

**BEST PRACTICES FOR**  
Using Crime Prevention  
Through Environmental Design  
in Weed and Seed Sites



The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to be the nation's leader in helping people keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe from crime. NCPC's strategic plan for 2007 through 2011 is centered on four goals: protect children and youth; partner with government and law enforcement to prevent crime; promote crime prevention and personal safety basics; and respond to emerging crime trends. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 400 national, federal, state, and local organizations representing thousands of constituents who are committed to preventing crime. NCPC also sponsors the National Crime Prevention Association, an individual membership association to promote resources and career development to crime prevention practitioners. It hosts two websites: [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org) for adults and [www.mcgruff.org](http://www.mcgruff.org) for children. It operates demonstration programs in schools, neighborhoods, and entire jurisdictions and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention and youth service. NCPC manages the McGruff® "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign. NCPC is funded through a variety of government agencies, corporate and private foundations, and donations from private individuals.

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# Introduction

The National Crime Prevention Council, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Capacity Development Office, provided training and technical assistance to ten communities across the United States between 2007 and 2009 to address crime and community improvement through the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design refers to the effective design and use of the built environment to encourage a reduction in the fear of crime, a reduction in the actual number of crimes, an improvement in community safety, an improvement in the perception of safety, and an improvement in the overall quality of life in a community.

Using customized CPTED training to meet the needs presented by specific communities, NCPC's trainers and facilitators determined which issues members of the community wished to confront, assessed the status of those issues, generated strategies to ameliorate the local issues, and provided ongoing technical assistance to strengthen local efforts.

NCPC served ten communities that have significant crime and quality-of-life issues that were identified by the Community Capacity Development Office. To do so, NCPC drew upon the four CPTED principles—natural access control, natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement, and maintenance—to lead the communities to solutions. NCPC engaged all strata of the communities, including the varying dynamics of government agencies, local businesses, family, law enforcement, institutions, and individuals and was able to facilitate the changes that allowed the sites to invest in themselves to achieve their visions of being safer, healthier, more vibrant communities with improved qualities of life.

- **ACCESS CONTROL:** This involves designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances, and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate transitions from the public environment to semi-private and private areas.
- **SURVEILLANCE:** A design principle that maximizes the visibility of people, parking areas, vehicles, and site activities. Strategies involve the strategic placement of windows, doors, walkways, parking lots, and vehicular routes.
- **TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT:** Sidewalks, landscaping, and porches help distinguish between public and private areas. This helps users display signs of "ownership" that send "hands off" messages to would-be offenders.
- **MAINTENANCE:** This addresses management and maintenance of space.
  - Proper upkeep (mowing grass, trimming trees and landscaping, picking up trash, repairing broken windows and light fixtures, and painting over graffiti)
  - Helps signal that a location or facility is well cared for and therefore would be inhospitable to a criminal
  - It also signals that an owner, manager, or neighbor is watching out for the property and could spot illegal behavior.

The CPTED training and technical assistance service was delivered to Weed and Seed site communities in

Dallas, TX  
Manchester, NH  
Montgomery, AL  
North Charleston, SC  
North Omaha, NE  
Omaha, NE  
Rome, NY  
Schenectady, NY  
Troy, NY  
Washington, DC

Each community was unique, but all shared similarities as well. Abandoned houses, faulty traffic flow, difficulty securing total surveillance, overgrowth of foliage, vacant lots, absentee landlords, complex and difficult-to-enforce laws and regulations, and inadequate street lighting were among the common problems shared by the communities. Substantial criminal activity such as drug dealing, substance abuse, burglaries, violent assaults, and prostitution were the prevalent crimes that communities hoped to reduce significantly.

# Treatment

The National Crime Prevention Council engaged the identified communities and developed a strategy to inform and train community stakeholders on the CPTED principles as a way to tackle the communities' issues and restore the perception of safety and improve the quality of life. NCPC began the process by obtaining residents' assessments of community issues, including pressing safety, crime, and quality-of-life issues. They also sought the residents' solutions and committed these to writing as well. (Tools used included questionnaires, surveys, and interviews by telephone and in person during site visits.)

Next, NCPC and the Weed and Seed Steering Committee for each site held training sessions for invited stakeholders and others that explained the four CPTED principles and began examining real world applications to their articulated problems. NCPC's trainers then led the stakeholders and others through an action planning process that, again, organized the concerns and challenges identified by residents and specified action steps the stakeholders could take to remedy specific issues. NCPC staff provided ongoing, follow-up technical assistance to the Steering Committees and their designated CPTED subcommittees. The follow-up and technical assistance consisted of telephone conversations, email exchanges, and other types of consultation. NCPC publications and other materials were provided to the identified sites to assist with community meetings and advance the strategy sessions of the committees.

