by the judge.

- How the judge gives a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance to all of them. How they help their lives to get better, to get jobs, and they find ways to address the root causes.
- How they treated people with respect and unbiased.
- You can see the impact for each individual. We do not really know people's circumstances.
- The girl who was an addict who had her life together. It was beautiful to see. Addiction is a hard topic to talk about. She had a job and going to school and becoming the person helping instead of the person needing help.

#### **h. What potential challenges do you see?**

- Language.
- Not everyone understands English. The way that they approach people. People may be offended based on how they are asked for things to be done.
  - Language is one of the most challenging things. Some begin doing a language course and do not continue because it is hard. People have responsibilities like jobs and kids which is another challenge for some people. They work a lot and they do not have time to go to classes. Age is a challenge because older people may have more responsibilities like children. (others agree)
- Ability to engage due to time and other responsibilities. As you advance in age you have more responsibilities and it makes it hard for people. You can see how people put in a lot of effort to participate in classes. They have very little time to study. Many Spanish speakers work in places where they also speak Spanish and they do not have opportunities to practice English. Some people are looking to have a job to pay the minimum needs and so people don't have time to participate in classes.
- Trust and acceptance from the community.
  - The community is very open minded, but we don't know if it will be a problem. Will the people the center is intended for feel safe or trust the authorities in the center if they have had bad experiences with the criminal justice system? It will take time to learn how to approach the people they are trying to help and to build trust and make them feel comfortable. Some may think they are being tricked because it sounds too good to be true.
  - People are going to struggle with trusting people in the center because of bad experiences. They won't want to reach out unless someone they know, and trust recommend it. Getting people to know about the center in the mainstream.
- Technology. People have to adapt to technology especially if they have kids. Some don't have computer or internet at home. It was a challenge to learn how to use a computer. Especially now, classes and programs are online, and it creates a challenge for individuals who don't know how to use technology.

**i. Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?**

- Everyone.
  - No matter race, social class, etc. People of higher social class can see where their money goes and see what other people go through and they can expand their mindset.
  - Federal, state, and local entities as well as community members. Everyone should take part in this to make it stronger. With federal support it will look more official. State entities may be able to provide funding. Local entities can be the link to community. Community members can propose ideas.
  - Educational institutions like MATC who could offer free classes to people who struggle in their life to give them a chance to get a better education and make better choices in their life.
  - The communities who have been criminalized and over policed the most.
  - Youth, elders, professionals, young professionals, people who are not in school.
  - Those who have encountered the current justice system.

**j. What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?**

- How does the community justice center determine if the clients are really changed?
- What are the main goals? Why was it created? What is the target population? What are the services that will be offered? How will the community benefit from it?
- What happens to people who commit repetitive crimes?
- We really need to know what the center will do for the community. If you do not know what they do or the programs they have you will never use it. We need to get more information to people.
- How can youth be involved?
- What is the timeline for the community justice center?
- What does organization involvement look like? How networked would the justice center be with community organizations that are social justice or equity based?

**k. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?**

- Have more resources for minorities. Resources in different languages and for rehabilitation.
- In theory, the center would make it more restorative. It depends how it is applied. It would require a lot of support, not just in terms of law enforcement but also taking into account other professionals like social workers, psychiatrists, etc. who are able to support one another and not just one group who is given the power to enforce the law.

**l. Measuring success:**

**How might we measure that the community justice center is successful?:**



The county asked if we could add this question for the focus groups we had not yet conducted. The participants provided suggested tangible and intangible measures to measure success.

- When people don't fear law enforcement anymore. Instead of running away from them they seek them for help.
- The motivation of individuals to grow because they matter too and they are not another number in the system.
- Lower recidivism rates.
- Getting youth back in the education system. To not worry what they have to go through at home in the school system
- Referrals to the center. More people to advocate for the center organically and through their experiences with the center. Not having it be a requirement or an obstacle for folks, it is a support. Instead of a battle, it is a place of trust where you can get the assistance you need.



**Report Prepared by:**

**Walter Williams, President  
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January 22, 2021**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the findings and themes based on the facilitator's workbook that was provided by Dane County to facilitate focus groups surrounding the topic of a *Community Justice Center*. The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute, Inc. held five focused groups with the following organizations: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Madison Alumnae Chapter (December 22, 2020), Blacks for Political and Social Action, Inc. (December 28, 2020), Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Mu Eta Lambda Chapter (January 6, 2021), High School Students from Verona Area School District (January 7, 2021), and High School Students from Madison Metropolitan School District (January 14, 2021). Amongst these groups, all were identified as African American/Black, except for three students who identified themselves as bi-racial (Black and white). The ages of these participants range from 13-80 years old. All groups were co-ed except for Alpha Phi Alpha whose group were all men and Delta Sigma Theta whose group were all women. Each session had 7 or more participants that gave their thoughts, feelings and reactions about Dane County developing a Community Justice Center that's modeled after the Red Hook Community Justice Center.

### **What is your feeling--or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?**

On average, participants indicated that they are dissatisfied with the current criminal justice system in Dane County. It was expressed that often Black people are harassed, discriminated and negatively profiled by police officers and are unfairly treated once entered into the criminal justice system. This has resulted in the lack of trust, rapport, and faith in the criminal justice system. Some individuals shared personal stories about their negative engagement with the justice system and others were able to share negative examples about members of their family. Across all groups, the feelings of being stereotyped because of their racial identity was alarming. The fear of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, being followed in the store, and the discomfort with having an officer in the rearview mirror are stressors that cause individuals to feel unsafe in their home city. Participants reactions to the stories that were shared were of sympathy and often relatable. Here are a few quotes from the groups:

“White people and young adults are given preferential treatment by police officers”

“Students are very fearful of the system”

“...cops pulled them over and was shocked it was a female, they saw her and thought the driver was Black and let them go once he [the officer] saw she was a white female”.

“Resources for programs that support Black communities tend to get cut first”

### **What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?**

“Adults dedicated to young people”, “invested community members”, “having Black people with lived experiences at the table”, and “the location” are common responses by each group. Participants had a positive response when discussing what the County should consider with this project. It's critical that there's an investment by all parties to look at every policy, practice and procedure to ensure the community justice center serve the community in a positive way and help push against racist ideology and behavior that continues to impede upon the mental and physical health of the Black community. The mental health of Black people is of great concern given the traumatic experiences that many have had, whether it's been directly or indirectly. Therefore, having the right stake holders involved with the development of this center will help with its credibility and its impact on the community at large. Here are a few more quotes from participants:

“...support for the whole family, that's what is needed”

“Focus on the root causes”

“Accountability amongst community members”

**If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?**

It was the consensus of most that if the county moves forward with a community justice center, it could help restore trust, give the community hope, and will be an opportunity to rethink how the justice system can aid in uplifting the community versus causing harm. It was further expounded upon that the community justice system needs to establish measurable metrics that will aid in holding both the community center and it’s involved parties accountable. Lastly, welcoming new voices and perspectives will help deter the community justice center from becoming mundane and a replica of what exists. With this in mind, most believe their feelings will change, but it’ll take some time along with evidence, that change is happening. Some stated:

“I’ll wait and see, there’s great potential here”

“This change will show that they really do care”

“Trust in our people to scrutinize the data and recommend changes”

**What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.**

The opportunities that this community center could bring are endless. Dane County isn’t short of resources, but the way the resources are utilized and how they are presented becomes the issue for communities of color. The narratives that come with certain programs can cause individuals to not seek support because of embarrassment, shame, and feeling inadequate. It was suggested that the following services be considered: Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health Service, Child Care, Social Services, GED/HSED Programs, Financial Wellness, AODA Support, Employment Opportunities for youth and adults, introduce technical careers (welding, construction, plumbing, information technology, etc.), Restoration of right, non-criminal support (e.g. landlord/tenant issues), family friendly events, and scholarships for high school students and adults who are interested in starting or returning to school.

**How can Dane County center the community’s needs in discussion of a community justice center?**

To center the community’s needs, it was a unanimous response from each group to have the community’s voice at the table when decisions are being made. To be specific, given the negative experiences Black people have had with the criminal justice center, hearing their stories and learning from their experiences, both positive and negative could help prevent further harm from being done to communities of color. Some community members may desire to be involved, but finds stepping up intimidating and sometime inaccessible, if they don’t have certain backgrounds or education. Therefore, it’s been suggested that the county consider ways to decentralizing leadership to increase opportunities for the community to engage. Some stated:

“Funding that’s sustainable”

“Shared leadership”

“Meaningful opportunities to give back”

“Don’t get the community hopes up, to let them down”

**In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?**

To help influence the development of a community justice center, it’s vital that everyone is on the same accord with the goal of progressing our communities by not approaching individuals as criminals, but as individuals who need support in a particular area of their life. It’s worth considering the voice of youth, parents, victims, offenders, and individuals with fresh ideas. It was further discussed that being transparent on the progress of this community center will help increase awareness, demonstrate commitment and support from all those who would benefit. To quote a few of the participants across the groups, it was stated that:

“We have the tools we need, just need to utilize them”

“Build MATC & UW-Madison partnerships”

“...kids listen to kids”

“Initially Iowa was against it totally, now they love it. If Iowa can implement this program, anyone can”

“One organization can address a particular need of the community to help carry the load of many”

**In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?**

Across all groups, individuals expressed loving the Community Justice Center model. The groups enjoyed how humanity was displayed in the process by putting the needs of the individual on the frontline. The way everyone was engaged, specifically the judge, gave the impression that the person in front of him was more important than anything else around. The approach to help, by providing wrap around services, gave hope to those who may have been hopeless. Hearing the response that “jail was easy” or that it “feels like growth” highlights the Community Justice System’s intentionality and commitment to restorative justice. Lastly, to hear how behaviors were addressed stood out tremendously. Having this approach must’ve helped with minimizing shame, while redirecting negative behavior. Some specific takeaways:

“Treated me like I was a human”

“Judge was eye to eye, intentionally”

“Focus on helping and restoring the individual”

“Knowing someone really cared”

“This is less punitive and more supportive”

“This could really help with recidivism”

## **What potential challenges do you see?**

The same feelings that were expressed in regard to establishing the community justice center are similar sentiments that could be a challenge. With the community's lack of credibility with the justice system, it may be a challenge to rebuild trust, specifically with those who's been negative impacted by the system. The steering committee of this project will have to be very intentional about welcoming the community's voice and reassuring individuals that this community center is about accountability, yet the approach is nothing like we've seen in the past. It's the fear of community members that this community justice center will further empower the white community members to exert their privilege and reinforce their racist bias and ideas. Therefore, challenging the mindsets and beliefs of the individuals who will be involved in this project will be crucial in determining the impact this center could have on Dane County. Direct commentary noted:

"The center not being take seriously, the people running it being either too kind and no backbone or them being very rude and not treating the people seeking help like real humans"

"Kids not going because it isn't "cool" or the new trend their friends are following"

"People may think this is another trap"

## **Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?**

To create a community justice center, a variety of stakeholders should be invited to the table. Providing the opportunity for individuals who have lived experiences with the justice system, along with those who haven't, but has been impacted in some capacity, will assist with giving points of view from both angles. Likewise, with youth, there are young people who have ideas, the voice and energy to help lead a variety of causes, but they must have access and trust that their voice matters. Working on projects such as community centers can be intimidating, so allowing entry points for anyone to feel like their voice matters will help everyone have a hand in how the center is developed. Specific comments shared:

"Judges willing to buy-in"

"Those in the system, leaders, youth"

"Pastors and churches"

## **What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?**

Not all focus groups were able to address this question, however, two of the five shared their thoughts about changes that can be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable. It was suggested that youth should be given more opportunities to speak and share their story, versus being talked down to. Having intentional programming for youth to engage could help deter some of the negative behavior and lessen the chance of them entering the justice system. Having a white savior complex does more harm than good. Therefore, addressing racist ideas and beliefs head-on could help the current system. Participants stated:

"good listeners and people who give youth a second chance to get it together"

“focus on the behavior and why the person made the decision they made”

“revisit cases that may have bias and discrimination and drop charges”

All in all, the response from each group were positive. The participants were engaged, thoughtful, and were excited about the idea of a community justice center. Individuals were pleased with what has taken place with the Red Hook Community Center and believe Dane County could benefit from something similar. Furthermore, after hearing the thoughts and concerns of each group, it's evident that the community is in dire need of a different approach as it relates to the justice system. Several participants shared how they've been negatively impacted by the justice system and wouldn't want others to experience the heartbreak.

