

Virginia Beach

“A Community for a Lifetime”

Virginia Beach is committed to providing a safe and healthy city in all planning and decision-making. We are looking to continually increase citizen’s awareness, capacity, and knowledge in order to promote individual, family, and community health, safety and wellness.

The “Safer by Design”, or CPTED, concept is one of the most impressive and cost effective primary crime prevention strategies available. It considers crime risks at the front end when designing buildings, open spaces, etc. While it might also involve the application of traditional security measures, the concept focuses on making buildings less crime-prone without turning them into fortresses. This is achieved through subtle changes in design based on how, when, and where crime typically occur.



A good Maintenance plan and this Landscape design provide for Natural Surveillance opportunity in this strip shopping center, also allowing citizens in their normal activities to observe the space around them. Plant selection, it’s location, and it’s growth rate/maturation is important to consider when designing a space. The wrong tree or shrub can have an adverse affect on surveillance opportunities by users.

NOTE: CPTED principles are site specific. Be aware of the need to consider the type of use, the users, the area, the demographics, adjacent uses, etc., when applying CPTED design principles.

For More Information, Contact:

Virginia Beach Planning Department
2405 Courthouse Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757-385-4621)

OR

Virginia Beach Police Department
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441 Princess Anne Road, Bldg 15
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
57-385-1006)

www.VBgov.com



A Certified Crime Prevention Community
“occasio facit furem”
(Opportunity Makes the Thief)

PD307 (01/2017)

CITY OF
VIRGINIA BEACH

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design



Building Today for
a Safer Tomorrow

Designing For a Safer Virginia Beach

Have you wondered why some properties are victimized and others are not and what makes one property more susceptible to criminal attack than others? Well, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED (pronounced sep-ted) holds some of those answers. Since the 1970's, CPTED has been attributed to the concept that is based upon the belief that:

“The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime as well as an improvement in the quality of life.”



Use of glass aids in allowing school staff to see visitors as they enter the school through the main entrance. This serves as a form of Access Control.

We constantly respond to our environment, whether we are aware of it or not. Our responses help us interact safely in our communities. Effective planning and design of our environment helps us to feel safer and reduces opportunities for criminal acts to occur.



Use of outdoor cafes bring eyes and ears out onto the street. This is a casual way of providing Natural Surveillance of a street or area. Decorative fencing defines Territory and delineates private space from public space.

CPTED Principles

Natural Surveillance increases visibility and is a design strategy that is directed at keeping intruders under observation. It involves placement of physical features, activities and people in a way that maximizes visibility. This involves providing ample opportunity for legitimate users of space engaged in their normal activity to observe the space around them.

Natural Access Control controls access and is a design strategy that is directed at decreasing criminal opportunity by strategic placement of entrances, exits, fences, landscaping and lighting. The primary thrust is to deny access to a crime target and to create a perception of risk to a would-be offender.

Territoriality promotes a sense of ownership and is an umbrella design strategy that realizes that physical design can create or extend a sphere of influence so that legitimate users of a property develop a sense of proprietorship over it and potential offenders perceive that territorial influence.

Putting CPTED to Work

CPTED principles can be applied in both existing and new development. These principles should be applied during the design phase to avoid potential costly changes later.

Existing Development: CPTED can be applied by identifying problem areas and creatively finding solutions to make those spaces safer. A CPTED assessment can be done for existing community, home, building, school, park or businesses.

New Development: Many problems can be avoided if the principles of CPTED are applied during the design and planning stages of development.

Supporting Ideas in CPTED

In addition to the three main CPTED principles, other ideas such as Maintenance and Activity Support and Design Conflicts are important principles involved in the application of CPTED.

A well maintained home, building, or community park creates a sense of guardianship and ownership, helping to deter criminals. Likewise, a well kept area tends to make someone feel like they will be observed by neighbors or business owners as it is obvious that people care about the area.

Encouraging activities in public spaces that are intended for use by residents and other legitimate users heightens the risk to criminals and discourages criminal acts.

Two incompatible activities located next to one another that are forced to compete for the same space can expose users to crime or raise their levels of fear. This should be avoided.