

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design



Background

Definition

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED, pronounced “sep-ted”) seeks to deter criminal behavior through design of the built environment. Proper design, use, and management of the built environment can lead to reductions in the incidence and fear of crime, while improving community vitality and overall quality of life. These design principles stem from the traditional “eyes on the street” concept, which holds that urban areas are safer when more people are present.

Both CPTED and traditional crime prevention work towards similar goals, but go about it in different ways. CPTED focuses on incorporating “natural” or “passive” strategies that rely on design elements, while traditional crime prevention typically focuses on mechanical strategies such as neighborhood watch groups and security equipment.

Health, equity and sustainability considerations

Jane Jacobs, the acclaimed urban planner, said that “a well-used city street is apt to be a safe street,” and noted that the qualities of a safe street include good lighting, adults and children on the sidewalks, and “eyes on the street” from businesses and public places.

There is a strong link between neighborhood conditions and health. Crime can have direct and indirect effects on individual and public health. Direct effects include violence, homicide, dangerous driving, and substance abuse. Indirect effects include stress, fear of crime, repeat victimization, and social isolation.

CPTED fosters collaboration among planners, law enforcement, engineers, designers, code enforcement, and community stakeholders. This collaborative approach can help to improve community and government relations, and increase activity and camaraderie among residents and visitors. The goal is to increase the number of people in public spaces and provide safe access to goods, services, jobs, and schools.

In contrast to the approach of addressing crime concerns by implementing visually affronting security or target hardening measures such as locks, hard barriers, security gates, security patrols, CPTED promotes

Removing plant overgrowth and other visibility barriers can **significantly** reduce incidents of crime.

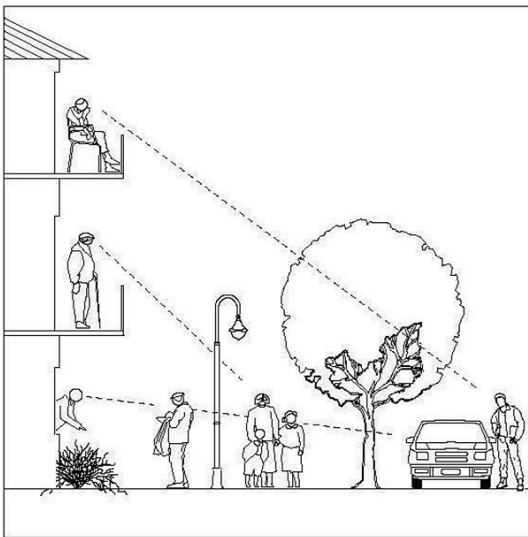
high quality and visually pleasing solutions as first responses that aim to enhance the legitimate use of space, and encourage active, shared spaces.

Program and Policy Examples

Program examples

The American Planning Association's [Community CPTED Quicknotes](#) (2013) lists ten key principles that communities should consider when implementing a CPTED framework. These design principles include:

- **Natural Surveillance:** *the design and placement of physical features to maximize visibility and surveillance.* Key strategies include the design, placement, and lighting of doors, windows, walkways, gathering areas, roadways, and structures. The objectives are to eliminate hiding places and increase the perception of human presence and supervision.
- **Natural Access Management:** *the physical guidance of people and vehicles.* Key strategies include the use of real or perceived barriers such as fencing or plantings, and other wayfinding elements such as lighting, signage, and artwork. The objectives are to provide orientation and a pedestrian-friendly environment and to discourage would-be offenders by making noncompliance obvious.
- **Territorial Reinforcement:** *the use of physical attributes to delineate space and express a positive sense of ownership.* Key strategies include the use of art, signs, landscaping, and boundary treatments as well as the orientation and strategic place of buildings. The objectives are to define borders, express ownership, and communicate a space is cared for and protected.
- **Physical Maintenance:** *the repair, replacement, and general upkeep of a space, building, or area.* Key strategies include the use of low-maintenance landscaping and architectural materials, trash collection and removal, and other programs to maintain a clean and orderly environment. The objective is to allow for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose.
- **Order Maintenance:** *the attention to minor violations and reduction of opportunities for inappropriate behavior.* Key strategies include posting rules and expectations, using graffiti- and vandalism-resistant materials, and imposing quick, fair, and consistent consequences for violations. The objectives are to foster safe, orderly, and predictable behaviors.
- **Activity Support:** *the planning and placement of safe activities.* Key strategies include sidewalk and street level activities, such as markets, fairs, and festivals, in key community areas. The objective is to increase the number of people using a space, thereby enhancing visibility, social comfort, and control.
- **Social Capital:** *the social trust, norms, and networks people draw upon to solve common problems,*



foster civic engagement, and discourage inappropriate behaviors. Key strategies include designated gathering areas, social events, and community programs. The objective is to encourage communication, trust, and collaboration among stakeholders and also with the government agencies that serve them.