It was often emphasized that trust needs to be reestablished with the Black community, specifically, those who have been harmed by the system. Restoring trust will ensure the community that Dane County is serious about supporting those in need by addressing the behavior and not causing harm to the person. Additionally, addressing the mental health needs of our community is critical. In the Black community, there are negative stigmas around getting mental health services, having a community justice center that rethink the approach to addressing mental health could help increase the morale of the community.

**Question that was asked, but were unable to be addressed:**

There was a Resolution, #556 "Investigating Solutions to Racial Disparities and Mental Health Challenges in the Dane County Jail and Throughout Dane County's Criminal Justice System". There was an ask for us to attach this report. Also, an accountability of the status of implementing the 10 recommendations submitted on September 17, 2015. There were individuals who were either on the committee or knew of this report. It was suggested that these recommendations are still relevant and should be incorporated and considered as the outreach for this Community Justice Center continues. Questions unable to be answered were as follows:

How much was the startup cost for Red Hook?

What does it take now to fund the Red Hook Center?

Will the Dane County Community Justice Center be maintained by the current justice system administration?

Thank you for your time reviewing this report. All questions can be directed to Walter Williams (wwilliams91@gmail.com) or Kirbie Mack (kirbiemack@gmail.com).



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6701 Seybold Road, Madison, WI 53719 (608) 209-5114

**February 16, 2021**

**Dear Community Justice Center Members,**

January 23, 2021

January 24, 2021

January 28, 2021

February 4, 2021

2. Who attended meetings – no names, but general description (age, gender, race, and ethnicity), also include the number of attendees.

Each meeting had 8-10 persons which included,

25 Africans-Americans (25- 48)

5 African Americans (49-75)

6 Caucasians (18-55)

5 Hispanics (18-23)

Gender: 31 Females

10 Males

3. Answers to questions posed:

a. What is your feeling-or that of your family— about the criminal justice system in Dane County?

During our 5 meetings we discussed several issues. First, the community members were happy to be given the opportunity to discuss the community justice center. Members did not know much about the potential project. Each meeting that was held we spent approximately 2 hours with thorough discussion. I appreciate allowing each member time to express their concerns with the criminal justice system. I noticed that we had several members speak expressively with passion.





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Some of our members showed expression by crying and with tears in their eyes. Members have never been given the opportunity to give input on any initiatives created by government.

They want to especially that county board for giving them this opportunity. In the meetings members had mixed feelings are about the recent activities that are expressed by others who are not happy with the Dane County Criminal Justice System. Wisconsin has the worst racial disparities in the Nation. People based their opinions on the reality of systemic racism. Some believe that the recent way that the Dane County Criminal System is operating is not acceptable. The data shows that as Dane County Population increases, there would be a need for more law enforcement officers. In my opinion, increasing the hiring of law enforcement officers cannot be the only alternative. Members believe that working to decrease the crimes and not accepting defeat would be a better way of making the county safe. We had participants in the groups with lived experiences. Other members knew families or had family members that experienced problems with the criminal justice system. They noticed that people are being released from jail or prisons without treatment. Members truly believe that the only way to invest in smart justice is to be inclusive of the community. In fact, we must have authentic engagement with communities of color.

Addressing the origin of the problems will produce better outcomes than ignoring the origins. We know that systemic racism exists and must be dismantle it with practices, policies, and trainings.

b. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?

The group had a great discussion with this question. Members felt that a safe place to continue to engage in the dialogue about the justice system was important. We must continue to have information about what the justice center is and is not. We think that this information is critical in just understanding the purpose of the center. It would be critical to have trust, racial equality, and fairness to all who interface with the new justice system.



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Not being trustworthy can create issues before the new center begin to operate. If trust is built in an organization and is executed properly, then decision making will be faster for all including the people who are being served, especially the community. It is important to know if a person feels that an organization can be trusted and relied upon. When authentic community engagement efforts occur then they will begin to respect what is offered. We believe that trust builds a person self-confidence, and it encourages them. Trust is something that is earned and in many communities of color we live by the example that our word is our bond. A bond is something that is creating between people to demonstrate their agreement with conditions with an issue. In addition, if someone tells you that they trust you please remember that they will continue to trust you until you give them a reason not to trust you. We want to be certain that it is captured that the community justice center will fail if the community is not supportive of this new reform. Also, if the center is not funded by the county and if other criminal justice partners are not supportive of the idea. We are excited to create a project that is designed by the Dane County community, criminal justice partners, those with lived experiences and embraces national best practices.

c. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?

If Dane County were to get a Criminal Justice Center, members believe that they this could be exciting news for the community. We are in a pivotal moment in our nation for criminal justice reforms and smart justice. I do not think anyone who do not have good feelings about the old system would change until the new center has proven to be affective. I think sharing data trends is critical to persuading those that have reservations about the investments. What it is and what it is not looks great on paper, however, can it be done. Trust is also crucial and is the foundation for the employees at the new center. Without trust at the center, conflicts will develop forthgoing.



What I continue to hear from members is that they are not interested in another study of brainstorming sessions. We know for a fact that African Americans are incarcerated at a higher rate than their white counterparts in Dane County and across the state of Wisconsin. We truly believe that if the investment was made to create the criminal justice system then the outcomes should report a decrease in incarceration or at least recidivism rates. Members shared personal stories about their love ones who were released from local jail or prison without housing, employment, treatment and without a plan. We must focus on giving the appropriate resources to inmates who are released from jail or prison. The community is watching to see if elected officials have been listening to protesters and the unrest in the community. The community continue to demand defund the police, divest the resources in the police departments and do not build any more jails but consider alternatives to incarceration. Members expect the outcomes for data to decrease with incarceration rates. We expect for more alternatives to be offered and for inmates to be successful with their supervision if the case management plans are thoroughly followed and amended as needed.

d. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community?

The Community Justice Center must focus on the following areas: Residence, Employment, Support, Treatment and Transportation. We know from data that many inmates that are incarcerated do not have a GED and are often not able to have 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Reading Level. We know that the housing tenant laws have prevented inmates from being able to reside with family members. In fact, if family members have housing subsidies then the inmate will not be allowed to stay with them. This unfortunate policy decision will cause many inmates to be released from jail to homeless centers, couch surfing and living with family members without being on the lease. There were examples in the group where members shared that landlords were aware of the inmate residing their and gave verbal consent but would never add them to the lease.



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Many families suffer with low-income levels and receive food at community centers, mobile food pantries, and school pantries. Food is a necessity, and we should never have hunger in our community. The community justice center should be in the community and should be looked at as a community resource. Members believe that you services from the community center should be available to anyone who needs assistance.

The center should provide vital services help for offenders and their families when needed. They should have a team of psychologists available to handle certain cases that need immediate attention. Social workers, counselors, mental health therapist, pastors, should be available at the center instead of being placed out in the community. Community service programs that offer HSED/GED programs for teens and adults. Also, youth programs, apprenticeship programs, career placement/job development. We know that Dane County is the fasting growing county. As a result, building affordable housing is in great demand.

e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?

The community needs can become the center of a discussion by producing previous years of data and statistics that effected the community not to progress or to be safe. That is why the new justice center will need to be built to better service the community and to make it safe. If the community stakeholders can be apart of the future discussions, a part of the engagement processes, and policy decisions then the community will never be forgotten. The community members will be the validators of the new justice center project. Please continue to allow community organizations to participate in the process by providing small grants to assist with community engagement efforts. We think that it is important to allow the community to lead the discussions and trust the community in what we feel is best. We think that the county board should attend the meeting with an open mind and listening ears. Members really think that we must continue with the momentum of criminal justice reforms that our county, state, and federal government is pushing at a national platform.



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f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center?

What can our organization or you as an individual do? Additional questions if time allowed.

We think that the community can influence the development of a community justice center by engaging other stakeholders. We think that the community can write county board supervisors to ask them to sign on to future legislation about the community justice center. Members believe that community leaders can ask to be appointed to any communities, taskforce, or commissions to discuss the creation of a new justice center. The community can attend meetings discussing the proposed new justice center and voice their concerns. Also, they can offer to help promote the proposed community justice center at community locations such as libraries, Madison College, churches, and other public places, communicating how the Justice center will help the community. The community must hold the county board and criminal justice partners accountable for the data. We must remember that the initiatives are created to build a more cohesive relationship between the community, inmates, and criminal justice partners. We hope that memorandum of understandings can be created to hold criminal justice partners accountable and build upon. In hopes are creating data sharing and data collection. We think that transparency is important for the community to review. We are requesting the data to be sent to various community partners to share the outcomes. We want to avoid a disconnect with the community not being informed of agenda items to vote upon. We think that working with the media, new outlets, and social media to cover the topic is important. Allowing the community to be employees of the center especially if it is in communities of color. We must give community as early of a notice as possible in order to get as much community input and engagement as possible.

g. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?



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What stood out the most to me was how the Judge thoroughly understood the criminal justice offenders and he made a difference in their lives. They said that they were proud of themselves. The judge aimed to protect the community. The care, respect, and saving lives stood out to me. The center followed up with their client when other issue arrives. The businesses saw a big difference in the neighborhood. The impact was amazing.

h. What potential challenges do you see?

The potential challenges that I saw was that the Justice Center must remain consistent. Consistently is vital for it to remain effect.

I. Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?

The Dane County Board of Supervisors and Staff, Dane County Executive, District Attorney, Judges, Human Services Department, Police Departments, Sheriff Departments, Department of Corrections, Health Care Providers, Mental Health Providers, community leaders, data analyst and national partners. I would like to know more about the staff. The staff is very important. They should be hand picked and should live in Dane County if possible. The professional employees should not only have degrees but should be caring, have compassion, an understanding of all the community culture, and want to help society and to help the community safe, other than considering the position as just a paycheck.

j. What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?

I would like to know what services they will offer the people living in the community and will they include the community in the initial planning. Also, will a cost be affiliated with the programs. Will programming be considered at the justice center. What models are you looking at for Dane County? We believe that there is no one shoe fits all approach. Our community is different from other communities therefore we should build a new justice center that fits our needs in Dane County. Also, can you share data that demonstrates that there is a new for this type of project? In addition, can you share data with the community that led you to consider this project.





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What other states have a justice center? Did the data trends reduce recidivism rates? Did the justice center create more alternatives for the county? How successful are the justice centers? Are centers located in the community or are they located in the courthouse? What programs are offered in the justice centers? Are justice centers operated by not-for-profit or the government? Who will be billed for the creation of a justice center? How often can a person attend the justice center?

k. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?

