

dubuque & tri-state

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DEI panel discussion focuses on safe local neighborhoods

Dubuque police chief and others reject the perception that some areas in the city are dogged by street crime.

BY JOSHUA IRVINE
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Panelists at a community conversation held Wednesday at Steeple Square in Dubuque discussed ways to help residents feel safe in the community.

The panel was the latest in a series sponsored by TH Media and Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. While the discussion opened with Dubuque's crime statistics, discussion showed the question of safety went further and wider than crime.

That was in part because Dubuque generally is a safe community, panelists said.

U.S. census data showed the city's violent crime rate climbed from 2014 to 2021, from 2.26 to 3.69 incidents per 1,000 people. However, it was below the rates in larger cities such as Davenport, Des Moines, Sioux City and Waterloo, and it fell in line with a general rise in violent crime nationwide.

Alex Baum, of the community foundation, pointed out that very little of that crime resulted from random acts.

"The vast majority of violent crimes committed in 2021 were committed by someone who was known to their victim," Baum noted.

Much of the evening's discussion pushed back against the idea that Dubuque, particularly its downtown, is dogged by street crime. Police Chief Jeremy Jensen was among the most vocal critics of that perception, saying crime "hotspots" downtown corresponded with high-density areas.

"I have no place (in Dubuque) I'm afraid to go," he said. "I have no place I'm afraid for my daughters to go."

The question of safe neighborhoods then, became a matter of how to make residents feel safe, particularly for people who are marginalized.

Lori Ollendick, a disability advocate, pointed to the need for more physically inclusive spaces, while Enoc Sanchez, an insurance agent



DAVE KETTERING • Telegraph Herald

Dubuque Police Chief Jeremy Jensen speaks during a panel discussion about safety in our neighborhoods at Steeple Square in Dubuque on Wednesday. This was the sixth in a series of community conversations presented by TH Media and Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque.



Attendees listen to a panel discussion about safety in local neighborhoods at Steeple Square in Dubuque on Wednesday.

and Latinx community leader, said more grocery store options downtown could reduce property crime by providing more affordable food options to low-income residents. Jensen also answered written

questions from audience members about local racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

While the disparity between Black and White offenders charged in Dubuque had improved from 2014 to

2021, Black residents still were more than 16 times more likely to be arrested and charged with a violent crime and nine times as likely to be charged with a drug or narcotics violation. The latter figure was the highest disparity among Iowa's major cities.

Jensen said he "cringed" looking at the numbers.

A consensus area among panelists was that the best way to improve perceptions of safety was for residents to make a point of meeting their neighbors.

Sanchez said the onus for that fell on longtime residents and was as simple as showing up to events such as the Latinx Fiesta.

"Just showing that mutual respect of, 'Hey, I'm not 100% about you, but I'm here to learn,' that mutual respect would go a tremendous distance," Sanchez said.

Joshua Irvine is a Report for America corps member and writes about issues related to poverty in the tri-state area for the Telegraph Herald.

news in brief

Police: Dubuque man assaulted another, causing brain injury

Police said a Dubuque man was arrested for an assault that caused another man to suffer a brain injury.

Kasai A. Roach, 20, of 1160 W. Third St., was arrested at 5:40 a.m. Wednesday at Dubuque Law Enforcement Center on a warrant charging willful injury causing serious injury.

Court documents state that police were dispatched at about 8:42 p.m. Friday to Superstop IV, 535 Hill St., for a report of an assault.

Police found Leonard T. Camacho, 27, no permanent address, in a vehicle bleeding from the face. Camacho was transported by ambulance to MercyOne Dubuque Medical Center, where doctors advised that he would require a transfer to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics for treatment of a brain bleed.

Investigators determined that Roach and Camacho had argued about a parking issue while they were getting gas at the convenience store, documents state.

Roach told police that he had punched Camacho in the face, which knocked him to the ground, documents state. Roach said he had acted in self-defense, then left the scene.



Kasai A. Roach

Police: Dubuque man sexually abused girl multiple times

Police said a Dubuque man sexually assaulted a girl under the age of 17 multiple times during the course of a decade.

Armon Kattil, 40, of 928 Garfield Ave., was arrested at 12:29 p.m. Tuesday at Dubuque Law Enforcement Center on a warrant charging third-degree sexual abuse.

Court documents state that the girl told authorities that Kattil, whom she knew, began sexually assaulting her about 10 years ago out of state. The girl said the abuse later continued in Dubuque. The last sexual assault occurred this year.



