

The Big Picture: Tracking Druid Hills Crime

By Gary Tapp

The Druid Hills Civic Association's Public Safety Committee has been tracking crime in Druid Hills on a monthly basis since May 2018. Those statistics provide an opportunity for an objective look at how much crime occurs, what kinds of crimes, and any seasonal patterns.

Our information for DeKalb County comes from **Crime Mapping.com**, which is a private, national database to which DeKalb County feeds data. For Atlanta, we use the Atlanta Police Department's **Open Data Portal**. Both DeKalb and Atlanta also send their reports to the FBI, where they are compiled into the national **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**. Ellen Meshnick, our Neighborhood Watch Coordinator, compiles the reports from these two databases. Gary Tapp maintains the database and does analysis. Doug Rollins is chair of the DHCA Public Safety Committee.

Among the many issues surrounding crime reporting, one of the most puzzling and most important to understand is that surveys by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics suggest that **less than half of all crimes are actually reported** to police. In other words, when people are asked whether they have been the victim of crimes in a certain time period, their responses are much higher than the number of crimes reported to police. (This survey is called the **National Crime Victimization Survey, or NCVS**.) This tendency reinforces the public perception that crime is higher than reported statistics show.

Each month we record the type of crime reported, the street, the date and time of day, and whether the crime occurred in a commercial or apartment complex, in the Emory Village, or on a residential street. For Atlanta, we get the actual street address, and for DeKalb we only receive the block number in which the crime occurred.

Chart 1 shows the overall trend since May 2018, with the top (red) line showing crimes on all 105 streets in Druid Hills, and the bottom (blue) line showing crimes on streets that are primarily single-family residences.

As you can see, except for a large outbreak of car break-ins over one week in November 2022, crime in Druid Hills fluctuates widely, but it has shown a gradually declining trend over the 6.7 years. The average number of crimes per month has fallen from about 29 in the 2018-2019 period to about 25 in December 2024.