I believe at the time, making the current system more restorative and equitable is an option. First, I believe we must create criminal justice reforms that include alternatives to incarceration options, more electronic monitoring options, more cash bail options. Second, we believe offering a weekend court could assist in reducing the number of inmates in jail. The community from all walks of life really need a change for the better. Many have lost hope and trust in the Dane County Justice System and have expressed it. In our opinion, this is bad because Words and data do matter. A new system is needed and from the info about Red Hook New Justice Center, it would be a good model for Dane County. We are overdue to have any alternatives that reduces our number of persons incarcerated.

4. The report should also include your reaction to the meetings from the standpoint of the facilitator. In this section, include questions that were asked, themes that continued to arise, and overall tone of the sessions.

Per my discussion with people of the Madison community about having a criminal justice center. The people loved the fact that the community center will be overseen by someone in their neighborhood that they know and feel they can trust. Also, someone who sees their best interest at heart and really cares about the community.



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The people are very excited to have a program that can support them through this tough time but there was also some concern. Some of the concerns were questions about who will be in charge? Will the criminal justice partners be trustworthy? Which are very good questions because they want to make sure that the person who is in charge is trustworthy and genuinely cares about them. That seems to be a struggle in many communities because people will say they will help but do not follow through with what they said.

This discussion helped the people feel heard and let them know that we are here for them. Although they had some concerns the community is willing to give the new program a chance to help them. If the community accepts this program and is on board, we will be able to provide a place for people who need help getting a job. Especially people who are just getting out of jail and need to get back on their feet. This criminal justice center will be a chance to bring amongst change and help people get a second chance at a better life. Families back to the table want to guarantee the people that we are here for you and will give you the help you need.

Please feel free to contact me directly at 608-209-5114 or via email at [Lburrell140@gmail.com](mailto:Lburrell140@gmail.com). I look forward to our on-going communication.

**Sincerely,**

**Lisa Burrell, President  
Families Back to the Table, Inc.**





**To: Dane County Board**

**From: Linda Ketcham, Executive Director**

**Re: Community Justice Center Facilitated Community Conversations  
Report from Madison-area Urban Ministry dba JustDane**

**Date: January 29, 2021**

**Dates of Meetings:**

Three meetings were held: 1/11/2021, 1/20/21 and 1/26/21

One meeting was held in the evening, one was held during the late afternoon and the third meeting was held in the early afternoon to accommodate work and virtual school schedules of potential participants.

**Attending/Participants:**

Twenty-nine people participated ranging in age from 21 to 73. Seventeen participants identified as male, 12 identified as female. Sixteen participants were Black, one Hmong, one Latinx, one Native American, and ten participants were white. Twenty-four participants had lived experience with the justice system. Nine participants are parents of minor children, eight participants are parents of adult children.

**Answers to questions posed:**

*What is your feeling – or that of your family about the criminal justice system in Dane County?*

There were several recurring themes across meetings in response to this question. Most prevalent was the feeling that the criminal justice system in Dane County is racist and disproportionately impacts people of color. Participants noted that the overwhelming majority of participants in jail diversion programs, Huber work release and Drug Court are white. Participants also noted that the police were a major problem within the system and that policing practices throughout Dane County were racist. One third of the participants expressed their feelings that the police are racist and lie in order to make arrests. Noting the irony that the people charged with upholding the law are violating it, participants expressed frustration with law enforcement officers in Dane County, as well as a fear of law enforcement due to the affiliation of some police officers with white supremacy groups - not just in DC but here, too.

**JUST DANE**

2115 South Park Street, Madison, WI 53713

Phone 608-256-0906 Web [justdane.org](http://justdane.org)

**Inclusion—Compassion—Forgiveness—Courage**

*"A community where everyone has a chance to succeed"*



In response to this question, many participants shared very personal stories about their involvement with the system. One woman shared the following: “When I was a provider in social services, I felt like there was hope for people in the system. When my life unraveled and I became involved in the system it was a whole different perspective. It was discouraging, I couldn’t get help, I couldn’t get information. It felt very punitive, like things were set for me to fail. It just breaks you down and you plead guilty just to be done. Now working in human services again, I hear the same thing from people in the system.”

Another participant shared “...information is hard to get, it’s exhausting. The system criminalizes poverty. I was in jail because I got a ticket for not wearing my seat belt and I couldn’t afford the ticket.

When I didn’t pay, they issued a warrant for me and I was arrested and put in jail for four days.”

Another participant shared that when she received an OWI (first offense) she ended up serving a jail sentence when she was labeled a habitual traffic offender because she had previous tickets for small offenses (like seat belt violation and driving without valid registration because she could not afford her vehicle registration).

From another participant we heard “I was encouraged to plead guilty, but no one told me how that would affect me in the future. I don’t feel like I got good representation.” Still another young woman shared that when she appeared in court the judge had already signed off on an Alternative to Revocation agreement that she herself had not yet seen.

Participants also feel that the system is heavy handed and punitive. Assuming guilt, it approaches individuals entering the system as if they already have been found guilty and judges them. Several participants shared that they felt the system was joke, with low level offenses resulting in P.O. holds or arrests, while people who have committed more serious offenses come in and out of the system because they have the funds to get a better attorney.

One participant described his feelings in this way: “the Dane County system is no more than a copy of the system across the U.S. and is designed for the elite to do commerce - this goes all the way back to slave patrols. It’s about controlling people for the benefit of business interests and property and keeping power. It has nothing to do with rehabilitation.” Related to this sentiment were concerns that the system was exploitative: using people housed in the jail for cheap labor; using fines and fees attached to court costs as another way to exploit; and also using fees for phones, laundry and commissary to further exploit people.

Participants generally held the opinion that the Dane County Criminal Justice system is indifferent to the needs of the people in the system, particularly to the needs of Black folks. There is no effective treatment offered in the jail, no rehab, the system has cost people their housing and jobs, and generally does a poor job of connecting people with existing resources in the community.

*What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?*

Participants felt strongly that several factors would be required to make a CJC successful in Dane County. First, the judges selected to preside and to be engaged would need to be vetted for buy-in. Additionally, the sentencing history of the judges should be examined for racial disparities to ensure fairness and equal access to the program.

Participants felt that adequate funding was crucial to the success of the project. Funding should be long-term, providing for ample study of the project’s success, not just one or two years as often is the case. System change takes time, and the County needs to make a long-term commitment to this if they are



going to do it. Participants were adamant that the project shouldn't rely on grant dollars that go away to support it. The County should be as willing to support this project financially as they are to put money into a jail to incarcerate people.

To be successful, people with lived experience need to be at the table at every decision point. That includes site selection, building and programmatic design. The agencies involved in providing support there should be ones with specific experience and expertise in providing support for justice involved individuals. There's a difference between an agency that has supports *specifically designed for justice involved individuals* and an agency that happens to have someone that is justice involved in their program. Any agencies providing supports through CJC shouldn't have barriers to participation. For example, don't require stable housing because if you do, it will count a lot of people out of participation. One participant expressed it this way "it will succeed to the extent it is incorporated with the community and current reentry support programs that actually do specific reentry work vs. all of those that say they do reentry because they happen to have a couple of people in a program that are returning." This participant noted that if a program is not specifically reentry focused, the staff often do not fully understand the challenges, barriers, trauma and systemic racism within the system. As a result, services are not as effective and sometimes even set people up to fail - for example: enrolling people in a training program in a field that their Probation Agent won't allow them to work in.

To be successful there should be lots of alternatives to jail, not just drug court. There also should be a continual evaluation of access to and of racial disparities related to who is using the CJC and benefitting from the available alternatives. Participants noted that people of color generally are either not offered alternatives or that the alternatives are not clearly explained to them in terms of the benefits of participation in such programs. Additionally, participants felt that data should be tracked related to the racial composition of individuals referred to alternatives to incarceration and diversion programs and that the data should be broken down by judge, DA and Public Defender. Right now, lots of the alternative programs have mostly white people involved; people of color seem to be left out of those alternatives.

All of the criminal justice system players (police, DA, jail, judges, DOC) will need training on the model and its goals. They will need training on evidence-based practices and trauma informed care, gender responsive programming, and culturally relevant programming. They must approach its mission from a framework of cultural humility. The County should make sure that the agencies providing the supportive services are equitable, that staff are paid a living wage and have benefits, and that the money just isn't going to the top while exploiting the direct service staff who most often are the people with lived experience. Pay attention to the wage disparities between the top and bottom. Make sure the money is supporting strong programs and not just management.

A successful CJC will have a different culture: one of welcome, inclusion and a real belief in second chances. It will be non-judgmental. To be successful it cannot be run by the system, including the Courts, DOC, law enforcement, jail - or even by the County - as all of these players have little credibility. It should be run by an Advisory Committee that includes people in the programs, people with lived experience, people from the agencies providing services, and representatives from funders.

There was consensus among participants that there needs to be lots of community partners and transparency in terms of outcome measures that are tracked and analyzed. There needs to be accountability at every level from judges to programs.



*If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?*

“The proof is in the pudding,” was the sentiment of one participant and echoed by several other individuals participating in the conversations. “Just creating this Center won’t change my opinion of the system – not until we see results and how people are treated and whether input from these sessions is incorporated and used in developing it.” Several participants expressed frustration that over the years the County has repeatedly asked them to share their stories, and to participate in studies that result in reports with recommendations that sit on shelves somewhere in the CCB. There is *a distrust that can be overcome if participants see that their input actually resulted in having an impact* in developing a CJC. Other participants suggested that neither their feelings about the system or the system itself would change if the same people who created the current system are left in charge of creating the CJC.

Other participants again shared that a CJC needs accountability to the community and metrics. Every agency involved must be held to the same standards for tracking their metrics. There was a sense that this doesn’t always happen: that some agencies get funds because they are in the ears of politicians, that no one is holding them accountable for what they’re doing with the money, and that people aren’t getting help from them. That said, outcome measures must have realistic outcomes and time frames. There needs to be a constant review of barriers to the CJC success, especially among justice system players.

“It doesn’t mean anything unless you track metrics and system reform.” This was another common feeling among participants – that simply creating a CJC does not magically end the systemic racism within the system. There has to be an effort to also reform the system so that people can have the opportunities they need to be successful, and are not continually dragged back down by things like P.O. holds, fines and fees, disparate stops by police, etc. Two participants shared their experiences with being picked up on P.O. holds when their GPS systems failed to charge. They were arrested while at home trying to charge the bracelets and were put in jail (one for four days and one for seven) even though there are widespread issues with GPS monitoring systems. Several participants noted that in communities with established Community Justice Centers the community had done extensive long-range planning, laying groundwork that was inclusive of all of the players, the community, and people with lived experience. It’s not clear that Dane County has done that foundational community work to build a successful CJC.

*What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community?*

Services provided should include a full-range of supports for the broader community, including, but not limited to: food pantry; legal assistance for a wide range of issues; mental health and AODA treatment; phones; computer labs; parenting services like JustDane’s Parenting Inside Out; hobby and leisure space; peer support; case management; housing; eviction prevention support; laundry; storage; transportation; childcare; trauma support; job training; benefit specialists; healthcare; counseling; and recovery groups (more than just twelve steps: things like Smart Recovery and Women for Sobriety). One participant noted “services should be wraparound like what I experienced at JustDane with Just Bakery, Circles of Support, trauma groups and peer support.” Other participants suggested that the services include volunteer opportunities for participants to give back to their community as a restorative practice.

