

Graffiti Prevention: Lights, Landscape, Access

OBJECTIVES

Define the concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED); identify the five strategies that comprise CPTED and how they can be used to prevent graffiti vandalism.

METHOD

Introduce CPTED and its five strategies. Divide students into small groups to walk the school grounds, observe any CPTED strategies in place, and identify changes to the school's physical environment that may improve graffiti prevention.

BACKGROUND

CPTED Defined

CPTED is a method used by architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers, and law enforcement to create a safer community through the physical environment.

The term CPTED was coined by Dr. C. Ray Jeffrey in the early 1970's, who describes it as follows: "CPTED is the proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the form and incidence of crime and improvement in the quality of life."

CPTED Strategies

CPTED uses five strategies for changing the physical environment to help people feel safer and deter crime:

1. **Natural Surveillance** - Placing physical features and activities in ways that maximize the ability to see what's going on.
2. **Access management** - Using properly located entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting to discourage crime.
3. **Territoriality** - Using fences, pavement treatments, art, signs, good maintenance, and landscaping to provide a visual transition from public to private property and express ownership.
4. **Activity support** - Encouraging legitimate activity in public spaces to discourage criminal behavior.
5. **Maintenance** - Maintenance and repair of landscaping, lighting, and other features to facilitate a sense of caring and ownership. This can also include maintaining and encouraging orderly behavior.

How CPTED Helps Prevent Graffiti Vandalism

As a graffiti prevention tool, CPTED strategies reduce the opportunity for graffiti to occur and increase the risk for graffiti vandals. Making simple changes can improve the chances that a business, school, park, or other area will not be tagged. Here are a few examples:

Natural surveillance

- Ensure existing lighting is working or improve lighting around a property to promote natural surveillance and discourage graffiti vandalism.
- Ensure appropriate lighting to best illuminate the desired target area.

- Step up monitoring or install a security camera in areas where there is chronic graffiti.
- Organize a “School Watch” to encourage students to be alert to any unwanted activity on school grounds.

Access management

- Incorporate shrubs, thorny plants, and vines to restrict access to school walls, fences, sheds, garages, and other graffiti targets.
- Use fences, controlled entrance and exits, rails, and other barriers that discourage through traffic.
- Limit access to roofs by moving dumpsters away from walls and covering drainpipes to prevent vandals from scaling them.

Territoriality

- Don’t allow a “legal wall,” or an area that permits graffiti, in the community; they are largely ineffective and may draw more graffiti vandals to the area.
- Mount a school paint brush mural on a chronically hit wall.
- Employ graffiti resistant materials or coatings on potential graffiti targets. Textured surfaces and dark colored surfaces are also less attractive to graffiti vandals.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students whether they believe their school or community has a graffiti problem. If so, ask students to identify its possible causes. Discuss a particular location where they may have seen graffiti and ask who is responsible for its prevention and removal. What happens if no one takes responsibility? How is graffiti prevented? (For additional background information, visit www.graffitihurts.org.)
2. Introduce the CPTED concept and its five strategies.
3. Generate a discussion with students about the five strategies and encourage them to think of CPTED examples they may have observed in the community or school.
4. Divide student into small groups (3-5 people). Have each group walk around the school building to observe any CPTED strategies in place or areas where a specific strategy might be useful to help prevent graffiti vandalism.
5. Following observation and research, student teams will make at least one recommendation for change and defend its impact and value (e.g., what the change will cost vs. its long-term value or cost savings, such as graffiti removal/cleanup expenses). Student teams may want to present their recommendation to the class.

ASSESSMENT

- Ask each student to identify three ways they could change the school’s physical environment to improve graffiti prevention (e.g., replace burned out lights or install new lighting; trim landscape; move dumpster away from building; organize a mural for a wall or utility box). Have students explain and defend their choices, determine who would need to approve and be involved in the change, and then notify the responsible person.

ENRICHMENT

- Have students interview a police officer, architect, landscaper, school administrator, or other professional about how they might implement a CPTED strategy for graffiti prevention, and evaluate its cost-effectiveness and impact on

- the community or school. Prior to the interview, students may want to conduct additional background research on CPTED using the internet.
- Invite the school principal, custodial staff, school resource officer or security, school landscapers, etc. into the class to discuss strategies to prevent graffiti vandalism on school grounds. Have students “interview” the guests and write a short article to submit to the school newspaper or local media.
 - Using the internet, have students identify who is responsible for graffiti prevention and removal in the community (it may be more than one person). Contact the most appropriate individual and have the class work with him/her to identify a graffiti prevention strategy that the class can organize and then implement.