

Information Packet (keep)

- History
- Guidelines
- What is the Blue Star Multi-Housing Program
- Three Phases of Certification
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)



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The Houston Police Department Blue Star Multi-Housing Program

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Blue Star Multi-Housing Program

The Blue Star Multi-Housing Program is a proactive program designed to reduce the potential for crime and to raise awareness in apartment managers, owners, and residents.

About the Blue Star Multi-Housing Program:

Houston's Police Department's Blue Star Multi-Housing Program is designed to be a cooperative effort between apartment managers / owners, apartment residents and law enforcement, to abate crime and to enhance the quality of life for citizens living within multi family communities. The awarding of a Blue Star designation means that the apartment community has successfully completed all three phases of the program and has met the minimum standards for certification. It is hoped that, over time, many apartment managers and prospective residents will recognize that the Blue Star Multi-Housing certification will promote a safer and cleaner community with a higher quality of life.

How the Program Works:

Houston Police officers and other crime prevention specialists train apartment managers and owners in the concepts of Blue Star and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) in an eight-hour class. After successful completion of the class, managers can request the Blue Star certification; but only after the CPTED Authorization and CPTED Preparation Checklist have been completed. The apartment community also must have a favorable CPTED survey of the property, according to standards established by the Houston Police Department. The CPTED Survey addresses issues such as lighting, perimeter fencing, landscaping, on-site security and crime prevention efforts, tenant screening procedures, etc.)

Once the CPTED survey is completed, the apartment community is required to satisfy all of the deficiencies cited in the report. Once deficiencies are resolved and upon the successful completion of an apartment-sponsored safety social, the apartment is awarded the Blue Star Multi-Housing certification. Annual inspections will be performed by Houston Police Department personnel to ensure that the high standards of the Blue Star Multi-Housing Program are being maintained. While no one can guarantee crime free community, the Blue Star certification indicates a shared commitment to reduce or prevent crime by management and police within the community.

For further information, please contact:

**Houston Police Department
Apartment Enforcement Unit
1200 Travis, 7th floor
(713) 308-3900**

Guidelines to Become Blue Star Certified

Phase I: (Eight hour training) Blue Certificate

Phase II: (CPTED Survey) Red Certificate

Before a CPTED Survey can be begun on a property two forms must be signed and faxed to the Apartment Enforcement Unit at (713) 308-3901.

- CPTED Authorization Form
- CPTED Preparation Checklist

Once these forms are received your property will be placed on the Phase II appointment list. You will receive a call when the CPTED Survey can be conducted and the name of the Officer that will be conducting the survey.

Once a CPTED Survey has been completed on a property, the property will have 60 days to complete the deficiencies found on the property. Once the deficiencies have been corrected, contact the Officer assigned to your property and they will proceed with a follow-up or call The Apartment Enforcement Unit at (713) 308-3900.

When the Officer completes the follow-up and there are corrections that still need to be made, the property will have an additional 30 days. If you need additional time you **MUST** contact the officer and request additional time.

Once the 90 days have expired the property will have to wait a year to start the process over again (Phase I).

Blue Star Certified Properties do not have to fill out these forms, their properties will automatically be scheduled for a CPTED Survey upon their expiration.

Phase III: (Safety Social) Green Certificate

The property will conduct a resident safety event onsite.

*******URGENT INFORMATION*******

Do not wait until a year has passed to start Phase II. If the year has passed you will have to attend the Blue Star Manager's Training class again (Phase I).

If your property is Remedial or Fast you cannot be Blue Star Certified until your property has been off the Remedial or Fast Plan for a year.

WHAT IS THE BLUE STAR MULTI - HOUSING PROGRAM?

Where it Began?

The Blue Star Multi Housing Program began in 1999 in the City of Houston. The program was modeled from the CRIME FREE MULTI HOUSING PROGRAM in Mesa Arizona.

The Purpose

Houston's Police Department's Blue Star Multi Housing Program is a voluntary program designed to be a cooperative effort between apartment managers, owners, residents and law enforcement, to abate crime and to enhance the quality of life for citizens living within multi family communities; to keep drugs and other illegal activity out of their community.

Who should Attend?

Property owners, managers, leasing staff, maintenance personnel and others in the management team should attend the entire 8 hour training program. It is also recommended that police officers attend the training to understand the civil nature of rental communities, and to establish a rapport with managers of rental properties.

Cost

The Blue Star Multi-Housing Program is a free program provided by the Houston Police Department.

THREE PHASES OF CERTIFICATION

Phase 1 (Eight hour training) Blue Certificate

After completion of the eight hour training program each participant will receive a certificate.

