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### **2003 Crime Drops to 22-Year Low**

Crimes committed in the Village last year dropped to the lowest level in 22 years, a trend police attribute to increased citizen involvement and a growing willingness of residents to report suspicious activities.

Some 2,389 crimes were committed in Oak Park during 2003, compared to 2,554 in 2002, a 6.5 percent decrease, and the fewest since 1981, the earliest year for which comparable data is available. The 2003 statistics represent the continuation of a downward trend especially evident over the past 12 years.

“The decline in crime last year is due in no small part to the cooperative spirit of the citizenry and our police officers on the street,” said Village Manager Carl Swenson. “Thanks to the active involvement of the citizenry, officers know they can depend on residents to help them protect the community.”

Police Chief Rick Tanksley echoed Swenson’s praise of residents for helping keep crime low in Oak Park.

“Alert and active citizens are the cornerstone of a successful program to prevent and reduce crime,” Tanksley said. “An alert citizen can often stop a crime and help police catch a criminal in the act. That’s why citizens should not hesitate to call 9-1-1 when they encounter suspicious people or incidents.”

Burglaries and thefts, which police consider crimes of opportunity, represented about 85 percent of all 2003 crimes. Thieves mostly targeted garages – often unlocked or open – and took personal items left unattended or inside vehicles.

“Crime in Oak Park can be further reduced if residents and the Police Department continue to strengthen our partnership and make crime fighting a cooperative undertaking,” Tanksley said. “Just by taking a few simple steps like closing and locking garages, removing personal property from plain view in autos and not leaving personal items unattended can do wonders to reduce the crimes of opportunity that represent the vast majority of criminal activity in our community.”

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Here's a brief overview of the statistics:

- Burglaries dropped to 501 in 2003, as compared to 541 in 2002. Burglary arrests were up. Sixty-four individuals were arrested in 2003 compared to 62 in 2002. The vast majority of burglaries in Oak Park continued to be to garages and autos.
- Thefts were down in 2003, totaling 1,509 compared to the previous year's 1,575 incidents. Arrests for theft increased to 320 in 2003, up from 316 in 2002. Most thefts in Oak Park are petty, including bicycles, license plates and retail shoplifting.
- Two murders were committed in 2003, compared to none in 2002. One murder was committed during a burglary, and the defendant is awaiting trial. The other murder was a Chicago gang/drug related, drive-by shooting that occurred on the Oak Park side of Roosevelt Road, but was unrelated to the Village or any resident.
- Arsons declined to three as compared to the previous year's seven cases. No arson arrests were made in 2002 or 2003.
- Motor vehicle thefts were down in 2003, totaling 169 as compared to 218 in 2002. Arrests for motor vehicle theft also were down, totaling 16 in 2003, compared to 21 in 2002.
- Nine criminal sexual assaults were reported in 2003, up from five in 2002. However, typically in these types of cases the victim knows the assailant. Arrests in this category were up as well, from four in 2002 to seven in 2003.
- Robberies decreased to 174 in 2003 from the previous year's 180, a drop police attribute in part to enhanced police patrols, the creation of the newly formed Street Crimes Team whose mission is to suppress crime through proactive law enforcement tactics, and the efforts of an involved citizenry. Arrests for robberies also were down, totaling 99 in 2003 as compared to 133 in 2002.
- Aggravated assault/battery incidents declined to 22 in 2003, compared to 28 in 2002. Thirty individuals were arrested in this category during 2003, compared to 29 in the prior year.
- Drug-related arrests increased overall to 156 in 2003, as compared to the previous year's 106 arrests. Arrests for possession of cannabis grew to 56 from the previous year's 44 and arrests for possession of controlled substances grew to 43 from 19. Arrests for possession of hypodermic syringes decreased to 17 in 2003 from 20 in 2002, and arrests for possession of drug paraphernalia increased to 40 from the previous year's 23.

Even though the Village saw decreases in violent crimes like robbery, arson and aggravated assault/battery, Tanksley said the department is constantly examining ways to address issues related to the personal impact and public perception created when these types of crimes are committed.

