

The Riverdale Park *Town Crier*

June 2005

Volume 34, Issue 5

Important Dates

Offices Closed

Memorial Day, May 30

Townwide Yard Sale

Monday, May 30, Memorial Day
10 AM to 5 PM

Special Trash Days

Tuesday, May 31, Spring Cleanup
Areas A & B, Regular & Bulk
No Yard Waste
Free Landfill Day

Wednesday, June 1, Yard Waste
Areas A & B

Work Sessions

Town Hall, 8:00 PM
Tuesday, May 31
Monday, June 27

Offices Closed

Monday, July 4
Holiday Trash Schedule
Area A, Tuesday
Area B, Wednesday

Legislative Meetings

Town Hall, 8:00 PM
Monday, June 6
Tuesday, July 5

Police Special

BY ROB OPPENHEIM

In honor of National Police Week (May 15), we take an in-depth look at our Police Department performance, reviewing crime patterns and police staffing over the past 5 years (page 5). We examine the distribution of crime across the wards and take a very quick look at how our crime problems compare with those of neighboring jurisdictions. It turns out that we look good—a strong indication that we have a terrific Police Department. Thanks to Lieutenant Patrick Timmons and Ward 3 Council Member David Hiles for compiling statistics for that report. Page 4 has a profile of Riverdale Park's Police Officer of the Year, Detective Sergeant Patrick Vitchock.

Riverdaliens to Our Police: *Thank You*

We extend a well-deserved "thank you" to the Riverdale Park Police for doing a tough job well. They risk their lives to preserve and protect us and our property. They, perhaps more than anyone else, safeguard our town from a potential downhill slide into violence and crime.

You can express your appreciation with a word of thanks. Send a thank you note or card to Riverdale Park Police, 5004 Queensbury Road, Riverdale Park, MD 20737. You can do it in person too. The next time you see an officer, just say thanks for doing your job and nod goodbye. No need to drag it out. It will mean a lot to them.

It's a Matter of Respect

Riverdale Park has friendly, approachable, and professional officers. But their job runs a wide range: They may go from fighting a guy on PCP to talking to an everyday citizen. You may encounter an officer still feeling the stress of his last call or an officer whose style is just a bit formal, somewhat military. This formal tone can seem awkward, as though one is being singled out or under suspicion. Not so. A police officer's formality is a way to be professional and to treat everyone with equality and respect. When I remember that, it helps put me at ease.

I try to return the gesture by saying "Officer," "Sergeant," or "Detective," instead of using a first name. I also keep a little extra distance between the officer and me, because their need for personal space is larger than mine. Police officers are trained—for our benefit—to be wary. So let them be, and don't take it personally.

Lynda Sandoval (<http://www.lyndalynda.com>) is a former police officer who writes about the nature of police officers. She says officers are often on alert, scanning their surroundings looking for danger. The result can be less eye contact during a conversation, which can be misinterpreted as antipathy or disinterest.

If you find yourself uncomfortable with an officer's formal style, remember that the officer is paying you respect. Take a step back and cloak yourself in similar formality. The officer will recognize the respect you are offering.

Chief Parker wants his officers to be approachable, and he encourages you to call or talk to them whenever you have the need. "Especially let us know about any suspicious activity that you see. It is never a bother to us." Call 301-927-4343. In an emergency you can dial 911 and ask to be transferred to the Riverdale Police.

To:	Bulk Rate U.S. Postage PAID Riverdale Park, MD
	Carrier Route Presort Every Resident and Business Riverdale Park, Md 20737

Council Actions

BY GUY TIBERIO

Special Legislative Meeting, Monday, April 25, 2005

Mayor and all council members present

1. PY-30 CDBG contract, Jefferson Street, Spring Lane, and 5400 Block 54th Avenue. Approved 6-0
2. Special exception, fence permit, 6000 Rhode Island Avenue. Approved 6-0
3. Cooperation Agreement with Prince George's County for future CDBG projects. Approved 6-0
4. Stop signs, Lafayette Avenue and Oglethorpe Street. Approved 6-0
5. Speed hump, 5900 Block Cleveland Avenue, subject to packaging complete list of request. Approved 6-0
6. Special exception, fence permit, Gepetto Catering, 4503-05 Queensbury Road. Approved 6-0
7. Waiver of bid requirements for Livable Communities, Parks Beautification Project. Approved 6-0
8. Livable Communities, Parks Beautification grant award, payment to Hyattsville Nursery not to exceed \$40,000. Approved 6-0

