



HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES: HOUSING

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Community design can play a role in the incidence and perception of neighborhood crime, and thus ultimately influence residents' behaviors, as negative perceptions of a neighborhood can impact community members' physical activity levels and how they use public services. This guide outlines examples of collaborative programs, policies, and initiatives that address crime prevention concerns and ultimately lead to healthier communities.

Neighborhood Design Matters

A neighborhood's design, including layout, lighting, building, and maintenance, can influence the prevalence of crime and fear, and thus impact residents' physical activity levels. Responding to the smaller problems of missing lighting, broken windows, trash, graffiti, and other nuisances can curb an escalation toward bigger problems.

Neighborhood factors such as perceived safety have received increasing attention as barriers to physical activity and sense of community.¹ In one study, women who perceived that their neighborhoods were unsafe walked 20 percent less than those who said their neighborhoods were safe.¹ Perceived safety can also impact children's physical activity levels.² However, through planning and multisectoral collaboration, communities can address these safety concerns and transform their neighborhoods.

Crime Prevention through Community Design (CPTED)

One such design approach is Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is a multidisciplinary and collaborative design approach used by communities throughout the country to address safety concerns related to crime and violence.³

CPTED teams may include law enforcement, architects, engineers, planners, public health professionals, designers, code enforcement,

community stakeholders, and others who collaborate to foster positive social interactions and deter criminal behavior with the goal of preventing crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior.³

Proponents of CPTED hold that proper design, use, and management of the built environment can lead to reduced incidence and fear of crime and improve community vitality and overall quality of life.⁴ CPTED can be implemented through a number of plans, programs, and policies, including area and comprehensive plans, land development regulations and guidelines, review and approval processes, and capital improvement plans.³ The following principles are generally regarded as ideal to create an effective program, but are not all necessary to achieve positive results.

The Five Principles of CPTED⁴

- Natural surveillance
- Territoriality
- Access control
- Activity support
- Management and maintenance

In successful CPTED programs, public service employees train as a team, collaborate with the public through workshops and community assessments, and address public safety in conjunction with related efforts such as economic development, neighborhood and

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business revitalization, capital improvements, and public health.⁴ In addition to reducing the incidence and fear of crime, implementing a CPTED program can contribute to more efficient and effective use of staff and monetary resources, improve community and government relations, improve public perceptions, and encourage increased social and economic investments in targeted areas.⁴

CPTED can also increase activity and social interaction among residents and visitors by increasing the number of people using public services and providing safe access to goods, services, jobs, and schools to contribute to a healthier community.⁴

POTENTIAL POLICY AND PROGRAM OPTIONS^{5,6}

- » Increasing street patrol or neighborhood watch programs.
- » Implementing Safe Routes to School and Join Use programs.
- » Incorporating community design changes.
- » Addressing housing vacancies.
- » Enforcing and taking action to remedy code violations.

Portland, Oregon

In 2008, Portland, Oregon adopted a CPTED policy strategy that called for cost-efficient CPTED principles and practices to be incorporated into the design, construction, and operations of all city-funded multi-family housing.⁷ Portland required all private sector individuals or organizations seeking permits to develop three or more dwelling units of a new multi-family property or remodel or upgrade of existing multi-family property to view non-binding CPTED design recommendations prior to plan approval.⁷ In addition, Portland prohibited the construction of fencing, railing walls, and other built barriers that divide outdoor areas in a manner that results in a complete visual barrier.⁷

Durham, North Carolina

In North Carolina, the city of Durham and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

(CMPD) demonstrated two successful models of CPTED application.^{8,9} The CMPD required organizations interested in applying for the department's Crime and Public Safety grants to have CMPD perform a CPTED study, which would evaluate design and effective use of the built environment in the community of interest using the elements of territoriality, surveillance, and access control.¹⁰

The following are examples of specific CPTED programs that have successfully improved overall safety and well-being in the United States.

Revitalizing and Building Community in Roxbury, Massachusetts^{11,12}

The nationwide Community Safety Initiatives (CSI), through the Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC), have supported strong community-police partnerships for many years. Since 2002, the MetLife Foundation and LISC CSI have partnered to recognize, sustain, and share the work of innovative community-police partnerships to promote neighborhood safety and revitalization.^{13,14}

Massachusetts' Revitalizing and Building Community in Roxbury's Blue Hill Corridor project is a recent CSI award winner. The project is a collaboration between the Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation (NCDC), the city of Boston, Boston LISC, local law enforcement, peer community-based organizations, and residents to combat crime caused or worsened by foreclosure in their neighborhoods.¹²

Residents regularly meet with NCDC and the local police to report and discuss suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. Local police also share information with residents on where and when there have been reports of crime and can increase their presence in residents' areas of concern. In addition, the city of Boston can hold commercial property owners accountable by issuing citations requiring them to clean up their establishments.¹²

In 2010, the project's notable accomplishments included identifying a property associated with criminal activity that was acquired, rehabilitated,

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and sold to a new homeowner; working with police and the city of Boston's Inspection Services Department to force private property owners to clean abandoned properties (issuing over 30 citations in one year); and seeing an overall reduction in area auto thefts, firearm recoveries drug arrests, and aggravated assaults.¹²



Riverside Gateway Initiatives, Providence, Rhode Island¹⁵

Years of neglect led to the decline of the Olneyville section of Providence, Rhode Island from an area populated by mills fueling the local economy to a neighborhood blighted by abandoned mills and vacant lots. A diverse set of stakeholders including more than 40 residents, the Olneyville Housing Corporation (OHC), private businesses, and Providence's housing authority and departments of police, planning, parks, and inspections and standards came together to advance a comprehensive revitalization agenda that has transformed a crime-ridden, abandoned section of the city into a healthy, vibrant neighborhood.¹⁵

Stakeholders used various strategies including implementing the five principles of CPTED to guide rehabilitation of a polluted riverbank area that was a haven for criminal activity into a family-friendly, nine-acre park. In addition, OHC acquired vacant lots and problem properties with police assistance and transformed them into attractive, affordable homes. Creative partnerships with the Providence Police Department at all stages of this five year process proved critical to the efforts' success, also demonstrating a successful way to take a health in all policies approach.

In addition to the neighborhood's physical revitalization, crime decreased dramatically in the immediate project area and problem-solving partnerships between police and community organizations are now part of the regular course of business in Olneyville.¹⁵

Auburn Boulevard Revitalization Project, Sacramento, California¹⁶

For years, a section of Auburn Boulevard in Sacramento, California was notorious for criminal activity. In response, local agencies and community groups, including the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, the city's environmental management division and departments of building, probation, child protective services, and animal control and fire, and the local utility company, joined to form a Nuisance Response Team (NRT).¹⁶

The NRT members had different perspectives and capabilities, and by working together could focus their resources more effectively.¹⁶ As a result, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) was able to develop several affordable housing and other projects. The sheriff's department dedicated two officers to the issue area on Auburn Boulevard and implemented problem-oriented policing practices. In addition, the district attorney's office trained code enforcement officers on evidence collection to improve cases against property owners. Finally, Sacramento County Code Enforcement issued code violations on particularly troubling nuisance properties.

With SHRA's help, residents formed a neighborhood watch group and a homeowners association, with leaders from both groups serving on the NRT. The NRT met regularly to identify problems and develop collective strategies to address the issues.

The presence of different agencies enabled the NRT to address multiple problems simultaneously, creating more effective pressure on property owners to make improvements. As a result, incidence of crime and property problems has declined significantly, and SHRA has been able to increase its redevelopment efforts and encourage reputable businesses to move into the area.¹⁶

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