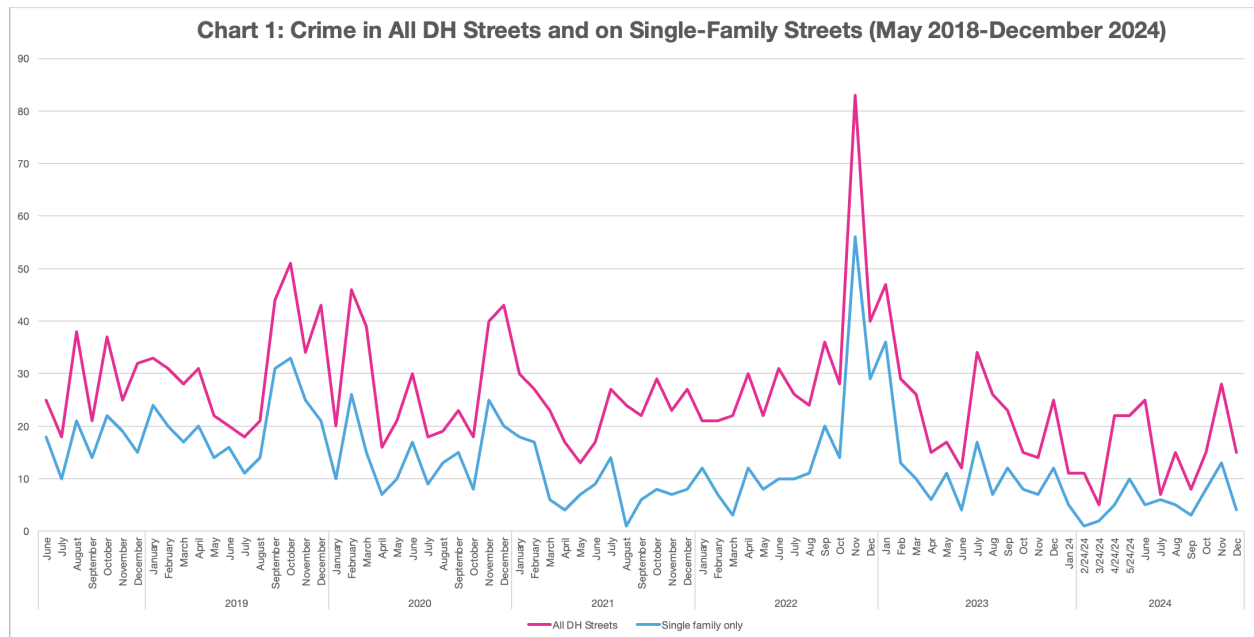


Chart 1 shows fairly clear seasonal patterns. The October-January period tends to see higher crime numbers, and summers tend to see the lowest. For example, highs for the year occurred in October in 2018 and 2019, in January in 2021 and 2023, in November in 2022 and 2024, and in February in 2020. Lows for the year occurred in July in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Lows were also recorded in May in 2021, June in 2023, and March in 2024.

We can only speculate about what factors underlie these patterns. Keeping in mind that most DH crime is auto-related, it could be that in

summer fewer cars are on our streets: schools are out, residents are away, fewer cars in parking lots, etc.

Table 1 provides a detailed summary of types of crimes reported in Druid Hills, with violent crimes in the first section and property crimes below that. Note that the 2018 data only include May-December of that year. Also note that we can only capture crimes that are reported to the

TABLE 1: Annual Summary							
VIOLENT							
Year	Murder	Robbery	Simple Assault	Agg Assault	Rape	All violent	
2018	0	0	12	0	0	12	
2019	0	2	21	1	0	24	
2020	0	3	24	4	1	32	
2021	0	3	34	2	2	41	
2022	0	1	19	5	2	27	
2023	0	1	27	3	4	35	
2024	0	2	40	3	0	45	
TOTALS	0	12	177	18	9	216	
PROPERTY							
	Residential Burglaries	Larceny/theft	Auto Theft	Other*	All property	All Crimes	
2018	5	157	12	40	214	226	
2019	13	291	14	34	352	376	
2020	8	225	20	48	301	333	
2021	8	167	18	44	237	278	
2022	4	289	18	47	358	385	
2023	9	176	12	53	250	285	
2024	10	60	8	62	137	182	
TOTALS	57	1365	102	328	1849	2065	
2018 data is May-December				*Includes Scams Swindles, DUI, Vandalism			

police by the public. Over the entire period, only 10% of all crimes were violent crimes, of which 82% were simple assaults.

Property Crimes

About 90% of all crimes in Druid Hills are property crimes (Chart 2), and, as Chart 3 shows, until midway through 2023 about 80% of all crimes were auto-related larcenies (primarily auto-break-ins). Other property crimes include damage to property, vandalism, shoplifting, theft of landscaping tools, and a rapidly increasing collection of scams and swindles.

