



# National Institute of Justice

R e s e a r c h i n A c t i o n

Jeremy Travis, Director

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## Highlights

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and community policing can be viewed as part of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy.

CPTED and community policing emphasize a problem-solving approach to crime prevention as well as close cooperation between police and residents in reducing both crime and fear of crime. Because CPTED emphasizes the systematic analysis of crime in a particular location, it directly supports community policing by providing crime prevention strategies tailored to solve specific problems.

Police, citizens, and government have a role to play in preventing crime under the CPTED/community policing approach:

- Police involvement within neighborhoods can include both foot patrol and working with community groups to strengthen citizens' sense of security and solve neighborhood problems that contribute to crime and fear of crime.
- Residents can work together to improve neighborhood appearance and deter criminals.
- Government can use building codes and inspection power to increase environmental security and discourage drug use and other criminal activities.

## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and Community Policing

by Dan Fleissner and Fred Heinzelmann, Ph.D.

Crime prevention today benefits from two strategies for protecting neighborhoods from crime and the fear of crime—Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and community policing. CPTED programs, through design and management of the physical environment of buildings, residential neighborhoods, and business areas, increase public safety and reduce fear of crime. Community policing programs, by making police more visible and familiar to the people and with the physical environment of their beats, reinforce these efforts and promote police-citizen partnerships to prevent crime and disorder. This Research in Action suggests several ways in which CPTED and community policing initiatives can be coordinated and integrated in a comprehensive approach to community security.

Basic principles of CPTED include target hardening (controlling access to neighborhoods and buildings and conducting surveillance on specific areas to reduce opportunities for crime to occur) and territorial reinforcement (increasing the sense of security in settings where people live and work through activities that encourage informal control of the environment).

Most community policing models include the decentralization of police services, the collaboration of police departments with other city agencies (such as parks or utility departments) to resolve problems, and

regular police-citizen dialog about perceived problems.

### Historical overview

Over the past 20 years, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has been sponsoring crime prevention research focusing on ways to make neighborhoods safer, using environmental design, police-community problem solving, block watch, and other neighborhood-based strategies common to CPTED and community policing. During the 1970s, NIJ pioneered studies demonstrating that the proper design and effective management of a physical environment can control and even prevent crime.<sup>1,2</sup> During this time, NIJ initiated research on foot patrol, which had been virtually abandoned because it was considered too costly and less effective than mobile patrols and more likely to promote the type of corruption that characterized the political-era style of policing (see "Three Eras of Policing"). Nevertheless, foot patrol experiments indicated that this model lessened a community's fear of crime and improved a community's perception of the police in general.<sup>3</sup>

NIJ researchers have also examined the settings in which crimes were committed. Blighted and rundown neighborhoods invite civil disorder and crime and lead to a general fear of crime, according to the "broken windows" theory espoused by George Kelling and James Q. Wilson in 1982. This

fear, often unrelated to the actual level of crime or risk of becoming a victim, then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as residents withdraw into their homes, abandon their neighborhoods, and become passive concerning their community's plight.<sup>4</sup>

The law enforcement response to this situation has been to conduct joint police-community efforts to clean up decayed neighborhoods, such as organizing graffiti paint-outs, removing abandoned vehicles, and installing adequate lighting around homes and businesses. Whether labeled CPTED or community policing, these problem-solving efforts help reduce the fear of crime and increase a community's sense of control. Other responses include block watch programs, which began in Seattle over 20 years ago and have now become citywide citizen efforts in business and residential areas alike. Experience in such programs has shown that such joint activities, which build trust and cooperation between police and neighborhood residents, form the foundation for further partnerships to promote problem solving and increase residents' control of their neighborhoods.

### Partnerships key to CPTED and community policing

The Community Policing Consortium Project—a project initiated by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and continued by the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services that involved the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and the Police Foundation—recently underscored community partnerships and problem-solving processes as the two core components of community policing.<sup>6</sup>

## Three Eras of Policing

The 19th and 20th centuries saw three specific periods of policing: the political era, the professional era, and the community policing era.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to 1900, the police were controlled by local politicians. This period of policing, known as the political era, had its strengths. The police were familiar with their neighborhoods and maintained order in them. However, this period was also characterized by abuse of immigrants' civil rights and was marked by widespread corruption.

In the professional era (1900–1970), the police relied heavily on new technology, such as radios, 911 emergency telephone systems, and automobile patrols to respond to calls for help from citizens. This is a period when police dealt only with crime; other community problems were seen as the responsibility of other city agencies.

In the 1970s, the beginning of the community policing era, police departments began to address some of the problems that had developed under the professional-era style of policing. The reactive, rapid response to *all* 911 calls—regardless of their urgency—was viewed as a poor use of resources because it allowed too little time for indepth investigations. In addition, the passive role of citizens had resulted in the loss of police ties with the people who typically had the information needed to solve crimes.

In the late 1970s, researchers saw the need for a problem-solving approach to crime prevention. One researcher's structured and systematic step-by-step process attempted to find the underlying causes of crime by identifying situations that generated many calls for service to police or other governmental agencies.<sup>8</sup>

Both CPTED and community policing rely on partnerships with community, government, educational, and social agencies in order to implement crime prevention strategies. Both programs also use the SARA problem-solving model as a key part of their approach. The Newport News Police Department, under the sponsorship of NIJ and the Police Executive Research Forum, created this four-step model:<sup>7</sup>

- **Scanning**—identify the problem.
- **Analysis**—study the problem and identify possible solutions.
- **Response**—implement a custom-designed response.
- **Assessment**—evaluate the action taken.