## Additional Benefits for Communities Using the CPTED Strategy

Enforcing seemingly minor code violations in communities (an existing foundational CPTED strategy) has a profound effect on the entire community. Once problems and solutions are identified and CPTED strategies are applied, communities become more stabilized and safer, crime is reduced, and residents become more invested in the community's quality of life. The simple cleanup of a vacant lot or restoring a children's playground or improving the street signage can cascade into more and more improvements that redouble into further community and government investment to the betterment of the entire community. Weeding out problems begets seeding in solutions. NCPC's CPTED strategy employs a "street-by-street" approach to address a community's problems. Once one street is stabilized, the CPTED effort is expanded to the next block or the next perimeter in the expanding circle. CPTED is a multi-pronged effort, not just beautification, not just code enforcement, but a system-wide approach to reducing crime, restoring safety, restoring the perception of safety, and making an improvement in the quality of life for the whole community. Here are the five communities where NCPC's CPTED strategy, embraced and enacted by stakeholders in the community, has made a real difference.

## Dallas, TX

The Ferguson Road-Two Points Weed and Seed site lies in the Northeast quadrant of Dallas in an area known as White Rock Hills. It is typical of the type of urban sprawl that results when population growth outpaces city services and advances in commercial development without the benefit of a master plan. It is home to 7,300 households of white, African American, and Hispanic ethnicity, 57 percent of whom rent their dwellings. The average household income is \$31,000 a year, and 25 percent of the adults in the area have not yet earned their high school diploma. An unemployment rate of 15 percent contributes to the decline in the quality of life in the Weed and Seed site. Behind the high stockade fences of the yards and homes, some sporting razor wire or barbed wire, and behind the shuttered windows and doors of empty homes and closed businesses, lies one palpable truth—the fear of crime. What looks to the outsider as an undistinguished slice of America is, in truth, a gang stronghold, a transit point for the high stakes international drug trade, and an extraordinarily violent community. Drugs smuggled into the United States can make their way to this Weed and Seed site before they are distributed to the rest of the nation. A number of significant Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Department of Justice operations have taken place in and around this community.

The Ferguson Road-Two Points Weed and Seed site set as its overall goal improving the quality of life of the residents in the Ferguson Road corridor and reducing crime by creating a safer environment.

The Weed and Seed Steering Committee's assessment of the most prevalent issue in the area included burglary of vehicles, residences, businesses, and individuals, and thefts of such commodities as metal and copper, among other things. These crimes contribute to a sense of fear in the community that allows criminals, gangs, and other law-breakers to perpetuate the cycle of crime. That cycle of crime contributed to a one-year double digit rise in crime figures for the site. A notorious gang, Puro Tango Blast (PTB), that got its start in Texan prisons has a firm foothold in the area and, likely, contributes (along with other gangs) to the crime and violence reported. A discrete, low-key drug running operation exists in normal-looking neighborhoods. Millions of dollars and large amounts of illegal drugs are transported, stashed, and sold in the area annually. Department of Justice drug busts in a neighboring community have underscored the sense of fear in residents.

As evidenced by the growing number of drug arrests in the area, many individuals in this Weed and Seed community abuse drugs and are probably the ones responsible for much of the motor vehicle, residential, and business burglaries and thefts. Compounding the issue are area pawn shops, which accept the stolen goods for cash that is then used to feed the individual's drug habit. The pawn shops have eluded conviction or sanction for this practice.

Within the Weed and Seed site is the Dallas Area Rapid Paratransit facility, one of the area's largest employers with hundreds of workers. These employees have been victimized by an epidemic of car break-ins and burglaries on the streets around the facility.

The fact that some residents and business owners do not maintain their properties and allow them to become rundown, unkempt, and dirty may seem like a small problem when much larger ones loom, but no issue stands alone and the Weed and Seed Steering Committee made enforcement of the existing codes on local property maintenance an objective. Street lighting is frequently inadequate or in disrepair and that allows criminal activity (drug use, burglary, prostitution) to flourish. The streets and traffic patterns themselves have caused consternation for law enforcement officers trying to find addresses, apprehend suspects, and conduct effective patrols.

In December 2008, NCPC responded to the call from the Ferguson Road Weed and Seed site to provide some CPTED basics for the residents, law enforcement, the Weed and Seed Steering Committee, and other stakeholders. NCPC CPTED trainers led the group through CPTED's basic principles and an assessment process that produced strategies and an Action Plan to address the numerous challenges.