Legislative Meeting, Monday, May 2, 2005

Mayor and all council members present

1. Received and approved judges' report of election, declared candidates receiving most votes considered elected to office. Approved 6-0

Special Legislative Meeting, Wednesday, May 4, 2005

Mayor and Council Members Toscano, Badders, Kiernan, and Webb present

1. Approved response to WMATA inquiry; no interest in vacant lot at 6300 Block 47th Avenue. Approved 4-0
2. Apron widening and new driveway, 5601 Taylor Road. Approved 4-0
3. Special exception, 6-ft. fence per plan #4 submitted for 5601 Taylor Road. Approved 4-0
4. Increased height of garage opening and roof, 5601 Taylor Road. Approved 4-0
5. Special exception, gate height, 5803 Taylor Road. Approved 4-0
6. Special exception, fence, 4711 Riverdale Road, subject to receipt of county permit. Approved 4-0

Town Crier

The Official Newsletter of the
Town of Riverdale Park, Maryland

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RP.TownCrier@comcast.net
Home: 301-779-1745
Copy Editor: Kate Kelly

Some material contained in the *Town Crier* represents the opinion of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the Town of Riverdale Park.

Town of Riverdale Park

5008 Queensbury Road
Riverdale Park, MD 20737

Mayor Guy Tiberio
Home: 301-864-3545

Council members

Ward 1 Tracey Toscano 301-927-9022
Ward 2 David Hiles 301-779-8620
Ward 3 Ray Badders 301-864-5722
Ward 4 Lawrence Taylor 301-474-6868
Ward 5 Gerard Kiernan 301-277-4554
Ward 6 Kenneth Webb 301-927-6381

Town Office 301-927-6381
e-mail: riverdaleparkmd@comcast.net
Patrick J. Prangley, Town Administrator

Police Department 301-927-4343
E. Thomas Parker, Police Chief

Public Works Department 301-864-1803
James Houser, Public Works Director

Code Enforcement 301-209-1505
Colleen M. Ferguson

Fire Department 301-927-0356
Vincent Harrison, Fire Chief

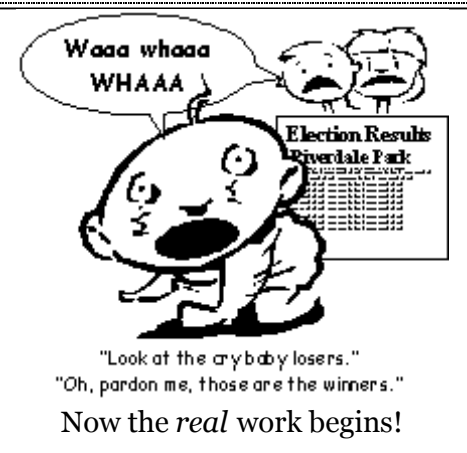
Riverdale Park Web Site

<http://www.ci.riverdale-park.md.us>

Election Results for Riverdale Park for May 2, 2005

BY ROB OPPENHEIM

	Won	Votes	%	Lost	Votes	%
Mayor	Vernon Archer	478	57%	Guy Tiberio	363	43%
Ward 1	Tracey Toscano	243	82%	Jack Jones	54	18%
Ward 2	Mary Donaldson	164	69%	David Hiles	73	31%
Ward 3	Novella Sargusingh	114	59%	Doris Pullman	79	41%
Ward 4	Lawrence Taylor	53	100%	(Uncontested)		
Ward 5	Gerard Kiernan	12	100%	(Uncontested)		
Ward 6	Kenneth Webb	17	100%	(Uncontested)		



Mayor's Report

BY GUY TIBERIO

Thanking the Residents of Riverdale Park

On June 6, I will hand over the gavel to Mayor-Elect Vernon Archer. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the residents and candidates who participated in our election May 2, 2005. Congratulations to the newly elected officials and to the council members who will complete their service in June, in particular Ray Badders (Ward 3), who has served magnificently as the veterans' monument designer and chairperson. Best wishes to him and to his family as they prepare to move from our town. They will be missed. My thanks to David Hiles (Ward 2), who stepped forward to replace Matt Hart. Thank you to Tracey Toscano (Ward 1), who stepped up as well to replace Christina Davis and who now has been elected to the ward seat.

