



For Immediate Release: 02.04.05

From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: Rick Tanksley
Chief of Police
708.358.5502

Increase in Thefts Nudge 2004 Crime Stats Up

An increase in thefts primarily from motor vehicles and garages pushed Oak Park's 2004 crime statistics up slightly over 2003, but the number of incidents remained low overall and far below peak levels in the 1980s and early 1990s.

"Oak Park consistently enjoys a relatively low crime rate – especially in terms of violent crimes," said Police Chief Rick C. Tanksley. "Our area of vulnerability continues to be thefts from vehicles and garages. All it takes to send our statistics up is one determined offender walking the alleys for a couple of days looking for an opportunity to commit a crime."

Preliminary crime statistics for 2004 reported 2,664 incidents, up some 275 incidents over 2003. More than 85 percent of the crimes committed in Oak Park last year were thefts and burglaries, most of which were related to automobiles and garages, including stolen bicycles, a long-standing issue in the Village. A new crime of stealing state vehicle license plate stickers alone added 60 incidents to theft total.

"The many Oak Park citizens who are quick to call and report suspicious people and activities deserve a tremendous amount of credit for keeping our crime rate as low as it is," said Village Manager Carl Swenson. "We are right next door to the nation's third largest city and most certainly feel that impact. A spirit of cooperation between police and citizens is what keeps our community so safe and secure."

Added Chief Tanksley, "When it comes to the crimes of opportunity that make up the majority of our community's crime statistics, personal vigilance is the best defense. With that I mean individuals making sure their garages and vehicles are locked, their valuables are secure and out of sight, and notifying police immediately of any suspicious activity. Foiling one or two would-be thieves a year would significantly lower our crime rate."

Despite the statistical increase in the overall rate, the 2004 crime statistics contain some very good news, according to Tanksley. Robberies are down nearly 15 percent, drug arrests are up nearly 20 percent and incidents of individuals caught with drug paraphernalia are up more than 22 percent.

-more-

2-2-2
2004 Crime Statistics

Robberies fell from 2003's 174 incidents to 148 in 2004. Drug arrests grew to 170 in 2004, up 156 arrests over the previous year. About 40 percent of the drug arrests were for cannabis.

Oak Park reported an increase in incidents of criminal sexual assault and aggravated assault/battery, crimes police say occurred most often among parties who know each other. Sixteen criminal sexual assaults were reported in 2004, compared to nine the previous year. Thirty-seven aggravated assault/battery incidents were reported in 2004, compared to 22 in 2003. Oak Park experienced one murder last year, a suspected gang-related shooting that began in Chicago, but ended in the Village.

"Violent crime is low for a community of our size and proximity to a major city," Tanksley said. "But for the victims, comparing statistics is not much consolation. That's why preventing violent crime and addressing the perception of safety will always be among the top priorities of this police department."

In the year ahead he said the department will step up its public education programs through the Community Policing Unit, and initiate plans to increase officer visibility.