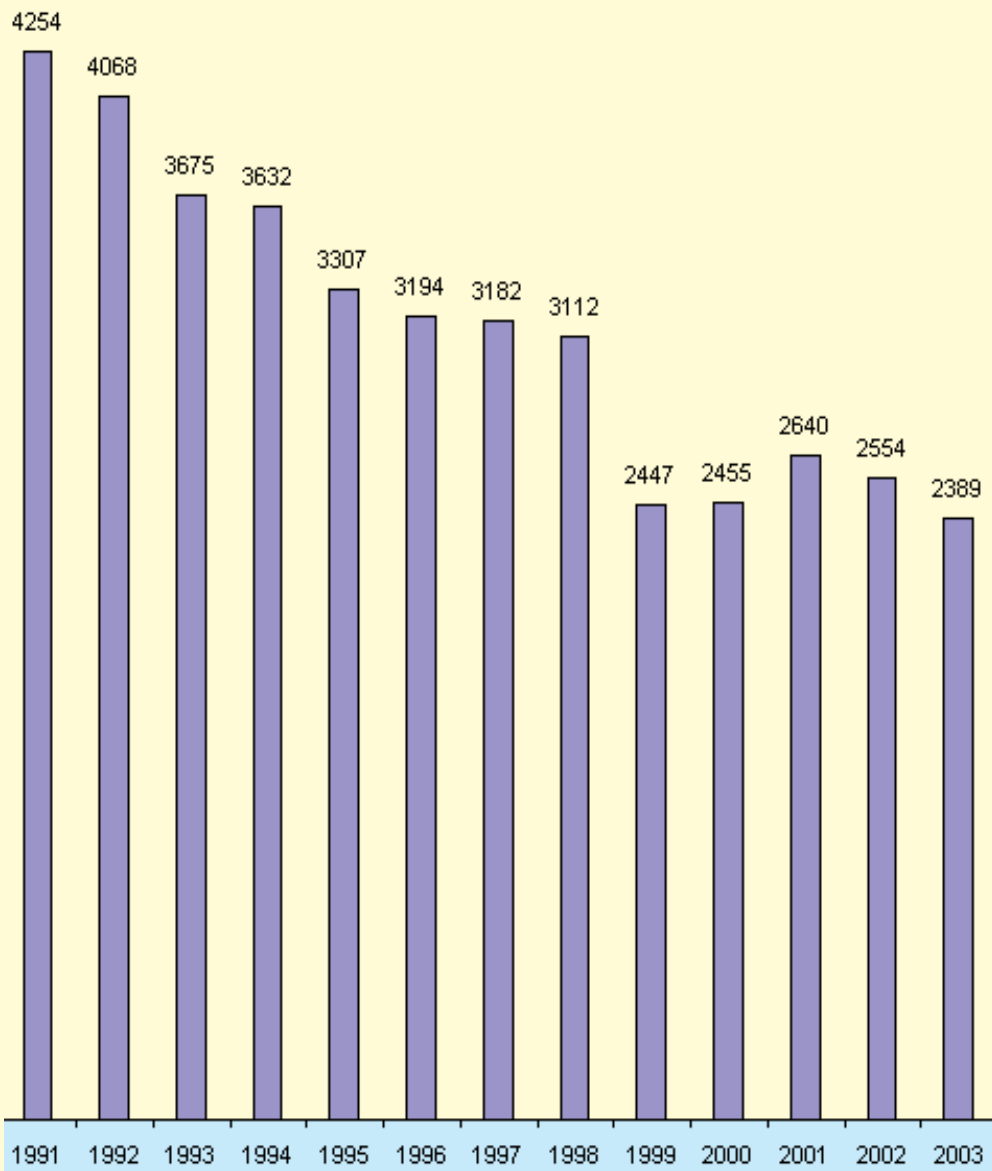
“The affect of a violent crime on a victim can last a lifetime. A single crime of this type also can have a far-reaching impact on a neighborhood. This year we intend to do more in the area of victim follow-up to help address the lingering effects of crimes against persons,” he said.

Tanksley said the Department also will be examining ways to engage young African-American males in meaningful dialogue and activities to keep their lives on a positive track.

“Experience has shown that if we don’t build bridges with this particularly high-risk population, they may eventually come into contact with the criminal justice system. We believe that more positive interaction with law enforcement officials at a younger age may help to better direct their energies in less destructive directions.”

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# Crime Index 1992-2003



## 2003 REPORTABLE CRIMES

MURDER	2
CRIMINAL SEXUAL ASSAULT	9
ROBBERY	174
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT/BATTERY	22
BURGLARY	501
THEFT	1509
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	169
ARSON	3
TOTALS	2389

### PART ONE OFFENSE ARRESTS

MURDER	1
CRIMINAL SEXUAL ASSAULT	7
ROBBERY	99
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT/BATTERY	30
BURGLARY	64
THEFT	320
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	16
ARSON	0
TOTALS	537

### DRUG ARRESTS

VIOL. OF THE CANNABIS ACT	56
VIOL. OF THE DRUG PARA. ACT	44
VIOL. OF CONTROLLED SUBST.	39
VIOL. OF THE HYPO. ACT	17
TOTALS	156

## Crime Index

Year	Total Crimes
1981	2242
1982	3402
1983	4250
1984	3902
1985	4044
1986	4190
1987	4157
1988	4258
1989	4055
1990	3424
1991	4254
1992	4068
1993	3675
1994	3632
1995	3307
1996	3194
1997	3182
1998	3112
1999	2447
2000	2455
2001	2640
2002	2554
2003	2389