I must also thank our volunteer residents who give so much of their time on various boards and committees: recreation, traffic study, beautification, MUTC, farmers market, tree, and others. Also, a big thank you to our Town Administrator Pat Prangley, to our department heads, and to our staff for their continued devotion to the nearly 7000 residents who call Riverdale Park home.

Most of all, I want to thank you, our residents, for having confidence in me for 9 years as a council member and 14 years as mayor. I was proud to serve and represent each and every one of you.

This community is my home and I feel very strongly about how we move forward in the future. I will no longer serve as mayor, but I will continue to push and promote initiatives that will allow us to seek a brighter future.

Over the past 2 years we have moved in extremely positive ways. We are currently on the verge of some of the greatest economic development in the history of our town: the creation of the M Square project, the expansion of the Eakin/Youngentob Associates (EYA) project from Hyattsville into Riverdale Park, the Priority Places designation of the Kenilworth Avenue corridor, and the potential new development around the railroad crossing. To see these projects to fruition will require the cooperation of elected officials, business people, and residents.

There is still much to do and many challenges ahead. Due to the current fiscal crisis in the state, our town and many others will be facing difficult economic choices, and constant vigilance is required to keep our town on track. I hope our newly elected officials, while finding their own way, will not deviate from the path of growing our town's economy, continued fiscal prudence, and proving to residents that their town is second to none.

This has been a busy 2 years for the town, its government, and the people. I hope it is a sign of many good things to come. Let us work together to make the next 2 years even more productive and responsive to our residents.

Again, thank you all for your support.

Thank You, Mayor Tiberio

BY ROB OPPENHEIM

Thank you for your many years of hard work and for bearing with the occasional difficult citizen who crossed your path. Your expertise and experience are great assets, and we all hope that you will continue to lend them, your ideas, and your goodwill to our town.

The *Town Crier* welcomes the new mayor, Vernon Archer, and looks forward to working with him.

Condolences

The Town of Riverdale Park and the *Town Crier* extend condolences to the family of Walter Lee Donaldson Sr., who died May 17. Lee was well known to residents as Director of Public Works, code enforcement officer, and father of Lee Jr., formerly of the Riverdale Park Police Department. He will be greatly missed.

Wanted: Crier Participants

BY ROB OPPENHEIM

Would you enjoy contributing to the *Town Crier*? You can volunteer as a reporter, photographer, photo editor, organizer, researcher, fact checker, cartoonist, and idea person.

If you are interested, e-mail or call Editor Rob Oppenheim: RP.TownCrier@comcast.net, 301-779-1745.

New Off-Road Law

Prince George's County now requires all off-road vehicles, including miniature scooters and dirt bikes to be registered. Use is limited to 7 AM to 8 PM and is prohibited on public roads and sidewalks. Helmets are required. Registration costs \$30 and is valid for two years. Fines start at \$250. Call 301-731-7990 for information.

Meet Your Police

Detective Sergeant Patrick Vitchock, Officer of the Year

BY ROB OPPENHEIM

Sergeant Vitchock's phone message had the deadpan style of Joe Friday from the 1960's TV show *Dragnet*. As I drove to the police station to interview Sgt. Vitchock, I kept thinking of Sgt. Friday saying, "Just the facts, sir." It worried me. I was looking for a lively human-interest story to balance the mind-numbing article on police statistics. But soon after meeting the detective, my worries vanished, as an engaging and impassioned person—and dedicated cop—emerged.

"Tell me about a chase," I asked. The detective thought for a moment. "I got a lot of satisfaction from a recent apprehension of a carjacking criminal." His smile disappeared as he continued with his story. "An elderly man was sitting in his car outside a local drugstore, waiting for the doors to open. Three men approached and threatened him with a knife, pushed him to the ground, then stole his car. The car's tracking device enabled us to quickly locate it at Prince George's Plaza. Two of the suspects were inside the mall, allegedly shoplifting. The getaway driver was waiting outside."

