



CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Police Department

Bill White, Mayor

1200 Travis Houston, Texas 77002-6000 713/247-1000

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS: Toni Lawrence Jarvis Johnson Anne Clutterbuck Wanda Adams Michael Sullivan M.J. Khan, P.E. Pam Holm Adrian Garcia
James Rodriguez Peter Brown Sue Lovell Melissa Noriega Ronald C. Green Jolanda Jones CITY CONTROLLER: Annise D. Parker

August 20, 2008

Harold L. Hurtt
Chief of Police



Mr. Alan Lipman, A. Ex. Director
Jewish Community Center
5601 South Braeswood
Houston, Texas 77096

Dear Mr. Alan Lipman:

The Public Affairs Division, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Unit has completed the security assessment of the five identified facilities. The following suggestions are made for the purpose of reducing the likelihood of criminal activity. While no guarantee can be stated or implied, the concepts of CPTED have proven themselves internationally. The Houston Police Department understands that there is no way to predict or prevent all crime risk.

Daytime and nighttime surveys were made on the facilities as indicated in the following information. Additionally, on Tuesday August 12, 2008 an aerial survey was conducted of the main Jewish Community Center facility including the Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center.

Security of any facility can always be improved. Time, money, operational concern make your choices anything but straight forward. We commend your organization for professionally addressing this issue.

Sincerely,

Stephen T. Daniel Sr. Com. Liaison

Std:std





**Crime Prevention
Through Environmental Design Survey
Confidential Information**

**Jewish Community Center & Associated Facilities
5601 South Braeswood
Houston, Texas**

**Conducted by:
Stephen T. Daniel
Senior Community Liaison**

**Houston Police Department
Public Affairs Division**

Information contained in this document has been prepared by the Houston Police Department's CPTED Unit, for the owner of the named property. All information contained within this document is confidential.



Introduction to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on the premise that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidents and fear of crime and an improvement of the quality of life.

CPTED assessments use four key concepts: **Surveillance (both natural and mechanical)**, **Access Control (both natural and mechanical)**, **Territorial Enforcement**, and **Maintenance**.

Surveillance is the ability to observe into and back out of an area. **Natural Surveillance** is the placement of physical features, activities, and people in a way that maximizes visibility. **Mechanical Surveillance** employs the use of cameras, mirrors, and other equipment that allows monitoring of remote areas.

Access Control is the limitation of access to and egress from a specific area. **Mechanical Access Control** employs the use of gates and associated control devices to limit ingress and egress to and from a given area. **Natural Access Control** is the physical guidance of

people coming and going from a place by strategic placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting.

Territorial Reinforcement is the use of the physical attributes that express ownership, such as fences, pavement, art, signage, and lighting. CPTED specialists stress the concept of the “Broken Window Theory” when evaluating a property. According to this theory, when physical disorder occurs on a property and is tolerated, civil disorder follows. If a property owner openly displays a lack of care for his property, he will attract an element that will openly misuse the property. Keeping a property clean and well maintained demonstrates an owner’s desire to maintain order. The physical “Curb Appeal” directly influences how tenants, visitors, and other elements of the community use and perceive the property.

Maintenance allows for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose. Maintenance insures curb appeal and asserts ownership, pride, and a sense of care, which discourages illegal activity. Maintenance prevents the reduction of visibility from landscaping overgrowth and obstructed or inoperative lighting.

CPTED, allied with active community involvement and an awareness of crime in one’s environment, aids in developing strategies to build safer communities. The Houston Police Department encourages citizens to employ CPTED Strategies and to develop a collaborative relationship with local law enforcement officials. The department’s **Positive Interaction Program (PIP)**, holds monthly meetings in each police division which educates the public on police functions and public safety issues. These forums allow participants to directly interact and communicate with officers who patrol their individual neighborhoods. The community is also provided with crime statistics for their neighborhoods. Information on the PIP Program can be obtained from the Centralized PIP Coordinator at **713. 308. 9079**.

The Department encourages apartment owners and managers to participate in its **Blue Star Multi Housing Program**. This three-phase crime prevention program is designed to involve owners, managers, and residents of multi family communities in a collaborative effort to combat illegal activity in their community. Any apartment manager, owner, or other interested party may attend the first phase of the program, The Manager’s Training Seminar, which is held several times a year in various sections of the city. This eight-hour seminar provides valuable information on The Blue Star Program, CPTED, Landlord Tenant Law, Resident Screening, Recognizing Gang and Narcotic Activity, and Interacting with the Police. Information on this program can be obtained from the Multi Family Administrative Unit at **713. 308. 3900**.

