ATLAS SAFETY & SECURITY DESIGN, INC.

DESIGNING AGAINST CRIME: THE CASE FOR CPTED TRAINING FOR ARCHITECTS

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There are three really good reasons why architects need to be trained in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). First, they need to know how to prevent crime in the buildings in order to prevent negligent liability; second, they want to design for the health, safety, and welfare of building users against threats of workplace violence, terrorism, and street crime; and third, because they have to design for security for all federal architecture by complying with the GSA Federal Security Standards.

Architects need to know the basic techniques and skills of CPTED to meet the general standards of care of building codes and specific industry standards found in, for example, the lodging and shopping center industries. Accidents and criminal incidents are drawing architects into premises liability lawsuits. Architecture impacts the safety and security of a building in many features including stairs, ramps, handrails, interior and exterior lighting, floor materials, parking lot design, blind spots, and dead end corridors. The selection of doors, windows, access control systems, and building circulation patterns are other safety and security design considerations. Often, the architect is held accountable for inadequate locks, poor key control, inoperative equipment, inadequate lighting, and systems failures.

The architect is also held accountable for having foreseen or having prior knowledge of designing high-risk buildings in crime prone zones and for not taking adequate precautions. Not only is the architect being held accountable for knowledge of the building type but also for knowledge of crime trends and the impact to the operational design criteria. Architects must provide the comprehensive security considerations in many types of urban buildings by designing for street and basement level protection as well as safe parking, exterior, shipping/receiving, and intake areas.

While premises liability lawsuits were relatively rare in the 1950s and a typical jury award was $10,000, the 1980's jury award was $1.04 million. In 1992, average jury awards rose to $3.35 million and settlements to $545,800. Fifty-eight percent of all civil cases in 1992 were premises liability issues and half of those were inadequate-security claims. Crime in the premises liability suits brought from 1983 to 1992 stemmed from, by location, apartment buildings 23 percent, parking lots 19 percent, hotel and motel rooms 15 percent, stores 9 percent, and restaurants 8 percent. Architects are viewed as having deep pockets because they are often forced to carry insurance. The result is that architects are being successfully dragged into litigation involving third-party premises liability security negligence lawsuits.

Architects want to be informed of all relevant design criteria that could impact the users and design of the building under contract. Traditionally, the architect is considered the master builder. It is he or she who should start the security design process during the programming phase. Securing premises, people, property, and information begins with a thorough needs assessment to establish the design criteria for the specific project. The first step in designing against terrorism or crime is to assess the threats and vulnerabilities to the tangible and intangible assets to be protected.

The Oklahoma and World Trade Center bombings increased awareness of the vulnerability to acts of terror, but area crime and workplace violence pose more of an actual threat. Considering that the thrust of criminal justice reform, such as the truth-in-sentencing program, has sputtered under the prison overcrowding situation, released chronic offenders practicing everyday street crime prove more threatening than terrorists planning random attacks. But terrorism is big news. The media cover bombings for weeks with unrelenting enthusiasm, if not actual facts. While the personal dramas of terrorism attacks unfold piece by piece, a victim of violent crime in a local urban parking lot, for example, goes unnoted. Still, any attention to the correlate of the physical environment abetting the criminally inclined helps drive the prevention argument.

CPTED is the effective use and design of the built environment to reduce the opportunity and fear of predatory stranger-to-stranger crime. CPTED uses a multi-tiered

approach to increase the effort needed to commit the crime, to increase the risks of being detected while committing a crime, to reduce the rewards for committing the crime, and to remove the excuses for inappropriate behavior. The strategies for achieving these goals include using natural access-control, natural surveillance, legitimate activity support, management and maintenance strategies, and territorial boundaries. Adequate security planning, CPTED, and defensible space planning are parts of the comprehensive security planning process as compared to a target-hardening or fortressing reaction to criminal incidents.

Despite decades of effort, a national security code or ordinance as part of state or national building codes has never been realized. The threat of premises liability litigation spurs opposition to the adoption of safety/security standards from widespread professional groups. Very few lodging, shopping/retail, building, and construction associations have supported minimum safety standards development. An exception is the new General Services Administration (GSA) Security Design Standards for federal government architecture. These standards are fast becoming the industry "standard of care."

Architects have to comply with the GSA Security Design standards intended to save lives, prevent injury, and protect property and assets. Terrorism has been the major vehicle for change in an otherwise stuck universe of crime prevention. For example, in June 1995, after the bombing of a federal facility in Oklahoma City, President Clinton mandated a basic standard of security for all federal facilities. The mandate states that each federal building shall be upgraded to the minimum security standards as recommended for its audited security level by the Department of Justice. The security design criteria provide a performance-based approach to various building systems and components from window glazing to structural systems. The GSA standards require a security risk assessment at the early programming stage of any federal project. Risk factors may be as diverse as a building's symbolic importance if it is a highly visible landmark or its function if it is considered vital to the national interests. Designs should allow for the capacity to increase responsiveness to a heightened or temporary threat, such as when a courthouse is the site of a high-profile trial.

In partnership with Florida's Attorney General, the Florida CPTED Network (FCN) provides minimum standards for certification and acts as a resource for premises security design and prevention education for city and county management, law enforcement, and design planning professionals. In recent years a few dedicated planners and law enforcement professionals in Sarasota and Broward County have initiated cutting-edge ordinances in their communities requiring at least one member of any government project design plan review team to be CPTED trained.

The future of safe neighborhoods and cities is here now. It is time for architects to come on board and embrace safety and security for all buildings and for all planners

to incorporate crime prevention through environmental design in every community.