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Implementing a Geographic Community-Based Prosecution Model in Philadelphia

by
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Implementing a Geographic Community-Based Prosecution Model in Philadelphia



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Table of Contents

1. Background	5
2. Why Geographic Prosecution?	6
3. Why Vertical Prosecution?	6
4. Implementing Community-Based Prosecution	7
History.....	7
Planning	8
Implementation: District Attorney’s Office	9
Implementation: Courts	10
5. Community-Based Prosecution: A Better System	11
Old System	11
New Design.....	12
6. Preliminary Results	14
Fewer Felony Cases Are Being Dismissed	14
Felonies Are Being Disposed Of More Efficiently	14
7. Lessons Learned	15
8. Conclusions	16

1. Background

Philadelphia has long been accepted as one of America's most dangerous big cities. Home to over 1.5 million residents, it had more than 18,000 violent crimes and 57,000 property crimes in 2010.¹ Philadelphia regularly has more than 300 homicides per year.

In December 2009, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a multi-day exposé, “Justice Delayed, Dismissed, Denied,” which chronicled the failures of the city's criminal justice system.² It revealed that:

- Among the ten largest cities, Philadelphia had the **highest violent crime rate**;
- Philadelphia had the **lowest felony conviction rate** among large urban counties; and
- Conviction rates for **armed robbery and armed assault** were **below 20%**.

In the decades preceding the release of the *Inquirer* series, the Philadelphia criminal justice system suffered from three serious flaws. First, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office (“District Attorney's Office” or “Office”) had “horizontally” prosecuted the vast majority of cases, including non-fatal shootings. Horizontal prosecution is common in big-city prosecutors' offices. It operates similarly to an assembly line: as a case moves through the system from arrest to disposition, a different prosecutor takes over the case at each new step. Second, instead of assigning cases to prosecutors based upon where the crime occurred within the city, prosecutors handled cases from all areas of Philadelphia. Third, the First Judicial District courts (“Philadelphia's courts”) were not consolidated in one building, and like the prosecutor's office, cases were processed horizontally, with each case being handed off to the next courtroom at each stage of the criminal justice process or based upon the dispositional path chosen (e.g., bench trial, jury trial, or plea). While preliminary hearings usually occurred at local police districts, trials and pleas took place in the downtown Criminal Justice Center (“CJC”).

Each of these features caused numerous problems. Because trial prosecutors had not handled the earlier proceedings of their cases, they lacked full familiarity with the facts and the individuals involved. Defense attorneys who had preliminary hearings and trials on the same day had to shuttle between the various police district courtrooms and the CJC, which routinely delayed cases, frustrating victims and witnesses. Police witnesses faced this same problem—in addition to performing their other job duties—and often failed to appear for court, resulting in routine continuances and dismissals.

But the lack of a geographic approach by the prosecutor's office inflicted the most damage upon the system. Philadelphia has long been described as a “City of Neighborhoods”—each community has its own idiosyncrasies, special dynamics, and cultural norms. The Philadelphia Police Department (“PPD”) is divided into 21 police districts and 6 detective divisions, and had long recognized that specialized attention to local crime behavior and trends is good for public safety.

However, prosecutors did not have the same knowledge of these neighborhoods. When an assistant district attorney (“ADA”) received a case, he or she generally did not have an intimate knowledge of the repeat offenders or place-based crime dynamics in the community where the crime occurred. In addition, the ADA usually lacked close working relationships with the police officers who oversaw the work at that particular police district. To overcome challenges of the prosecutor's

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “2010 County-by-County Uniform Crime Reports.”

² Philadelphia Inquirer, “Justice: Delayed, dismissed, denied”, December 2009.

<http://www.philly.com/philly/multimedia/Justice_Delayed_Dismissed_Denied_Part_1.html>

lack of familiarity and connectivity with Philadelphia neighborhoods, implementing community-based prosecution became the top priority of the District Attorney's Office.

2. Why Geographic Prosecution?

Crime occurs geographically. Drug gangs operate on certain streets, repeat burglars target specific neighborhoods, and homicides form clusters on a map. It only makes sense that crime be prosecuted geographically, by assigning prosecutors to specific neighborhoods.

There are numerous potential benefits to a geographic, community-based approach to prosecution, all of which can help improve public safety:

- **Stronger cases**—Prosecutors who are more familiar with local dynamics, place-based crime, and key offenders will build better cases, engender stronger witness cooperation, and see fewer cases continued or withdrawn.
- **More attention to local crime problems**—By developing an ongoing relationship with local leaders, agencies, and residents, community-based prosecutors will be better attuned to the needs of their neighborhoods.
- **More cooperation from the community**—A community that sees the prosecutor's office as responsive to its needs will be more likely to report crimes and work toward proactive, community-wide solutions. A stronger partnership with local residents creates stronger witness cooperation.
- **Better relationships with local residents and police officers**—A community-based prosecution model ensures that prosecutors will foster better ties with the communities they represent and build relationships with the police officers they work with on a daily basis.
- **More efficient prosecution**—Stronger cases, fortified by relationships with local police officers and familiarity with witnesses, will allow cases to be disposed of more effectively and efficiently.