### **How CPTED Helps**

The group, led by NCPC trainers, focused on many of the issues that impacted the quality of life. Through its assessment and action planning, NCPC led the committee to

- Develop volunteer groups that now review and assess street lighting and report problems to the public utility for prompt repair
- Request a traffic study to reduce inappropriate traffic, use strategies of one-way streets, paint addresses on the curb to designate resident parking, improve speed limit signage, and examine models of code enforcement volunteer programs to properly instruct its volunteers in enforcement code strategy.
- Propose solutions to the car burglary issue around the Paratransit facility

### **Results**

From the start, the application of CPTED strategies to the Ferguson Road-Two Points Weed and Seed site has had the cascading improvement effect seen in other communities. In the comprehensive plan for improving the site, the city has authorized a code enforcement court and a code enforcement prosecutor to be co-located within the Weed and Seed site offices. City positions were established to fill those code enforcement roles. The Steering Committee examined model code enforcement ordinances from other localities, instituted a trespassing ordinance to prosecute loitering, and stepped up code enforcement and prosecution.

The public utility is doing a better job of maintaining and improving street lighting. Neighborhood associations are engaged with code enforcement, supplementing the code enforcement officers, encouraging outside lighting, or putting lights on at night, picking up trash, encouraging residents to mow their lawns, and removing abandoned vehicles. All of the recommendations concerning the Paratransit facility were put in place. A private, secured parking lot for the Paratransit employees has reduced car burglaries significantly. The city is

enforcing an ordinance that requires businesses to have operating, strategically placed cameras and direct views into their front windows. Both of these are important CPTED practices. There is a proposal to place a police substation in a troublesome strip mall. (This is pending an out-of-state landlord's approval.) The city is so supportive of the community's action that it has authorized a new branch of the Dallas Public Library for the area and library officials are committed to a new design that will incorporate many CPTED principles.

NCPC is scheduled to continue training a new group of police officers and others in the principles of advanced CPTED design to build on the success shown by the Weed and Seed site.

The gangs still operate in the community, but the improvements have been such that Dallas' Ferguson Road-Two Points Weed and Seed site is much closer to fulfilling the vision set by its Steering Committee. Its goal of making Ferguson Road a place "where people want to live, not have to live" is on its way to becoming a reality.

## Manchester, NH

The Downtown/Millyard Weed and Seed site is an area of 1.4 square miles or, in area, 4.2 percent of the City of Manchester. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the target community consists of seven census tracts, which encompass approximately 7,600 households or 20 percent of the total population of Manchester. The vast majority of the households are white (79 percent) with a smattering representation of Hispanics, African-Americans, and others. The median household income is about \$33,000 and 25 percent of the adults have not graduated from high school.

Manchester, first settled in the 18th century, made its mark in manufacturing and textiles production up through the mid-20th century. Today it has a more diversified economy of service, healthcare, technology industries, higher education, and financial services, but is challenged by the same global economic conditions that affect most communities. The Downtown/Millyard area (named for its manufacturing past) is home to the Weed and Seed site, which began its effort with lofty ambitions. The Weed and Seed Steering Committee's CPTED Subcommittee identified two main concerns for immediate attention: The Adam D. Curtis Skate Park and the quality of life throughout the Weed and Seed site.

The Adam D. Curtis Skate Park (named after a deceased youth) is part of a recreation complex that includes a Little League ball field, a skateboard park bowl, and the Regis Lemire Youth Center. The skate park, while more than noble in intention, has design flaws that have contributed to opportunities for criminal actions by young people and others. When it was dedicated in 1999, it was in excellent condition, but its location did not lend itself to the community's management or maintenance and it soon fell into disrepair. The skate bowl was below ground and well out of view of passing patrols. The skate complex included Jersey barriers for skateboard maneuvers, but they tended to obscure vision into the park and provided an opportunity for drug dealing,



underage drinking, assaults, loitering, graffiti, and other criminal acts and negative behaviors. The park was surrounded by a fence on three sides and the back wall of the youth center (a former gas station) on the fourth side. The youth center wall that backed onto the skate park, often covered with graffiti, had no windows. The fence bordering the park was often in poor repair with holes having been cut out for convenient entry and exit. The Manchester Weed and Seed community saw the skate park as a microcosm that reflected the decline of the community, which included increased homelessness, an increase in commercial robberies and residential burglaries, and an increase in police calls. The Weed and Seed CPTED Subcommittee saw the skate park as an opportunity to put in motion a community-wide revitalization.