Survey Subject: **Jewish Community Center**
5601 South Braeswood
Houston, Texas 77096
713-729-3200
Beat: 15E10

Jewish Community Center/West Houston
1120 Dairy Ashford Rd.
Houston, Texas 77079
281-556-5567

Merfisht Teen Center
9000 S. Rice
Houston, Texas 77096
713-838-7200
Beat: 15E10

Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center
5601 S. Braeswood
Houston, Texas 77096
713-551-7200
Beat: 15E10

Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center
1120 Dairy Ashford
Houston, Texas 77079

Primary Contact: Mr. Alan Lipman
Assistant Executive Director
The Jewish Community Center of Houston

Survey Dates: Jewish Community Center
Daytime survey: July 8, 2008
Nighttime survey: July 16, 2008

Merfish Teen Center
Daytime survey: July 8, 2008
Nighttime survey: July 16, 2008

Jewish Community Center/West Houston
Daytime survey: July 21, 2008
Nighttime survey: Aug. 11, 2008

Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center
Daytime survey: July 8, 2008
Nighttime survey: July 16, 2008

Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center
Daytime survey: July 21, 2008
Nighttime survey: Aug. 11, 2008



Summary: An interview was first conducted with Mr. Lipman regarding policies and procedures at the five facilities. An inspection of each property was conducted and field notes were made. The Jewish Community Center ranked well above average for facilities of its type. The Merfish Teen Center and Jewish Community Center/West Houston were

average for facilities of their type. Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center was superior in access control. Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center was average in access control.

The first and most important element of security was certainly present. That being an awareness of security. This was evidenced by the very request for this survey. The fact that periodic security meetings are conducted shows a continuing awareness of the potential threat.

The area of greatest weakness for all facilities except Bertha Alyce was access control. The attitude and culture for access control observed in the Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center should be replicated in all facilities. The JCC sets the standard for most facilities in lighting.

Most aspects of security involve two common elements which increase security as they progress. Each organization must determine how much of these two elements they are willing to incur in order to extend their security. The two elements are **cost** and **inconvenience**. Generally, the greater the investment in dollars, the greater the inconvenience to personnel and the public, the higher the level of security.

**Jewish Community Center
&
Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center**

Access Control - The assets of greatest value at the JCC are the children. Especially in the summer, numerous programs are under way. While entrances are monitored by camera, no motion detector exists to alert the monitor to observe the action at the door. Most threatening is the front door. Individuals are allowed to walk into the facility without signing in, presenting identification, or stating their business. Further, they are allowed to walk through out the facility without any visible means of identification by staff.

We suggest that all individuals entering the facility are identified and their purpose for being there is validated. HPD will be glad to provide specifics on logging in and badging of individuals should you request such.

A key control program should be maintained and seriously adhered to. A periodic audit of all keys and who holds them is recommended.

Established door cameras should be maintained and up graded as needed. Additional cameras covering the various parking lots and transit areas should be added. It would be advantageous to have monitors in a location where an individual could observe them real time. In order for this to be realistic various devices should be installed to compliment most cameras, i.e. motion detectors or door contacts that would annunciate activity in the camera's view.

The installation of a facility wide burglar alarm system would raise access control to a higher level. Should the JCC desire, HPD can make some specific suggestions of areas to protect.

Window laminate would strengthen windows from storms and explosions. While it would not hold the glass necessarily in tack, it tends to hold broken pieces together to minimize the flying projectiles. It also slows down breaking and entering.

Access control to the Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center appeared above average. The window glass between the receptionist and the mantrap should be strengthened. Enunciators in the view of the security cameras would assist in calling attention to activity in those monitored areas. Classroom doors should be lockable from the inside.

Subcontractors/Vendors – applies to all facilities

All subcontractors and vendors should wear proper identification and be authorized access to the facility. The JCC should incorporate in its agreements that subcontractors and vendors will conduct competent background checks on their employees to insure they are of reputable character and have no history which would indicate they are a threat to either children or adults.



Perimeter Control

Perimeter control along Braeswood is good. The implementation of automatic gates is good. The shrubs along the fence line should be removed in order to provide more natural surveillance of the property.