3. Why Vertical Prosecution?

Vertical prosecution of serious violent crimes is a common tool in community prosecution, and it is the backbone of a sound geographic prosecution approach. One of the aims of geographic prosecution is to build better cases: ADAs who specialize in particular communities will gain the background knowledge and relationships necessary to prosecute criminals and prevent crimes before they happen. Vertical prosecution goes hand-in-hand with this objective.

Vertical prosecution is when a single prosecutor or a single team of prosecutors handles a case from start to finish. This is how homicides and rapes have been prosecuted in Philadelphia for years. This method contrasts markedly with horizontal prosecution, where different prosecutors handle different steps of a case, which is also known as the “assembly line” form of justice.

Vertical prosecution has numerous benefits, each with the potential to improve public safety:

- **Stronger cases**—A trial prosecutor or team who handles a case from start to finish will have a better grasp of the facts and stronger working relationships with the case’s key participants than a prosecutor who merely has a transitory relationship with that case.
- **Fewer cases withdrawn or dismissed**—Under horizontal prosecution, half of all felonies in Philadelphia were dismissed for lack of prosecution—often because ADAs were unfamiliar with their cases and not fully prepared for trial or hearings. Vertical prosecution reduces this inefficiency.
- **More attention to victims**—Victims will see the same prosecutor or prosecutorial team throughout the processing of that case, in contrast to having to reintroduce themselves and the facts of their case to a different prosecutor at each new step in the proceedings.
- **More cooperation from witnesses**—Witnesses will see continuity throughout their cases, and they will be more inclined to work with law enforcement during the later stages of cases.
- **Better outcomes for violent crime cases**—There is a long successful history of prosecutors using vertical prosecution to improve case outcomes in career criminal, domestic violence, child abuse, and homicide cases.

4. Implementing a Geographic Community-Based Prosecution Model

History

Geographic community-based prosecution is a relatively recent innovation. It has only gained significant traction in the past 10-15 years. Community prosecution focuses on targeted areas and involves long-term, proactive partnerships among the prosecutor’s office, law enforcement, the community, and public and private organizations, whereby the authority of the prosecutor’s office is used to solve problems, improve public safety, and enhance quality of life in the community.³ Community prosecutors interact with the community and address issues traditional prosecutors have not typically handled, such as problem-solving for crime prevention, public safety, and health matters. Key elements of community prosecution include vertical prosecution, community advisory councils, problem mediation, and alternatives to incarceration programs.⁴

In 1990, the Multnomah County (Oregon) District Attorney, Michael Schrunk, established what is widely considered the country’s first community prosecution initiative.⁵ That initiative allocated a staff person and other resources from the prosecutor’s office to work with community groups, legislators, and law enforcement to reduce drug-related crime in three Portland neighborhoods. In 1991, the Kings County (Brooklyn, New York) District Attorney, Charles “Joe” Hynes, divided the prosecutors in his office into trial zones that were devised to ensure similar

³ Weinstein, Susan, “Community Prosecution: A Decade into the 21st Century”, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, 2010, p.3-4. <http://www.apainc.org/files/DDF/CP%20-%20Decade%20into%2021st%20Century%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Bureau of Justice Assistance, Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement. <<https://www.bja.gov/evaluation/program-crime-prevention/cbcp1.htm>>

⁵ Boland, B. 2007. *The Response of Multnomah County to Neighborhood Crime: 1990-2005*. Alexandria, VA: American Prosecutors Research Institute. Wolf, R. V., and Worrall, J. L. 2004. *Lessons from the Field: Ten Community Prosecution Leadership Profiles*. Alexandria, VA: American Prosecutors Research Institute.

caseloads (relative number of cases) in each.⁶ These offices wanted their line prosecutors to become experts in their respective regions and coordinate with community members and other law enforcement officials to develop responses to local criminal activity.⁷ Shortly thereafter, in 1992, the State’s Attorney in Montgomery County, Maryland, divided all county prosecutors into five geographic regions that mirrored the county’s police districts.

In June 1996, then U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, Eric H. Holder, Jr., created a pilot community prosecution program, geographically assigning 19 Assistant U.S. Attorneys to patrol service areas in that district and to handle matters relating to the community. Trial attorneys in the community prosecution unit prosecuted cases assigned to them vertically, while two attorneys did community outreach.⁸ In August 1999, the program was expanded to cover the entire city. Today, the community prosecution section of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia has both Community Prosecutors and Community Outreach Specialists (non-attorney positions) with offices in each police district in Washington, D.C.