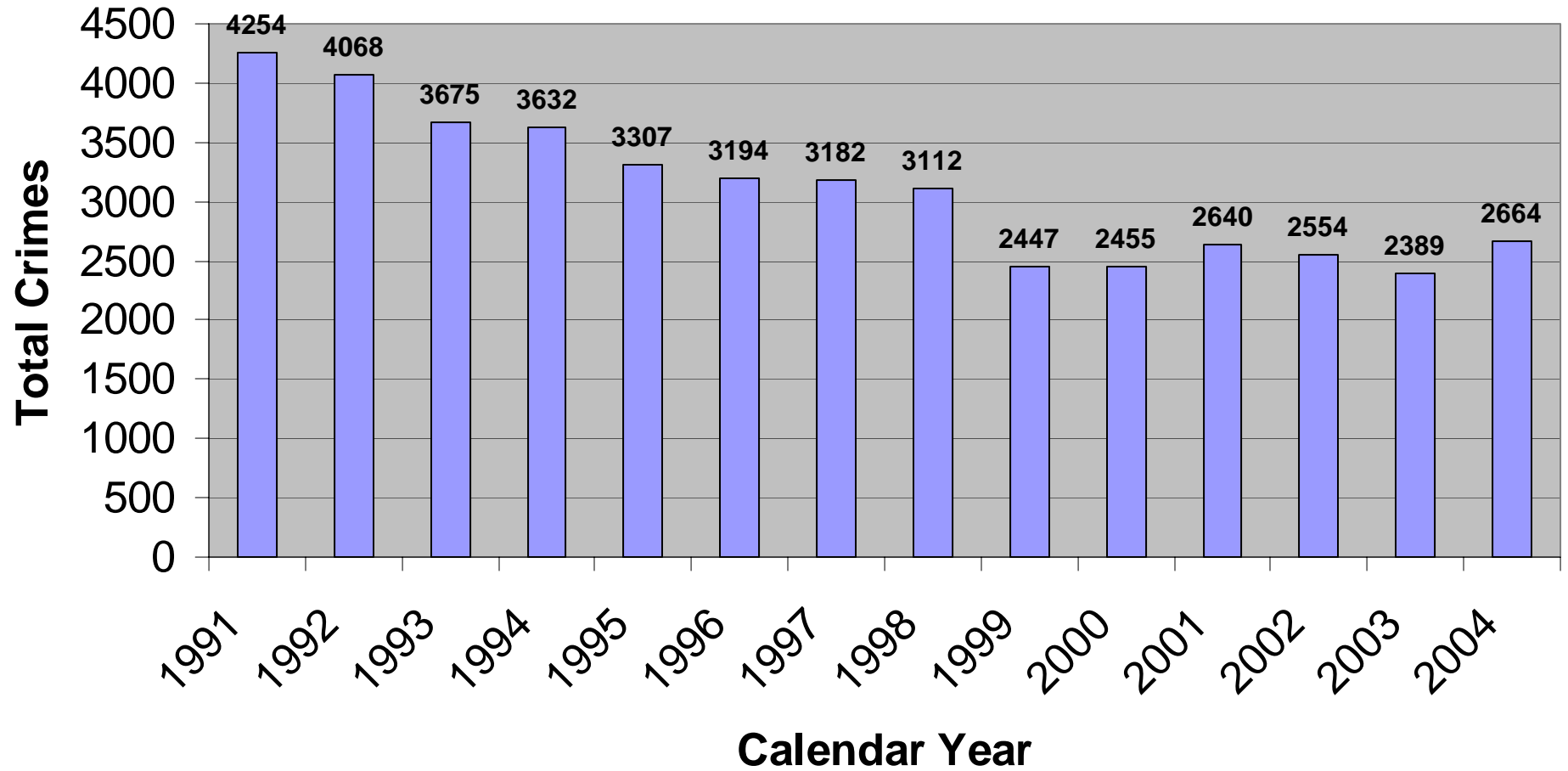
"We intend to intensify our efforts to get out into the community and talk about crime prevention at the neighborhood level," Tanksley said. "We also expect to more aggressively use the Village's public information tools to give residents tips they can use to help us keep thieves out of our garages and cars.

"The Oak Park Police Department sincerely appreciates the efforts of the citizens in working with us to keep our community a wonderful place to live and work. By continuing to work hand-in-hand, together we can have a very real positive impact on reducing the type of non-violent crime that dominates Oak Park's annual statistics."

For more information on crime prevention and programs, call the Police Department's non-emergency number, 708.386.3800 or email police@oak-park.us. Information also is posted on the Village website www.oak-park.us – mouse-over the Department tab, then click on Police.

###

Crime Index - 1991 - 2004



Illinois Uniform Crime Report Comparison

Total Crimes Committed

	2003	2004
Murder	2	1
Criminal Sexual Assault	9	16
Robbery	174	148
Aggravated Assault Battery	22	37
Burglary	501	525
Theft	1509	1765
Motor Vehicle Theft	169	167
Arson	3	5
	<hr/> 2389	<hr/> 2664

Total Arrests Made

Murder	1	0
Criminal Sexual Assault	7	3
Robbery	99	54
Aggravated Assault Battery	30	22
Burglary	64	99
Theft	320	233
Motor Vehicle Theft	16	17
Arson	0	3
	<hr/> 537	<hr/> 431

Drug Arrests

Cannabis	56	67
Paraphernalia	40	49
Controlled Substance	43	44
Hypodermic	17	10
	<hr/> 156	<hr/> 170

Theft Comparison

	2003	2004
Theft from Motor Vehicle	40	84
Theft of vehicle Parts & Accs.	84	47
Burglary Vehicle Parts & Accs.	30	17
State License Plates	0	56
State License Sticker	0	60
Burglary from Motor Vehicle	248	380
Theft over \$300	226	245
Bicycle Theft	27	212
Theft under \$300	552	457
Retail Theft	268	201
Delivery Container Theft	22	0
Pick Pocketing	0	2
Purse Snatchings	5	3
Theft from Building	1	0
Theft from Coin-Op Machines	6	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1509	1765