Armon Kattil

police

The Dubuque Police and Dubuque County Sheriff's departments reported:

- Reo Cameron, 28, of 570 W. Locust St., was arrested at 10:08 p.m. Tuesday at his residence on charges of domestic assault with strangulation, domestic assault with injury and child endangerment.
- Timothy R. Bertucci, 32, of 1170 McGregor Drive, was arrested at 6:15 p.m. Tuesday at his residence on a warrant charging second-degree theft.
- Jamal R. Sterling, 29, of Chicago, was arrested at 5:44 p.m. Tuesday in the 700 block of Kelly Lane on a warrant charging possession of crack cocaine with intent to deliver and possession of MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy.
- Preston T. Mai, 27, of 555½ W. Locust St., was arrested at 3:18 p.m. Tuesday at his residence on charges of domestic assault with strangulation and child endangerment.
- Troy E. Rees, 26, of 2080 Elm St., was arrested at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday at Dubuque Law Enforcement Center on a warrant charging failure to comply with the sex offender registry.
- Quon M. Kenebrew Sr., 29, of 1110 Iowa St., No. 4, was arrested at 1:19 p.m. Tuesday in the 1400 block of Main Street on warrants charging domestic assault with strangulation, domestic assault with injury and possession of marijuana.
- Steven L. Rossman, 64, of Stockton, Ill., was arrested at 6 a.m. Tuesday at Dubuque Law Enforcement Center on a warrant charging domestic assault with strangulation and domestic assault with injury.
- Kailee A. Beyer, 34, of 55 Diamond St., was arrested at 10:15 p.m. Sunday in the 300 block of Bell Street on charges of possession of cocaine, possession of drug paraphernalia and intoxication by drugs.
- A fraud case involving the theft of \$500 was reported at 11:43 a.m. Tuesday in the 1900 block of Jackson Street.
- Unauthorized use of a credit card resulting in the loss of \$2,300 was reported at 9:12 a.m. Tuesday in the 2000 block of Asbury Road.

NICC officials planning to slightly increase tax rate for next fiscal year

Proposal is to raise tax from 91 cents to 93 cents per \$1,000 of taxable valuation.

BY ELIZABETH KELSEY
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PEOSTA, Iowa — Northeast Iowa Community College officials plan to slightly raise the college's tax rate in the coming fiscal year.

College finance officials this week shared with the Board of Trustees a proposed tax rate of 93 cents per \$1,000 of taxable valuation for residents of NICC's service area for the 2024 fiscal year. The college's current tax rate is about 91 cents per \$1,000.

The tax rate is part of a \$75.1 million proposed certified budget college officials intend to submit to the state for fiscal year 2024. Board mem-

bers voted to set a public hearing on the matter for April 17.

Executive Director of Finance Lexi Wagner said college officials initially presented a proposed levy rate and budget in January. However, after state lawmakers in February passed a bill correcting an error in the state's calculation of property valuation rollbacks, counties were required to resubmit valuations, and NICC officials readjusted the school's budget and levy rate accordingly.

Wagner said the college's decision to request an increase in the tax rate is based on a smaller-than-normal increase in taxable assessed property valuations, once the rollback was adjusted, coupled with rising operational costs.

Vice President of Finance and Administration Dave Dahms noted

TH more online
 See the NICC FY24 budget plan, [TelegraphHerald.com](https://www.telegraphherald.com)

that the college has a diverse and stable tax base, and enrollment has somewhat stabilized over the past few years, although the college's 4,322 reported students in fall 2022 still represent a decline from five years previously.

However, federal COVID-19 relief funds the college utilized over the past two years have largely ended, and state legislators have not yet settled on how much community colleges will receive in state general aid in the coming year, so finance officials built the budget conservatively, Dahms said.

"It's all about cost control and dealing with inflationary pressures and spending your money wisely,"

he said after the meeting.

Board members on Monday also approved tuition and student fee increases, which will take effect this fall.

Students who are Iowa residents will pay an additional \$10 in tuition per credit hour, while nonresident and international students will see those costs increase by \$15. All students also will pay an additional \$1 course fee per credit hour.

In approving the tuition increases, board members acknowledged the rising cost of all goods and services and the financial aid many students receive.

"So many of our students get a lot of scholarships and aid that the \$10, in my opinion, for the (majority of students), is not really that crippling," said Board Vice Chair Bob Shafer.