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Overall Crime Rate Dramatically Declines in 2005

Decreases in nearly every category of crime tracked by Oak Park Police helped give 2005 the lowest crime rate in at least the past 24 years, an overall decline officials credit to growing citizen involvement and cooperation with police.

Total crime in the Village declined more than 26 percent in 2005 as thefts and burglaries – historically the most prominent of local crime – each registered significant declines of 17 percent and 34 percent respectively from 2004. These two crimes alone accounted for 80 percent of the 1,970 crimes committed in Oak Park in 2005.

"These statistics are a true testament to the continued cooperation of citizens and the Police Department," said Oak Park Police Chief Rick C. Tanksley. "Residents willingness to pick up the telephone and call when they see suspicious activity often means we are stopping a crime and catching a criminal, rather than investigating an incident."

Tanksley also cited residents growing attention to fundamental crime-prevention details like closing garage doors, not leaving items in plain view in vehicles and keeping their outside areas well lighted as key factors in reducing the crimes of opportunity that dominate the Village's crime reports.

Village Manager Carl Swenson praised the Police Department's visibility in the community and success in reaching out to residents at the neighborhood level through the Community Policing Program.

"The decline in property crimes reflects well on the Police Department's public education efforts," Swenson said. "By helping residents better understand how their actions can reduce crime, the police have created a partnership with the community that is reflected in the crime rate."

With a decline in the crime rate for 2005 over 2004 came a decline in arrests as well. Overall arrests were down about 34 percent, except for drug-related arrests, which were up about 8 percent mostly for possession of paraphernalia.

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2005 Crime Rate Down
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The only increases in crime in 2005 were for aggravated assault and battery – up about 20 cases – and arson, up three incidents over the 2004. The 58 assault and battery cases reported in 2005 were mostly domestic cases and juvenile disturbances, police say, and arrests were up in this category as the victims tended to know their assailants. The eight arson cases investigated in 2005 included dumpster fires likely set as pranks.

While the decline in the numbers at the bottom line of the crime statistics is significant, Tanksley said overcoming the perception of crime remains difficult in a community next door to the nation's third largest city. The one murder committed in Oak Park in 2005, for example, was so violent and beyond reason that its effect was felt well beyond the neighborhood where the crime occurred.

"Statistics are valuable as a resource management tool, but they are just numbers. Each number represents a person who has suffered a loss. And whether the overall rate is up or down doesn't mean a lot to a victim of a crime," the Chief said. "In the year ahead my officers, command staff and I will be working hard to help residents feel safe by providing them the information they need to be full partners in our crime prevention efforts."

