Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles

CPTED is about designing safer, more welcoming places for people to live, work and play.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a concept based on the idea that the built environment be designed or modified to reduce the opportunities for crime and increase the perception of safety. CPTED focuses on the interaction between the physical environment, human behaviour and the social dynamics within a space. These are the four key principles of CPTED:

1. **Natural Surveillance**:

This principle emphasises the importance of designing spaces in ways that increase the likelihood of people observing activities in those areas. Well-lit areas, open sightlines and strategically placed windows or pathways help encourage informal surveillance, which can deter criminal behaviour. The idea is that when potential offenders know they are more likely to be seen, they may be less likely to commit crimes.

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2. **Territoriality**:

Territoriality is about defining and reinforcing boundaries between public and private spaces. The clear demarcation of ownership or control over a space (whether through fences, signage or other means) creates a sense of ownership and responsibility. People are more likely to take care of spaces that they feel are "theirs" and are less likely to tolerate disorder, which can help prevent crime. This can include the use of different textures, plantings or levels to delineate boundaries.

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3. **Access Control**:

This principle focuses on regulating and controlling access to spaces. By limiting opportunities for offenders to enter certain areas (e.g. through gates, locked doors or strategic placement of physical barriers), the likelihood of criminal activity is reduced. Access control also includes designing pathways or entrances in a way that discourages undesirable access while encouraging legitimate use. This can include eliminating concealed spaces, isolated areas and places for people to hide.

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4. **Activity Support**:

Activity support is about promoting legitimate, positive activities in a given space to ensure that it is regularly used and actively supervised at all times of the day and night. A well-used space is less likely to attract criminal behaviour. Encouraging social interactions, community engagement or even the design of spaces that accommodate recreational or work-related activities can foster a sense of security and ownership.

When these principles are effectively applied, they create environments that are less inviting to criminals and more conducive to positive, community-based interactions. The aim is to reduce opportunities for crime, increase feelings of safety and enhance the overall quality of life in a space.

Further information can been found in ISO22341 "Guidelines for crime prevention through environmental design"