Many of the aforementioned offices faced challenges⁹, similar to the District Attorney’s Office, while transitioning to geographic prosecution. Prosecutors were uncomfortable working closely with community members, and police were disappointed that prosecutors with special expertise in certain types of cases were often diverted to regional work. Philadelphia’s courts were also hesitant about this new approach. However, the District Attorney’s Office was able to successfully overcome these challenges.

Planning

Like most counties in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia has a Criminal Justice Advisory Board (“CJAB”). The CJAB is composed of representatives from the Philadelphia’s courts, Mayor’s Office, Philadelphia Prison System, District Attorney’s Office, Defender Association of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office, PPD, Philadelphia Adult Probation and Parole Department, and other local criminal justice stakeholders. One goal of the Philadelphia CJAB is to improve interagency problem-solving in the city’s criminal justice system. The CJAB was a very helpful entity during Philadelphia’s transition to community-based prosecution.

Shifting to a geographic community-based prosecution model is a large undertaking—one that requires significant institutional acceptance in order for it to be successful. Stakeholders must understand how they will benefit from such a change in the system. In Philadelphia, several agencies stood to gain from a geographic community-based prosecution model (which came to be known locally as “zone courts”):

⁶ Bureau of Justice Assistance, History of Community Prosecution.
<<https://www.ncjrs.gov/html/bja/commpros/bja1.html>>

⁷ Gramckow, Heike, “Community Prosecution in the United States.” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* vol. 5-4, 1997, pp. 11-13.

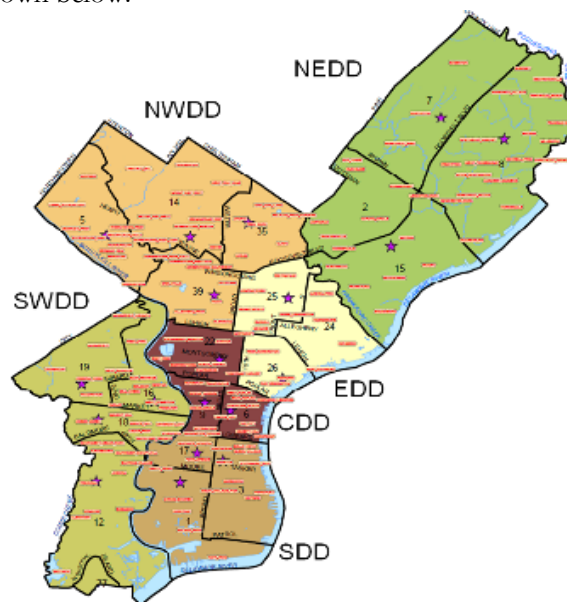
⁸ Goldkamp, J. S., Irons-Guynn, C., & Weiland, D., “Community Prosecution Strategies” Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, August 2003, p. 56.

⁹ Weinstein, Susan, “Community Prosecution: A Decade into the 21st Century”, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, 2010, p.7. <http://www.apainc.org/files/DDF/CP%20-%20Decade%20into%2021st%20Century%20FINAL.pdf>

- **The District Attorney's Office** would see more effective and efficient prosecutions, and fewer cases dismissed or withdrawn.
- **The Defense Bar** would see improvements in how cases were handled, as responsibility for a case was now with clearly identifiable trial teams. They would also experience speedier plea bargaining, better ability to receive discovery, and enhanced working relationships.
- **The First Judicial District (courts)** would benefit from prosecution-side improvements and see quicker case resolution and better cooperation between the prosecution and defense.
- **The Jail/ Prison System** would hold fewer prisoners under pretrial confinement as a result of cases being disposed of effectively.
- **The Police Department** would benefit from a more open, organized, and efficient court system through better relationships between law enforcement and prosecutors.
- **The victims** would be safer, with preliminary hearings moved from low-security local police districts into the downtown, high-security CJC.
- **All Philadelphia citizens** would benefit from a more open, organized criminal justice system and improved public safety.

Implementation: District Attorney's Office

As mentioned earlier, the PPD is composed of six detective divisions—Central Detective Division (CDD), Eastern Detective Division (EDD), Northeast Detective Division (NEDD), Northwest Detective Division (NWDD), South Detective Division (SDD), and Southwest Detective Division (SWDD). Each detective division is made up of regional police districts. In general, detectives are assigned to divisions, while police officers are assigned to districts. Philadelphia police detective divisions are shown below:



In Philadelphia, the idea behind geographic community-based prosecution was to align the District Attorney's Office and the courts with the breakdown of the PPD's map. The Office created

a special prosecution zone for each detective division, and the courts assigned each of the six zones to a different floor in the downtown CJC.

The District Attorney’s Office folded three of its prosecution units into the zones—the Municipal Court Unit (which handles misdemeanors and felony preliminary hearings), the Felony Waiver Unit, and the Major Trials Unit. Prosecutors from these units were allocated to the zones in rough proportion to the caseload for each zone. For example, SDD had seen 23.1% of the Municipal Court Unit caseload during the prior year, so it received 25% of the total number of ADAs assigned to the Municipal Court Unit. The chart below illustrates how prosecutors were assigned to each zone from each unit.