The **first certificate** received will be the eight hour Manager Training which is to be framed and displayed in the leasing office, or in a prominent place where applicants are sure to see it. Prospective residents should be told as soon as possible that the property management is working with the police to keep the community safe. In order to display the certificate managers must have completed all three phases.

If there is no leasing office, a certificate can be displayed in a 3- ring notebook with other materials used in the **Blue Star Multi Housing Program**. The manager or owner should show the notebook to prospective residents.

Phase 2 (CPTED Survey Red Certificate

In the second phase of the program a representative of the police department will inspect the rental property to assess physical security and general appearance of the property.

If the property meets the minimum requirements, they will be given a second certificate. A **second certificate** will certify that the property has met the minimum CPTED security requirements of the Blue Star Multi Housing Program.

Phase 3 (Safety Social) Green Certificate

In the third and final phase of the program, the apartment community will conduct a Safety Social for residents at the rental property. Management is responsible for providing the food, non-alcoholic drinks and entertainment for this event. It is also recommended that property managers raffle door prizes as an added incentive to draw residents to the meeting. It is necessary to conduct at least one (1) meeting per year to maintain membership in the Blue Star Multi Housing Program.

Houston Police Department Blue Star Multi-Housing Program



16 Minimum Requirements

1. Eye Viewers in all exterior doors.
2. Deadbolts on all exterior doors.
3. Three inch screws in striker plates.
4. Lift and slide protection on sliding doors.
5. Adequate security lighting per police recommendations.
6. Properly trimmed landscaping per police recommendations.
7. Address according to City Ordinance requirements.
8. Site map at vehicular entrance to property.
9. Access/pedestrian gates in working condition and permits current with HFD standards.
10. Trespass Affidavit (renewed every year and if the owner or manager changes).
11. No violations of City Codes per police recommendations.
12. Applicants must be screened for criminal history by management.
13. An analysis of criminal activity as defined by the Apartment Security Ordinance; shall be conducted and may be used as a determining factor in achieving final certification.
14. If you employ a Security or Law Enforcement Officer they must be in uniform while patrolling the property.
15. Provide a parking decal or permit to all residents with a vehicle.
16. Apartment community is not a party to any kind of litigation involving an allegation of a criminal and/or civil offense; occurring the apartment community and/or on the property.

CPTED

(CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN)

5 BASIC CONCEPTS

I. NATURAL SURVEILLANCE (increases visibility)

"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.

II. NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL (restricts access)

Natural access control is the capacity to limit who can gain entry to a building, and how. An apartment building with dozens of unsecured access gates and poorly labeled signage can not hope to control comings and goings. Intruders have free rein, and apartments must rely on other security measures. Without natural access control, a much greater emphasis must be placed on surveillance, territoriality, and relying on security to step in and compensate.

III. TERRITORIALITY (promotes a sense of ownership)

Territoriality is the capacity to establish authority over environment -- making a statement about who is in charge, who belongs, and who is an outsider.

Signs directing visitors or spelling out rules reinforce territoriality and influence behavior; having parking permits for residence show that they belong on the property. Territoriality is the capacity to establish authority over environment -- making a statement about who is in charge, who belongs, and who is an outsider. For example, graffiti is a way that gangs establish territoriality; schools can take it back with vigilant maintenance.

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IV. MAINTENANCE (deters offenders)

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.

V. ACTIVITY SUPPORT (the placing of activity where individuals become part of the natural surveillance)

The general design concept of activity support involves methods for reinforcing existing or new activities as a means of making effective use of the built environment. This design concept originates in the observation that in a given community, resources capable of sustaining constructive community activities are often underused. Support of these activities can bring a vital and coalescing improvement to the community, along with a reduction of the vulnerable social and physical gaps that permit criminal intrusions.

CPTED implements this concept by locating playgrounds where the children's parents can observe them at play, by placing reading or activity rooms near a building entrance, or by designing attractive mini-malls to foster constructive social activities.

WHAT ARE SOME CPTED TACTICS?

APARTMENT BUILDINGS:

- provide common spaces to encourage tenant interaction
- minimize the number of units sharing a common entrance
- equip entrances with an intercom system
- ensure hallways are well-lit
- install deadbolt locks and peep holes on unit doors
- provide children's areas that can be easily observed
- provide windows that allow for surveillance in laundry rooms

PARKING LOTS AND GARAGES:

- avoid enclosed, underground, multi-story garages
- install bright lights over driving lanes and parking spaces
- use paint to increase light levels
- control access and egress with automatic doors and gates
- avoid pillars and recesses that may hide offenders

PUBLIC SPACES:

- encourage use by legitimate users
- avoid placing dark, and or hidden areas near activity nodes
- install appropriate lighting
- avoid placing covered outdoor areas where loitering may be a problem

REQUIREMENTS FOR LANDSCAPING

LANDSCAPING:

Tree canopies should not obstruct lighting, and mature shrubs around stairs, windows and building entrances as well as common areas should not create entrapment zones or concealment (places to hide).

