

## CPTED for Parking Structures & Surface Lots By Terry Wright

The basic premise of *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* is that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence, and the fear of crime and improve the quality of life.

We've all seen on TV and in the movies the woman at night fumbling for her car keys in the infamous parking lot or underground garage accompanied by the crescendo musical arrangement. For many, parking in such a space is a frightening experience. So how does the Parking professional make their property palatable so those potential customers will want to use it? Location, location, location is one, but just because you build it in the right location doesn't mean they will come. First ask yourself what makes a good parking garage? For the manager, it is filled to capacity and pays for itself. For the architect it is one project that will be their *pièce de résistance*, and for the customer it's one into which they can drive their SUV. For the female driver, it is a place where she does not have to park in fear. A CPTED specialist's job is to ensure all those perspectives intersect.

Good CPTED starts with good planning. Shop around for the right architect. Select one who specializes in parking structures. Research crime statistics. Look at surrounding land uses, both present and future. Who are your clientele? Factor in due diligence. These are some of the variables that can help you determine your objectives.

One principle of CPTED is natural observation or surveillance using non-mechanical methods. It is the placement of physical features and/or activities, and people that maximize natural visibility.



The photo on the left places a safe activity (walking) in a potentially unsafe area (the parking garage). Clearly, knowing your surrounding land use is critical. To the south of this garage is a shopping mall. At the other end of the walkway is a large student housing complex. This particular strategy may not work in another application where these variables are not present. Note the access to the elevator in the same picture. The walls are glass which maximizes natural visibility to pedestrians. This increases a

motivated offender's risk of apprehension and reduces the opportunity of criminal behaviour. The picture on the right uses this same philosophy for the stairwells.



This photo illustrates effective use of lighting. The walls are whitewashed to reflect natural light and increase illumination. Metal halide lighting is used as it provides excellent colour rendition and witness identification potential. Note that the lamps are placed where the users require the light, over the vehicles and not in the aisles so the customers can see door locks, and inside their vehicles. Poor natural visibility is shown in below.

This surface lot is surrounded by burms. For a motivated offender this poses less risk of apprehension.

Maintenance and landscaping are also critical issues. In many instances good natural visibility is established only to be obliterated by the placement of trees and shrubs or the wrong type of plantings. Foliage also grows and requires pruning. Nothing spells trouble quicker than not repairing burnt out exit lights or removing graffiti. You've likely heard of the broken window theory.



Natural Access Control, another CPTED principle, can deter access to a target (a space or facility) and create a perception of risk to the offender. It helps to distinguish between private or semi-private and public space. This is known as Territorial Reinforcement. The photo to the left exemplifies this.

CPTED is common sense. It asks the question: how can it help you do what you do better? It can and should be augmented with sound procedural and physical security (e.g. use of CCTV and emergency telephone systems). Remember

too that CPTED is site specific. Strategies that may work well in one venue may not have the same results in the next.