"When we approached the vehicle, it sped away. We chased the car through Hyattsville until the driver took a turn onto a dead-end street and crashed into a tree." The suspects who had been inside the mall escaped, but the driver is serving a 12-year sentence.

Catching crooks is not always that easy, but Sgt. Vitchock has closed many such cases, including homicide, attempted murder, armed robbery, carjacking, drug distribution, sex offenses, and fraud.

On court days, Sgt. Vitchock wears a suit and tie, but he prefers casual clothes, partly because they help him remain inconspicuous, but also for practical reasons. "We have foot chases all the time. I was recently on a foot chase in dress shirt and shoes. Not fun," he says. "We had five officers on that chase, and three were assaulted by the suspect."

Sgt. Vitchock grew quiet as he talked about the candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, honoring the 153 officers killed in the line of duty in 2004. The event is part of National Police Week. "The memorial wall is very moving. You see the teddy bears and notes left by children about how they miss their fallen hero. Just about every officer I know has been assaulted or injured. ... It's kind of sad. You don't hear much about them." (You can learn more about this beautiful memorial at Judiciary Square in Northwest Washington, D.C., at www.tinyurl.com/djcpj).

Sgt. Vitchock wears many hats. He is the town's lone detective and its information technology officer. When he joined the force 5 years ago, Sgt. Vitchock already had several years of experience. In 2002, he was assigned to the Criminal Investigations Unit; he became the unit's supervisor in 2003. Staffing cuts in 2004 reduced the unit from three detectives to just himself, so he carries a heavy caseload, works long hours, and fills in as needed—sometimes as dispatcher or beat officer. He is on call virtually all day, every day—yet maintains a positive "can do" attitude.

Detective Sergeant Patrick Vitchock was recently named Riverdale Park's Officer of the Year for 2004.

Townwide YARD SALE

**Memorial Day, Monday, May 30, 2005
10 AM–5 PM**

Spring clean your house and yard, then sell your extras, right on your front yard. You can get rid of leftovers at a thrift store or in the special town wide spring clean up trash collection on Tuesday, May 31.

Venta En Los Patios En Toda La Ciudad

El Día de la Recordación, Lunes 30 de Mayo, 2005
de 10:00am - 5:00pm

Limpie su casa y su patio esta primavera y venda sus articulos que no utilice, allí mismo en su patio; algunas.



Examining Police Performance

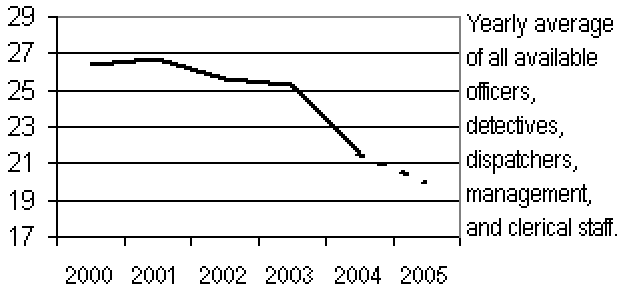
BY ROB OPPENHEIM

Staffing Pressures

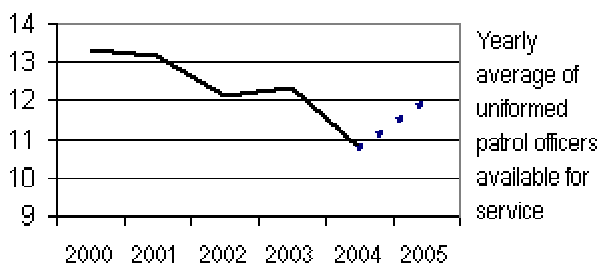
Declining revenues have forced cuts in police staffing of almost 30% over the past few years. The number of detectives dropped from 3 to 1. The complement of patrol officers went from 14 to 10, although currently there are 12, and the department is authorized to hire one more.

Below we look at average staffing for each year. Data for 2005 are not averaged and are shown as a dashed line.

