



Loss Control Insights

Crime Prevention through Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on a theory that the proper design and effective use of a facility can increase a feeling of safety and improve the quality of life for the staff and volunteers, and reduce the opportunity for crimes to occur. In other words, if a site is laid out well, the likelihood of it being targeted for a crime is reduced. Crime prevention is defined as the anticipation, recognition and an appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of some action to remove or reduce it. CPTED takes crime prevention one step further by studying the site design and working with architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers to create safer designs in new and existing facilities. Good design can be safe design.

CPTED concepts and strategies take into account how people behave in an environment, how that environment lends itself to a productive and safe use by those using the space, and how crime prevention may be applied. Issues such as the building orientation, entrances/exits, parking lot location, landscaping, lighting, fences, sidewalks, signage are just a few examples of what is considered when a site plan is reviewed for being laid out well and/or safe. Interior colors, lighting, ceiling heights, reception area design, hallway size, width of counters make environments feel safe, yet pleasing, to staff and service recipients, while deterring would-be criminals.

For example, rather than overt security devices, such as cameras, guards and metal detectors, one youth-serving nonprofit designed a single point of entry into the building, which leads to a reception area visible through glass from the administrative offices. These offices and parent conference rooms are accessible to visitors without entering the main service provision area. Service recipients are separated by age into pods that radiate off a central atrium located down a hallway from reception. Should an incident occur in one pod, it can be isolated from the rest of the building by closing discreet steel doors. All secondary exits are accessible only in emergencies.

Adaptation

Many nonprofits are not designing their buildings from scratch, but they can use less expensive approaches to help reduce crime. For example, lowered ceilings, softer and

lower-wattage lighting, and calming paint colors reduce anxiety that can lead to shouting, acting out and other violence. Narrowing the hallway as it leads from the main entry doors to the reception area naturally slows people down and directs them. Customer-service counters constructed wider than the comfortable reach of a tall person's arm, protects employees and volunteers without caging them behind steel bars and bulletproof plastic. Not only do these solutions tend to de-escalate situations for those with larceny on their minds, they make the site welcoming for the majority of people coming to your facility.

CPTED is much more far-reaching than dead bolts on doors and locks on windows. The principles can be applied easily and inexpensively to building or remodeling, and have been implemented in communities across the nation. CPTED applies three key concepts, all of which are interrelated.

1. Natural surveillance - the placement of physical features, activities and people in such a way as to maximize visibility:

- raised entrances
- low-level landscaping
- windows face rear parking lots
- exterior of building well lit

2. Natural access control - the physical guidance of people coming and going from a space that deny access and challenge unwanted visitors by the judicious placement of:

- entrances,
- exits,
- fencing,
- landscaping and
- lighting

3. Territorial reinforcement - territorial reinforcement is the use of physical attributes that express ownership and make intruders feel unsafe and unwelcome:

- fencing,
- signage,
- landscaping and
- pavement treatments

The way we react to an environment is more often than not determined by the cues we are picking up from that environment. Those things which make normal or legitimate users of a space feel safe (such as good lighting), make abnormal or illegitimate users of the same space feel unsafe in pursuing undesirable behaviors (such as stealing from motor vehicles).

Following are some specific things you can enact without rebuilding, remodeling or moving your facility.

Exterior

Request that the police do a security assessment of your nonprofit's facility. This is especially helpful in a high-crime neighborhood. The assessment helps determine if you're done

everything you can to secure the premises and provide for the safety of your personnel, clients and visitors. If not, you'll have a list of improvements that can become a strategy. Presenting a neat, cared-for front makes your site less of a target. These might include:

- Regularly remove graffiti from walkways, walls and pavement.
- Pick up litter and debris from the grounds.
- Cut back foliage from windows, entrances, and exits.
- Use a buddy system to walk employees to their cars.
- Provide extra strong locks, grills or grates or an alarm system on entries to the building.
- Offer classes in street smarts to employees and volunteers.