Staff Assignments

	CDD	EDD	NEDD	NWDD	SDD	SWDD
MC Unit 26,439 cases 24 ADAs	3,461 11.9% 3 ADAs	6,218 23.5% 6 ADAs	3,777 14.2% 3 ADAs	4,169 15.7% 4 ADAs	2,807 10.6% 2 ADAs	6,132 23.1% 6 ADAs
FWU Unit 22,155 cases 14 ADAs	3,030 13.7% 2 ADAs	5,284 23.9% 3 ADAs	3,554 16% 2 ADAs	3,539 16% 3 ADAs	2,186 9.9% 1 ADA	4,562 20.1% 3 ADAs
Major Trials 9,495 cases 44 ADAs	1,299 13.7% 7 ADAs	2,265 23.9% 8 ADAs	1,523 16% 7 ADAs	1,516 16% 8 ADAs	937 9.9% 5 ADAs	1,955 20.1% 9 ADAs
Totals:	12 ADAs	17 ADAs	12 ADAs	15 ADAs	8 ADAs	18 ADAs

Prosecutors then reviewed every open Municipal Court, Felony Waiver, and Major Trials case and assigned it to the zone where the crime occurred.

Implementation: Philadelphia’s Courts

Organizing and centralizing cases by zone in the CJC was an integral part of making community-based prosecution work. In the past, two factors contributed to the high rates of case continuances and dismissals:

- ***Preliminary hearings were held miles away from the CJC***—Since preliminary hearings were held in the police districts, defense lawyers and police witnesses would often be late or absent from hearings when they had scheduling conflicts.
- ***Courtrooms in the CJC were not organized by geographic region***—While police officers would usually be called as a witness only in cases that occurred in their district, they would still have to travel constantly between floors to testify as a witness when they had multiple cases scheduled on one day. Cases were often needlessly continued when officers were delayed.

In order to address these issues, court administrators and criminal justice leaders “zoned” the CJC to align with the new prosecution zones. Each zone (CDD, EDD, NEDD, NWDD, SDD, and SWDD) was assigned to a different floor in the CJC, as the chart shows below:

Court Assignments

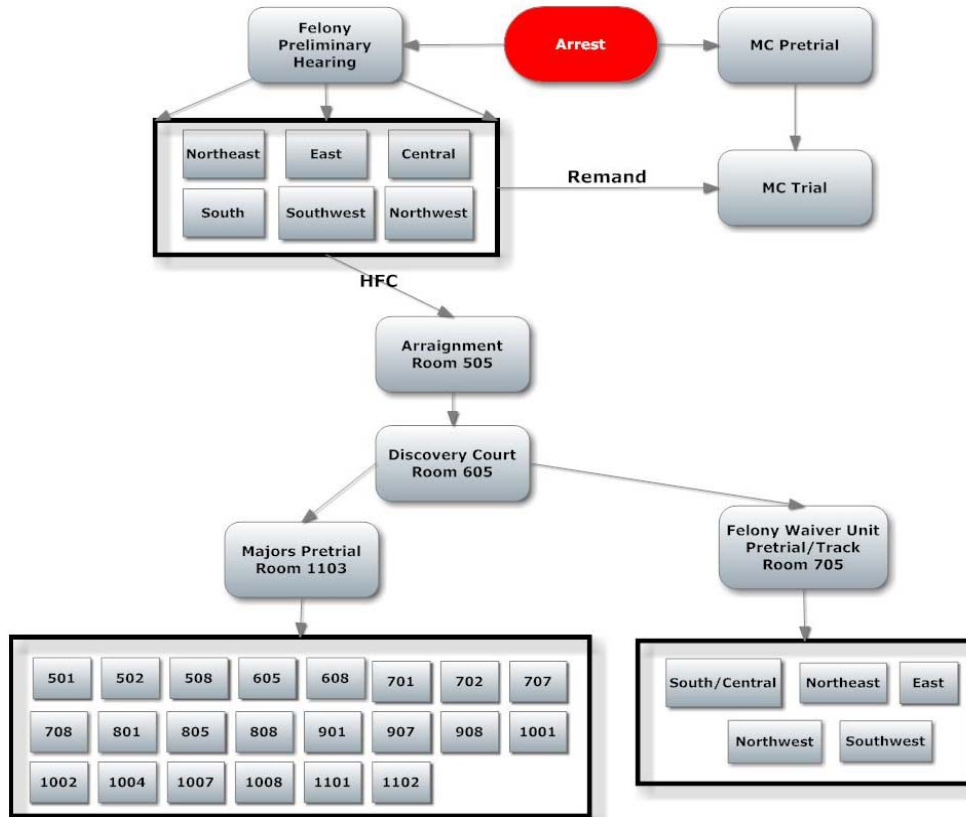
10 th Floor EDD 18 ADAs (6 MC / 3 FWU / 8 Majors)	1001 Major Trial Room	1002 Major Trial Room	1003 Preliminary Hearings	1004 EDD FWU Trial	1005 Dembe / Woode- Skipper, MH Court / ARD	1006 MC Trial (24 cases/ day)	1007 Major Trial Room	1008 Major Trial Room
9 th Floor CDD 12 ADAs (3 MC / 2 FWU / 7 Majors)	901 Major Trial Room	902 Major Trial Room	903 Preliminary Hearings	904 CDD/ NWDD FWU Trial	905** AVOPP	906 MC Trial (13 cases/ day)	907 Homicide Trial	908 Major Trial Room
8 th Floor SWDD 18 ADAs (6 MC / 3 FWU / 9 Majors)	801 Major Trial Room	802 Major Trial Room	803 Preliminary Hearings	804 SWDD FWU Trial	805 Major Trial Room	806 MC Trial (23 cases/ day)	807 Homicide Trial	808 Major Trial Room
7 th Floor NWDD 15 ADAs (4 MC / 3 FWU 8 Majors)	701 Major Trial Room	702 Major Trial Room	703 Preliminary Hearings	704 Arraign. / Traffic Ct. Appeals	705 FWU Pre- trial Room	706 MC Trial (16 cases/ day)	707 Homicide Trial	708 Major Trial Room
6 th Floor SDD 8 ADAs (2 MC / 1 FWU 5 Majors)	601 Major Trial Room	602 Major Trial Room	603 Preliminary Hearings / DUI Tmt - M Drug Tmt-W	604 Gun Court	605 Majors Discovery Court	606 MC Trial (11 cases/ day)	607 Homicide Trial	608 Major Trial Room
5 th Floor NEDD 12 ADAs (3 MC / 2 FWU / 7 Majors)	501 Major Trial Room	502 Major Trial Room	503 Preliminary Hearings	504 NEDD / SDD FWU Trial	505 Motions Court	506 MC Trial (14 cases/ day)	507 Homicide Trial	508 Major Trial Room