Services should be evidence based and focus on empowerment, building people up - not tearing them down. Services should be available to singles as well as families, and be inclusive for everyone,



including the LGBTQ community. Don't have agencies that can't work with LGBTQ folx or say things like "it's a lifestyle" – as was said to one participant who felt triggered in their housing program when the case manager continually referred to their sexual orientation as a lifestyle.

At minimum, services should be available to an individual long-term: up to 2 years rather than just a few months, which is too short of a time to really help someone rebuild. Services should be provided by local agencies already doing this work, not by big agencies without a real tie to the community that aren't as accountable to the community. Services need to be provided by agencies committed to hiring people with lived experience in the areas of not only mental health and substance abuse, but also justice system involvement.

*How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?*

Having these conversations is one way to center the community's needs, but too many voices are not at the table. The Criminal Justice Council should include members and representatives from multiple reentry agencies AND people with lived experience, both past and current, at the table as participants and members. Local agencies specifically offering reentry supportive services and people with lived experience should also be on the planning group for the CJC.

Another way to center the community's needs is to recognize that the community is diverse, as are the people involved in the justice system. All of the women participating in the conversations felt that they are not represented in conversations about justice reform, needs and services; that there is a narrow focus on the experiences of men in the system; and that women are still rarely seen as leaders or invited to the table for conversations about justice system reform.

*In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organizations or you as an individual do?*

Participants shared that these community engagement conversations could help influence the development if the County is truly interested in the ideas, experiences and input of the people participating, and of people with lived experience. A good deal of distrust was shared by participants as they noted that over the last decade or so Dane County and Madison have created multiple task forces and committees focused on poverty and criminal justice system issues like racism. People with lived experience are asked to share their stories publicly, to be vulnerable - and then the reports are written with recommendations that sit on shelves, and nothing changes. Participants expressed a willingness to help influence the development by serving on the planning group, and by meeting with elected officials to share their personal experiences in the system.

Participants felt that more organizations should actively engage in advocacy for system change. Participants noted that some organizations providing direct supportive services refrain from advocacy for fear of losing funding from the County. Yet these organizations can have a significant influence in building broader community support for a CJC and for an end to systemic inequities in our justice system. Participants felt that organizations that say they "do reentry" work should visibly and publicly engage in advocacy on more macro level issues like adequate funding for community-based supports vs. incarceration, policing reform, justice system reforms in terms of fines and fees, DOC hold and electronic monitoring issues, in short, policies and procedures that, if unchanged will not support the goals of a community justice center. As an example, DOC policies to put people in jail on holds is detrimental to the overall goals of helping people to actually rebuild their lives. Fines and fees imposed by the courts push people in the system further into poverty. Policing is disproportionately focused on



people of color. Without addressing these kinds of problems, the system won't get better. Overall, the goal should be to create a more just and equitable system. By itself, a CJC does not accomplish that.

It was noted that, due to the pandemic, it is even more difficult for people with lived experience to engage and attend public meetings of the County Board or Committees. The current system for trying to participate is complicated and has kept some people from being able to offer testimony at various meetings. If the County wants broad and representative community engagement, it should review how it has set up virtual meetings and the process for the public input.

*In reviewing the video of the Red Hook Community Justice Center what stood out?*

Participants were impressed by the way the process worked. The judge was approachable, and was on the same level as the participants, which reinforced the idea that no one was better than anyone else. There were lots of services and supports. The focus was on building people up. The lives of the people involved in the center were improved. So was the community - because lives were changed for the better instead of torn apart, like much of our system does. The Red Hook Center was person driven and not system driven like in Dane County. That helped build people up. One participant shared that to her "it felt like what I've experienced at JustDane in terms of being empowering and [having] wraparound supports." Participants agreed across all three meetings that, if Dane County would create a CJC like that in Red Hook, it would have a significant impact on the lives of individuals here.

The Red Hook Center truly is a community center. One participant who has attended some of the previous community conversations hosted by the County felt that Dane County's proposal is more of a criminal justice center that is not truly focused on the whole community. If that is the case, the concern is that there will be a stigma attached to participating in the program and the community, including families of justice involved individuals, still will not be supported in addressing their needs.

*What potential challenges do you see?*

There was consensus across groups that County elected officials will not have the political will to adequately and fully fund this effort for a long enough period of time to really measure its impact. Participants expressed doubt that Dane County will be willing to invest as much in a CJC and real reforms to the system as they are willing to invest in a jail to cage people. Participants noted that the County often partially funds a program for a short period of time, setting goals and eligibility criteria that are not reflective of best practices in reentry, and that the metrics are not realistic, especially given the barriers faced by justice involved individuals. Several participants recommended that the County commit to fully funding a CJC for a minimum of ten years and have it overseen by an Advisory Committee comprised of agencies providing services, people with lived experience, and funding representatives.

Community resistance was also seen as a potential challenge, with the broader community not supporting a CJC. Lots of public education will need to be done in the community. A similar concern surfaced regarding buy-in/support from the justice system players like police, corrections, judges, the DA and public defenders. There was concern that without buy-in from all of the system players, the Center would be sabotaged or would simply reflect the racial disparities seen in other parts of the system where white people are disproportionately referred to alternatives to incarceration, and people of color are not.

Several participants expressed concern that the CJC would be developed based on what the justice system and County deemed to be needed vs. what individuals on supervision would find useful. As one



person stated “don’t set us up to fail because you say you created something that you didn’t fully create, and left holes. That happens a lot with County funded stuff.”

There was little confidence that law enforcement agencies would sign on in support of a CJC, with some participants expressing concern that police might actually target people involved in the CJC as a way of sabotaging it. The WI DOC was another agency identified as needing to buy into the model, and to collaborate. DOC agents would need to be educated on the model and goals - and there should be some sort of way to measure pushback by agents.

Siting the CJC was another concern. The idea that there will be a strong NIMBY response by the community was raised. One participant noted the recent siting of the Triage Center in an old Probation and Parole office as a sign that the County doesn’t understand trauma and triggering. That participant noted that the idea of seeking services in a building where they had to report to their agent, and where they were taken into custody and revoked, was a huge trigger and a non-starter in terms of engagement in anything happening in that building.

Several participants stated that a challenge they saw was “who is building the table and who is deciding who gets invited to the table?” Several participants stated that the City and County tend to invite “the same old Black folks that are palatable to white people.” They referenced the City’s recent process to create a Civilian Oversight Board as a model the County could consider as they invite people into the planning process.

Unrealistic expectations on the part of the County were seen as a potential challenge. This focused on broader justice issues such as living wages and the lack of affordable housing. As one participant said, “when you don’t have jobs that pay livable wages or affordable housing for people – we work hard to rebuild our lives, but the jobs and housing market work against us.” This led to a conversation about the need for a focus on broader justice issues that include economic justice, and whether the County is willing to create a community organizing component into the Community Justice Center that would work to address broader systemic injustices. The consensus was that any outcome measures/goals need to consider these broader societal factors when measuring success of a CJC.

#### Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?

The most common response to this question was “people with lived experience.” Related to that was the opinion that too often “people with lived justice system experience” are assumed to be Black men to the exclusion of people Latinx, Asian, Black women, all women, and LGBTQ folks, as well as family members of people involved in the justice system. Justice involved individuals from across all racial, ethnic, gender and gender identities must be invited to the table and engaged in the development of a CJC.

Defense attorneys were the second most frequently recommended group to be involved in development of a CJC. Individuals felt that defense attorneys often were shut out of conversations about community needs related to the justice system, but that they - far more than the DA’s office - knew what the gaps were, and what kinds of challenges face people in the system.

Agencies that are providing specific reentry services should be involved. A number of participants noted that “reentry” is a new buzzword and that lots of agencies now say they do reentry work but are not actually doing reentry work. Such agencies just happen to have some participants who are justice involved, but don’t really understand the barriers and challenges faced and some agencies do not have any people with lived experience on their staff. An example was offered by an individual who was



unable to enroll in a job training program post incarceration because he was homeless, and while the agency says it provides re-entry services, they have a requirement that people have 60 days of stable housing in order to participate. Participants recommended that the County examine which agencies are specifically providing reentry supportive services and hire people with lived experience.

Local business leaders were recommended as individuals that should be engaged in the planning to help secure buy-in. This would include landlords, employers and trade groups.

Individuals involved in the planning should be from across the county, as reentry challenges and needs can look different depending on where you live. Additionally, this would be important because people will need transportation to the CJC. Without a regional transportation system, there will be systemic barriers to participation depending on where the center is located and where people live. This relates back to the transportation service referenced under services that should be provided.

Mental health and treatment providers should be involved in the planning of the Center, especially providers offering culturally relevant and responsive services. Additionally, include domestic violence agencies and agencies working with individual who are victims of human trafficking, as this accounts for a significant amount of the trauma experienced by women involved in the justice system.

Judges that support the goals of a CJC should be involved. There was disagreement about whether anyone from the DA's office or law-enforcement should be involved, because they were seen by a large number of attendees as too powerful and not in touch with the challenges people are facing. Conversely, some participants argued that the reason the DA and law enforcement should be engaged in planning is precisely because, in general, they do not currently refer people to existing resources. To a large extent, they seem unaware of the myriad of resources available in the community, and who is providing them. People of color must be involved due to the racial disparities in our system, and this should be a broad cross section of the community - as one person put it: "not just the same few people that always get invited."

*What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?*

How much would a Community Justice Center cost? How much do similar centers in other states cost and is there long-term City and County commitment to fully funding it? When the County relies on grants to fund these things they often don't last long, or some other funder takes it over and then the goals and culture of the services and programming can change so that it's no longer what it was intended to be. How have other Centers handled this?

Many participants wondered what kind of foundational and organizing work was done prior to the actual development and implantation of the Red Hook Community Justice Center. How did they get buy-in from justice involved individuals, justice system players and the community - and how long did that take to develop? How do they maintain the buy-in and trust among partners in the long term?

What are the actual stated goals and metrics of the Red Hook Community Justice Center and other Community Justice Centers around the country? Who developed those goals and metrics and how are they tracked?

*What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?*

One change identified by participants was the addition of expanded representation of people with lived experience on the Criminal Justice Council, and more reentry agency representation. Additionally, participants felt that to increase trust, transparency and accountability, the criminal justice system



players (police, sheriff, DA, judges, jail/Huber) should be required to track racial demographic information for people arrested; people charged; and how charges were handled regarding: plea, reduced, offered diversion programs, and the sentencing disposition by judge. Tracking this data is perhaps complicated but would provide insight into disparities in the system and provide the data needed to guide reforms.

Offering people more opportunities to give back to their community in lieu of jail time would be more restorative than sitting in a cell. It also would provide an opportunity to build a job reference for some individuals that may help them secure employment.

### **Reaction to the meetings including questions that were asked, recurring themes, and overall tone of the sessions:**

In each of the previous sections we have identified questions asked by individuals participating in the conversations. Many of the questions focused on the extent to which justice involved individuals would truly be included in the planning of a Community Justice Center and whether the County is really committed to a Community Justice Center model.

