

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

The premise of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime, a reduction in calls for police service and to an increase in the quality of life for residents. The three main, overlapping elements in CPTED are: Natural Surveillance, Natural Access Control, and Territorial Reinforcement.¹

Natural Surveillance is a design concept directed primarily at keeping intruders under observation. Therefore, the primary thrust of a surveillance strategy is to facilitate observation although it may accomplish the effect of an increased perception of risk. Surveillance strategies are typically classified as organized (e.g. police patrols), mechanical (e.g. lighting) and natural (e.g. windows).

Natural Access Control strategies primary thrust is to deny access to a crime target and to create a perception of risk for offenders. Access control strategies are typically classified as: Organized (e.g. guards), mechanical (e.g. locks) and natural (e.g. spatial definition).

The concept of territoriality reinforcement suggests that physical design can contribute to a sense of territoriality. Restated, physical design can create or extend a sphere of territorial influence and potential offenders perceive that territorial influence. As an example, low walls, landscape and paving patterns can be used to clearly define the space around a unit entry as belonging to, and therefore the responsibility of, the residents of that unit.

CPTED Strategies

In as much as possible, all space should become the clear responsibility of someone.
Avoid space which is unassigned

Provide clearly marked transitional zones that indicate movement from public to semi-public to private space. As an example, the sidewalk represents public space. The main path into a residential development and the path branching to the individual unit(s) are both semi-public; the interior of the unit is private.

Relocate gathering areas to locations of natural surveillance and access control ~ as opposed to locations away from the view of would be offenders. As an example, all children play areas should be located within the central common area of the building with as many units as possible able to glance or actively watch the children at play.

Place safe activities in unsafe locations to create the natural surveillance of these activities thereby increasing the perception of safety for legitimate users and of risk for

offenders. For example, well-used common areas (considered as safe) may overlook a parking area (considered unsafe) to provide additional security to the parking area.

Place unsafe activities in safe locations to overcome the vulnerability of these activities with natural surveillance and access control of the safe area. For instance, common bathroom facilities and laundry rooms should not be located in a remote corner of the site or at the end of a long, anonymous hallway. Locate these facilities adjacent to the entry or to a location where there is normally high foot traffic.

Redesignate the use of space to provide natural barriers to conflicting activities. As an example, a sidewalk or path could be placed between the basketball courts and the children's play area.

Redesign space to increase the perception or reality of natural surveillance. Overcome distance and isolation through improved communications.

Design Considerations

Natural Surveillance:

Provide an opportunity for people engaged in normal everyday activity to observe the space around them. Place activities where individuals engaged in those activities will become part of the natural surveillance system without any interruption to their activity.

Provide a good visual connection between residential and/or commercial units and public environments such as streets, common areas, parks, sidewalks, parking areas and alleys. Place actively used rooms such as kitchens, living/family room and lobbies to allow for good viewing of parking, streets, and/or commons areas. Managers, doormen, attendants and security personnel should have extensive views of these areas.

Provide for the ability to see into a room or space prior to entering.

Take advantage of mixed use if it exists and provide good visual connection between the uses. This may enable natural surveillance during the day and evening. Many commercial zones become vacant during the evenings. With a residential component, this zone then becomes active during the evenings and weekends as well.

Refer to the Tacoma Building Code for required minimum building construction standards and the attached CPTED Site Evaluation for required security standards.

Natural Access Control:

Locate common areas as centrally as possible or near major circulation paths within the project. Avoid remote locations for common areas. Consider containing common areas within a building layout.

Group common areas together so that necessary task such as laundry may be done while watching children or using recreation areas.

Provide clear, well-lit paths from the street to the development through parking and landscaped areas and within the development to building entries.

Avoid ambiguous walkways and entries where occupants and guest may become lost or disoriented. Or must search for the correct entry or unit.

Provide adequate lighting, width of path, definition of path and ability to see a destination.

Provide obvious physical security techniques such as locks, lights, walls, gates, and, when necessary, security cameras.

Control unwanted entry through attic space. Where ownership changes, provide a wall that extends from the suspended ceiling to the underside of the roof/floor assembly above.

Identify whether surrounding properties constitute a negative or adverse impact on the development. Mitigate the adverse impact whenever possible with enhanced access control techniques.

Ground floor units may require security above and beyond the other areas in the development. Walls, fencing, deterrent landscaping and lighting may be necessary.

Territorial Reinforcement:

People take more interest in something they own or which they feel intrinsically involved. Therefore, the environment should be designed to clearly delineate private spaces. Provide obvious defined entries, patios, balconies and terraces. Use low walls, landscape and paving patterns to delineate ownership and responsibility.

Create a sense of ownership to foster behavior that challenges abuse or unwanted acts in that space. Owners have a vested interest and are more likely to challenge intruders or report them to the police.

Provide real amenities in common areas so people will use them and have a stake in maintaining them. Avoid common areas which become a “no mans land.”

Provide clearly defined and secure storage areas, including bicycles, outdoor children's toys, etc.

Consider creating “sub developments” within a project where people share clustered parking, entries, amenities, and common areas. Avoid long corridors that are shared by all and owned by none.

Facilitate the successful Neighborhood Watch program. Cluster units in such a way to allow occupants to interact and see unit entries (and possibly sidewalks and streets) from within other units. Create an environment where strangers or intruders stand out and are more easily identified.

In some developments, it may be appropriate to give occupants some autonomy and control over their environment. This may include devoting landscape space to tenant use and upkeep, allowing occupants to determine color, landscape and other finish design materials.

Landscaping and Fencing:

Specify thorny landscape as a natural barrier to deter unwanted entry. Use vines or planted wall coverings to deter graffiti. Avoid blank spaces that may be an invitation to graffiti vandals.

Provide landscape and fencing that do not create hiding places for criminals. Discourage crime by creating an inhospitable environment for criminals.

As fencing has become more ubiquitous, provide attractive and durable fencing whenever possible. Consider creative solutions to fencing schemes that work aesthetically as well as functionally.

Lighting:

Provide lighting systems that provide nighttime vision for pedestrians, homeowners and business people to permit pedestrians to see one another, to see risks involved in walking at night and to reduce the risk of trip and fall accidents. Provide lighting systems that will enhance police ability for surveillance, patrol and pursuit.

Provide lighting systems that provide nighttime vision for motorists to increase the visibility of pedestrians, other vehicles and other objects that should be seen and avoided.

Provide lighting systems that minimize glare, light pollution and light trespass.

ⁱ The information provided in this document has been adapted from information provided by the Los Angeles Police Department.