Under this system, prosecutors assigned to the Central Zone try cases on the 9th floor, day after day. Police officers from the 6th District (part of CDD) now usually only have to testify in cases heard on the 9th floor.

5. Community-Based Prosecution: A Better System

Old System

Before Philadelphia implemented geographic community-based prosecution, the typical flow of a felony case through the system—from arrest to disposition—was extremely complex and inefficient. The following chart (see next page) illustrates the previous process:

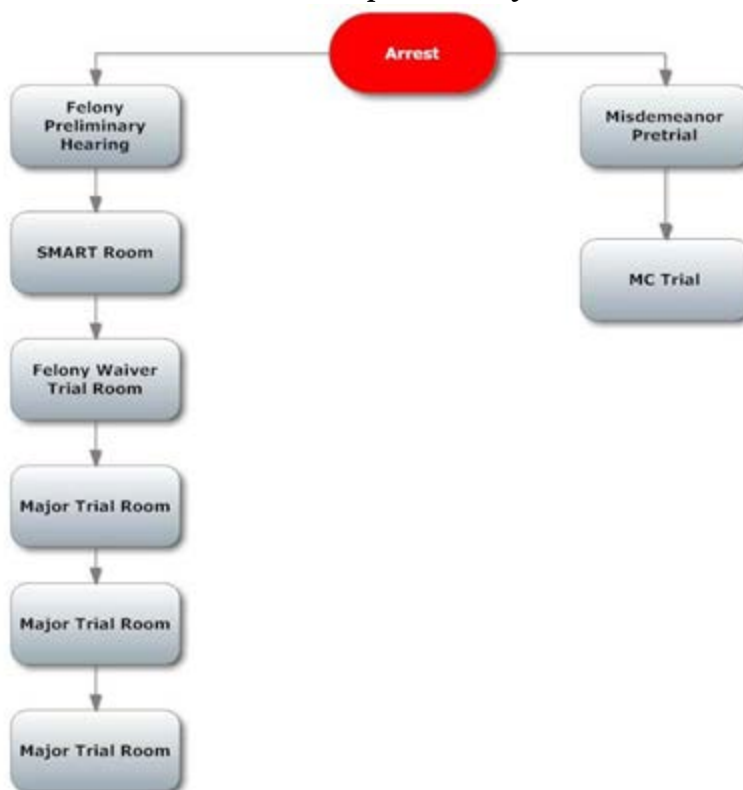


After arrest and charging, a felony preliminary hearing would be held in one of six different police district courtrooms spread throughout the city (Northeast, East, Central, South, Southwest, and Northwest). This preliminary hearing would be handled by a prosecutor in the Municipal Court Unit. If the judge found a prima facie case, the case was held for court and transferred to the CJC. There, the defendant would be arraigned on the 5th floor, and then discovery would occur on the 6th floor. If the defendant waived his or her right to a jury trial, the case would be moved to a felony waiver pretrial room on the 7th floor, with a new prosecutor, before proceeding to court on either the 7th, 8th, 9th, or 11th floor. If the case instead went to a jury trial, it would first go through a major pretrial room on the 11th floor before being assigned to one of 22 different major trial courtrooms (as identified in the bottom left corner of the above chart). This centralized process led to mismanagement and unpreparedness, and caused many cases to be dismissed or withdrawn.