Perimeter control along Atwell Drive does not exist. This is both positive and negative. While it provides open access to the front of the property and excellent natural surveillance, it also presents a welcoming appearance. The negative is, it does allow individuals unrestricted access to the subterranean play area by the front of the building. Calls for Service do not indicate any significant vehicle theft. Should auto theft become an issue, then consideration of fencing and gates for a limited area on Atwell should be considered.

The new perimeter fencing down the property line between the JCC and residential homes is an excellent step. If not already planned, gates should be considered in order to control traffic access to the pool, tennis, and school area.



Vegetation around Mullins Street to S. Braeswood should be maintained. The vehicle gate at Mullins Street should be maintained and in good repair. Effort should be made to insure the gate is secured at all times except when actually needed for access.



Wood fencing obscuring the play area of the school eliminates all natural surveillance. This would be better served by metal fencing as employed along S. Braeswood near the outdoor tennis courts.

Trespass

A trespass affidavit should be on file with the Southwest Division of HPD. They are located at 4503 Beechnut Houston, Texas. “No Trespass” signs should be displayed around the perimeter at each entrance and exit. It is suggested that the signs be in both English and Spanish. JCC security should notify HPD of anyone they deem to be trespassing

Personnel – Backgrounds – *applies to all facilities*

For most organizations the greatest security threat unfortunately is from within. It is critical in order to limit both your security exposure and legal liability exposure that quality background investigations be conducted on all employees. These should be refreshed on an annual basis. Some organizations conduct these refreshers annually in conjunction with annual employee performance reviews. Policies should be in place requiring all employees to advise management of any change in their status i.e. an arrest, indictment, or conviction for any crime.

Personnel – Training – *applies to all facilities*

Security awareness through regular personnel training is vital to a secure facility. Your staff is the best security mechanism available to you. Keep them aware and up to date on security concerns. HPD is available to provide speakers for employee meetings to maintain security awareness. Developing a security climate of awareness not fear is of greatest benefit to both the organization and its employees.

Staff should be advised of a panic code word, which may be used during times of duress. This code word should be changed on a quarterly basis. The use of the code word should be discussed at each staff-training meeting. With the implementation of ID badges and visitor badges, staff should be trained to politely challenge anyone they see in the facility without proper identification.

Safe Areas

Safe areas which are readily available to staff and clients in all areas of the facility should be maintained. Staff should be trained to direct fellow employees and clients into these areas and secure the door upon notification of an immediate on site threat. They should also be trained in how to authenticate the identity of proper authorities before granting access to the safe area.

Employee Exit Interview – *applies to all facilities*

All employees upon their departure from employment with the JCC should engage in an exit interview with management, which among other things should include a security checklist. This list should include the returning of all keys, the changing of all codes and access privileges to computers, the returning of ID badges. Notice should be given to all remaining staff of the departure of said employee.

JCC Lighting

Most areas of the main facility at 5601 S. Braeswood are very well lit. One area of improvement is the first entrance on Atwell coming from S. Braeswood. The street light is obscured by the overgrowth of trees. A request of the city should be made to trim back these trees. Contact the City of Houston at the 311 help line. Provide them with the location and block number and they should trim the trees back. The difficulty is that the resident at this location has no security lighting. This with the obscured street light creates a black hole at the entrance when viewed from the lighted parking area.

One light appeared to be burned out in the Northeast parking area. A regular light survey should be made in order to rapidly replace burned out bulbs. The lighting along Braeswood is good with the exception of the new tennis courts. The quadrant of the facility is totally dark. These lights may not have been brought on line from the new construction. The sooner they are on the better.

The area between the Jewish Federation and the JCC front entrance provides too many shadows, which could provide concealment. The second entrance on Atwell from Braeswood is very well lit. There is a sidewalk between the pool fence and the brick wall with a gate, which is very dark. The rear entrance off of Mullins is very dark. Possible trimming of trees by the city would improve this.

Vehicles

All marked JCC vehicles should be secured when not in use. Once the automatic gates are operating, parking between the school and the outdoor tennis courts would be the best option. A walk around inspection by the driver should be conducted before use. This inspection should include an observation of any item affixed to the vehicle that seems out of place. Also any wire, string, tape, or other binding material observed should be investigated. Should any objects be found which are not easily identified, they should be treated as suspicious and HPD called to further investigate. Any dripping liquids should be investigated to verify it is AC condensation, oil, transmission fluid, or coolant.