### **How CPTED Helps**

The Weed and Seed site requested and received CPTED training from NCPC and helped the Weed and Seed Steering Committee develop a CPTED Action Plan and an Ad-Hoc CPTED Subcommittee for the site and a CPTED Skate Park Subcommittee to develop recommendations for the city government. In the training and subsequent technical assistance, the Skate Park Subcommittee examined other communities' skate park models and obtained ideas on how to improve the communication plan with business owners (e.g., blast faxes and e-mails). The Weed and Seed Steering Committee partners who were trained in the CPTED principles explored examples of other communities' newsletters, and the Manchester police reviewed what was done by Neighborhood Watch groups, trained merchants in robbery simulations, and educated neighborhood residents in crime prevention. NCPC allowed videotaping of the CPTED training and strategy sessions for wider dissemination.

As a result, the ad hoc CPTED Committee Weed and Seed Steering Committee partners were able to articulate three crime prevention goals for revitalization:

- **To communicate community issues and concerns through publications.** The CPTED Ad-Hoc Committee saw this as an opportunity to create buy-in from all segments of the community for its revitalization.
- **To educate the community about CPTED principles.** The CPTED Ad-Hoc Committee believed that propagating the basic strategies of CPTED to all in the community would strengthen the foothold of crime prevention and community revitalization in the Weed and Seed site.
- **Empower the community to take a greater responsibility for quality-of-life issues.** The CPTED Ad-Hoc Committee agreed that crime prevention grounded in CPTED principles would provide a foundation to improve the quality of life in all the domains of the community for all of its inhabitants.

### **Results**

An Action Plan was developed for each goal and the following action items were accomplished: (1) The Weed and Seed site coordinator publishes a monthly newsletter for residents and businesses reinforcing CPTED principles

and their application to the site; (2) The CPTED training provided by NCPC was recorded for broadcast on public access television; (3) a community calendar of scheduled cleanups and events was published and distributed via the Weed and Seed website; and (4) area businesses were included in planning and disseminating information.

Several Neighborhood Watch captains, law enforcement officers, city departments, and local business owners were trained in basic CPTED principles. The CPTED training that NCPC provided was recorded and telecast frequently on the city's public access channel for viewing by residents and business owners. There were more than 10,000 viewings of the recorded training. Strategies to revitalize the skate park were formulated.

On the quality-of-life front, a Weed and Seed Community Restoration Committee took responsibility for expanding crime prevention efforts to include a winter blanket distribution project to 49 service agencies. Adopt-a-Planter and an Adopt-a-Fire Hydrant projects were begun to engage residents in simple CPTED principles to improve the quality-of-life and deter crime. Fifty-eight Neighborhood Watch groups were coordinated to improve the surveillance aspect of the CPTED principles.

Foremost in the Action Plan was the renewal of the skate park, using important tenets in the CPTED strategy. A window was added to the youth center building that backs onto the skate park, so that the skate park could be better observed. The graffiti on the wall of the youth center was removed and painted over. The Jersey barriers were removed from the park and the fence was taken down. Lighting in the area was improved. Police patrols were increased with Weed and Seed funding.

Positive peer pressure has helped maintain the skate park. Youth have been empowered to take care of the renewed park and maintain it with brooms provided by the city. The Skate Park Subcommittee, parents, and area bike and skate shops have pursued organizing a bike and skateboard association that may sponsor events and competitions. With the subcommittee's recommendations, the city is discussing alternative locations for a new indoor skate park that will be better located to take advantage of the momentum created by the renewal.

The mayor and city council proved very supportive of the Weed and Seed site's efforts. The city's security manager, who is certified in CPTED, agreed to provide train-the-trainer sessions for 12 community police officers who will then train citizens and institute CPTED training in the city's Citizen-Police Academy. The 58 Neighborhood Crime Watch captains, area business owners, the city health department, and others are scheduled to participate in future CPTED training, as well.

Collaborations with a national hardware and garden store, the regional railroad, and other business owners have resulted in projects that are beautifying, restoring, and making the community safer and graffiti-free. The mayor developed an anti-graffiti task force that has created an invested group of volunteers that has obtained paint donations for paint-outs and mural applications across the city in graffiti "hot zones." Anti-graffiti warning signs have been installed and Neighborhood Watch groups have been empowered to work directly with the city on graffiti removal and prevention measures.

The mayor has been so impressed by the Weed and Seed site's CPTED strategies' success that there is hope to take much of the initiative city-wide and replicate the Weed and Seed site's work in the city's master plan.

## Montgomery, AL

Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, has a population of about 200,000. The Central Montgomery Weed and Seed site contains the historic Cleveland Court apartments, where the mother of the civil rights movement, Rosa Parks, lived in 1955 when she became the symbol of the famous Montgomery bus boycott. Her apartment building was added to the National Register of Historic places in 2001. Today, that building and the neighboring communities face challenges from crime, disrepair, and quality-of-life issues.

