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Canada

What is CPTED?

By: Cst. Tom McKay

CPTED (pronounced sep-ted) is a short form for the proactive crime fighting technique known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

CPTED Is Based Upon The Theory That:

"the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life".

CPTED'S underlying objective is to help the various disciplines do a better job of achieving their primary objectives, with the added by-product of improved security and loss prevention. This objective is based upon the belief that crime and loss is a by-product of human functions that are not working.

How Does CPTED Differ From Traditional Crime Fighting Techniques?

CPTED's emphasis is based on design and use. In this way, it deviates from the traditional target hardening approach to crime prevention.

The target-hardening approach traditionally focused on denying access to a crime target through physical or artificial barriers (such as locks, alarms, fences and gates). This approach often overlooked the opportunities for natural access control and surveillance while placing a constraint on the use, access and enjoyment of the hardened environment.

CPTED emphasizes and exploits these lost opportunities through the development of three overlapping CPTED strategies. These strategies are:

- Natural Surveillance
- Natural Access Control
- Territorial Reinforcement

Natural Surveillance	is a design strategy that is directed primarily at keeping intruders under observation.
Natural Access Control	is a design strategy that is directed at decreasing crime opportunity.
Territorial Reinforcement	is a design strategy that realizes that physical design can create or extend a sphere of influence so that users develop a sense of proprietorship or territoriality.

The term "natural" refers to deriving surveillance and access control as a by-product of the normal and routine use of the environment. Natural surveillance and access control can be ultimately subdivided into three categories. These are natural, mechanical, and organized means.
Mechanical forms of natural surveillance and access control commonly use traditional target hardening techniques. The use of these techniques are limited to situations where the effective use of the environment is not unduly impaired.

How Can We Assess Which Strategies Are Needed?

To assess which strategies are needed, we must first assess the space we are evaluating. To do this we use what has been referred to as the three D approach. This approach is based upon the following functions:

- All human space has some **DESIGNATED** purpose.
- All human space has social, cultural, legal or physical **DEFINITIONS** that prescribe the desired and acceptable behaviours.
- All human space is **DESIGNED** to support and control the desired behaviour.

What is CPTED?

The 3 D's of **Designation, Definition** and **Design** may be used as a guide to the evaluation of space, by asking the following types of questions:

Designation

- What is the designated purpose of this space?
- What was it originally intended to be used for?
- How well does the space support its current use? Its intended use?
- Is there conflict?

Definition

- How is the space defined?
- Is it clear who owns it?
- Where are its borders?
- Are there social or cultural definitions that affect how that space is used?
- Are the legal or administrative rules clearly set out and reinforced in policy?
- Are there signs?
- Is there conflict or confusion between the designated purpose and definition?

Design

- How well does the physical design support the intended function?
- How well does the physical design support the definition of the desired or accepted behaviours?
- Does the physical design conflict with or impede the productive use of the space or the proper functioning of the intended human activity?
- Is there confusion or conflict in the manner in which the physical design is intended to control behaviour?

These questions are reflective of the CPTED priorities of questioning everything while looking at things from a different perspective and never the same way again.

Once we have completed our assessment we can begin to match the discipline's functions with a space that can support them. It is at this stage where we will begin to apply the CPTED strategies that were noted above.

Where Can CPTED Be Applied?

CPTED is so versatile it can literally be applied anywhere. However, some of the areas that have already benefitted from CPTED are:

- Shopping malls and parking areas
- Industrial/Commercial parks
- Schools and institutions
- Parks and play grounds
- Housing developments
- Street systems and Marinas

Are there common CPTED design strategies?

YES. Nine major CPTED strategies are listed below:

1. Provide clear border definition of controlled space.

2. Provide clearly marked transitional zones which indicated movement from semi-public to private space.

3. Relocate gathering areas to locations with natural surveillance and access control or to locations away from the view of would be offenders.

4. Place safe activities in unsafe locations to increase the natural surveillance of these locations. This will increase the perception of safety within these areas while increasing the perception of risk in offenders.

5. Place unsafe activities in safe spots to overcome the vulnerability of these activities with the natural surveillance and access control of the safe area.

6. Redesignate the use of space to provide natural barriers to conflicting activities.

7. Improve scheduling of space to allow for effective use and appropriate critical intensity.

8. Redesign space to increase the perception or reality of natural surveillance.

9. Overcome distance and isolation through improved communications and design efficiencies.

The CPTED philosophy is perhaps best summed up by the CPTED motto:

"What are you trying to do here, and how can we help you do it better?"

If this motto is followed we can expect to meet the objectives of CPTED and the objectives of community policing.

Bibliography

Crowe, Timothy, D., Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: Applications of Architectural Design and Space Management Concepts. Louisville, KY., National Crime Prevention Institute, 1991.