Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

Crime is a social problem in our society that affects thousands of people's lives each year. The resulting fear of crime threatens a community's sense of safety. Citizens feel their freedom of movement is restricted, preventing them from fully participating in their community. The basic elements of a crime are often summarized by a set of three characteristics: an offender, a potential victim/target, and a location.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a strategy based on the premise that the design and use of the built environment can deter crime and lead to a reduction in fear, versus the traditional crime prevention techniques based on target hardening alone.

CPTED focuses on the physical environment to create natural forms of surveillance, access control and territorial reinforcement in a deliberate attempt to present a psychological deterrent for the purpose of positively influencing and changing human behaviour as people interact with the environment.

CPTED can reduce crime and fear through:

- Territoriality - fostering residents' interaction, vigilance, and control over their neighbourhood
- Surveillance - maximizing the ability to spot suspicious people and activities
- Activity support - encouraging the intended use of public space by residents
- Hierarchy of space - identifying ownership by delineating private space from public space through real or symbolic boundaries
- Access control/target hardening - using physical barriers, security devices and tamper-resistant materials to restrict entrance
- Environment - a design or location decision that takes into account the surrounding environment and minimizes conflict in the use of space.
- Image/Maintenance - ensuring that a building or area is clean, well-maintained, and graffiti-free.

CPTED Design Strategies

1. Provide clear border definition of controlled space.
2. Provide clearly marked transitional zones which indicate 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 use and 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. Re-designate the use of space to provide natural barriers to conflicting activities.
7. Improve the scheduling of activities which take place in the area to minimize conflicts in how the space is used.
8. Overcome distance and isolation through improved communications and design efficiencies.

Benefits of CPTED

- It considers a broad array of problems, not just crime.
- It requires a systematic analysis of crime events and the conditions and factors that contribute to opportunities for crime.
- It results in a set of programs or strategies that are proactive and tailored to the problem and the location.
- It engages an array of citizens, government agencies, and local institutions, each of which has a role to play in defining the problem and deciding upon an appropriate solution, as well as some accountability for long–term improvements.

Four Principles of CPTED

Natural Surveillance

Criminals do not want to be seen. Natural surveillance creates increased opportunities for members of the community as they go about their everyday activities and act as legitimate 'eyes on the street.' Successful natural surveillance applications include:

- Orienting driveways and paths towards natural forms of surveillance such as building entrances and windows
- Increasing the visibility of vulnerable areas such as building entrances, stairwells, playgrounds, through the strategic use of lighting, windows, fencing material, and landscaping.
- Trimming back overgrown landscaping will allow for sufficient sightlines; moving public garbage cans to visible and open locations will reduce loitering.
- Strategically lighting pathways and other potentially problematic areas.
- Creating opportunities for use of problematic areas for generating legitimate activity. This can include the establishment of sidewalk patios, seating areas and other amenities.

Territorial Reinforcement

People naturally protect spaces that they feel is their own, and have a certain respect for the space of others. Territorial reinforcement discourages potential unwanted users by clearly defining legitimate users of a location. Successful territorial reinforcement applications include:

- Creating clearly marked transitional zones as users move from public to semi-public and private space. This can be achieved through using different paving patterns, different interior design features, architectural barriers or markers, signs and other visual cues.
- Locate amenities in communal area to encourage activity and use.
- Avoiding the appearance of ambiguity by ensuring that all space is designated with a clear, and active purpose.
- Establish a mechanism to control visitors and other users to buildings or areas that regularly are used by multiple user groups.

Natural Access Control

Natural access control focuses on encouraging the movement of people. Natural access control incorporates design elements to keep unauthorised persons out of a particular place if they do not have a legitimate reason for being there. Successful natural access control applications include:

- Providing clear identification of public versus private spaces, along with easily identifiable features to move users towards desirable routes of travel through and around public and private spaces.
- Strategically placing building directories, way signs or location maps at main public access points; clearly identifying entrances and exits.
- Limiting uncontrolled and/or unobserved public access onto a property, building or private space,
- Using landscape features such as thorny low lying shrubs, gates, or fences to prevent public access to spaces not meant for public use.

Maintenance - Management

Citizens' sense of pride for their neighbourhood contributes to the reduction of criminal activity. The more dilapidated an area, the risk increases for unwanted activities. The maintenance and the 'image' of an area can have a major impact on whether it will become targeted. The identity and image of a neighbourhood strengthens social cohesion and creates a general sense of security. Successful maintenance and management applications include:

- Conducting timely maintenances; prompt removal of graffiti; picking up trash and debris. Engaging in neighbourhood beautification initiatives.
- Locating lighting in such a way that bulbs can be easily replaced and shrubs and vegetation do not obstruct light from intended target areas.
- Using finishes or materials for structures that are resistant to vandalism, damage or graffiti, and are easy to clean, repair or replace.
- Provide opportunities for community members to participate in decisions impacting their neighbourhood. Citizens can bring specific knowledge of problematic issues along with community based ideas to address issues that impact their neighbourhoods.

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