

Protecting Your Home

CPTED - Reducing Crime



CRIMEREDUCTION
Canada®

APARTMENT SECURITY

CPTED - Reducing the Fear of Crime

Does your apartment security plan focus on locks, surveillance cameras, security screen doors and solid walls? If so, you may be contributing to something nearly as bad as the crime you are trying to prevent. Perception is reality and the fear of crime can be as devastating as crime itself. Most property owners want to do whatever they can to ensure a reasonable degree of safety for their tenants and guests. Quite often, the only options owners are aware of are “target-hardening” focused. While locks and other mechanical devices are effective tools in crime prevention, an overwhelming presence of security bars, black metal screen doors and other visible security devices gives people an uneasy feeling because they perceive the area to be “high-risk”. They will ultimately spend little time there or avoid it all together. There are other strategies you can incorporate, which will actually increase security while reducing the visible presence of such. This is known as “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design”, or CPTED.

CPTED (pronounced “sep-ted”) is the proper design and effective use of a built environment which leads to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime. Cpted weighs heavily the importance of reducing a person’s fear of crime, through environmental design. Not only does it reduce a person’s fear of crime, but it also increases a criminal’s fear of being caught, therefore reducing crime itself. There are four main cpted design principles which I will outline for you.

I. NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

“See and be seen” is the overall goal when it comes to natural surveillance. A person is less likely to commit a crime if they think someone will see them do it. Lighting and landscape play an important role in achieving this. Keep your landscape trimmed so that it does not interfere with lighting or natural sightlines from public areas and windows. Make sure that your property is adequately and evenly lighted after dark. Utilize decorative wrought iron fencing material whenever appropriate. This is especially important in areas which are isolated such as patios, sideyards and backyards. The idea is to give potential intruders the sense risk from the thought that they are being watched. Another effective method of achieving this is by placing more “eyes on the street”. Encourage your tenants to spend time outside through creation of “activity support areas”. These include front porches, child-play areas and benches placed

PROTECTING YOUR MULTI UNIT DWELLING - CPTED

in common areas where legitimate users will sit and observe what is happening around them.

2. NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

Access control is more than a high block wall topped with barbed wire. Remember, you want to create a sense of risk to potential offenders, without contributing to a legitimate user's fear of crime. CPTED utilizes walkways, low fences, lighting, signage and landscape to clearly guide people to and from the proper entrances. The goal is not necessarily to keep intruders out, but to direct the flow of people while decreasing the opportunity for crime. For instance, if you want to control access to a row of 1st story windows, you might plant a row of roses or other low-growing thorny plants immediately below those windows. Most criminals will select "the path of least resistance" when targeting a victim. The roses won't prevent someone from gaining access to the windows if they really want it, but it might discourage them. Another example addresses the narrow side areas at your property which are very vulnerable. Instead of building a 6' high solid wall, which would interfere with natural surveillance, use decorative wrought iron to control access. Take it one step further and place gravel down so that when someone walks on it others will be alerted to their presence.

3. TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

You want to create and extend a "sphere of influence" over your property and distinguish private areas from public ones. This can be achieved through physical design features such as tiled or textured pavement, landscaping and signage. Replace the common concrete walkway leading up to your property with a curved, textured path lined with a row of flowers on each side. Create an arched entryway onto your property, with the name and address of your building above it. This will not only send the message that "you have now stepped onto private property", but will also enable your tenants or other legitimate users to develop a sense of proprietorship over it. Potential trespassers will perceive this control, and again, have an increased sense of risk thereby discouraging them.

4. MAINTENANCE

All the effort you put into creating a well thought out CPTED-based security plan for your property can be quickly lost unless you maintain it. The Broken Windows Theory suggests that one "broken window" or nuisance, if allowed to exist, will lead to others and ultimately to the decline of entire neighborhoods. Neglected and poorly maintained properties are breeding grounds for criminal activity. In addition to keeping your landscape neatly trimmed and checking your lighting on a regular basis, you must project the image that people at the property care and will not tolerate criminal behavior. Keep trash picked up and dispose of large discarded items appropriately. Immediately report graffiti to police and paint it out. Do not allow unregistered or non-operating vehicles to be stored on your property and enforce tenant rules and regulations.

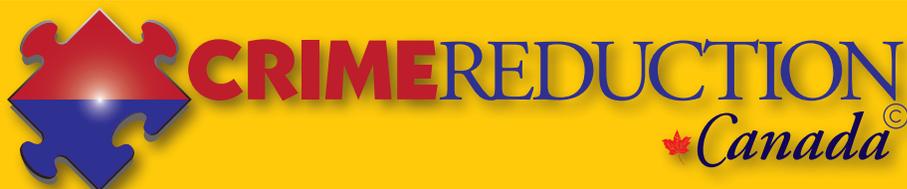
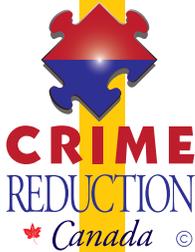
CPTED is not an exact science, but rather a set of principles based on human behavior. Many CPTED techniques can be implemented for little or no cost. If you consider these principles when analyzing the overall design of your property in regards to security, or before remodeling, you can create a safer and more peaceful environment for your tenants and other legitimate users.

By: Harry Erickson, a police officer for over 17 years and a security consultant for CPTED Security. For more information regarding Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, visit CPTED Security Training and Consulting at www.cptedsecurity.com. Published in the Apartment Journal - August 2005.

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