*The overall tone of the sessions can be summarized as skeptical.* Participants repeatedly expressed doubts that the County is ready to fully commit to what will be required to plan, develop and implement a Community Justice Center similar to the Red Hook CJC. Participants felt that Dane County has not done the requisite “leg work” to prepare the justice system and community for such a center. Without that leg work, it will not be successful. Included in preparation must be significant input from justice involved individuals. This is something participants in our conversations felt has not been obtained because only a fairly narrow group of individuals have thus far been invited to the table for in-depth conversations and input. Participants felt that a CJC must have clear goals and metrics that are also realistic. Participants expressed their feelings that the County should commit to fully funding a CJC for an initial commitment of 10 years because this was critical to allow ample time for full implementation and outcomes to be reviewed. Participants were also skeptical about whether there would be buy-in from the police, jail, DA, judges and DOC to help individuals be successful. Without such buy-in from these key partners, the sense was that it would be setting people up to fail.

Men participating in the conversations tended to be adamantly opposed to police and the DA’s involvement in planning a Community Justice Center. The women who participated were slightly more open to police and DA involvement, while expressing that police and the DA would need to be educated about the Center to ensure their buy-in. It was not clear why this was a difference in opinion. (One participant shared that she had had some relatively positive interactions with police related to domestic violence.)

Another recurring theme related to the need to not only create a Community Justice Center, but to truly *transform the system in which it would operate*. Citing personal experiences with police and other justice system players, participants repeatedly expressed a lack of trust in the system to reform itself. They noted that the creation of a Community Justice Center is not a panacea. It will not stop the systemic racism within the community, and it will not address the larger, macro level injustices such as a lack of employment opportunities, wages that are not livable, and a lack of affordable housing and landlords willing to rent to individuals in the justice system - all of which are required for individuals to be successful. Participants believe it is important for the County to understand this: creation of a CJC will not magically fix our system, reform our system, or create opportunities for people to succeed.



The question of funding also came up in every conversation. Participants were doubtful that the County would commit long-term to fully funding a Community Justice Center that met the community focus piece of what a CJC is. They also doubted that the County would commit to fully funding the services to be offered in the Center and would instead ask agencies to provide expanded services for the same or less funding, which they expressed ultimately sets people up to fail and to be blamed for the failure when they can't access services that are supposed to be available. Failure to fully fund the CJC and services, while touting the creation of a CJC, will create expectations in the community, and give the illusion that supports are available, when in fact such supports are not accessible.. Participants fear that the people trying to access the services that aren't available will be blamed for failing to succeed and the Center will lose community support. In the words of one participant "the county ought to be willing to spend at least as much on a CJC as they are on a jail and the Sheriff's budget." That same participant expressed her doubt that that would be the case.

Woven throughout the stories, input and ideas offered during the three conversations was the idea that to be successful a CJC must be seen as welcoming and inclusive. It must be a place focused on the person, on healing and health, and on truly restorative practices that engage the whole of our community. It must incorporate advocacy designed to hold the community accountable for the conditions we allow to exist, including - but not limited to - systemic racism.

While there was a great deal of criticism expressed toward the current system along with significant doubts about the County's willingness to create a true Community Justice Center, the men and women attending the meetings were still hopeful. The Red Hook Community Justice Center offers a glimpse into what can be. If the County is willing to accept the feedback received through these conversations across agencies, to expand engagement, and to invite more people to the table in planning and leadership roles, people felt that it was possible to build a real community justice center. The overwhelming opinion was that it would be a benefit to the entire community and could truly help address some of the disparities, although not all of the disparities. Participants also want to be engaged in the process, to have a voice. This engagement and input must be at every level: initial planning, site selection, services and projects offered, metrics and goals, funding, evaluation, and continued focus on advocacy and policy change to reform the system in Dane County. The men and women in the conversations we hosted do not want to have someone "speak for them or as their voice" and they don't want someone else or some other group to "be their voice". They would like people in power and at the table to pull up more chairs and hand over the microphone – if that happens, they are optimistic that the Dane County system could be reformed into a restorative, healing model.

# Community Justice Centers Facilitated Community Conversations

Final Report for Dane County  
from Nehemiah Community  
Development Corporation



February 8, 2021

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## Introduction

In December of 2020, Nehemiah Community Development Corporation joined six other organizations in contracting with Dane County. Our aim was to collect community perceptions on the possibility of developing a Community Justice Center in Dane County. Dane County staff provided a facilitator guide and training for each organization to lead three community meetings in December 2020 and January 2021.

## Community Meetings

Our focus was to get input from those who have participated in Justified Anger's training on history and how to be an ally for racial justice as well as from people who have experienced incarceration.

We hosted a meeting for Justified Anger Alumni Group on Thursday, January 21 attended by 67 people. Because of the Zoom setting, we were unable to collect self-identified race, ethnicity, and gender from all participants. However, we were able to identify eight men and 61 women. Greater than 95% of participants identify as white.

We attempted to hold meetings for people who have experienced incarceration, however due to covid restrictions and challenges with technology, we had poor attendance. As an alternative, Nehemiah's reentry staff team conducted one-on-one conversations based on the structure in the facilitator guide (with modifications for cultural responsiveness) between the dates of January 22 and February 1. Demographics of those interviewed are as follows: nine participants identified as Black men with a history of incarceration, one Black man who is currently incarcerated and was interviewed on a call from prison, one white man and one white woman, both of whom have no history of incarceration, but are community advocates for criminal justice reform.

## Answers to Questions Posed

### a. What is your feeling-or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?

In general, participants expressed frustration with the current criminal justice center in Dane County. All participants of the January 21<sup>st</sup> meetings were generally aware of the racial disparities and recent conversations about the Dane County Jail building process. One participant said,

*“Too much emphasis on the crime and limited attention to the underlying stressors, conditions and inequities.”*

Some were aware of the Community Restorative Court or other restorative justice programs in the area. Many participants mentioned that they would like to see forward progress for reforms. Some participants expressed that they did not know much about the criminal justice system in Dane county, but they are concerned about the perception of increased crime and vandalism as well as

*“repeat offenders that our justice system has not held accountable.”*

Those who experienced incarceration felt that the criminal justice system is anything but just. In general, participants had extremely negative experiences and were skeptical about the willingness to make changes. Participants believe that the criminal justice system is inherently unjust, racist, and designed to keep people in the system once they get there.



b. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?

Participants across demographics were more in alignment on this question. From the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, a participant said,

*“I think it's critical to have the support from all the players-defendants and formerly incarcerated individuals, public defenders, ADA's, judges, as well as the public at large.”*

A participant from a one-on-one interview said,

*“Everybody's gotta be on the same page. Everyone involved has to be willing to go forward, significant effort, and just being sensitive to, you know, different needs for different people.”*

To be successful, most participants expressed the importance of making sure underrepresented community voices are represented and were glad to hear that the county had taken this step. The community justice center should always have a community oversight board to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of those most impacted.

Participants identified community education to get buy-in as critical to make this concept successful.

*“Key for me was hearing that we weren't safer now in 2021 than in 1970 AND we have incarcerated so many human beings.”*

Also, people want to see investment of “*realistic*” and sufficient funding and resources to ensure the center can operate as intended without cutting corners.

While participants appreciated the Red Hook example, others suggested that Dane County should research successful models in other countries with better statistics than we have in the US.

The center will need to have a mechanism to move cases through quickly instead of letting people languish for months to years with unresolved cases.

While most comments focused on the need to have participation and buy-in from all community demographics, some mentioned the importance of making sure that stakeholders within the system are fully on board. To be successful, the center will need full participation from law enforcement, the District Attorney, the State Public Defender and county offices, judges, and the Department of Corrections. Without that buy-in some were skeptical about whether the concept could work at all especially considering the reluctance of those in elected positions to risk turning voters away.

c. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?

Responses were very disparate across demographics. One response from a participant who had experienced incarceration summed up many responses by saying:

*“I mean, it ain't gonna change until they stop doin the shit. ...do I think it's gonna change it because they build that building? No.”*

After expressing that viewpoint, participants felt that a community justice center:

- Would be a step forward at connecting the community with the process and help reduce of feeling helpless.





- Might help the community understand rights and be able to determine if public defenders and probation/parole agents are acting within the standards of the law and DOC mission statements and not abusing or setting too many rules of supervision.
- May provide a space where the community can feel like they can hold our system accountable and be more well informed of laws/issues that need attention, updating, or change.

People from the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting had more hopeful responses focusing on the importance of restorative justice and how this:

*“would be an excellent way for our community to heal and come together, help families with issues that have impacts on why family members are in this position in the justice system.”*

Another participant shared,

*“I would be very encouraged and generally feel that our community would be safer and more of a community for all people, not just white people and people with a certain income.”*

d. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.

Services mentioned include the following in no particular order:

- Comprehensive education on finances and how to manage a budget
- Information on home ownership
- Mental health treatment including trauma counseling, yoga/meditation, etc.
- Drug treatment – at all levels, drop-in, outpatient, and access to residential programs on demand
- Diversity-confidentiality
- Equal opportunity
- Easy access / bus route / handicap accessible
- Resource lists available to make referrals for assistance needed that is not provided at the center so anyone that comes will leave with something
- Both proactive and reactive information. many services in the area are for after someone is already involved in the system, but preventative services to keep children informed and families aware of what is to come would be helpful.
- Childcare and activities for children, sports, playground, after school programs
- Ensure basic needs are met (food, shelter, clothing)
- Arts and creativity outlets
- Legal education and advocates
- Mediation and family services who can deal with custody and child support agreements
- Interview and job applications support
- Problem solving education
- GED/HSED programs and assistance for accessing vocational or college/university education
- Assistance applying for government programs (e.g., food share, disability, higher education funding, etc.)

All demographics emphasized the need to have this center be a one-stop shop and include wrap-around, coordinated services to be successful. For services that cannot be provided on site, there should be a referral system and direct connection of people with service providers (as opposed to indirect where people are given phone numbers or extra forms to fill out to connect with services).



Services should also be available to the community-at-large or at least to friends and family of the person involved with the center.

- e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?
- f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?

Although the questions have different intentions, there was a high level of overlap in these questions so I will address them together in this report. Many of these answers also intersected with answers to other questions during the session.

Participants shared that it is critical for the county to ensure that communities of color are driving this conversation and planning since they are most affected. For this to work, it cannot be business as usual. The process must be turned on its head if the county wishes to truly center the community's needs.

Other responses mentioned the idea of hiring a PR/marketing firm to help bring the message about this project to different audience. For example, getting buy-in from those unfamiliar with the criminal justice system or those who still believe in a "tough on crime" approach will be much different than getting buy-in from the Black community and other communities of color. Government agencies (unfortunately) are not well known for effective communication with all sectors of the communities they serve. How could Dane County use people in the PR profession, in particular those with experience in telling community stories, to help get this message across? When asked about how Nehemiah can help, one comment was to use some of our strategies for storytelling to help the general public understand the need as well as to elevate often unheard voices.

One comment sums up the need for full inclusion: We need to incorporate

*"those in the community whose voices are often not heard and elevated, namely those who have been involved in the system and come out the other side; they have so much wisdom and insight into how we can improve the current state of our CJ system. We need to tap into their lived experience and listen to their stories, what needs were unmet before they entered the system, during their time within the system and immediately after."*

#### *Additional questions if time allowed*

We did not have time to address the additional questions.

## Facilitator Perspective

In general, the tone of responses from white participants with limited criminal justice system experience and Black participants with extensive criminal justice experience were extremely disparate. White participants had more of an optimistic outlook on the process whereas those with lived experience were more pessimistic based on their negative experiences with the criminal justice system.

