



Neighborhood Courts

Launched in 2012, Neighborhood Courts is an innovative model for keeping low-level offenders from entering the criminal justice system. The program is designed to resolve cases efficiently, create community-driven solutions to crime, reduce the burden on our courts, and reduce recidivism.

Recipient of the **Innovation in Criminal Justice Award** by the US DOJ/ Bureau of Justice and numerous other organizations in 2015

Over **3,100** cases heard since Neighborhood Court was created

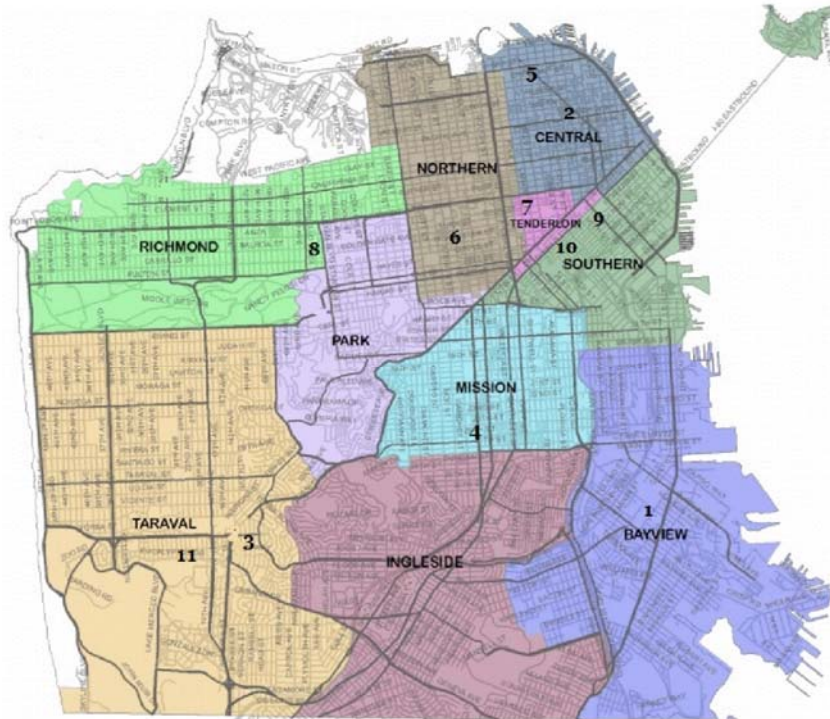
In 2016 Neighborhood Court handled **422**

97% of participants appeared

90% successfully resolved their case through Neighborhood Court

55 grants provided back to the community through the [Neighborhood Justice Fund](#)

Over **130** community members have served as volunteer adjudicators



Community Involvement and Participant Accountability

Non-violent misdemeanor cases that would otherwise be prosecuted are diverted pre-charging by the SFDA into [ten Neighborhood Courts](#) across the City (one for each police district), where trained neighborhood volunteers hear the matters, speak with the participants (e.g. defendants under traditional prosecution) about the harm caused by their actions, and issue “directives” designed to repair that harm and address risk factors. Participation in Neighborhood Court is voluntary – but participants must be willing to take accountability for their actions. Once the participant completes their directives, the case is discharged. Cases that do not resolve in Neighborhood Court are returned to the SFDA for prosecution.

The Neighborhood Courts program is a partnership of the SFDA and two community-based organizations: the San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project and Community Boards.

Innovation in Criminal Justice

1. **Efficient.** Cases can be heard within a couple of weeks and fully completed before the case would even appear in criminal court
2. **Community-driven solutions.** The community that is affected by the crime is empowered to resolve the matter by address the harm that was caused by the act.
3. **Justice reinvestment.** By taking low-level cases out of our overburdened courtrooms, we can reserve justice system resources for the cases that need traditional prosecution – and reinvest the resulting savings in prevention and services. Moreover, through our [Neighborhood Justice Fund](#) initiative, payments made by participants into a “community restitution” fund are redirected into grants to nonprofit organizations across the City.
4. **Recidivism reduction.** By keeping low-level offenders out of the traditional system, and, in the process, keeping convictions off their records, the Neighborhood Courts removes an obstacle to meaningful participation in the community. As individuals gain an understanding of the impacts of their actions, they may be less likely to reoffend. Principles of [procedural justice](#), core to the operation of Neighborhood Courts, also help to promote successful completion of the program.

A Recognized Model

Neighborhood Courts was identified as a 2015 Innovation in Criminal Justice by the United States Department of Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and Center for Court Innovation. The model has been replicated in Los Angeles and Yolo County California, and has garnered interest from jurisdictions across the country.

Neighborhood Adjudicators: Who are they?

Adjudicators are members of San Francisco's diverse neighborhoods who volunteer to hear the cases. They have been trained in restorative justice and problem solving. They are NOT defense attorneys, prosecutors, or judges. They include residents, merchants, students, parents and retired community members.

During Neighborhood Courts sessions, adjudicators hear from the offender and the victim (in cases where there is a victim), and discuss the impact of the crime on the community.

Our community-based partners, San Francisco Pretrial Diversion and Community Boards, provide ongoing training and support to our adjudicators, helping them to infuse restorative principles into the sessions and to craft individualized directives in each case.

If you are interested in volunteering for Neighborhood Courts, [click on this application](#) and submit it today. If you have questions, call Jackson Gee at (415) 553-1817 or email him at Jackson.gee@sfgov.org.

Referred to Neighborhood Court?

If you have been cited for a misdemeanor and referred to Neighborhood Court, we encourage you to get scheduled for your hearing as soon as possible. Please call: (415) 517-4806 to be scheduled and for more information about Neighborhood Court.

If you have legal questions, please contact a lawyer. You may speak with a defense attorney at no cost by calling the Public Defender's Officer at (415) 553-1671. Ask for the Attorney of the Day.