

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

The Houston Police Department offers Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design surveys of neighborhoods, apartment communities, businesses, homes, schools and other government agencies, and places of worship.

The use of CPTED concepts has shown that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime and an improvement in the quality of life.

CPTED consists of four key concepts that overlap and complement each other:

- **Natural Surveillance** relates to the placement of physical features, activities, and people in a way that maximizes visibility. For example, *eyes on the street*, which basically means people watching out for each other and the removal of any obstacle that would prevent people from being able to see throughout the property.
- **Natural Access Control** looks at the physical guidance of people coming to or going from a space through the strategic placement of entrances and exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting. Access control is aimed at providing the space for the intended user by keeping out those that do not belong. A good example of access control is fencing and automatic gates in apartment complexes.
- **Territorial Reinforcement** is the use of attributes such as fences, pavement treatments, art, signs and lighting that express ownership and pride on a property. The lack of ownership in apartments or other rental properties provides a challenge to instill a sense of ownership and pride.
- **Maintenance** allows for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose and also serves as another expression of ownership. Appropriate and timely maintenance prevents the reduction of visibility from overgrown landscaping and obstructed or inoperable lighting. Often, once maintenance declines and deterioration sets in, crime rises.

Although the use of CPTED principles are not intended to make the property crime-proof, the *probability* of crime should be reduced if the CPTED strategies are properly applied and maintained.

CPTED recommendations are seldom in conflict with more traditional forms of crime prevention such as security systems, area watch groups, and target-hardening techniques.

The CPTED section also provides presentations to civic groups, P.I.P. meetings or any other organization, needing to be informed on the effective use of CPTED principles.

For further information or to request a CPTED survey or presentation, please contact:

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