The seven-tenths of a square mile area is home to nearly 1,200 households, 98 percent of which are African-Americans whose median household income is less than \$14,000 annually. About 40 percent of the adult residents have not graduated from high school and about 43 percent of the population lives in rented housing. About one-half of the population has lived there for less than five years.

The area is marked by an abundance of abandoned properties and vacant lots. Many of the chronic drug houses have been eliminated during the Weed and Seed program, but the activity still fluctuates on certain streets due to the large number of rental houses and the willingness of some landlords to tolerate the activity. Prostitution occurs in areas marked by low visibility and violators make easy their escape from law enforcement officers by using shortcuts through numerous abandoned properties and vacant lots. A network of friends and relatives provides a haven for drug dealing activity. The vacant properties and abandoned housing provide an opportunity for criminal activities, including "shot houses" where illegal, unauthorized liquor is for sale and consumption. Poor lighting compounds the night visibility problems. The lack of residents in certain sections due to vacant properties reduces the natural surveillance and territorial enforcement that generally helps to curb criminal behavior.

The area was laid out before the automobile became the predominant mode of transportation and there is little off-street parking and less on-street parking available than in comparable urban settings.

Loiterers frequently stand outside several apartment complexes, and it is difficult to determine whether they are trespassers or residents. Residents report that it is an area in transition with an abundance of drug dealing and substance abuse, and it is easy to see law enforcement coming. Property in the area is not identified well. The lighting at the Goode Street Community Center is inadequate and contributes to the opportunity for criminal activities.

An overflowing trash dumpster and the exposed and disorganized wiring from cable television installations contribute to the unsightliness and hazard of the environs in Cleveland Court. Litter is visible on certain streets that are routes from fast food or grocery stores or where residents do not maintain the area.

The Central Montgomery Weed and Seed Steering Committee included the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Office of the Mayor, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, a Montgomery City councilperson, the Montgomery Police Department, Montgomery Family Court, Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority, Montgomery Department of Human Resources, Montgomery Housing Authority, and residents. The Law Enforcement Committee also includes the Alabama Alcohol Beverage Control Board and city housing code inspectors.

NCPC was called in to provide on-site CPTED training and technical assistance. To address the issues confronting the community, the CPTED training work group arrived at a mission statement to reduce and prevent crime while implementing measurable quality-of-life improvements in the Central Montgomery Weed and Seed area. They established goals of

- Reducing vacant and abandoned properties
- Improving the quality of life issues in Cleveland Court
- Increasing the overall safety of the Goode Street Community Center

The on-site CPTED training provided by NCPC used those goals as a focus for the Steering Committee's CPTED Action Plan. Instruction on CPTED basics led the group to develop a CPTED Action Plan that included a systematic approach to connect areas one to another. The Steering Committee is attempting to spread the improvements street-by-street, block-by-block.

### **How CPTED Helps**

The local power company was engaged and agreed to replace street lights that had been broken or vandalized. The local cable company addressed the unsightly and possibly dangerous exposed wiring situations by bundling and organizing the wiring clusters so they appear orderly and are not dangerous. The property manager arranged regular trash pickups from Cleveland Court trash dumpster.

There is a community center on the school property. Lighting is insufficient and there is an effort to install better lighting with motion detectors. The community policing effort is assisted by an officer who is certified in CPTED. The mayor is reorganizing the city government and its budgeting processes to make it easier to get things done in the community. The mayor is supportive of renewing the community center and its need for new windows and a better structure to allow more use in all types of weather.

To increase public safety, the Steering Committee recommended installing a gunfire detection system. Such systems help law enforcement detect the physical location of the gunfire, review video of the location, and dispatch an appropriate response. Gunfire detection systems have been shown to produce safer communities, produce 80 percent more arrests, and provide evidence for court. Such a system was installed in the Central Montgomery Weed and Seed site in 2009. Weed and Seed funds and assets forfeiture paid for the gunfire detection system and for some surveillance cameras for the Cleveland Court area.

The mayor has been working with code enforcement and traffic engineers to systemize traffic patterns. Trash pickup has been improved throughout the

community. The mayor is considering a measure to waive some demolition and land use fees to encourage the removal of unused and abandoned structures. The mayor is researching the establishment of an environmental court to deal with the vacant lot and abandoned house issues.

In an ancillary way, CPTED has helped advance the following initiatives to improve the community. The city councilperson met with the city planning department to pursue a strategy of establishing a land bank and land trust to (1) condemn and tear down abandoned properties, (2) preserve green space in the region, and (3) make the area attractive to comprehensive development under a master plan.

