

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)

Part 1

[00:09] - Chris Butler

Crime and fear of crime are real and important issues for all of us.

On a daily basis, crime can affect the way people live their lives and in turn impact the viability of business, the success of a park or playground, the use of a public toilet, how safe we feel when walking in our neighbourhood and whether we decide to go out at night.

How safe we think a place is will often determine how we go about our daily lives.

But as planners, engineers and designers, there are things we can do to make things better.

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While law enforcement and punishment are widely recognised means of tackling crime, there's a strong acknowledgement of the significant role that crime prevention can play in managing and reducing crime.

One such approach is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED.

CPTED provides a framework for incorporating crime prevention within our day-to-day design and planning by focusing on reducing the opportunity for people to commit crime and therefore lessening the motivation for someone to offend.

Today, I'm going to walk you through the basics of CPTED, using local examples from New Zealand to show you how it works in practice.

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CPTED is a crime prevention philosophy that has been around since the 1960s. Its origins were born out of the urban renewal strategies and city planning at the time in North America.

CPTED considers how we design our buildings and environments in a way that reduces both actual and perceived crime.

It does this by increasing the perceived likelihood of detection and apprehension known to be the single biggest deterrent of crime, while at the same time encouraging legitimate or lawful use of the space in positive social interaction.

The key considerations for CPTED are how's the space designed, how is it managed and how is it being used.

CPTED can be applied at a micro scale, so on the design of a shop entrance or the fencing of a property, and it can also be applied at a macro scale, for example in the design of a new residential neighbourhood, shopping centre or walking track.

It's also important to understand that CPTED principles can be applied both proactively and reactively.

Proactively in the design and layout of a new building or space, and reactively when Police, Council or the wider community have identified an existing environment as being unsafe or subject to criminal activity.

And CPTED principles can be used to guide improvements and changes to the space to address the risk.

At the heart of all this, it is important to remember crime occurs for many different reasons and cannot be prevented by well-designed places alone.

CPTED is an important tool with proven benefits. But as only one of many tools in reducing crime.

Remember, the key considerations for CPTED are how is the space designed, how is it managed and how is it being used?

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So what are the CPTED principles of guidance and how can it help? In New Zealand, we have the National Guidelines for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

This document was released in 2005 by the New Zealand Ministry of Justice and comes in two parts.

Part one covers off the seven qualities of safer places, which I likened to your tools or criteria to assess an environmental place.

These will be the focus of this discussion.

Part two is the implementation guide, and this looks at ways to implement CPTED, how to undertake a safety audit or site visit, and the things to look out for and how CPTED is incorporated in our planning framework in New Zealand.

[03:16]

The seven qualities of Safer Places.

Access. Talks about safe movement and connections, places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient and safe movement without compromising security.

Surveillance and sightlines. The concept of seeing and being seen. Places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked in clear sight lines and good lighting provide for maximum visibility.

Layout. Clear and logical orientation. Places are laid out to discourage crime, enhance perception of safety, and help orientation and wayfinding.

Activity mix. The concept of eyes on the street. Places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times for promoting compatible mix of uses and an increased use of public spaces.

A sense of ownership. Showing the spaces cared for. Places that promote a sense of ownership, respect and territorial responsibility in community.

Quality environments. Well-designed, managed and maintained environments. Places that provide a quality environment, a design with management and maintenance in mind to discourage crime and promote community safety in the present and in the future.

Physical protection. Using active security measures. Places that include necessary, well-designed security features and elements like fencing, lighting and CCTV.