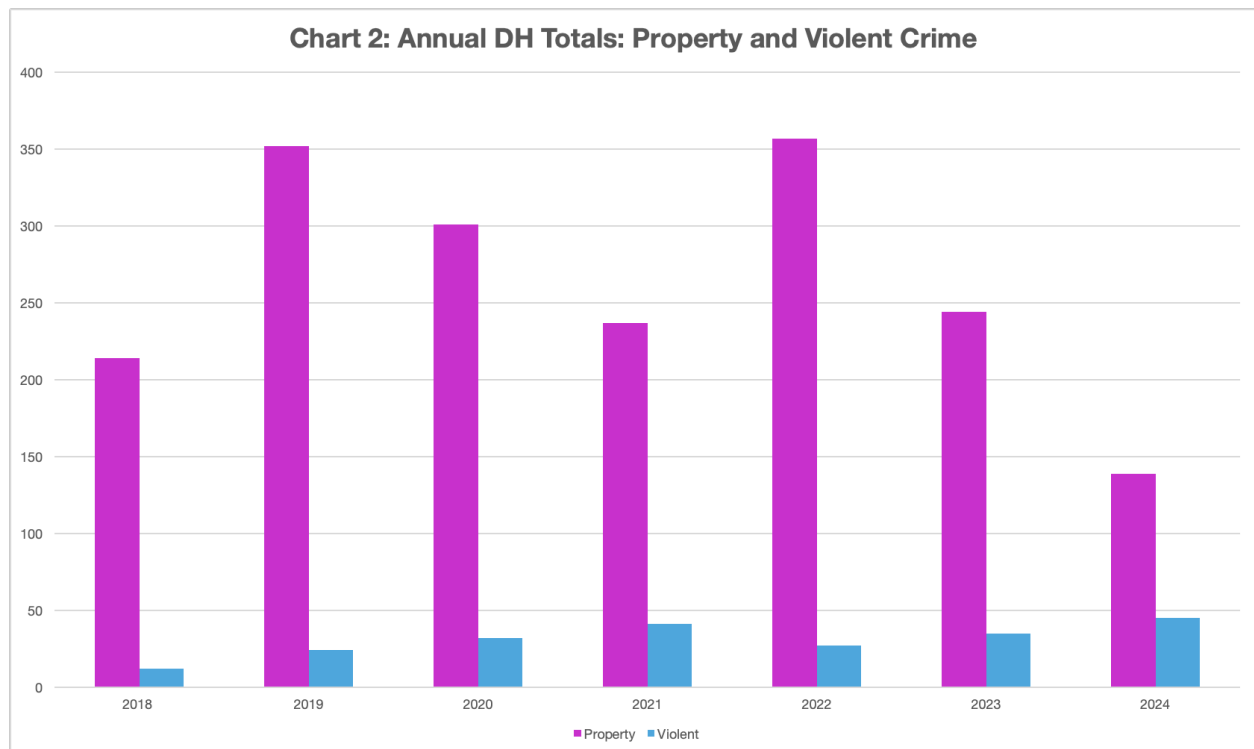
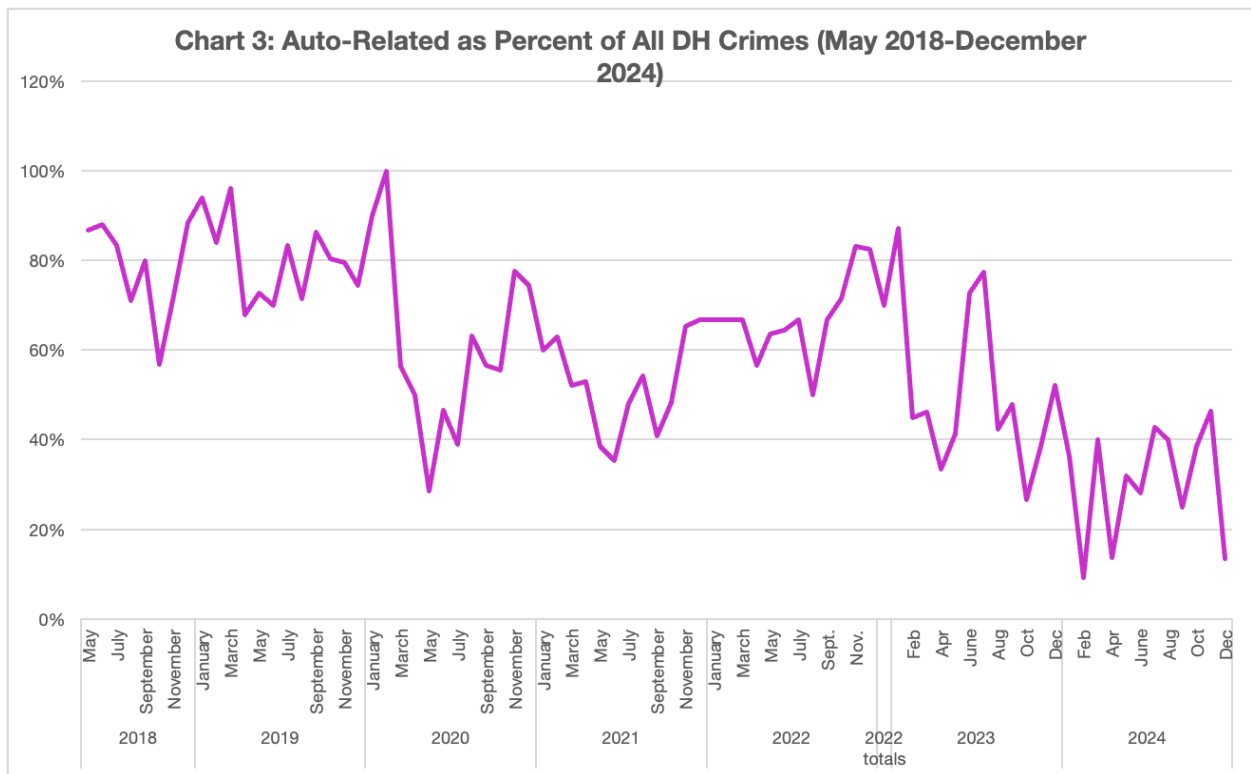