By removing problem properties the land bank can make it attractive and stabilized for developers. Progress is being made on the land bank and land trust fronts. The Weed and Seed site, as a whole, is challenged by the proliferation of absentee landlords and Alabama law that defers many rights to the land owner. The Alabama House of Representatives determines the housing code that local jurisdictions must follow. This slows movement on condemning houses. The housing codes agency has moved on a strategy of posting vacant houses as illegal for entry. A building officially posted with signage enables the police to enter without a warrant and arrest trespassers, squatters, or individuals engaged in criminal activities or enterprise. The Weed and Seed Steering Committee headed up an effort to establish a community development corporation (CDC). The Steering Committee also sought to put teeth in building code enforcement. A systematic approach to identify unsafe or dilapidated properties was determined to be a needed priority.

### **Results**

A gunfire detection system is in place. Better lighting, television cable wiring maintenance, and regular trash pickups have improved the safety and appearance of the area. An energized community, led by inspired leaders, has launched a series of initiatives and improvement plans to restore the community and prevent crime. Rosa Parks would be proud of the stand that her former community has taken to improve the neighborhood for all.

## **North Charleston, SC**

North Charleston, SC's, Weed and Seed site consists of five distinct neighborhoods trisected by railroad tracks that make for challenges unlike those faced by most other communities.

In the early 20th century, North Charleston was one of a few planned model garden cities. Industry, government, and military base development changed the plan and today North Charleston reflects that past but now faces a different reality. Where once plantations blossomed and defense plants flourished, an array of clapboard houses and busy streets shrouded by verdant foliage belies the city's recent ranking as one of the most dangerous cities in the United States. Many of the houses are now empty, in the hands of absentee owners, or abandoned. Drug dealing, substance abuse, prostitution, gun violence, burgla-

ries, and robberies are common. These crimes present a serious challenge to the community's leaders and residents.

Within the two square miles of the Weed and Seed site are 2,500 households with an average income of \$23,000 each. There are twice as many renters as homeowners and 20 percent of the houses are vacant, many abandoned. The population is a mix of African-Americans, whites, and people of Hispanic heritage.

The situation is made all the more difficult by South Carolina's protectiveness of land and property ownership rights. As a result, the abandoned property issue is hard to address. Additionally, the state owns most of the streets, inhibiting the city government from making changes to traffic patterns. Any change in street design must go through a state process that thwarts local efforts for reform or effective and timely redesign. Because of its warm location near the Atlantic Coast, the growing season can be 11 months long. Foliage (weeds and trees) can easily overrun a property if the foliage is not managed. Because of their picturesque and historic nature, the native trees are protected by law and a government permit is required to trim a tree that is more than six inches in diameter. This leads to a canopy effect on city streets that provides welcome shade during the day, but renders street lighting ineffective and provides cover for criminal activities at night. The state, not the city, provides mowing services to cut back the railroad right-of-way growth, but mows only twice a year due to budget constraints and growback is rapid and substantial.

As noted earlier, railroad tracks divide the Weed and Seed site into distinct areas. The ubiquitous tracks have a way of closing off neighborhoods one from another. When a train stops and blocks a traffic intersection at surface level it inconveniences residents and impedes public safety. The noise of the railroad impacts the quality of life. The railroad and its right-of-ways can be difficult impediments for local government and community associations because of federal interstate commerce laws that supersede most local regulations designed to control or manage their presence. Some of the tracks are at surface level and some are elevated. The railroad's elevated right-of-ways have heavy undergrowth and overgrown tree limbs. This, too, provides cover for illegal activity such as drug dealing and prostitution and impedes crime prevention efforts. This crime-friendly environment has helped make North Charleston the seventh worst city for violent crimes per capita in the country.

### ***How CPTED Helps***

NCPC provided CPTED training and technical assistance to the Weed and Seed site, helping with a site assessment and assisting the stakeholders with an Action Plan. A centerpiece of the Action Plan was code enforcement on properties in the site and a community CPTED education campaign. The Action Plan emphasized

- **Educating the residents about CPTED-based crime prevention strategies.** Reiterating the National Crime Prevention Council's mantra that "crime prevention is everybody's business," this strategy enlisted residents as catalysts and agents for their own community's improvement. Learning about CPTED and crime prevention basics empowered communities to assert their desires for a better quality of life and public safety.