This problem-solving model provides an easy and understandable framework for developing the broad partnerships necessary for CPTED and community policing initiatives to succeed.

Decisions regarding the use and management of the physical environment can have an even broader effect on security throughout a neighborhood. For example, environmental strategies that are designed to reduce crime and fear (such as closing drug houses and using traffic diversion and control to promote neighborhood cohesion) can also increase informal social control and enhance the quality of neighborhood life.<sup>9</sup> In Hartford, Connecticut, police and community residents used a comprehensive CPTED/community policing strategy that gave back to residents control over their neighborhood (see “CPTED and Community Policing in Hartford”). Another example concerns enhancing security in a public housing development by reducing the number of families using a specific building entrance. This action increased residents' sense of responsibility for controlling who entered their building.

## What police and residents can do

Thus, police agencies, community residents, and local officials all have roles to play in implementing a comprehensive CPTED/community policing strategy to promote public safety in private neighborhoods, business areas, and public housing.<sup>10</sup>

### Police can:

- Conduct security surveys for residents and provide security improvements such as adequate lighting and locks.
- Conduct park patrols and patrols of other public spaces to eliminate crime and drug use.
- Use their substations to inform residents of high-risk locations in the neighborhood.
- Work with urban planners and architects to review the designs and plans in order to enhance community security.
- Prepare educational materials for building owners and managers to deal with problem tenants and enhance the livability and security of rental units. These materials are useful because they address not only the manner in which the physical environment is designed but also how the environment can be managed more effectively to enhance public safety.
- Control traffic flow to reduce the use of streets by criminals and enhance neighborhood cohesion and resident interaction. Streets can be closed or traffic diverted to create residential enclaves that give residents greater control of their living environment.

### Residents can improve their neighborhoods by:

- Engaging in cleanup programs to remove trash or graffiti.

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## CPTED and Community Policing in Hartford

IJ research in Hartford, Connecticut, provides a useful demonstration of a comprehensive CPTED/community policing approach to neighborhood crime prevention. This program successfully incorporated resident initiatives, CPTED (in the form of traffic diversion and the development of neighborhood enclaves), and community policing. CPTED strategies were

also critical in helping residents gain more control over their neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> These included a focus on citizen patrols, increased lighting, greater control of juvenile activities, and the use of cleanup campaigns to enhance the quality of neighborhood life. These efforts influenced the residents' use of their neighborhood and the level of interaction and social control exercised by citizens in that setting.

- Carrying out programs to improve the appearance, safety, and use of public spaces.
- Conducting their own patrols to identify neighborhood problems.
- Joining an organized block watch program.

### Specific crime prevention activities.

**Security in parks.** Parks can be refurbished, lighting installed, and opening and closing times scheduled to improve security. Adopt-a-park programs can be used to involve residents in cleaning up trash and litter and providing information to police about illegal activities being carried out in recreational areas. Recreational events can be scheduled to increase the community's informal social control of these places.

**Building regulations.** Local governments can be encouraged to use building codes as well as inspection and enforcement powers to increase environmental security. The owners of deteriorated or abandoned buildings can be required to repair, secure, or demolish them. Provisions related to security can also be incorporated into the city building code. These provisions include target hardening tactics (e.g., locks, strengthening of doors, and

lighting) as well as security standards for the design of the structure and site.

**Civil remedies.** Civil actions can be used against building owners or tenants to control criminal activity or the inappropriate use of property. These actions may include the following:

- Obtaining title to abandoned property by community improvement associations.
- Using nuisance abatement along with inspections by public works, building, fire, housing, or utility authorities to control criminal behavior or drug use in specific buildings or settings.
- Encouraging model leases to control illegal activities of tenants.
- Enforcing liquor laws to control violence and disorderly behavior around bars or liquor stores (especially at closing times).
- Using anti-trespassing laws to control unwanted loitering.

### Trends

One general trend has been for CPTED and community policing strategies to reinforce each other as they focus on comprehensive problem solving, the promotion of working relationships with the community, and the development of education and orientation programs

that can assist residential and business groups as they address specific neighborhood problems—especially those dealing with crime and the environment.

The development of these initiatives affects various factors such as the level of communication and cooperation among police, city staff, and residents; the type, amount, and use of community education and orientation programs; and the methods by which crime prevention programs are described, measured, and evaluated. Currently, these factors apply more to law enforcement agencies because modifying a community policing model may require changes of significant magnitude. However, as CPTED evolves, its extension from just looking at the manmade environment to looking at how the natural setting is used and managed will also entail significant change for other public agencies involved in promoting safer and more livable communities.

Although community policing seems to be producing positive results and offers a promising new approach, rigorous monitoring and evaluation over the long term are needed to determine its effectiveness and economic advantages. Moreover, questions about the optimum conditions for influencing the design and management of the physical envi-

ronment and barriers to the use of CPTED remain pertinent. Another question that needs additional study is how best to institutionalize CPTED for private as well as public development (e.g., as part of building codes). CPTED and community policing together offer comprehensive approaches that hold promise for effectively solving problems of crime and crime prevention.

### Notes

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Dan Fleissner is manager of Community Policing Research and Grants Management for the Seattle Police Department. Fred Heinzelmann, Ph.D., was a staff member (1970–1994) of the National Institute of Justice, where he served as director of the Crime Prevention and Enforcement Division.

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