Themes that continued to arise are as follows:

- There is a need to involve ALL of our community voices and to take a targeted approach to do so.
- There is a need to highlight and center underrepresented voices as well as voices of those with lived experience. This should be done not just with listening, but by giving those community members a meaningful seat at the table.
- Buy-in is absolutely critical for this project to succeed. That includes buy-in from communities as well as stakeholders working within the system.
- The county needs to be serious about making an investment in the center. Without sufficient funding, this will not succeed.
- White participants with limited criminal justice experience expressed frustration and sorrow over the way our system currently operates, the inequities and inefficiencies. Black participants who have experienced incarceration expressed frustration and hopelessness about the willingness or ability for anyone to change the system.
- To change system outcomes, we need to address the root cause of what brings people to arrest or the criminal defendant chair in the first place. This will require wrap-around/coordinated services and as many of those as possible in one location. These services should be available to more than just the criminal defendant. Community members should be able to access the services *before* they become involved in the system.
- There is a need to ensure opportunities are present for children from childcare to after school activities to counseling services.
- Participants liked the idea of building a space in a way that serves the people instead of a “monument”. Most participants had not thought about using physical space to change the system or the thought of using art and colors to change the perception of the system.

Outstanding questions from participants included a burning desire to know next steps. Many expected to have more information about what would happen next. They were not used to being brought into a process so early as most of the time when community members are asked for their opinion, planning is almost complete. Some expressed frustration that they had not been involved sooner (I think assuming that we were farther along in the process) and others were frustrated that the steps could not be laid out for them. Easing this frustration will come with the engagement of a strong communication plan as the project progresses. Others wanted to know how this project relates to the new jail and whether funding for this center would impact the funding for the new jail building (some in favor, others opposed). Also, people were curious whether there would be coordination between the building of the jail and this center and whether building the jail too soon would cause missed opportunities with the center planning and conversations. At the same time, participants acknowledged that there is a real need to make sure the jail as safe and humane as a jail can possibly be.

Overall, this was a valuable experience and most participants appreciated being brought into the conversation so early in the process. We, at Nehemiah, look forward to continued involvement in the planning for a Community Justice Center.





## **Social Justice Center FINAL REPORT**

### **1. Dates of meetings**

The Hmong Institute held four meetings with Hmong and Southeast Asian community members.

January 8<sup>th</sup>  
January 12<sup>th</sup>  
January 16<sup>th</sup>  
January 27<sup>th</sup>

### **2. Who attended meetings – no names, but general description (age, gender, race, and ethnicity), also include the number of attendees.**

January 8<sup>th</sup> Nine participants (Four Hmong women ages: 26, 28, 29, and 30. One Cambodian woman age 40. Two Hmong men ages: 46 and 51. One Cambodian man age 35. One Tibetan man age 27.)

January 12<sup>th</sup> Fourteen participants from East High school (eight Hmong females: 15, 15, 16, 16, 16, 17, 17, 26. Six Hmong males ages: 16, 16, 16, 16, 17, 17)

January 16<sup>th</sup> Six participants (Two Hmong women ages: 33, 35, 40. One Caucasian woman age 46. Two Hmong men ages 42, 49. One Korean man age 41.)

January 27<sup>th</sup> Five participants (Four Hmong women ages: 30, 28, 33, and 55. One Hmong man age: 45)

### **3. Answers to questions posed:**

#### **a. What is your feeling--or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?**

In general, many in the Southeast Asian (SEA) community feel and believe the criminal justice system is bias against Asian and communities of color. Many of the adults feel that there is a lot of bias and racial profiling that takes place. One of the participants gave an example that on New Year's Eve they had a small house gathering with 20

family members of which six were children. The party was in the basement of the house and some were in the garage. A police officer came to the house and said someone complain they were having a party that violated public health order. He then asked how many people were at the party and had them all come out to the garage to be counted. They were under the number of 25 people allowed to gather. This was humiliating and scary for many of the children and adults. A white neighbor across the street and a few houses down was also having a New Year's Eve gathering. Similarly, they were outside in the garage and the participant said you could tell there were more than 25 people. The police officer drove by the house, shined his light at the garage, looked at the people, then drove off without even getting out of his car, going to the homeowner, asking how many people were at the party, and count all the people to make sure they were not violating the public health order. The Southeast Asian family felt they were discriminated against because they were SEA however, the neighbor was White, the police officer looked the other way. They believe the reason the policy officer did not question the white neighbor was not because no one had called to complain or that the police officer did not see the party as he stopped to shine his light at the party and could clearly see there were more than 25 people. It was because the neighbor was White and the officer who was also White. The SEA family believe and was taught that police officers are supposed to investigate if they see or suspect the law was being violated. But this incident reinforced the believe that the justice system is bias against Asians.

This is one of the main reasons why Southeast Asian communities do not turn to the police or criminal justice system for help because of the racial bias. The SEA community would rather turn to community leaders to help solve disputes or conflict. Additionally, they feel that the criminal justice system does not know their culture and do not take into consideration culture impacts when making their decision. In the SEA culture, being arrested means you are guilty, and one would lose face in the community. They do not understand that being put in handcuff may have been done for the safety of the officer. They do not understand due process or innocent until proven guilty. In the SEA community if you are handcuffed that means you are guilty.

Many of the Hmong adults and youth shared that neither them or anyone they knew has gone through the legal system such as commit a crime, get arrested, put in jail, and go to court. Many shared they would like more education about the steps of being arrested and the legal system. They would also like to have more education about a person's legal rights.

**b. What do you think would be critical to make a community Justice Center succeed?**

Many shared that the location was important for its success. It should be centrally located but not downtown as it is hard to get to for many due to the lack of parking. The location should be where there is other social program around it to help support the restorative justice programs inside the Center. The location should have around it

housing, food, and public transportation. It should be close to schools. It must be adequately funded in order to be successful. However, funding cannot come at the expense of nonprofits and service program getting their funding reduced in order to fund the Justice Center.

Make sure there are representation of all ethnic and race at the center for staff, programs, interpretation/language. People that look like the community working there. Staff needs to be culturally competent and speak the Spanish and Hmong.

Hmong people tend not to use social services. Would need to find a way to make sure those in the Hmong community know about and use the social services at the Center.

**c. If Dane County moves forward with a community Justice Center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?**

Many shared this would help build trust between the SEA community and police officers. The Center could be a place that could provide more support for the people who are struggling in the community. One participated said, "If a person gets arrested for stealing, rather than just locking them up, we should ask why they stole. Then we could address the reason why they stole, and the person would not steal again in the future. Thus, they would not get arrested again and go to jail. This Center could be a place for this. Addressing the root cause of the issue not just lock people up."

**d. What services could a community Justice Center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.**

Many shared that mental health services would be very important and beneficial for the community. Often times it is stress that causes people to break the law in order to feed their family or addiction.

More education and programs on prevention for community members so they don't end up having to use the Justice Center. There should also be education opportunity for people who goes through the legal system as part of their sentencing. This will help them get a better job when they get out. There needs to be educational training on implicated bias for staff as well as the offender.

Having diverse staff that reflection the community is important. Having diverse staff at the leadership level is very important to gain the trust of the community. Many of the Hmong youth shared that hiring people that genuinely want to help people is important. You do not want to hire people who is there just because it is a job but are there because they want to help. Having supportive people around the offender such as counselors, parents and trusted adults would be beneficial to the success of the Center.

The SEA community sees this as a community center where they can also rent out the space for community events to overcome the stigma that is a courthouse or a building where people who get into trouble goes. The Justice Center should also have a kitchen to cook and serve food as sharing food is an important part of the SEA culture. The Center would have employment opportunity such as having an automobile repair shop for people could come learn how to fix cars or come get their cars fixed at a lower price than going a dealership.

**e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community Justice Center?**

Invite more stake holders from different communities to the discussion. Create a diverse advisory council to build and help run it. Invite nonprofit leaders who are providing services and whose services may be in the Center be part of the council.

If the County does a survey about the Justice Center, the survey responses should be weighted. If 1000 white residents completed the survey and 100 wants program A while only 50 SEA residents completed the survey but 45 SEA residents indicated they wanted program B, more weight should be given to the SEA response since 90% of the respondents wanted program B while only 10% of white residents wanted program A. Just because 100 white residents voted in favor of program A and only 45 SEA residents voted for program B it should not mean program A gets approved because it got more votes.

**f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community Justice Center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?**

Participants shared they could help spread awareness and educate others in their community about what a community Justice Center is. They continue to talk to community members and collect input. SEA students shared they could bring it up in school for discussion. Have discussion in the classroom to spread awareness and collect feedback. Students could also ring it back to their families to educate family members about what the Center is and get input.

The Hmong Institute could help provide culturally and linguistically responsive mental health to offenders and staff.

***Additional questions if time allowed***

**g. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?**

The SEA community did not know what a community Justice Center was until watching the video. Overall, the SEA community really like the idea of the Center. Many imagine the community Justice Center as community center.

They like the concept of providing legal info, services, and access to the community. One of the participants shared they knew of a few programs such as the family community clinic but they only meet a few hours on Sunday. This meant they could a limited amount of time to provide legal advice. Having a Justice Center would allow people to get legal advice and education about a person's legal rights thus taking away the fear of the legal system. They shared that the concept aligns with some of the diverse programs in Dane County and likes the restorative justice piece of it.

A Hmong youth shared that having a Justice Center is good thing or a cool thing to see. He was part of the restorative justice circle in middle school. He said, "It's cool to see how they incorporated restorative justice into the legal system."

Another student shared, "This program is like rehabilitation and the educational part of the video really stood out to me. They (the offenders in the video) still want a future for themselves."

A female student shared that the Justice Center has more a community wise feeling. Seeing the judge sitting at eye level stood out to her.

Two youth said they would be willing to volunteer to serve on youth court.

**h. What potential challenges do you see?**

Many shared that they did want the Justice Center to be known as a place for community of color to go and get a "get out of jail" card. Or be known as only a social service agency. They express the need to overcome the stigma that only people of color goes or uses the Justice Center.

Participants also shared that funding, allocation of funds, and finding a good location could provide challenges. They wanted to make sure there was adequate funding to keep the Justice Center operational and also continue funding nonprofits that provide social justice services. Several asked about how does this impact nonprofits budgets who do this kind of work.

**i. Who would need to be involved in creating a community Justice Center?**

Participants suggested that the County should invite more stake holders from different communities to the discussion making process. One suggestion was to create a diverse advisory council consisting of diverse members that reflect the community. The advisory council would help make decision on the location, construction of the build and help run it such as a board of directors. Youths should also be on the advisory council.

**j. What additional information would you like to know about community Justice Centers?**

Majority of the participants wanted to know where the County was in the process of opening the Justice Center. They also wanted to be updated regularly on the progress of the Justice Center.

**k. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?**

There needs to be a lot of trust building between community of color and the legal system. There needs to be more positive experience with cops. Cops need to have more positive interaction with communities of color. There needs to be more dialogue between communities of color and the police to see how we can work together on overcoming the distrust. One participant said, “We often hear, don’t bring cops around because that’s a trigger. Then how do we bring in cops to have dialogue without triggering? We need to overcome this type of thinking and bring the two groups together to talk.”

Many shared there needs to be more education on what a person’s legal rights are. For example, when a person is pulled over for a minor traffic violation. What are their rights. Do they need to roll the window all the way down? Do they need to get out of the car if they feel their life is in danger? Or if they are just walking down the street and they get question by the police. What rights do they have? Do they need to show their ID if they did not commit a crime? Do they need to answer questions or tell the police officer their name when asked?

There needs to be more cultural competency and implicit bias training for police officers. Cultural competency and implicit bias should be part of the curriculum at the policy academy. Staffing of the Justice Center that reflects the community. There needs to be more community of color in leadership roles in the police department. More community of color in leadership role that includes Asian, Latino and Native Americans and not just African American.