Trees should be planted away from walls, fences, and buildings so they cannot be used to enable someone to climb over or onto them. They should also be planted away from light poles so they do not block illumination on the ground, and from video cameras so they do not block their fields of view.

Trim all tree canopies obstructing wall pack and flood lights. Trim all tree branches **six to seven feet** from the ground as well so as not to obstruct sightlines from the ground to porches and apartment entrances. Trim all trees canopies in common areas which obstruct lighting, and trim trees and shrubs between buildings along pedestrian walkways.

Remove or trim overgrown shrubs from the bottom up and to around **three feet** in height to allow better visibility around apartment windows, entry points, as well as approaches to stairways and buildings.

Landscaping should not disrupt critical areas of Natural Surveillance.

- **Parking lots**
- **Pedestrian paths**
- **Entry doors**
- **Windows**

• Ground plants and shrubbery between sidewalks, driveways, doors or gates, should be maintained at a height of not more than (3) feet.

• Ground plants under windows should be maintained at a height that is below the window sill.

Trees should be trimmed so that the lower branches are more than six (7) feet off the ground. To provide shade for pedestrians, trees should be located adjacent to walks leading from street frontages and major parking areas to major building entrances and site areas. Conflict with light standards should be avoided in order to maintain illumination levels.

BLUE STAR C.P.T.E.D. LANDSCAPING:

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is based on four concepts, Natural Surveillance, Natural Access Control, Territorial Reinforcement, and Maintenance.

The concept of **Natural Surveillance** is that criminals feel less comfortable in areas where they are being watched, or may be seen. **Keeping shrubs and trees trimmed to maintain the feeling of openness and visibility makes the criminal element feel like they are at risk of getting caught.** On the other hand, legitimate users of an area feel safer because they can see what is going on around them and can see potential threats and respond quicker. A property with overgrown and unkempt landscape is an invitation for criminals.

Natural Access Control utilizes landscape plants and other natural design elements to channel people away from unauthorized areas. For instance a paved walkway lined with flowers strongly suggests the approved route to a proper entrance. **A thorny vine or rose bush can restrict access to windows or a graffiti-plagued wall, and add beauty to the property as well.** The goal of using landscape plants is not necessarily to prevent, but to discourage trespassing into unauthorized areas. This is accomplished in a more subtle way rather than overwhelming the environment with the presence of “hard” security measures.

Territorial Reinforcement is based on the idea that criminals feel less comfortable operating in areas where they perceive someone is in control. Territorial Reinforcement utilizes “Pride in Ownership” to send a clear message that the people responsible for a property take pride in it and will challenge someone coming there to commit crimes. **Utilizing decorative pavers or colored concrete and freshly planted flowers to identify private property gives residents a sense of territoriality and projects the image that someone is responsible for the property.** Criminals are less likely to commit crimes where they feel that there are people who take an interest in the property and will protect it.

Maintenance Care and maintenance enable continued use of a space for its intended purpose. It also serves as an additional expression of ownership.

- Uncut grass and weeds make a home or area look like it is not inhabited. It sends a message to criminals that no one cares and may be inviting to criminals to victimize the property.

- Owners of a business, home, and/or apartment building that maintain their property make it inviting to potential customers, guests, renters. A manicured landscape, a clean and repaired building, proper lighting, and absence of trash will help to make people feel safe.

Design Strategy for Maintenance:

- Trim shrubs and trees regularly. Keep grass cut and eliminate weeds.

GOALS OF LIGHTING

Interior Lighting:

- Energy efficient (used consistently)
- Tamper proof fixture (use special screws)
- Break Resistant Lens (Polycarbonate-Lexan)

Exterior Lighting:

- Illuminate building numbers
- Illuminate building accesses
- Illuminate front and back areas

Exterior lighting needs to be bright enough for you to see 100 feet and it helps if you can identify colors. Good lighting is definitely a deterrent to criminals because they don't want to be seen or identified. Apartment management needs to have a system in place to periodically inspect and replace lighting outages.

Ground Lighting:

- Provide a cone of light downward to walkways
- Provide a level of lighting between buildings to distinguish forms and movement

If you take pride in your grounds -- the tasteful trees, the statuesque shrubbery, the beautiful garden - why not enjoy them by night as well as day? The right outdoor lighting allows you to derive the full benefits of your costly landscaping after the sun goes down. It also provides better safety and security. **Safety:** good lighting on steps, walks and driveways help avoid accidents. **Security:** floodlighting and other landscape lighting will deter prowlers and vandals.

SITE MAPS:

A site map shall be at every entrance gate. (Is a City Ordinance)

NOTES