



## **Downtown Public Safety**

### **FACT SHEET**

#### **Overview:**

Whether you live Downtown or you come here to work, shop or play – public safety is important to us all. When it comes to violent crime, we can be thankful that Seattle has one of the lowest rates of violent crime of major U.S. cities (violent crime as defined by the FBI, includes murder, rape, aggravated assault and robbery). Seattle's violent crime rate remains lower than Boston and Portland, and less than half the rate in Atlanta, Houston and St. Louis.

However as we've been hearing over the past year from Downtown residents, employees and visitors, Downtown is not feeling as safe as it used to because of the prevalence of open-air drug dealing, street disorder, and aggressive and intimidating solicitation and behavior.

#### **Seattle has a low violent crime rate relative to other major U.S. Cities:**

- Seattle had 573.6 incidents of violent crime per 100,000 residents in 2008
- Boston's rate was 1104.4, Baltimore's 1588.5, Portland's 662.9

SOURCE: 2008 FBI Uniform Crime Reports (most recent complete data)

#### **However, drug dealing, aggressive solicitation and intimidating behavior persists Downtown and impacts real and perceived safety:**

##### **Instances of aggressive solicitation Downtown are increasing:**

- Observations of solicitation/panhandling by MID Ambassadors (within the MID boundaries) increased 55 percent between 2008 and 2009

SOURCE: 2008 and 2009 Metropolitan Improvement District Observation Reports

##### **Aggressive solicitation and drug dealing are top concerns of Downtown residents and employers:**

- 66 percent of Downtown residents report being concerned about aggressive panhandling/solicitation
- 75 percent of respondents reported being concerned about the selling of drugs Downtown
- A majority believed the city was not doing enough to address both issues

SOURCE: 2009 Metropolitan Improvement District Residents Study

**One in four Seattle residents avoid Downtown because of a fear of personal safety and a significant number of Downtown residents avoid venturing out at night:**

- In a city sponsored survey, 1 in 4 Seattle residents reported this year that they avoided Downtown because of a fear of crime or personal safety, the highest of any neighborhood mentioned and an increase from a similar survey taken in 2007
- 38 percent of residents do not feel safe walking Downtown at night

SOURCE: 2009 Seattle Police Department Community Assessment of Policing Survey, Metropolitan Improvement District 2009 Residents Study

**Convention attendees and organizers regularly report high concerns with the prevalence of aggressive behavior Downtown:**

- The organizer of one of the largest conventions booked in Seattle in 2009 reported that the level of panhandling and loitering was "by far her group's biggest complaint and concern associated with their Seattle convention"
- Convention, tourism and retail activities contribute significantly to the City's tax base and the City's ability to fund much needed human services. Nearly half of Seattle's retail sales tax revenue is generated within the Center City and half of all jobs in Seattle are located in the Center City. Sales and B&O tax revenue supports city investment in shelters, emergency services, substance abuse treatment, hygiene centers and other human services important to Downtown and the region. Maintaining strong retail and convention activity is critical to maintaining revenues for these services

SOURCE: Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau, City of Seattle, Washington State Employment Securities Data

**Seattle has fewer sworn police officers per capita than our peer cities across the country:**

- Seattle has 2.2 sworn officers per 1000 population
- Compare that to Boston, which has 3.66 or Milwaukee, which has 3.35 or Baltimore, which has 4.17 or Philadelphia, which has 4.69
- New York City has 4.28 officers per 1000 population

SOURCE: 2008 FBI Uniform Crime Reports

For more information, contact DSA's Policy Director Jon Scholes at [jons@downtownseattle.org](mailto:jons@downtownseattle.org)

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