New Design

The realignment of the District Attorney’s Office and CJC has led to a much simpler flow of cases, making it easier for all case participants to navigate.

Sample Floor, CJC



Now, upon arrest, a felony case will be charged and a preliminary hearing will occur on the designated zone floor in the CJC. If held for court, the case will be transferred to a “SMART Room” (i.e., Strategic Management ARC [Advance Review and Consolidation], Readiness and Trial), where a plea agreement will be negotiated if the defendant seeks that option. If not, the case will proceed to either a felony waiver room or a major trial room. Each step will occur on the same floor.

As proven below under Preliminary Results, since the implementation of geographic community-based prosecution, prosecutors are better prepared for their cases and more familiar with key case participants. Witnesses are more likely to appear for hearings and trials, and fewer cases are lost through procedural cracks in the system. Cases are disposed of more efficiently, with more cases being disposed of on the merits as opposed to being dismissed or withdrawn. Geographic community-based prosecution has also improved public safety.

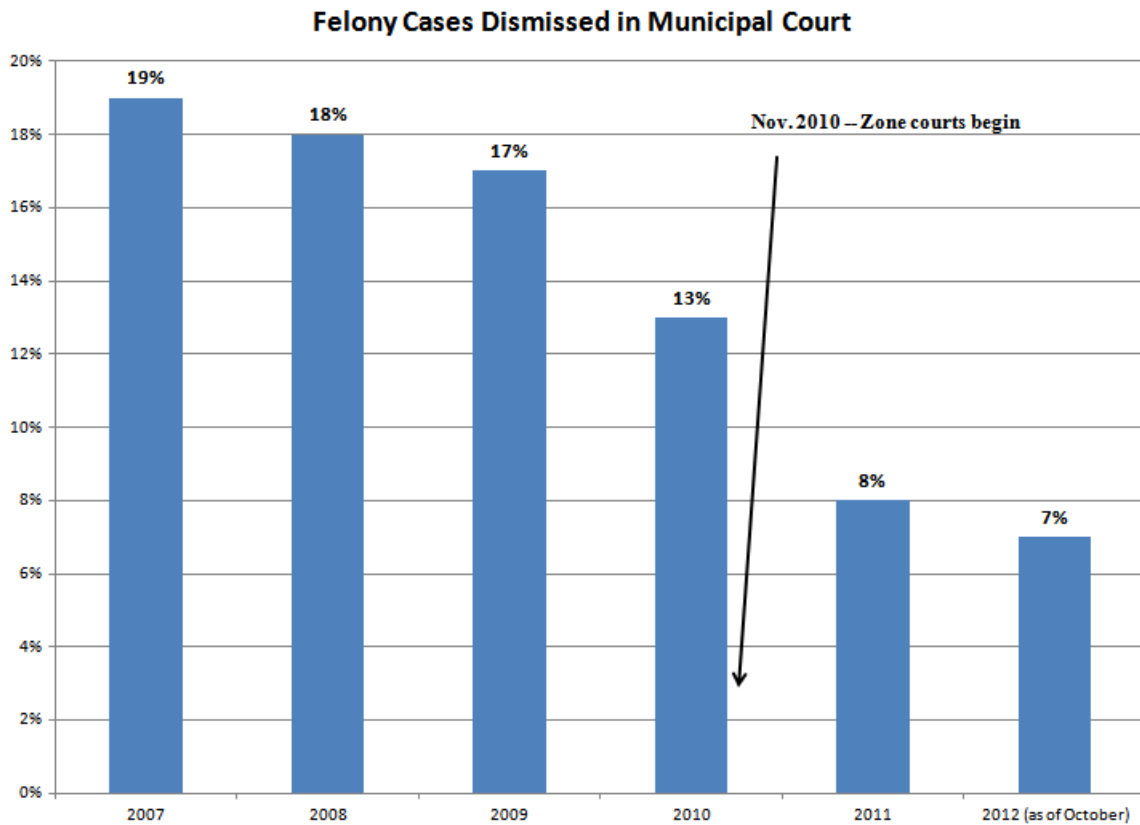
There is an additional pedagogical benefit to using zone courts and geographic community-based prosecution. Each year, the District Attorney’s Office hires a class of 20 to 30 new ADAs. Previously, these newly hired prosecutors would begin in the Municipal Court Unit, handling misdemeanors and felony preliminary hearings. Because the learning curve for new prosecutors is steep, they would often depend on each other for guidance. Under this model, however, new prosecutors are each assigned to a zone. Each zone has many senior prosecutors who are well-versed in criminal procedure, and new prosecutors now have the opportunity to work closely with experienced prosecutors and develop their skills much more rapidly than they could under the previous system. As a result, prosecutors are given significantly more responsibility earlier in their careers than under the previous model.