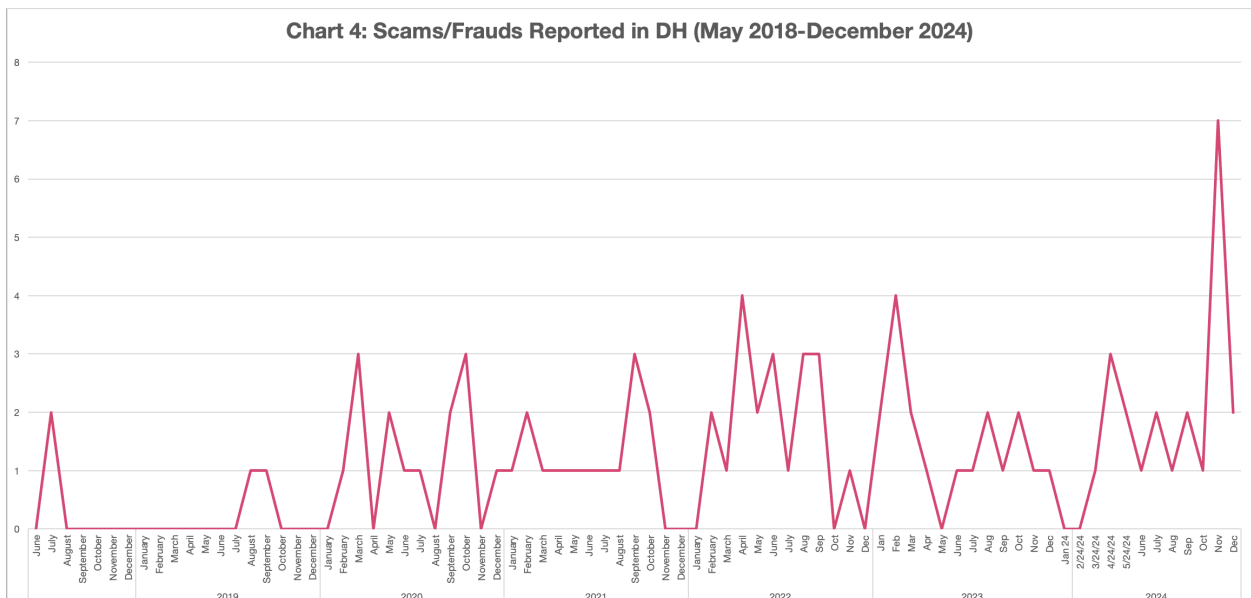


