



Belleville Police Service

FACT SHEET

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Have you ever wondered why some properties are victimized and others are not and what makes one property more susceptible to criminal attack than another?

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design holds some of these answers by providing a common sense way to improve the safety of your environment.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED (pronounced sep-ted), as it is more commonly known, is a proactive crime-fighting technique that believes that “the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime as well as an improvement in the quality of life”. CPTED works by eliminating criminal opportunities in and around your property. By getting your property “right”, a criminal may avoid giving it a second and closer look. This keeps your property safer, by decreasing crime opportunity.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY PROPERTY SAFER?

CPTED need not be expensive or difficult to apply and simply involves taking advantage of your property’s natural surveillance, access control and territorial potential.

A NATURAL SURVEILLANCE REVIEW

In order to proceed, start by taking a fresh look at your property’s natural surveillance potential. Ask yourself:

- Are views from neighbouring properties or streets obscured by landscaping or fencing?
- Are there any adult-sized hiding spots around my doors or windows?
- Are there areas of contrast and shadow around my building where intruders can linger undetected?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, your property’s natural surveillance potential needs to be improved. Consider adding motion activated lights, reducing landscaping, or altering fencing so that intruders can be kept under observation.

ACCESS CONTROL REVIEW

Next, take a fresh look at your property’s access control potential. Ask yourself:

- Do people routinely violate my property and/or fence lines?
- Can this be done in an inconspicuous manner?
- Do people access my property in ways other than I intended?
- Do any existing access routes lack natural surveillance?
- As a result of the placement or existence of outdoor furniture, equipment and/or utilities, is there potential to access an otherwise inaccessible window, door or opening?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, your property’s access control needs to be improved. Consider better control of undesired movements onto and within your property. Install landscaping, fencing or barriers to increase the conspicuousness of anyone breaching a boundary or reinforce an existing boundary that’s already been subject to trespass.

When selecting fencing or landscape materials, take into account maintenance requirements and the impact of mature landscaping on natural surveillance. For maximum landscaping effectiveness, consider a species with thorns.

Finally, keep furniture, equipment and/or utilities, wherever possible, away from otherwise inaccessible windows, doors or openings. Remember, access control decreases crime opportunity.

A TERRITORIAL REVIEW

Finally, take a fresh look at your property’s territoriality. Ask yourself:

- Do strangers regularly trespass on my property?
- Is my property being used as a short-cut?
- Does my property ever have an uninvited or unkept look?
- Are there underutilized sections of my property where the public is invited and people feel comfortable loitering?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, your property’s territoriality needs to be improved. Take steps to rectify this by creating or extending a sphere of influence around your property.

For businesses and residences, this can be done through strategically placed markers, flowerbeds, low fences, walls, hedges, signage; better and/or more timely maintenance, and where the public is invited, as signing purposes to “leftover spaces”.

For residences, don’t forget to create an “illusion of occupancy”. This is extremely important in deterring thieves. Accomplish this by making sure your lawn is maintained, your driveway is shoveled and your circulars are picked up. Use timers to control your lights and have someone check on your property. And don’t forget to join and participate in Neighbourhood Watch and for businesses, Business Crime Watch.

DON ‘T FORGET ABOUT TARGET HARDENING

For maximum crime prevention benefits, target hardening should be applied with CPTED principles. For Target Hardening advice, please see the Home Security Fact Sheet series.

CPTED’S PROVEN TRACK RECORD

CPTED techniques are directed against crimes of opportunity. Where these techniques have been applied to problem settings, crimes of opportunity have decreased by as much as 90%.

WHAT ABOUT INTERIOR APPLICATIONS?

CPTED is equally effective when applied to building or store interiors. CPTED’s universality results from its ability to help various disciplines do a better job of achieving their primary objective. Designers and merchandisers have discovered that the application of CPTED techniques have reportedly increased sales by as much as 33% and decreased security problems by 50%.

MAXIMIZING CPTED BENEFITS

CPTED provides the opportunity to design in crime prevention and design out crime. For maximum benefits, CPTED should be applied at the design or planning stage when these benefits can be achieved at little or no cost.