6. Preliminary Results

Although Philadelphia has only utilized a geographic community-based prosecution system for two years (zone courts began in November 2010), the statistics thus far are very promising.

Fewer Felony Cases Are Being Dismissed

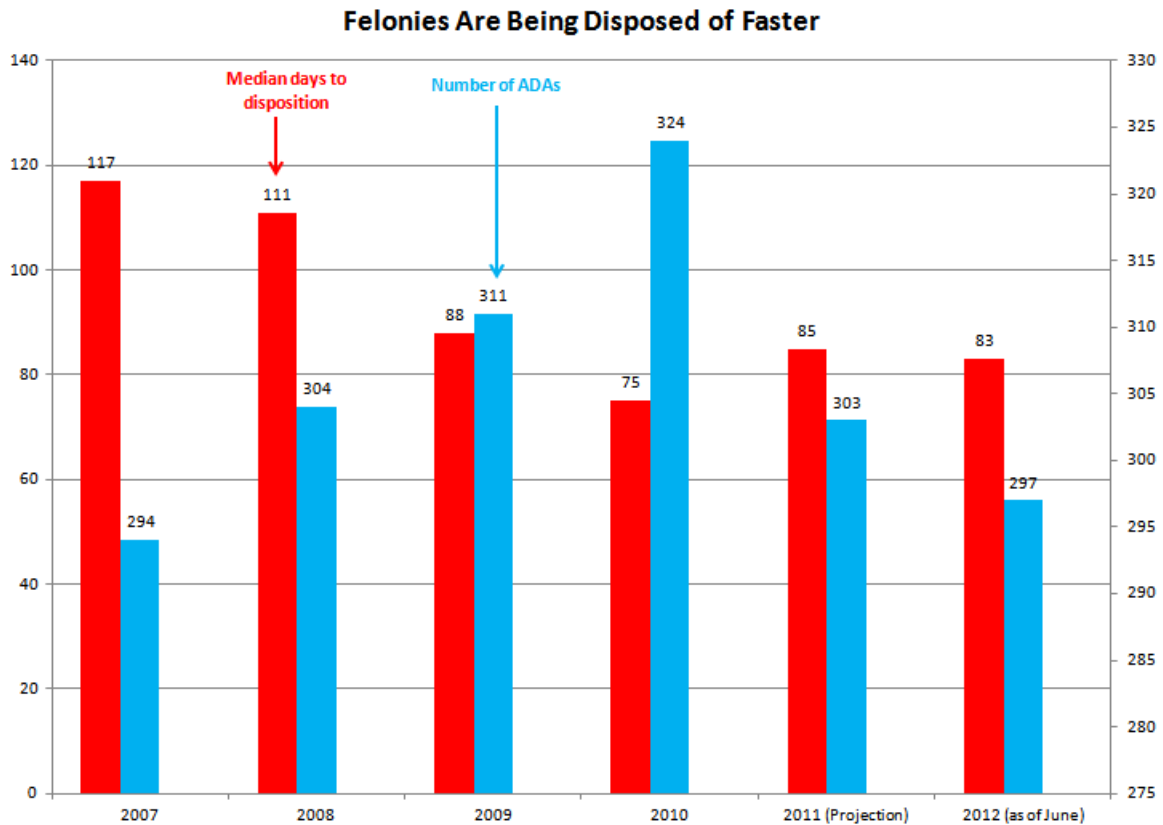
Since implementing geographic community-based prosecution, significantly fewer felony cases are being dismissed. In 2007, 19% of felonies were dismissed in Municipal Court. In 2012, as of October, only 7% of felonies were dismissed in Municipal Court. Although there was a steady decline of 1% from 2007 to 2009, the greatest decline of felony dismissals occurred after the implementation of zone courts and geographic community-based prosecution. The following chart shows a marked decrease in the number of cases being dismissed following the implementation of zone courts:



Felonies Are Being Disposed of More Efficiently

Felony cases are also being disposed of more quickly. In 2007, the median number of days it took for a felony to reach disposition was 117. For 2011, the projected median number of days to disposition was 85—a 27% decline in the time it takes to process a typical case through the system.

The chart below shows the significance of this improvement. In 2009 and 2010, the number of ADAs in the Office surged, which reduced the average number of cases each ADA handled and allowed for quicker dispositions. But in 2011 and 2012, the number of ADAs declined to nearly its 2007 level, and yet the median number of days to disposition in 2011 *was still significantly lower than it was in 2007*. Criminal justice partners agree that the criminal justice system is operating more efficiently and effectively than before. This trend has continued for cases from the first half of 2012.