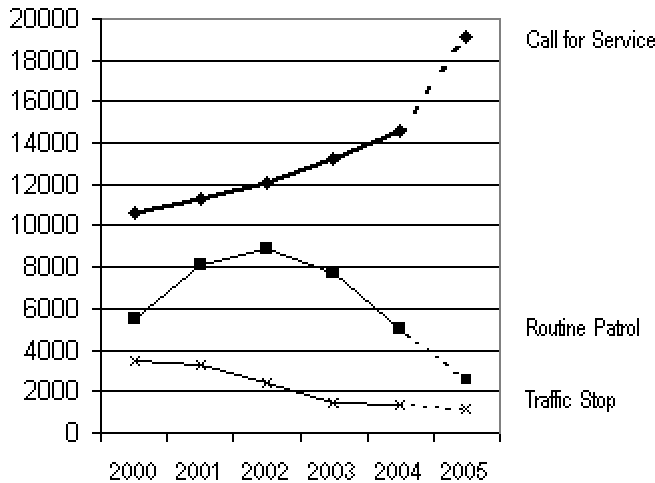
Active Police Staff



Active Patrol Officers

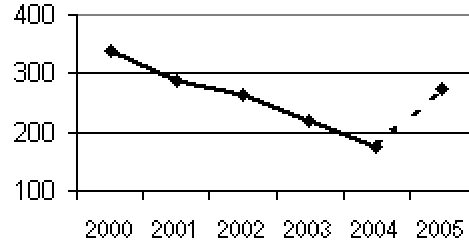


Staff reductions, combined with a huge rise in call volume forced reductions in routine operations. (Year-to-date data are extrapolated to a full year for 2005):



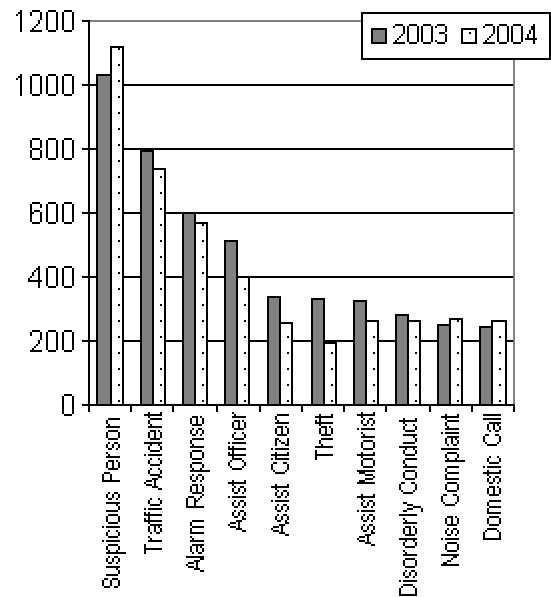
In the following chart, notice how the number of arrests tends to track the number of active patrol officers.

Arrests Down



Police Activity

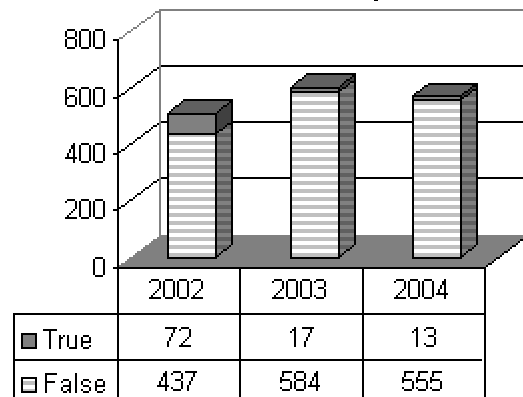
Top 10 Calls for Service



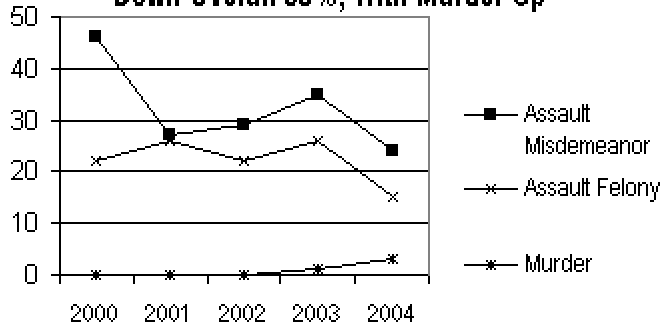
The increase in reports of suspicious persons helps reduce crime by helping police catch people before a crime occurs. If you are suspicious of something—call!