Many of the SEA community share that when they hear the County or City talk about diversity it generally means they are only referring to African Americans or Latinx. There needs to be more inclusion of SEA and Native Americans. Often times Asian and Native

American data are left out of reports and presentations. It is almost as if SEA, Asian, and Native Americans do not exist in Dane County. Participants share they felt like this was discrimination against SEA, Asian, and Native Americans. They shared the example of how that there was not any Hmong, Asian or Native American staff at the County in a leadership role while there are many African American and Latinx that oversee departments. There are not any Hmong or Asian in leadership roles in the legal system or police department while there are many African Americans. One participant said, "It's like they purposely discriminate against us at the County."

**4. The report should also include your reaction to the meetings from the standpoint of the facilitator. In this section, include questions that were asked, themes that continued to arise, and overall tone of the sessions.**

As the facilitator I felt having the videos was helpful in explaining the concept of what a Community Justice Center was. Many in the SEA community, particularly older adults did not understand the concept of restorative justice. Culturally, SEA believe that if you are arrested or handcuffed you are guilty. A person who is arrested is then taken away by the police and many never return. So, you can see the distrust and fear of the police or legal system. Many came from a society that the police were the enforcers of the law. Police officers were not there to serve and protect but to punish wrong doers. Often punishment was done without a trial. This is another reason why the SEA community do not call 911 for help.

After seeing the video and explaining what restorative justice is and the concept behind the Community Justice Center everyone likes the idea. However, for the Hmong community many see the Center as a community center where you could use the space for community events in addition to the justice or court piece of it.

It was interesting to hear that none of the participants had every been through the legal system. In fact, most of the participants did not know any Hmong or SEA person that had gotten into legal issues or committed a crime and had to go to court. In many ways, this affirms the model minority myth that Asians are the good minority group that does not get in trouble. However, this also means that the SEA community are also left out of the policy making when it comes to the justice system. This is also the reason why many in the SEA community do not know their legal rights and the legal process. This contributes to the fact that few Asians are in leadership roles in the justice system as many Asians do not get into legal problems.

Overall, participants were in favor and liked the idea of having Community Justice Center. The overall theme was how to overcome racial bias that exist in the justice system. Everyone felt that if more SEA or Asians were in leadership role this would help build trust and change the culture in the SEA community to see the justice system and police officers differently than enforcers of the law.

The type of program offered at the Center was another topic discussed at length by participants. The overwelling consensus was that more mental health program would be needed. Many suggested that The Hmong Institute could provide culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services to offenders, staff, and the community at the Justice Center. They could also do cultural diversity training to staff and the community.

Lastly, everyone was excited about having the Justice Center. Hmong youth liked the restorative justice part of the Center. That fact that students wanted to volunteer and be part of the youth court meant they believed and support the building of the Center. How often do you get youth excited about something to the point they would volunteer and give up their time to participate?

We look forward to progress of having a Community Justice Center in Dane County. We are excited and look ahead to continuing to partner with the County on this worthy initiative.



# Urban Triage

# Community Justice

# Conversations

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Alex Booker

18th February, 2021



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## Introduction

1. Meeting Dates and Demographics
2. Questions A-K
3. Summary

## DEMOGRAPHIC

1/13/21

➤ 20 Participants

➤ **GENDER/RACE**

- 15 women
  - 9 Black, 1 Latinx, 4 White
- 5 men
  - 2 Black, 3 White

➤ **AGE**

- Women 26 - 56
- Men 25 - 52

➤ **PROFESSION**

- 10 Social Workers
- 2 Spiritual Healthers
- 2 Service Industry
- 6 N/A

1/20/21

➤ 15 Participants

➤ **GENDER/RACE**

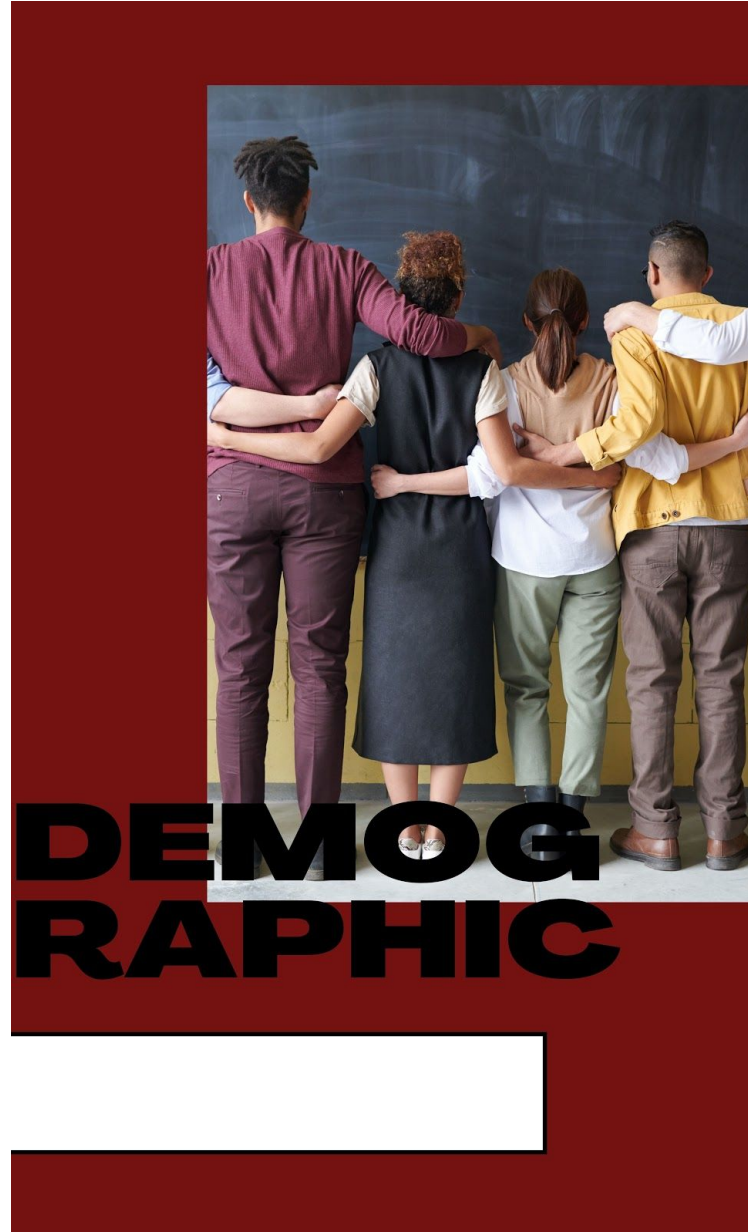
- 9 Women
  - 8 Black, 1 Lantinx
- 6 Men
  - 2 Black, 3 White, 1 Lanitix

➤ **AGE**

- Women 32 - 46
- Men 35-52

➤ **PROFESSION**

- 1 Running for Local Office
- 3 Teachers
- 5 Business Owners/Entrepreneurs
- 6 N/A



1/30/21

➤ 25 Participants

➤ **GENDER/RACE**

- 20 Women
  - 20 Black
- 5 Men
  - 5 Black

➤ **AGE**

- Women 25 - 62
- Men 31-49

➤ **PROFESSION**

- 4 Formerly Incarcerated
- 7 Medical Workers
- 7 Social Workers
- 1 Pharmacist
- 2 Masters Students
- 3 Directors
- 1 PhD Student



# DEMOG RAPHIC



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## Questions A-K



### a. How do you feel about the criminal justice system in Dane County?

- I feel that the criminal justice system in Dane County reflects the injustice system in the country as a whole. It is used as a weapon to keep Black people oppressed and disqualifies people from being able to receive support to improve their lives.
- The criminal justice system is discriminatory. It is centered around white people. People are locked up for minor offenses and too often folks are innocent. They're charged with disorderly conduct for being mad or resisting arrest because of their "attitude".
- I believe the criminal justice system is biased towards Black and Brown people.
- The criminal justice system is quick to put Black people in the criminal justice system and rarely offers resources.

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- I don't trust the criminal justice system.
  - Black people are locked up at a rate of 10:1—why would we trust the system that causes harm?
  - The videos were appealing to me but based in politics. The folks interviewed are the ones causing harm—why would they do anything differently in a NEW institution aka a community center?
  - Justice system is just-us.

**b. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?**

- We need to have transformative education and cultural reconstruction as a main focus of the center. This way there will be long lasting changes in the people served.
- You will need mentors that have been through the same situation to encourage the newcomers. Also, you need the judicial system to go along with it as well.
- An organized plan, people that are committed to completing the program, and a judicial system that is willing to work with the justice center to improve the experience people have while in the justice system.
- Similar to the community justice center in the video, putting rehabilitated people that were once in the offenders situation in the center to help rehabilitate people.
- The center needs to be separate from the city so the community can truly trust it.
- Acknowledgment of how Dane County has over criminalized and demonized Black adults and Black youth at disproportionate rates to our white counterparts.
- The center needs to be placed in a historically Black and Brown community with high need and limited access.
- The people in charge of the center need to have ties to the community and be invested in improving the quality of Black lives in Dane county.
- The center can work with the justice system but it needs to be its own entity. To make marginalized people feel more comfortable the center should not have on duty officers in it.

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**c. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?**

- It will make me feel that there will be justice for the criminal justice system. Also, it will give people the opportunity to turn their lives around.
- If the number of incarcerations is significantly reduced by the justice center it would drastically change my negative feelings towards the justice system.
- I feel like it would give some hope that our people would have some help healing from their trauma vs just thrown into jail.
- I would only be hopeful if the people in charge are people that have a history of action and not just talking. Once we see the changes then there will be hope for a better system.
- At this point only action will change my views. It would not create trust in the justice system but it would give me hope for the better treatment of Black people in Dane county.
- The Justice center would only be one step in righting the wrongs done by Dane County onto Black people. There is so much more that needs to be done to create trust between Black people and the system.
- There needs to be results before people can truly trust the center.
- If the center is run by the county I won't trust the center nor will I gain trust in the injustice system.

**d. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? (Direct quotes from attendees/summarized. There are overlaps in responses.)**

- Housing programs, educational programs, case workers, food pantry, addiction support programs, and mental health programs or counselors should be provided at the community justice center.
- Mental health programs, healthy lifestyle living, job placement, and acquiring resources, art programs, and community service initiatives.
- GED program, trade, STEM and other internship opportunities.
- Transformational education (personal change resources, personal development, mental health services, spiritual/ trauma services), food access, teen programming, career placements/internships, entrepreneur

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cultivation, building generation wealth in the Black community, and debt services/financial literacy, investments, real estate

- Support in building credit, legal clinics (housing rights, entrepreneurship, family court, large purchases, ect.), community gardens, rental spaces for pop up shops, industrial kitchens for small businesses to work out of, direct connections to energy supports, auto clinics, home repair classes, home economics classes, wellness retreats, HBCU tours, a showcase of Black history in Dane County(the good and the bad).
- Transportation, help for the elderly, cooking demonstrations, mindfulness, meditation rooms, yoga, fitness, a gym, outdoor activities, emotional support animals, events for holidays.