- **Land Use and Community Design:** *the distribution, location, and amount of land for various uses; land use density and intensity; and the design elements, strategies, and overall character of a planning area.* Key strategies include team training for professionals involved in planning and development activities, solicitation of community public safety concerns, and collaboration in problem solving and

incorporation of CPTED principles into planning processes. The objectives are to create, or recreate, and manage built environments in a manner that includes consideration for public safety.

- **Target Hardening:** *the making of potential targets resistant to criminal attack.* Key strategies include the reinforcement of entry and exit features, law enforcement or security presence, and security devices such as locks, alarms, and cameras. The objectives are to increase the efforts that offenders must expend and the risk of their being identified or apprehended in committing an offense.
- **Natural Imperatives:** *ensuring access to necessary goods and services including natural light, clean air and water, healthy foods, physical activity, employment, and housing.* Key strategies include pedestrian amenities, public parks, accessible transit systems, quality food sources, and education and employment opportunities. The objective is to promote healthy behaviors and reduce mental fatigue and associated risky behaviors by meeting the biological, social, and economic needs of the population.

How is it used locally?

The City of SeaTac includes CPTED design principles in its municipal code ([Municipal Code Title 17](#)). The code creates CPTED standards to reduce the fear and incidence of crime and to improve the quality of life.

The Burien Police [Community Crime Prevention Unit](#) offers free CPTED consultations and guidance for neighborhoods.

King County Metro's S. Kirkland TOD Parking Garage and Transit Center includes CPTED design features as outlined in [Design Criteria and Performance Specifications \(April 2012\)](#).

Columbia City, a neighborhood in Southeast Seattle, incorporated CPTED improvements as part of the neighborhood design review process to improve real and perceived levels of public safety and the quality of the built environment, as outlined in the [Southeast Seattle Action Agenda \(March 2005\)](#).

The [Seattle Neighborhood Group](#), a non-profit working to prevent crime and build community through partnerships with residents, businesses, law enforcement and other organizations, offers CPTED services citywide, with an emphasis on Central and Southeast Seattle, West Seattle, and White Center. The Seattle Neighborhood Group staff visit a site, take photographs, collect anecdotal information from property users and generate an illustrated CPTED report for the site. The Seattle Neighborhood Group works with business, apartment properties, private property owners, and has partnered with the City of Seattle to address park safety.

Implementation

Developing policy language

CPTED can be implemented through a variety of plans, programs, and policies, including area and comprehensive plans, land development regulations and guidelines, review and approval processes, and capital improvement plans.



Model policy language

CPTED principles provide a common language to help government staff work with communities to identify and respond to issues.

Many general and comprehensive plans include the themes commonly associated with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in the normal review process for development proposals. The Washington State Department of Commerce's 2007 [Example Comprehensive Plans to Support Physically Active Communities](#) includes model CPTED language from the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan (2001).

Considerations for local implementation

CPTED has been most successful in communities where government staff train as a team, collaborate with the public through workshops and community assessments, and address public safety in conjunction with other efforts, including economic development, neighborhood and business revitalization, capital improvements, and public health.

Traditionally, comprehensive plans do not address safety. CPTED should be included as an environmental design component if it is to be included in a comprehensive plan.

The American Planning Association's [Safe Growth America Checklist](#) (2004) provides a set of questions to help community members examine their neighborhood and implement a set of CPTED principles that best fit community needs.

Challenges to implementation

There is no "one size fits all" approach to CPTED. Each neighborhood should choose how to best implement CPTED principles. For example, alleys are often a controversial element. Many planners encourage the use of alleys as a place for garages, utilities, and trash receptacles, to encourage the opening up of the front of residential streets to people, pedestrians, social interactions, and "eyes on the street." CPTED principles, however, assert that alleys can provide escape routes and additional access points for criminals.

Resources

Carter & Carter, LLP's [Resources and U.S. Case Studies](#)

[SafeScape: Creating Safer, More Livable Communities Through Planning and Design](#) (2001)

Seattle Police Department's [CPTED Brochure](#)

Seattle Police Department's [South Park 76 Station and Subway Restaurant CPTED Survey](#)

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's Healthy Community Planning Toolbox—Policy Intervention Tools: [Land Use and Safety and Injury](#), [Parks and Recreation and Safety and Injury](#) (2013)