Chart 3 includes both auto-break-ins and stolen cars, although DH averages only about 15 stolen cars per year, or just over one per month. In fact, the last two years have seen the lowest number of auto thefts in DH since we began our tracking (see Table 1). Note that Chart 3 shows the percentage of all DH crime that is auto-related, and that between May 2018 and January 2023 that percentage sent most of the time between 70% and 100%. But since February 2023 we have had only three months when that percentage has been higher than 50%.

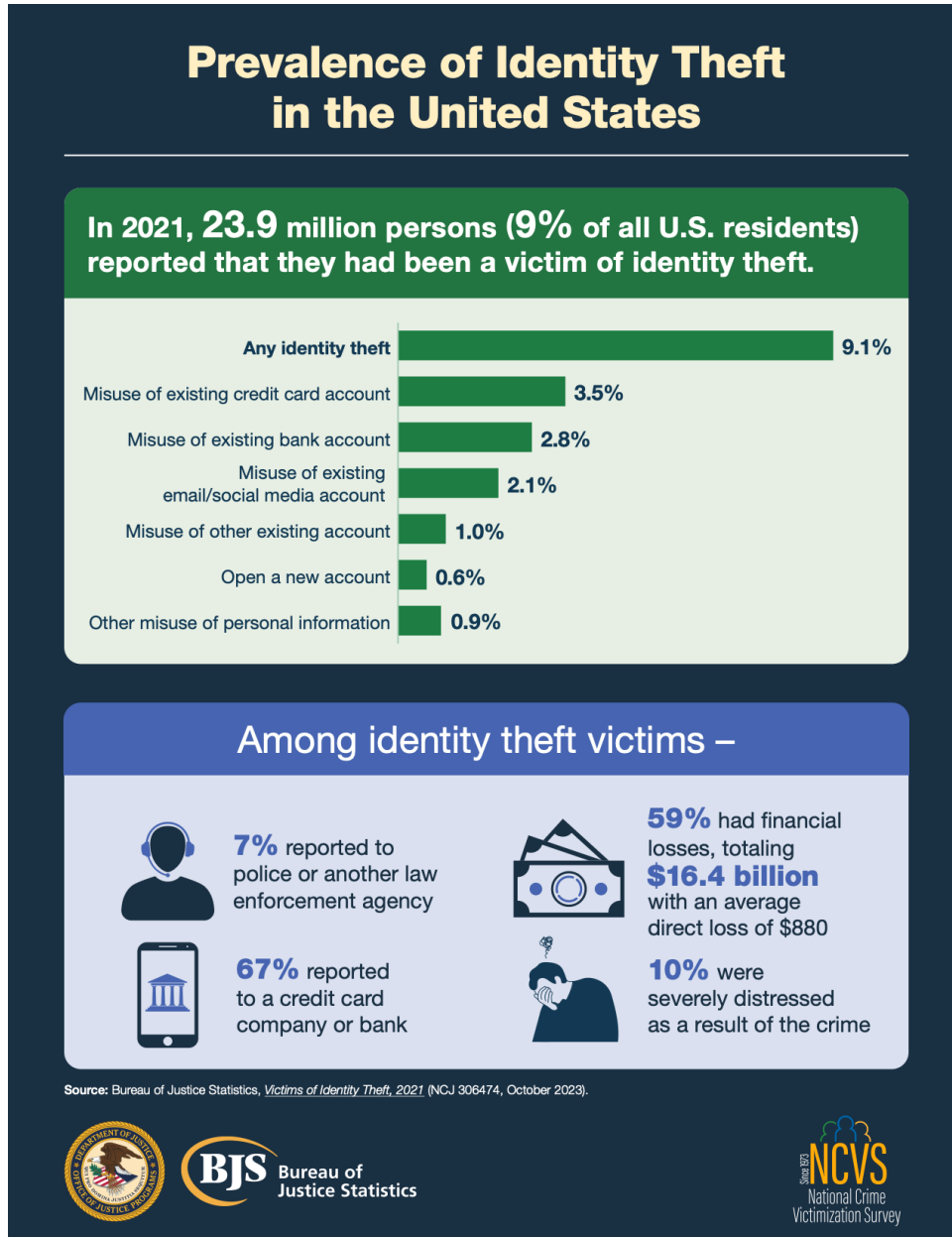


Again, we don't have hard evidence that might explain this decline. Some possible factors that have been suggested include: 1) crime has been declining nationwide for the last few years, 2) Atlanta police say they have been able to put more juvenile offenders behind bars, 3) DeKalb police say they have been able to have more police cars on patrol, 4) DHCA, Neighborhood Watch, Emory Village Alliance, and other civic groups have been relentlessly urging people to never leave items visible in cars, and 5) our neighborhood has seen a sharp increase in the use of surveillance cameras on homes and driveways.

Another trend worth mentioning is the sharp increase in reported scams/frauds/swindles shown in Chart 4. It's important to be aware of the various types of scams and to be skeptical of calls and e-mails that might be suspicious. Scams currently fall into the "Other" category in Table 1, which also includes things like vandalism, property damage, shoplifting, public drunkenness, and DUI.



We also include below a graphic from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics describing the prevalence of identity theft in 2021.



Violent Crimes

As Chart 2 above shows, the incidence of violent crime in Druid Hills is so low that we can almost list them all individually. For **robberies**, for example, (taking property from a person or persons by force or threats of force) we have had only 12 in Druid Hills in the 6.7 years of tracking, or about 1.8 per year. They included a landscaping truck on Oxford, Jimmy John's in the Village, a domestic robbery (ex-husband) in the Sage Hill parking lot, and two street robberies (Emory Village, and East Lake Dr.). Only one robbery appears to have occurred on a single-family street (Beech Valley Rd.).