- **Developing brochures and PowerPoint presentations for use with neighborhood meetings.** This strategy used these materials in a multiplier effect to spread the crime prevention and public safety message that can be readily actualized by residents by employing CPTED principles. Law enforcement personnel certified in CPTED principles reviewed and approved the materials. The City of North Charleston CPTED Committee proposed developing a resource book for neighborhood improvement.
- **Following a street-by-street strategy.** The Weed and Seed Steering Committee leadership led the comprehensive application of this strategy by engaging all of the participating city agencies and departments to address needed changes in a designated area or block, stabilizing that area, and then repeating the comprehensive process on the next block until the entire Weed and Seed site had been addressed with CPTED principles and practices.
- **Developing a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design team.** This team, which consisted of several city agencies (Weed and Seed, police, fire, code enforcement, building, and planning) specifically addressed CPTED issues in the Weed and Seed area that could then be practiced in other areas of the city.
- **Developing new strategies for the city to address property blight and crime issues.** The committee looked into updating city codes and changing ordinances to reflect a greater interest in improving communities.
- **Working to bring in other players, including the regional railroad, the local power company, and the South Carolina Department of Transportation, to work with city agencies on CPTED issues.** Including all community stakeholders and potential solution providers in CPTED principles training can increase buy-in from all segments of the community and produce foundational understanding of the challenges present and the strategies needed for success.
- **Involving the Mayor's Office and Executive Department in CPTED issues for a more well-rounded and supportive approach.** The Mayor's Office and Executive Department will seek grounding in CPTED principles to evaluate its potential and effectiveness for possible city-wide roll-out, as modeled by other successful Weed and Seed sites.
- **Fostering cooperation among city agencies to implement CPTED principles and practices.** CPTED training (past and proposed) has provided or will provide city employees with the opportunity to work with fellow employees from other disciplines to learn how to look at problems from other perspectives and how to cooperate with each other to achieve mutual goals that enhance the quality of life in North Charleston. This goal emphasizes the need for agencies to work together cooperatively rather than trying to accomplish everything independently.

## **Results**

Five geographic neighborhoods plan to host informational CPTED training provided by the North Charleston Crime Prevention Through Environmental

Design team. Code enforcement will be concentrated in one block for a week and then expanded to the neighboring block for a week once the first block is stabilized. That strategy will continue until all the neighborhoods have been stabilized. This street-by-street strategy will begin in the Ferndale neighborhood, where most of the police calls have been generated, and where the quality of life has been deemed to be most in need of improvement. Managing small parcels of a neighborhood at one time makes the plan doable and makes the results visible so that residents of other parts of the neighborhood and other neighborhoods are inspired.

The railroad management was petitioned by the Department of Public Works to maintain the right-of-way more regularly; that has been agreed to and started. In some areas the railroad right-of-way enhances the area, while in other areas, because of overgrowth, it diminishes the community and its quality of life. Another meeting with the railroad is to be set up to further explain the Action Plan and the railroad's impact on the community.

Members from six city departments cooperated in the street-by-street strategy: the building department, zoning department, public works, police, fire, and code enforcement. New leadership in the code enforcement department energized the effort. The South Carolina Department of Transportation was also invited to be part of the consortium of agencies. The cooperating departments will complete community sweeps where all the departments go through a neighborhood, engage the residents in conversation about the Weed and Seed CPTED effort, suggest maintenance and improvements, write tickets for egregious violations (abandoned vehicles, overgrown lots, etc.), informally collect intelligence about the life of the community, listen to suggestions for the effort, and provide smoke detectors to homes that do not have one and CPTED basic information materials to reinforce the effort.

The city is increasing its effort to engage and hold responsible absentee landlords for property maintenance. Additional CPTED training is scheduled for the summer of 2009 and publicity about the CPTED training opportunities will be emphasized.

The hope is that where once a model garden city flourished, a new North Charleston can blossom and fulfill the planners' early vision. Weeding (literally) and seeding with sound CPTED strategies is advancing a city's dream for itself.

## **Troy, NY**

Troy, NY, once one of the wealthiest cities in the United States, is home to the Westside Waterfront Weed and Seed site, just north of the capital city of Albany on the eastern bank of the Hudson River. The Weed and Seed site is a little over a square mile in area and is home to nearly 3,500 households, which earn about \$27,000 annually. The site is 78 percent white, 14 percent African American, and 6 percent Hispanic. One-quarter of the adults in the area do not have a high school diploma and three times as many people rent their dwellings as compared to those who own and live in their own homes.



For generations this part of Troy has been home to American families of European immigrant origin. A way of life developed that included using the outside of the home (the front yard and alley) as a social focal point that built family stability, friendships, neighborliness, and community. An erosion of that way of life has crept in on the back of an increasing drug trade, street level dealing, and substance abuse. Traffic designs that hinder police effectiveness (one-way streets), the declining socio-economic status of the residents, and an increase in absentee landlords and vacant housing have led to decay and squalor and impacted the quality of life for many long-time residents. Residents rarely use the outside of their homes, afraid of witnessing or being victimized by illegal activity, so they have become self-imposed prisoners of their homes and leave the outside public spaces to those who would engage in criminal activity. Public spaces have become the domain of criminals and vandals who spread disorder, graffiti, and other indicators of a community in decline.