With more than 500 false alarms annually, our police respond to about 1.5 false alarms every day.

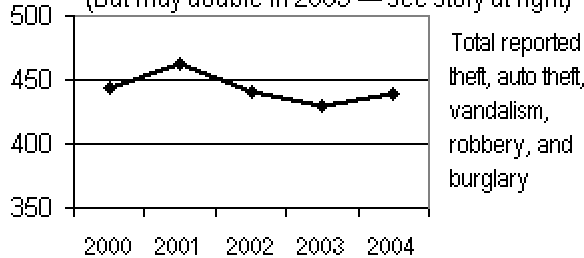
Alarm Response



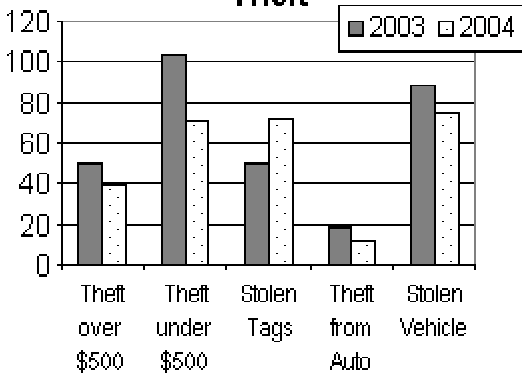
Mixed Trend for Violent Crime Down Overall 38%; With Murder Up



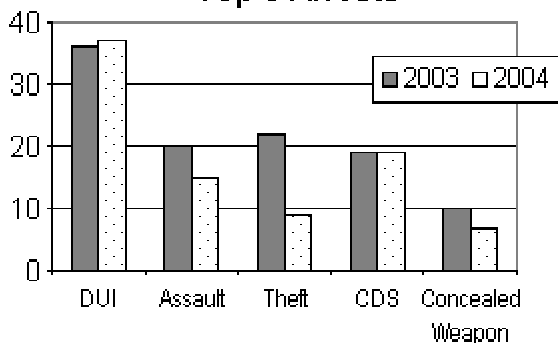
Property Crime Fairly Constant Through 2004 (But may double in 2005 — see story at right)



Theft



Top 5 Arrests



DUI, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
CDS, controlled dangerous substance (drugs)

Comparison to Other Jurisdictions

Disturbing 2005 Trends

The Washington *Post* Metro section reported May 18 (www.tinyurl.com/csbbba) that in Prince George's County "compared with this time last year, homicides are up 57 percent, carjackings are up 42 percent, rapes have increased 25 percent and robberies have more than doubled." Although Riverdale Park's rate of violent crime is unchanged so far in 2005, like the rest of the county, the number of robberies, burglaries, and auto thefts has doubled in the first 4 months of 2005.

Our press deadline did not permit extensive comparison of crime data for Riverdale Park and surrounding jurisdictions, but this table shows we had significantly fewer auto thefts per 1000 population than did our neighbors.

2004 Vehicle Thefts per 1000 population

Riverdale Park	11	Mount Rainier	21
Hyattsville	13	P.G. County	22
Greenbelt	14	Bladensburg	36

Riverdale Park has 15 sworn officers (12 of them patrol officers) and is looking to hire another. That would give us 2.4 officers per 1000 population—slightly below the national average of 2.6 for metropolitan counties but significantly more than Prince George's 1.7 (according to FBI statistics as quoted in the *Post* article).

The Numbers Behind the Charts

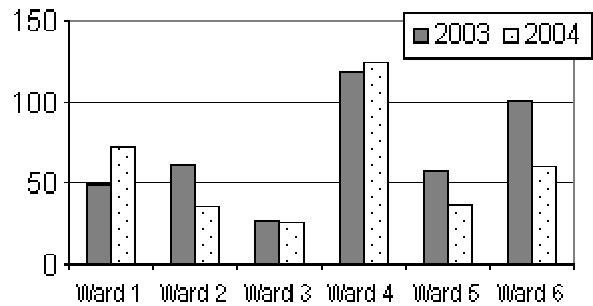
For those who like to see the numbers, here are the Riverdale Park wide statistics.

Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Change 5 years
Call for Service	10602	11257	12088	13238	14632	38%
Routine Patrol	5531	8130	8885	7732	5056	-9%
Alarm Response	675	532	509	601	568	-16%
Field Observation	348	431	674	488	283	-19%
Arrest	340	286	265	220	175	-49%
Traffic Statistics	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
Traffic Stop	3504	3297	2456	1472	1310	-63%
Traffic Citation	2700	2664	2216	1306	1082	-60%
Reported Accident	735	871	740	792	737	0%
Written Accident	294	296	328	359	376	28%
Violent Crime	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
Misdemeanor Assault	46	27	29	35	24	-48%
Felony Assault	22	26	22	26	15	-32%
Murder	0	0	0	1	3	300%
Rape	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total Violent Crime	68	53	51	62	42	-38%
Property Crime	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
Theft Report	245	221	197	172	194	-21%
Stolen Vehicle	58	59	83	89	75	29%
Robbery (All)	23	39	51	64	46	100%
Burglary (All)	39	59	48	45	42	8%
Total Property Crime	365	378	379	370	357	-2%

Staffing	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Change 5 years
Avg. Total Staff	26.3	26.8	25.6	25.3	21.6	-18%
Avg. Patrol Officers	13.3	13.2	12.1	12.3	10.8	-19%
Current Staffing						2005
Total Staff					20	-24%
Patrol Officers					12	-10%
Partial Year	Jan-Apr 2004	Jan-Apr 2005	Change 1 year	Extrapolated 2005		
Call For Service	2922	3821	31%	19134		
Routine Patrol	2213	1161	-48%	2653		
Arrest	42	66	57%	275		
Traffic Stop	438	397	-9%	1187		
Violent Crime	10	10	0%	42		
Property Crime	45	99	120%	785		

Ward 4 (Kenilworth Avenue north), Ward 6 (Kenilworth Avenue south), and Ward 1 along Route 1, experience the most thievery.

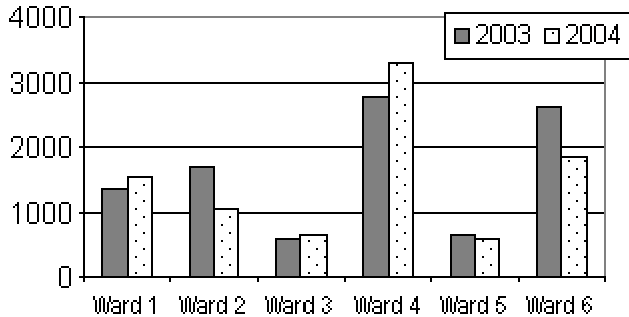
Total Theft, Robbery, Burglary, Auto Theft



Police Work by Ward

Wards 4 and 6, which border Kenilworth Avenue, generate the most calls to the police. To see a map of the wards, visit www.tinyurl.com/c258d

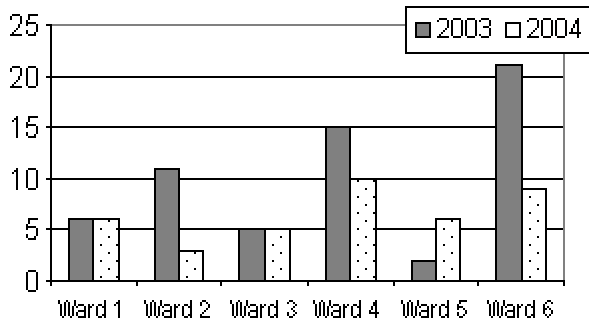
Calls for Service by Ward



Calls for service include everything that officers do including area checks and other activities that are not recorded by ward. Only about 9,000 of the roughly 14,000 calls for service are classified by ward.

Thanks to reductions in the number of assaults in Wards 4 and 6, there was a fairly even distribution across town.

Assaults Down



Ward 5 Report

BY GERARD F. KIERNAN
COUNCIL MEMBER, WARD 5

I want to thank those voters in the ward who came out election day to exercise one of the most important rights that we have as Americans. I have laid out my goals for the coming term. I look forward to working with Mayor Archer and my colleagues to put Riverdale Park back on track to fiscal health.