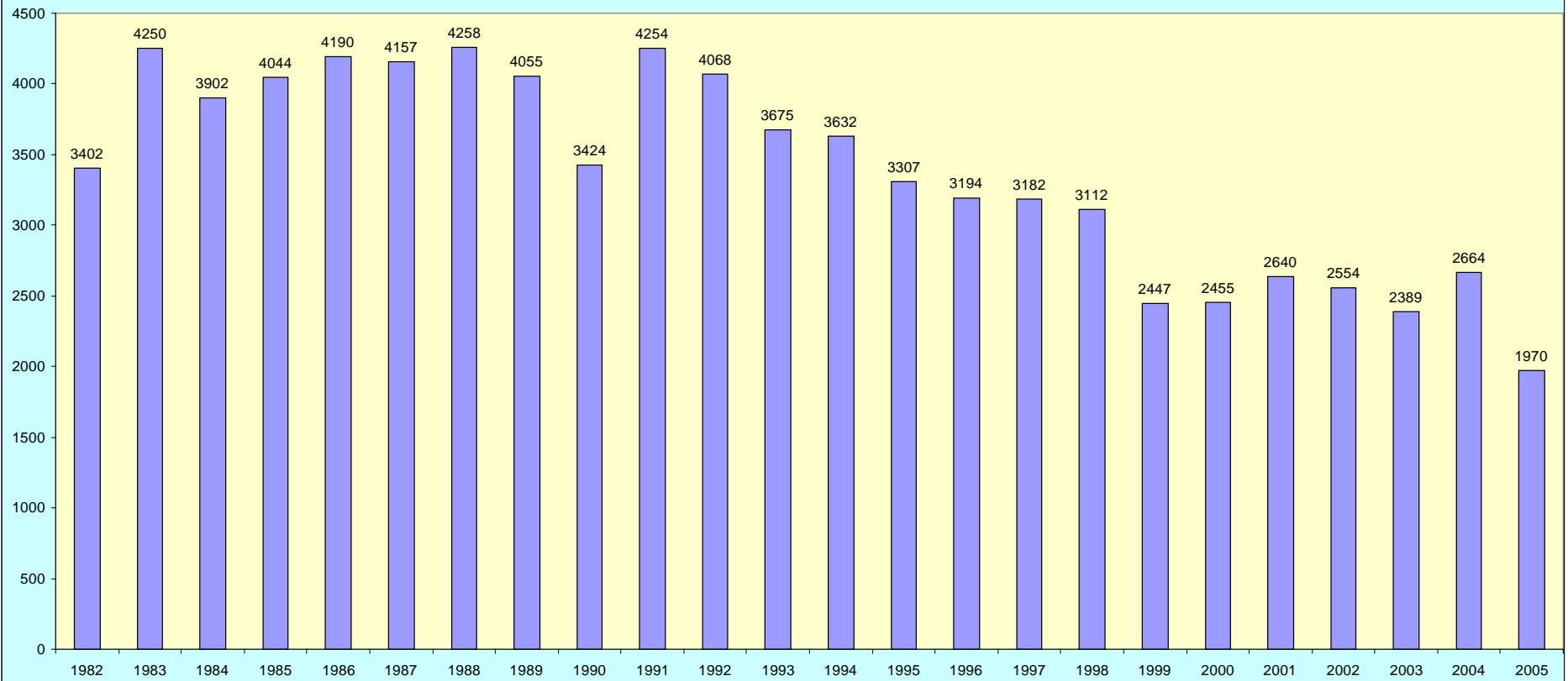
Community outreach efforts will continue to include special bulletins distributed door-to-door when events warrant, public service announcements on the Village's cable television station, VOP-TV6, and regular neighborhood meetings hosted by the Resident Beat Officers.

"Maintaining the cooperative spirit that exists between residents and the police is among the highest of department priorities," Tanksley said. "Residents and police are partners when it comes to preventing crime. The partnership in Oak Park is strong and we intend to keep it that way."

For more information on the Police Department and crime prevention, call 386.3800, email police@oak-park.us or visit www.oak-park.us.

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Crime Index 1982 - 2005



ILLINOIS UNIFORM CRIME REPORT COMPARISON * Year to Date

	Dec-04	Dec-05	% CHANGE
PART ONE OFFENSE			
MURDER	1	1	0.00%
CRIMINAL SEXUAL ASSAULT	16	11	-31.25%
ROBBERY	148	130	-12.16%
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT/BATTERY	37	58	56.76%
BURGLARY	525	437	-16.76%
THEFT	1765	1160	-34.28%
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	167	165	-1.20%
ARSON	5	8	60.00%
TOTAL # OF PART ONE CRIMES	2664	1970	-26.05%
PART ONE OFFENSE ARRESTS			
MURDER	0	0	0.00%
CRIMINAL SEXUAL ASSAULT	3	5	66.67%
ROBBERY	54	40	-25.93%
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT/BATTERY	22	74	236.36%
BURGLARY	99	32	-67.68%
THEFT	233	125	-46.35%
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	17	8	-52.94%
ARSON	3	1	-66.67%
TOTAL # OF PART ONE ARRESTS	431	285	-33.87%
DRUG ARRESTS			
VIOL. OF THE CANNABIS ACT	67	57	-14.93%
VIOL. OF CONTROLLED SUBST.	49	71	44.90%
VIOL. OF HYPODERMIC SYRINGES/NEEDLES ACT	44	10	-77.27%
VIOL. OF THE PARAPHERNALIA ACT	10	46	360.00%
TOTAL # OF DRUG ARRESTS	170	184	8.24%
CALLS FOR SERVICE			
	49547	45959	-7.24%