**e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?**

- They could survey the different areas of the county to see what is needed.
- Possibly a community meeting, maybe a survey in the mail
- They can hire people that have already been doing the work in these communities and that reflect the community they serve. Black and Brown people should have positions within the center system that hold true power and can make decisions on how the center is run.
- Hire people from the community to consult on the development of the center.
- Include youth input on what would get them involved in the center.
- Create a board that reflects the population it is serving.
- Reach out to organizations to hold another round of community justice center conversations before things solidify.
- Keep organizations in the loop so they can update the people as decisions are made.

**f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?**

- I can volunteer my time and any resources that I have to the community center.

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- Market the community center as a resource and partner with the justice system to send all low-level cases through the community justice center.
  - Volunteer for the center, utilize the programs of the center to become better.
  - Share our experiences at the center.
  - Hold events and workshops at the center to gain exposure.
  - Attend the workgroups at the center and bring friends and family to the center.
  - Go to the center for community service/volunteer opportunities.
  - Use the center as a platform to launch my business and credit them for providing the space.

**g. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?**

- The people given a second chance and able to change their lives around. Also, that the judge was nice and kind.
- The positive experience people had that went through the justice center and how well they worked to improve the community.
- What stood out the most for me is that a lot of people that were in the program ended up working for the program.
- People that went through the center were able to come back and work at the center.
- The center restored pride in the community.
- The center provided emergency resources during natural disasters.

**h. What potential challenges do you see?**

- There is a lack of community in Dane county and the center won't be enough to solve it. To get people in the door for preventative work there needs to be something that draws people in.
- I see people not taking the programs seriously. Another thing I see is Dane county hiring a lot of Black people and not giving them the power to make decisions



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- The people initially hired would have the passion to make true change, what will ensure people will continue to uphold that mission after the original group moves on?
  - Marginalized communities won't trust the center.
  - People might think the county is doing this for the optics and not the people.
  - The public might think a community justice center is a waste of taxpayer's money.
  - People opposing the mission of the center and wanting harsh punishments instead of restorative practices.

**i. Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?**

- The judges, lawyers, police, employees, case managers, and volunteers.
- The leaders of Dane county and the people of the community
- People that are running programs in the community already so they can bring their connections to the center.
- The community the center will be placed in needs to have a large say in how things go.
- People that have been impacted by the previous justice center should be the first ones hired to make sure the center is different from what we already have.

**j. What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?**

- Not much since it is in the beginning of being planned. We would just like to be a part of the planning process.
- How does the county plan to fund the center?
- What is the timeline for the center and when will it be open?

**k. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?**

- It would be nice if racial barriers would be eliminated. Everyone received a second chance depending on the crime.

- 
- I think more people should be offered things like rehab and counseling versus being thrown in jail.
  - Finding the root to what made people commit the crime and helping with that root cause.
  - The whole system needs to be thrown away and rebuilt from the ground up. This system is made to hold Black people down.
  - Put more funding in social workers and case managers instead of city officials and officers.
  - Making sure people can still receive support services after their experience with the system.
  - A path to clear your record that is inclusive.

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## Conclusion

As a facilitator it was interesting hosting these conversations. There were different motives when it came to each participant. The first group was full of people already working in social work and were very concerned about funding. They did not want the county to do similar work to what smaller orgs have been doing, and then use up the funding that they would normally give to the smaller orgs. They also wanted to make sure people that have been in the community, working with troubled youth and people in the system, are the ones making decisions for the center because they know what is needed at the moment.

The other groups were interested in the day to day functions of the center. They thought it was a good idea but didn't believe the county would do the work needed to serve the most vulnerable in our community. It was brought up that there should be nonprofit organizations on the board to make decisions about the center to make sure our community needs are met. They also expressed distrust of the injustice system and would need more than a center to believe in a change. There would have to be a separation between the center and the county for them to truly trust the work. Along with trust the topic of community building came up. Many marginalized people in Dane County feel like they are not a part of the community. There is nothing pulling them to engage in local events because their identity/ culture is often pushed to the side. A solution to that was having community building and fellowship be a main focus of the center and it's staff.

Another topic that came up in all the meetings is a need for this to be different from programs that already exist in regards to youth and teen programming. There should be more than just pre-college programs for teens to be involved in. The center needs to foster the growth of the youth in the community by empowering them to reach their full potential. The lack of teen programming was a big topic because the youth of Dane county are lost without it. Teens need positive, productive, and culturally relevant activities available year round and that just isn't happening anymore.

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The tone of our conversations were hopeful and weary. People wanted to believe in the center but the county doesn't have a good record with moving in the best interest of our community. There will be a lot of trust building needed to get the community on the county's side. That is why many of our participants wanted a separation between the county and the center. The two can work together but the people in charge of how the center runs should not be people working for the county. Without this major step people felt that the center would just be an extension of an already broken system.

As a Madison native I believe a justice center is needed, I just don't know how the county will be any different than the centers that exist already. I was involved in restorative justice and youth court at La Follette and those practices stuck with me to this day. I learned a different way of thinking and gained skills that helped me post graduation. What those programs did not do was build my self esteem as a Black man in the context of Madison Wisconsin. That is needed because once you have to deal with racism it is easy for it to be internalized as not being enough. Black people are told we are not enough by society each day and we are also told we are the reason for all of our misfortunes. Those narratives force Black people into feeling isolated and desperate to get out of their situation without asking for support. Not feeling like you have other options in life or that you don't have potential is where many people find themselves making poor decisions out of necessity. Overall the center is a good idea, we just need to continue to center Blackness in the planning process. Because everyone benefits when we uplift the most marginalized.

# Facilitator's Handbook

Community Justice Centers Facilitated Community Conversations

December 2020



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## RESOURCES AND REMINDERS FOR FACILITATORS

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### COVID-19 Reminder

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues throughout the world, businesses and practices have moved online. At this point, going into the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the pandemic, you likely have determined ways to hold meetings and do business remotely. If you need assistance identifying a remote meeting platform (Zoom, GoToMeeting, Etc.), please notify the County Board Office.

As outlined in the contract, the facilitated meetings will be held virtually. If you need additional information related to COVID and the current public health orders, please see here:

<https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/forward-dane/current-order>

### Ground Rules

Having ground rules identified at the outset of a meeting will help make for respectful, productive conversation. If you do not already have ground rules that you use, there are some sample ground rules available here: <https://extension.umn.edu/public-engagement-strategies/setting-ground-rules-productive-discussions>

Please get agreement from participants on the ground rules of the meeting prior to starting discussion.

### Resources

The following are resources to be reviewed by facilitator in advance:

[Potential Dane County Community Justice Center What It Is/What It Is Not](#)

<https://cjc.countyofdane.com/documents/What-it-is-and-What-it-is-Not-community-justice-center-LK.pdf>

[October 29, 2020 Community Conversation – Community Justice Centers](#)

[October 29, 2020 Community Conversation – Community Justice Centers Q&A](#)

[2020 RES-180 Endorsing Criminal Justice Reform and Developing a Triage and Restoration Center and a Community Justice Center](#)

[2020 budget amendment to conduct a public engagement and a needs assessment for a community justice center](#)

### Facilitation Tools

Below are links to some facilitation tools. These are meant only as a reference if needed.

[Facilitator Tool Kit – A Guide for Helping Groups Get Results](#)

[Facilitation Tools for Meetings and Workshops](#)

[Tips for Facilitating an Online Meeting](#)

## SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

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Below are some sample communications that you can use when contacting participants for meetings. *Please note – these are just samples, you do not need to use them, or you can change them however you'd like. They are intended to be helpful to make the logistics of the meetings easier.*

### Invite to meeting

*We are excited to announce an opportunity that we are partnering with Dane County on related to criminal justice reform. Over the next few weeks we will be meeting with members of our community to talk through potential areas for improvement and potential reforms.*

*We would like to invite you to a meeting at \_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_ to join this discussion.*

*This is an opportunity for us to create meaningful change developed by the community!*

*What do you need to do?*

- 1. Let us know you'd like to join.*
- 2. Prior to meeting, review the below videos. We will be discussing them, and they will provide background information.*

[\*They Treated Me Like a Person: Inside the Red Hook Community Justice Center\*](#)

*Thank you,*

### Reminder for meeting

*As a reminder, we are meeting at \_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_ to discuss criminal justice reform.*

*Please review the below videos prior to the meeting.*

[\*They Treated Me Like a Person: Inside the Red Hook Community Justice Center\*](#)

*Thank you,*

## STRUCTURE OF FACILITATED MEETINGS

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1. Introductions of all participants
2. Following introductions, please discuss ground rules for the meeting with participants (see Resources and Reminders for Facilitators for sample ground rules if you do not have any that you currently use)
3. Provide background for session
  - a. We are partnering with Dane County on innovative, community-driven criminal justice reform. As you saw in the video you watched prior to this meeting, this session, while broad, will focus on a potential community justice center. At this point, we are working with the county on gathering input from our community related to criminal justice reform. There are other organizations that are having similar conversations around a community justice center to provide a diverse perspective.
  - b. As a reminder a community justice center is...

*Facilitator note: Use the one page reference sheet [“Potential Dane County Community Justice Center: What It Is/Is Not”](#) for an overview of what a community justice center is.*

4. The following are broad questions to be asked to begin dialogue and conversation.
  - a. What is your feeling-or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?

*Facilitator note: Dependent on the size, you may not have time to get every participants input*

5. Watch [“Restorative Justice at Red Hook Community Justice Center”](#) and [“Justice for Victims”](#) as background to the following discussion.
  - a. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?
  - b. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?
  - c. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.

*Facilitator note: Often community justice centers serve both those with criminal justice cases, and those not involved in the system.*

6. Watch [“Community and Dane County”](#), and [“Role of Judges in Restorative Justice”](#) videos as background to the following discussion.



- a. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?
  - b. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?
7. Ask for any questions/additional thoughts. If none, or after addressed, go to larger set of questions focused on community justice center:

*Facilitator note: As time allows, ask some or all of the questions below. It is not necessary to ask all of them.*

- a. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?
  - b. What potential challenges do you see?
  - c. Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?
  - d. What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?
  - e. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?
8. Wrap-up
- a. Let the participants know the next steps, which include:
    - i. Final completion of additional meetings
    - ii. Drafting a report
    - iii. Presenting to various County committees.
      1. Ask participants if they would like to either receive an email or mailed a hard copy of the report when it is completed, and/or to be notified of the meeting that the work will be presented at. Please share this contact information with [Lauren Kuhl](#).

# FINAL REPORT

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The final report should be no more than 10 pages and include the following information:

1. Dates of meetings
2. Who attended meetings – no names, but general description (age, gender, race, and ethnicity), also include the number of attendees.
3. Answers to questions posed:
  - a. What is your feeling-or that of your family--about the criminal justice system in Dane County?
  - b. What do you think would be critical to make a community justice center succeed?
  - c. If Dane County moves forward with a community justice center how would that change your feeling of criminal justice and potential outcomes of criminal justice?
  - d. What services could a community justice center provide that could be beneficial to the community? Housing, GED, food pantry as examples.
  - e. How can Dane County center the community's needs in discussion of a community justice center?
  - f. In what ways can the community influence the development of a community justice center? What can our organization or you as an individual do?

*Additional questions if time allowed*

  - g. In reviewing the video on the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the longer video that was sent in advance), what stood out?
  - h. What potential challenges do you see?
  - i. Who would need to be involved in creating a community justice center?
  - j. What additional information would you like to know about community justice centers?
  - k. What changes could be made to the current system to make it more restorative and equitable?
4. The report should also include your reaction to the meetings from the standpoint of the facilitator. In this section, include questions that were asked, themes that continued to arise, and overall tone of the sessions.

## CONTACTS

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