7. Lessons Learned

There were many challenges to implementing a geographic community-based prosecution model in Philadelphia. Here are some of the lessons learned along the way:

- ***Gaining institutional support***—Because this was such a significant change to how Philadelphia’s criminal justice system worked, the relevant stakeholders needed to be shown how they would specifically benefit from community-based prosecution.
- ***Reassigning existing cases to new zones***—This was a time-consuming process. Other jurisdictions may be wise to filter cases by geographic region well in advance of implementing the model. That way, once implementation begins, there will be relatively few existing cases without an assigned region.

- **Staggering court start times**—In Philadelphia’s case, because many more hearings were added to the CJC under zone courts, there were concerns that the traffic would be too much for the building to handle. Since sheriffs transport prisoners for hearings and trials, they were also concerned that there would be no room for the influx of buses that would result from preliminary hearings being moved to the CJC. To address this issue and alleviate traffic, court start times were staggered throughout the morning, rather than all starting at 8:00 a.m.
- **Putting higher-volume zones on lower floors**—Zones with the most criminal cases have the most traffic. In order to reduce the impact that the additional traffic would have on the CJC, the zones with the most criminal cases were assigned to lower floors. Assigning these zones to lower floors placed less of a demand on the elevators by reducing the distance the average person had to travel on the elevators. This change prevented the CJC elevators from becoming overloaded.
- **Advocating for new court rules to complement zone courts**—As stated earlier, a big challenge of zone courts in Philadelphia was that *all hearings* would be moved to the downtown courthouse. This was a marked departure from the status quo, when hearings were held in each neighborhood, some of which are long distances from downtown. Before zone courts were implemented, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court adopted a new rule that allowed hearsay evidence to be admitted at preliminary hearings for theft and property cases. This way, these victims were not expected to travel all of the way downtown in order to merely testify that they did not grant the defendant permission to use their property.

8. Conclusions

Zone courts went into effect in Philadelphia in November 2010. The transition was remarkably smooth, and only small adjustments, such as those listed above, were needed to fine tune the process. All of the stakeholders—including ADAs, public defenders, judges, police officers, and court staff—quickly acclimated to the new system.

Geographic community-based prosecution has been only one of a series of criminal justice reforms that Philadelphia has undertaken over the past few years. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has adopted additional changes that have streamlined processes, including a rule that requires judges to determine whether defense counsel is ready to proceed with a hearing before determining whether the Commonwealth is ready. This rule change has helped reduce gamesmanship and the number of continuances.

The District Attorney’s Office has made several other changes to its own policies, including securing a technology-improvement grant through the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (“BJA”). Through BJA’s Encouraging Innovation Field-Initiated grant solicitation, the District Attorney’s Office was awarded funding for their Performance Based Prosecution Project which sought to collect data and track its performance. This technology-improvement grant allowed the Office to build the necessary capabilities to capture criminal justice and case management data which was not being retained or analyzed prior to the grant. Additionally, the Office has implemented the following programs to complement its geographic community-based prosecution strategies:

- ***Small Amounts of Marijuana Program***—Diverts low-risk, non-violent drug offenders.
- ***Accelerated Misdemeanor Program***—Ensures swift and certain punishment while recognizing that some misdemeanants should receive less punitive treatment.
- ***SMART Room Program***—Improves the way plea agreements are negotiated in felony cases.

By implementing other strategies which create more efficiency or effectiveness within the Office and criminal justice system, more prosecutorial resources can be diverted to violent crime and community-based prosecution efforts. However, geographic community-based prosecution, having transformed the workings of Philadelphia’s courts and prosecutor’s office, remains the core foundation of the system. Zone courts were essential to maximizing the benefits of the innovative programs that were implemented over the past few years, and future reforms will further build upon zone courts. For instance, the District Attorney’s Office recently started a GunStat¹⁰ program, in partnership with the PPD, the Mayor’s Office, and other city criminal justice agencies. GunStat monitors known violent offenders for gun crimes. When an offender is arrested for a gun violation, the ADA will ask for high bail to remove him or her from the streets. Because this pilot program began in two of the most violent police districts in the city, the regional knowledge of the prosecutors assigned to these zones has been immensely beneficial.

To assist with the development or implementation of geographical community-based prosecution, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (“APA”), in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation, offers a number of services such as onsite technical assistance visits, in which APA staff and senior community prosecution consultants provide hands-on training and brainstorm solutions to operational problems. To explore educational or technical assistance opportunities, please contact Steven Jansen, APA’s Vice-President, by e-mail at Steven.Jansen@apainc.org or by phone at 202-861-2482, or Robert Hood, APA’s Director of Community Prosecution and Violent Crime Division, by e-mail at Robert.Hood@apainc.org.

¹⁰ Newall, Mike, McCoy, Craig, Purcell, Dylan, “Homicides on track for 45 year low in Philadelphia” The Inquirer, July 2013 http://articles.philly.com/2013-07-01/news/40288167_1_crime-city-homicide-figures-analysis