



CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Research shows that criminal behaviour can be influenced by the design of the physical environment. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a crime prevention strategy that uses this knowledge to design, or redesign, maintain and manage the physical environment in such a way that opportunities for criminal activity are reduced and personal safety and perceptions of safety are improved. The four principles of CPTED that can be used in your neighbourhood and community to help prevent and reduce crime are:

1. Surveillance: This principle is about maximising the visibility of people and property. It focuses on environmental design that assists natural surveillance by others and eliminates isolated areas. Surveillance increases perceptions of safety and deters crime by increasing the likelihood of the potential offender and potential victim being seen. Good lighting and well placed, maintained vegetation are key to surveillance. For example, windows and doors should be placed in locations that allow intended users to see or be seen while ensuring intruders will be seen as well. Trees and fences should not provide hiding places.

2. Access management: This principle refers to methods used to attract people and vehicles to some places and channel them away from other places. Access control utilises doors, shrubs, fences, gates and other physical design elements to discourage access to an area by all but its intended users. It includes putting furniture and equipment away so that it can't be used to access otherwise inaccessible windows, doors or openings. An example is installing bollards on the pavement to prevent vehicle ram raids.

3. Territorial reinforcement: This principle focuses on making clear boundaries between private and public spaces to clearly establish the legitimacy of users and uses in a given location. It utilises markers such as signs, fences, and landscaping to help foster individual and community ownership and connection with an area by informing people about its ownership and function. This helps increase the perception of risk for potential offenders by making them feel conspicuous and increasing the likelihood that someone will intervene if necessary. Design features should distinguish boundaries without compromising visual surveillance. For example, strangers should not feel comfortable going on to your property or using it as a shortcut. Houses should look occupied and cared for at all times. Arrange to have lawns mowed and your letterbox cleared when going away on. (*See our page on Vacant Home Tips for more ideas.*)

4. Quality environments: This principle is about maintaining the physical environment so that it is attractive and supports surveillance. It includes the prevention of visual deterioration such as litter and graffiti. If left unchecked this type of deterioration sends out inviting messages to offenders whilst conveying to non-offenders that the area is not safe. It includes avoiding the existence of ambiguous land use such as derelict sections that attract crime, avoiding conflicts between incompatible user groups and activities in a location, and using activities to draw people in to an area in order to make it safer. Good examples are the clusters of inner city cafés and restaurants that have attracted large numbers of people back in to areas of cities at night that were once considered unsafe. Thinking about and applying CPTED principles in your neighbourhood can help to reduce the fear and incidence of crime while improving the quality of life for you and your community.