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Students Respond to Crime on Capitol Hill

Diego Gonzalez, Volunteer Reporter

Recently, there have been many news reports circulating about crime in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. A man was fatally stabbed in Capitol Hill's Link Rail station May 11, resulting in the closure of the station for the weekend. Later that same night, a 13-year-old girl was injured by being shot in the Yesler Terrace neighborhood. Both incidents occurred within walking distance of Seattle University, but does that make Seattle U a dangerous campus? Students don't think so.

According to the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) 2024 crime dashboard, there have been a total of 583 crimes committed on Capitol Hill this year, the most of any neighborhood outlined by SPD, including crimes.

Most students make sure to differentiate the two—Capitol Hill and Seattle U—as two separate domains. Jason Smith, a first-year biology major, spoke on the issue during an interview.

"Even at night time, when I'm walking around late on campus, for the most part, it's safe. [Seattle U], is, for the most part, a safe spot," Smith said.

Savate Wiggs, a first-year business law major, feels that there is a public perception of Capitol Hill being dangerous; however, he feels safe on campus given its small student body population. No matter where on campus, Wiggs always feels within reach of someone he knows, someone who can help if an incident occurs.

"What makes me feel safe about being on campus is it feels more like a home. Because you got dorms, people are living in the dorms. People are going to school here and there's a sense of community here," Wiggs said.

However, both Wiggs and Smith are first-years who have not experienced any negative community interactions on campus.

Kacie Nagaoka, a second-year marketing major, has had negative experiences throughout their time on campus. While they believe that Seattle U is slightly safer than the surrounding



Kay McHugh



Kevin Frazier

neighborhoods, she recognizes that they blend into each other, allowing Capitol Hill's more suspicious locals on campus.

"I take the bus by Chardin and I used to get followed off of it. I've had multiple people, multiple times have hate crimes... committed against me," Nagaoka said.

Another time, Nagaoka was at the local IHOP right across East Madison Street when a middle-aged man was harassing her and her friends. They decided to call Public Safety to escort all of them back to campus. However, that did not happen.

"So we were like, 'Ok we're right next to campus, Public Safety will come and get us.' We waited for an hour and a half at IHOP, and the guy had left by the time Public Safety had come."

The recent violent crimes that occurred the previous Saturday served only to reinforce the negative perception of Capitol Hill for many of the interviewees. Although Nagaoka notes that that encounter does not reflect her experience on campus.

"Things like that, I don't think about it until like it'll actually happen," Nagaoka said.

Aaron Casarez, a third-year business analytics major, is a resident assistant at Seattle U. He notes that he similarly doesn't think about the crime on Capitol Hill until it makes headlines.



Kevin Frazier

"I still kind of go on [the light rail] whenever I need to because it's very convenient, but when something like this happens, it definitely makes you take a step back and think about it," Casarez said.

However, both Smith and Casarez, who are from smaller towns, acknowledge that the issue of crime, especially violent crimes, is not exclusive to Capitol Hill. Smith believes that the issue is the responsibility of the local government and police, not Seattle U.

"If SU were to do something it would be to, I guess, get it out there that something needs to be done about it. Like [if] people just don't feel safe walking around, that's not a good thing," Smith said.

The students remained of the viewpoint that campus is a safe place and not to be fearful, but it may be beneficial to be prepared. The most popular recommendations from students are to walk in groups and to carry pepper spray.

"There's still some times where it's really nice. It can be tough if you only come to Capitol Hill at night or you've only seen that, but for sure there's times where Capitol Hill's nice, especially during the day," Wiggs said.

Students acknowledge that concerns around crime will always be a part of living in Seattle. However, through proper preparations, students can continue enjoying their time on Capitol Hill and Seattle U.