

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) as a Design Tool

The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime. Architects, planners, builders and others proposing any new development or construction have the ability to influence the creation of safer communities by incorporating CPTED principles, which are not required, but are encouraged as a component of project design. This guide may be used to provide a general overview of basic ideas to consider when planning a development project.



IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

- Engage the support of stakeholders and other key partners.
- Identify existing crime and disorder problems in and around the site.
- Conduct a CPTED review at 30% project planning to make sure design options are included with follow-up reviews as needed.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following are examples of development design modeled after the three principles of CPTED:

- 1) Natural Surveillance - Visual Connection
- 2) Natural Access Control - Spatial Definition
- 3) Territorial Reinforcement - Foster a Sense of Ownership.

LANDSCAPING

- When designing landscape plans, consider the appearance of the site at mature plant size.
- Specify vines or planted wall coverings and avoid blank wall spaces to deter graffiti.
- Provide landscape and fencing that does not create hiding places.
- Use transparent, rather than opaque fencing (i.e. tubular steel, wrought iron, or galvanized or powder coated chain link) when not being used as required screening.

- Consider creative solutions to fencing schemes which work aesthetically as well as functionally to allow for visibility (i.e. a combination of masonry with steel tubular or modified wood fence raised off the ground or with staggered spacing of fence boards).
- Select and space plants to maintain visibility through a landscape focusing on lower growing plants near windows and doors. Keep trees limbed up to at least 6-7 feet above the ground to reduce shadows and provide visibility into the area.
- Keep plants around windows low and at least 30 inches away from building entryways for unobstructed views.
- Utilize trees with thin branch crown at mature growth near light poles and fixtures, preferably a cylindrical shaped tree to reduce shadows and effectiveness of lighting. Trees should not be planted within 10 feet of light poles.

LIGHTING

- Provide appropriate levels of lighting for streets, paths, alleys, and parks.
- Lighting systems should increase the visibility of pedestrians, vehicles, and structures for motorists driving at night.



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

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- Provide illumination to allow night-time vision for pedestrians and residents, and to allow pedestrians the ability to see each other. Consider where lighting must be located to allow all parties adequate vision in order to reduce risks involved with walking at night and reduce the risk of trip-and-fall accidents.
- Use lighting systems which will enhance police ability for surveillance, patrol, and pursuit.
- Select lighting that minimizes glare, light pollution, and light trespass. Provide light transition zones so that eyes are able to adjust to darkness or bright lighting when walking in or out of buildings.
- All exterior site and parking lot lighting should conform to the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America Security Lighting for People, Property and Public Spaces Guidelines.

BUILDINGS

- Clearly delineate private property area (such as private yards, entryways, and courtyards) from public spaces through such methods as alternative paving materials, color, and changes in grade.
- Provide unobstructed views of surrounding areas.
- Ensure entrances are visible and are overlooked by windows to allow for views of any criminal activity.
- Avoid landscaping types that are planted close to buildings that may conceal offenders.
- Install bright security lights on motion sensors, photo cells, or timers.
- Use solid-core exterior doors and door-frames with efficient, working locks.
- Provide hallways, elevator banks, and bathroom entries with bright lighting.
- All directional and information signs need to have contrasting lettering so they are clearly visible. In a complex development, all buildings should be signed with the function and address.

PARKING LOTS AND GARAGES

- Avoid enclosed, underground, multi-story garages.
- Install bright lights over driving lanes and parking spaces.
- Use light-colored paint to increase interior light levels.
- Control access and egress with automatic doors and gates.
- Avoid pillars, low walls and recesses that may hide offenders.

PUBLIC SPACES

- Design structures, infrastructure, and public spaces that will promote a safe environment and reduce the opportunity for illegal activity
- Avoid low walls, planters, and water features that encourage use by transient persons. Use fencing, bollards, pavement textures and changing grade levels to enforce the limited access of public and private spaces.
- Avoid placing dark or hidden areas near areas of high activity.
- Install lighting that meets the needs of all intended users, including pedestrians, patrons, and residents.
- Restrict the use of covered outdoor areas to discourage loitering.
- Use single-seating furnishings and small tables as street furniture to discourage use as sleeping areas.

For a review of your project and more specific information on CPTED as a “value added” component to your development, contact Mike Teskey, City of Tacoma CBS program, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Coordination at 253-591-5634.

Disclaimer: The recommendations listed here are made for the purpose of reducing the likelihood of criminal activity and providing for a safer environment. While no guarantee can be stated or implied, the concepts of CPTED have been proven internationally. The City of Tacoma recommends these measures as a public service, with the understanding that there is no way to predict or prevent all crime risks. Local building and fire/life safety codes must be considered when implementing CPTED strategies. All applicable codes (including local zoning, building, and fire codes) must be considered when implementing CPTED strategies. Please see [Tip Sheet L-1400](#) for more information on the Basic CPTED principles.



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