Any suspicious vehicles, especially left over night should be treated with caution.



Merfish Teen Center

Access Control – The facility is designed in such a manner that lends itself to good access control, however it is not employed. Gates were open during all hours of observation, both day and night. There was no control over the front door. After walking into the facility and down a hallway, I was challenged by a senior staff member. I had exposure to 30 to 50 children before being challenged.

The front door should have an electronic locking device controlled by someone of responsibility. Staff and campers should be readily identifiable. Any visitors should be signed in, the reason for their visit verified, and a visitors ID worn.

All gates should be locked requiring individuals to enter via the front door, which should be controlled.

A key control program should be maintained.

Video and recording of the front door is recommended. The ability to monitor this real time from the JCC is also recommended. A panic button in the area of the front door, which is monitored at the JCC, would serve as a good back up.

A safe area and panic code, as well as a public announcement system would be valuable should a threat arrive at the front entrance. A parking lot camera with enunciator at the gate would give the front door monitor a heads up to people arriving at the Center.



Perimeter Control

Fencing is good along Rice Blvd. and N. Braeswood. Attention should be given that spaces do not develop that allow individuals to crawl under this fence. Fencing from the each street to the back corner needs maintaining. Vegetation provides too many places for concealment. Victims could easily be forced to this fence line and assaulted. Clearing of vegetation would be beneficial.

Trespass

A trespass affidavit should be on file with the Southwest Division of HPD. They are located at 4503 Beechnut Houston, Texas. "No Trespass" signs should be displayed around the perimeter at each entrance and exit. We suggest that the signs be in both English and Spanish. JCC security should notify HPD of anyone they deem to be trespassing



Lighting

As you drive into the parking area at night the tennis court lights shine into your eyes. This reduces the ability of patrol officers to view activity on the grounds. Redirecting

them would be beneficial. There is a disparity between lighting levels in the parking area and the activity field. Bright lights in the parking area reduce your ability to view the activity field.

If some interior lights were left on it would improve the ability of patrol officers to view any activity inside the building.

The area of the parking exit gate is dark and provides places to hide from the view of a patrolling officer.



**Jewish Community Center/West Houston
&
Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center**

Access Control – The greatest natural advantage for this facility is the fact that it sits off of Dairy Ashford a reasonable distance, thus not calling attention to itself. Access control for the Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center front door was very good. Access control for the Community Center was not present. The south end door to the Childhood Center was not controlled. It is recommended that the south door be locked when staff are not on the play ground. A camera of the playground, monitored at the front desk would provide

an extra measure of safety by allowing others to observe the activities and call for assistance if needed. Classroom doors should be lockable from the inside.

Some type of access control needs to be implemented at the Community Center, either human or electronic. This also compromises security to the pool area where the school children are on occasion.

The Childhood Center should maintain and practice threat response via code words, facility wide announcements, safe areas and request for assistance from the Houston Police Department.

Perimeter Control

Fencing along the south border next to the Tully Field Parking is reasonably good, but caution should be taken to insure this fence is well maintained. The gate is left open for convenience during the day and was found open at night. This should be secured after staff arrive to limit access from the field. Additionally, the low fence along the south playground and the courtyard should be raised to the height of the other fences. It is not a deterrent to anyone walking in off the street. Vegetation around the power transformer in the north playground should be cleared. Classroom doors should be lockable from the inside.

Trespass

A trespass affidavit should be on file with the Westside Division of HPD. They are located at 3203 S. Dairy Ashford Houston, Texas. "No Trespass" signs should be displayed around the perimeter at each entrance and exit. It is suggested that the signs be in both English and Spanish. JCC security should notify HPD of anyone they deem to be trespassing

Lighting

The installation of exterior lights at this facility is good, however the maintenance needs improvement. Three floodlights on the gym building would come on and off. There was improved parking lot lighting due to the overflow lighting from the Wells Fargo building next door. The breezeway lights were good, however two of them flickered on and off. The gym building flood on the southeast corner was not working. The gym lights along the south side of the building were good. There were no lights visible on the south side playground. The trees at the south playground block any light from the stadium. The east side of the school needs lighting. There are several dark spots.

With the exception of the east side of the school and south playground, lights are in place and well positioned, however maintenance is lacking.

End of Report