No **murders** were reported in our tracking period in Druid Hills.

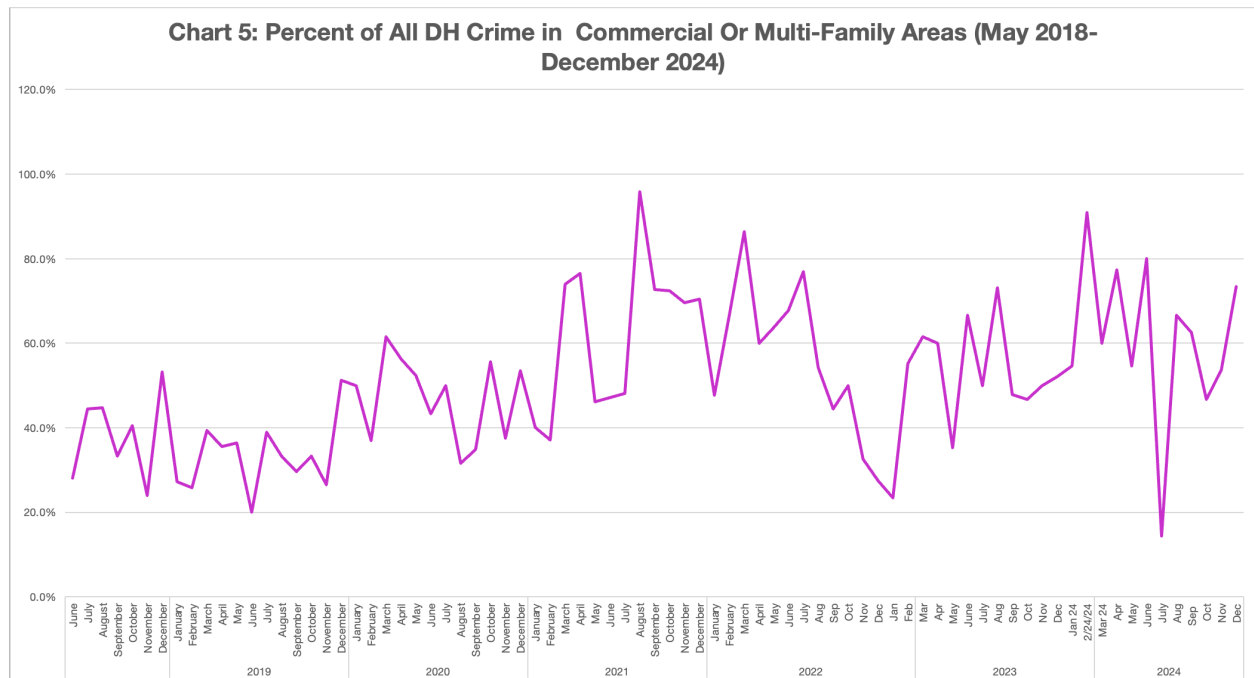
Only 9 **rapes or sexual assaults** were reported during the tracking period, again about 1.3 per year. Five of those were reported at Laurel Heights Mental Health Hospital on Briarcliff, one was a domestic assault at Emory Hospital, one occurred in the 700 block of Houston Mill Rd, one in the apartments at 1300 Briarcliff, and in one the victim reported to Emory Hospital but the rape occurred outside of Druid Hills.

The FBI defines **aggravated assault** as an unlawful attack with the intent to inflict serious harm. Pointing or firing a weapon can be put into this category. Only 18 aggravated assaults were reported in the 6.7 years we tracked, or about 2.7 per year. Two of those were road rage incidents where a gun was pointed, two were at Laurel Heights, four were in the Emory Hospital or its parking decks, one was in Emory Village, and most of the rest were domestic incidents in apartment areas. Only two appear to be in single-family home streets (Vickers Drive and Fairview Rd).