My phone number is 301-277-4554. If you prefer e-mail, write to me at gerardkiernan@earthlink.net.

New Church Coming to Riverdale Park

BY GERARD F. KIERNAN

Town residents may have seen the notice posted on the empty lot at the corner of Riverdale Road and 54th Avenue announcing a Planning Board hearing June 2. I am trying to convince the owner to attend a council meeting to explain his intentions for that property. Plans show a church building on the corner lot that includes a 750-seat sanctuary and banquet room with seating for 200-300. A parking lot is shown for the currently empty lot on 54th Avenue, across from Riverdale Towers. The plans imply that the church would use the Poretzky lot on Riverdale Road, across from the Bank of America, for overflow parking.

As people in Ward 5 and other areas know, we already have a parking problem on that portion of 54th Avenue. I want to ensure this new neighbor will not aggravate existing traffic problems.

June 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 29	30 Memorial Day Offices closed No trash pickup Ceremony, 8 AM, Veterans' Memorial Town wide Yard Sale	31 Spring Cleanup Regular & bulk trash Areas A & B Work Session Town Hall, 8 PM	June 1 Yard waste Areas A & B	2 Normal trash schedule resumes	3	4
Spring Cleanup Day, Tuesday, May 31						
5	6 Legislative Session Town Hall, 8 PM	7 Traffic Study Town Hall, 7 PM	8	9	10	11
12	13 Boy Scouts Town Hall, 7 PM Recreation Board Town Hall, 7:30 PM	14 Madison Hill Town Hall, 7:30 PM	15	16	17	18
19 Father's Day	20	21 PGHLN Town Hall, 7:30 PM	22 Lions Club Town Hall, 7 PM	23	24	25
26	27 Work Session Town Hall, 8 PM	28	29	30	July 1	2
3	4 Independence Day Offices closed No trash pickup	5 Area A Trash Legislative Session Town Hall, 8 PM	6 Area B Trash	7 Normal trash schedule resumes	8	9

The following recurring events are not shown in the calendar above:

Riversdale Mansion Tours, Sunday and Friday, noon to 4 PM

Soccer, Sunday, 4–6 PM, Field of Dreams

Girl Scouts, Friday, 2:45 PM, Town Hall

Farmer's Market, Thursday, May 1 to Nov. 17, 3–7 PM, Town Center

Normal Trash Schedule

Area A: Monday, regular trash and yard waste; Thursday, regular and heavy trash, metal recycling

Area B: Tuesday, regular trash and yard waste; Friday, regular and heavy trash, metal recycling

County recycling: Wednesday, bottles, cans, newspapers, mixed paper

Public Works Drop-Off: Saturday, 9 AM to 5 PM, heavy trash, motor oil, mixed paper

Special Trash Days, Special Schedule

BY DEBBIE MURPHY



No trash pickup, Monday, May 30

Spring Cleanup Day and Holiday Pickup: Spring Cleanup Day is the one day of the year that Prince George's County waives landfill tipping fees. So the Memorial Day weekend is a perfect time to clean out the closets, basement, and garage. Sell what you can at the town's yard sale, **Monday, May 30**, and take the rest to a thrift store or put it out with your regular trash the next day. Public Works will be closed Monday, May 30.

Tuesday, May 31, the whole town will have a regular and bulk-trash pickup. Do not put out metal, tires, or appliances that contain Freon that day. Hazardous materials, such as paint and antifreeze, **cannot** be collected. Yard waste collection will resume **Wednesday, June 1**. Please do not overfill bags of grass. If they are too heavy for one person to lift, they will not be collected.

Call the Department of Public Works, 301-864-1803, to arrange for **tire pickup**. The charge is \$2.50 per tire (\$2.00 for senior citizens, 60 and older). Old tires can collect water to become breeding grounds for mosquitoes, including the Asian tiger mosquito. It is a violation of the town code to keep tires in your yard.

More information: Call Public Works, 301-864-1803, or look for **trash fees and area maps**, www.tinyurl.com/b28wb and **trash restrictions**, www.tinyurl.com/c7zp2.