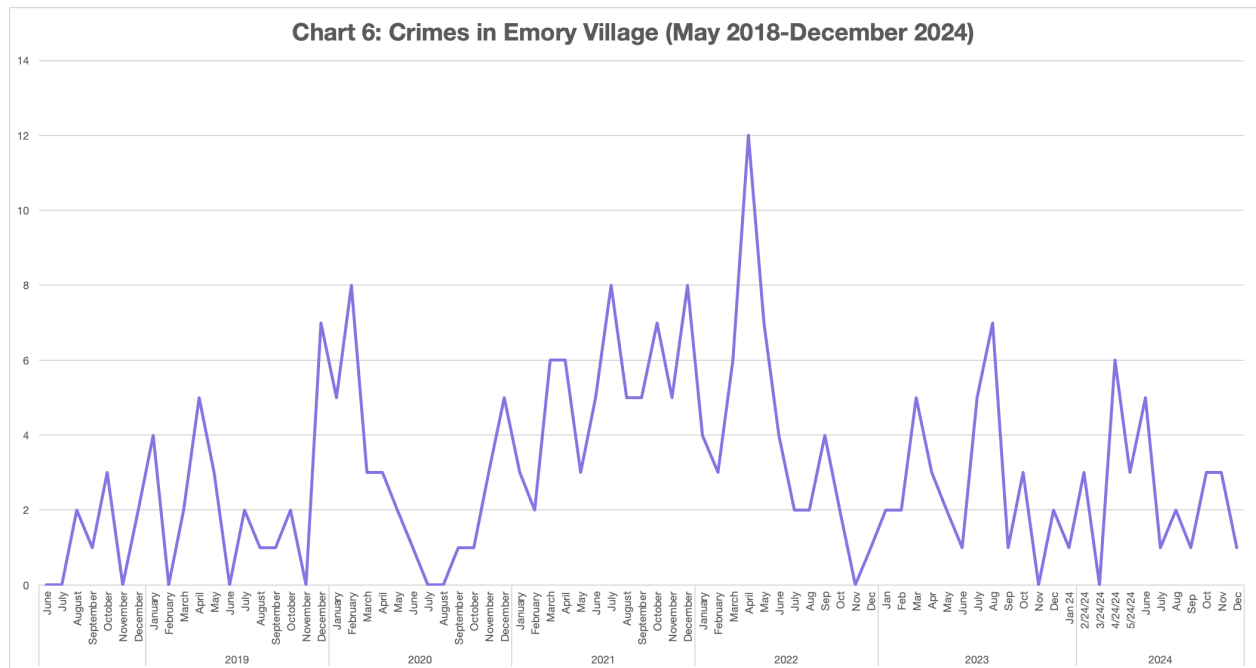
The remainder of the violent crimes (177, or about 26 per year) were **simple assaults**, which can include a punch, a shove, throwing something, spitting, unwanted touching, or making threats. About 72% of those cases occurred in institutional or commercial areas, including the two health facilities on Briarcliff (Laurel Heights and Pruitt Health), Emory Hospital or its parking decks, and Emory Village. Only about 14% of the simple assaults occurred on single-family streets. The remainder of cases occurred in apartment complexes.

Crime Locations:

Chart 5 shows that the **percentage of DH crimes occurring in commercial or multi-family housing complexes has been generally increasing**. The long-term average for those areas stands at 48% of all DH crimes, but in the last two years we have seen eleven months with 60% or more of all DH crimes, and even more of the simple assaults, occurring in those areas. In addition to the three health facilities mentioned above and Emory Village, these include apartment and condo complexes along Rock Springs Rd, Briarcliff Rd, and Ponce de Leon, and Sage Hill Shopping Center. Note that the Emory Commons shopping center, the McDonalds/Chevron, and the FedEx Strip Center are not included in Druid Hills.



Crime in **Emory Village**, like the overall crime rate in Druid Hills, has fluctuated widely, from a low of zero in some months to a high of 12 in April 2022. For the entire tracking period, Emory Village has averaged 3.2 crimes per month. The vast majority of those are car break-ins, with a few simple assaults, shopliftings, and an occasional business burglary. In the last two years, EV has averaged 2.5 crimes per month, slightly below its long-term average of 3.2 per month.



Finally, it's worth breaking out **the trend for crime on single-family streets**, which is also shown in Chart 1, but here in Chart 7 it is isolated for emphasis. The decline in the past two years has dropped the long-term average to just 13.0 crimes per month in the single-family streets in Druid Hills.