### **How CPTED Helps**

The Weed and Seed site identified long-time public assets in the community and set out to reclaim them to restore a quality of life that makes for healthy communities through CPTED and other community initiatives. In an effort to reclaim green space for all to use, the Weed and Seed site identified three areas to address with intensive treatment. The Arnold Fallon Apartment complex, the Little Italy Marketplace, and the Canal Street Pocket Park were all once thriving community asset, but had fallen into general disuse and were the site of criminal activities and nonproductive activities of area youth.

### **Results**

The Weed and Seed site set a goal of reducing the property crime in the Arnold Fallon Apartment complex. The city and the community increased and improved the signage at the apartments so that it was easier to reinforce the boundaries between private and public property and make clear that the playground was for residents' use only. This included new identifying numbers on the buildings. The playground was renovated to make it more user-friendly and appealing, with the placement of new mulch on the surface, the installation of improved lighting, and the addition of a small water park with a sprinkler "splash pad" for children. The landscaping was also improved with the planting of "hostile foliage." In addition, the parking lot was relined and a wrought iron fence was installed.

Those living at U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidized housing are required to provide eight hours a month of service to the community. The residents at the Fallon apartments, a HUD-subsidized housing complex, have been engaged to provide their community service at the playground, working as volunteers with the city's housing department maintenance crew. Residents were convened to explain the future vision of the park and landscaping and to elicit suggestions and encourage buy-in for the effort. It was determined that more lighting for the park and the parking area was needed to extend the hours that the playground would be available.

The Weed and Seed site set a goal of reducing crime and increasing the lawful use of the Little Italy neighborhood's traditional marketplace area. In Troy's Little Italy neighborhood, a marketplace area has been in existence for more than a hundred years. Currently it is a large paved area open on three sides that is bordered by a retaining wall that separates the Marketplace from a nearby elevated roadway. The Marketplace had been used as a farmer's market area, but over time, it has fallen into disuse and has become an eyesore. The Marketplace has no access control and the retaining wall (approximately 25 feet high and in disrepair) was blanketed with graffiti. The Weed and Seed Steering Committee met with the Neighborhood Watch Association to get ideas for improvement. Members of the committee met with staff of the city's landscaping department, who were able to identify the boundary of the park vs. other property. Repair of the retaining wall will cost in excess of \$100,000, so they explored other possible strategies to mitigate the wall problem. The city engineer's planning for the retaining wall continues. A wrought-iron fence has been installed on the three other sides of the area, a bocce court was installed, and a memory wall was established to honor residents and families. Memorial bricks can be purchased by community members. They engaged the Catholic Youth Organization to develop youth programming for using the area.

The Weed and Seed site set a goal of reducing crime and renewing use of the Canal Avenue Pocket Park by families. The Pocket Park on Canal Avenue was rife with graffiti, in disrepair, and unmaintained. Older youth hang out there, loitering on rusted playground equipment and intimidating, by their presence, children and families who might want to play and relax. The steering committee met with the Osgood Crime Watch Association and city officials and came up with a work plan for the area, including an idea to lock the gate to the park each evening and open it each morning. A neighboring city fire department station agreed to take the responsibility for opening and locking the gates every day. The community policing unit agreed to patrol more regularly.

Osgood Crime Watch Association agreed to maintain the park and assist with controlling access to it. The city administration acknowledged that there needed to be a work plan and a vision for the park. Earth Day in April was celebrated through service projects that saw 60 neighbors volunteer to remove graffiti, clean up, paint playground equipment, and trim trees to help develop sightlines and lighting. The United Way organized a revitalization project of 100 volunteers to take out the old playground equipment and ready the site for new, toddler-scaled playground equipment. They removed foliage and replaced it with appropriate hostile foliage; planted a vegetable garden; installed picnic tables, barbecue grills, a hopscotch area, and new gates. One of the most impressive innovations was the design and installation of a children's literacy trail garden based on the book *Flower Garden* by author Eve Bunting. Signs replicating the simple verses of the children's tale illustrate the garden and the path through it:

*"Garden in a shopping cart / Doesn't it look great?  
Garden on the checkout stand / I can hardly wait."*

The hope is that more families with young children will now use the pocket park.

The Steering Committee has had a great relationship with the city's public works department. A group of eight to ten highly involved residents, the women's reentry program (from the Roarke Center), the Rensselaer County Prevention Bureau, Troy's Community Policing Unit (eight officers and a captain), and three large, influential neighborhood associations—South Central Neighborhood Association, Little Italy Neighborhood Watch, and Osgood Neighborhood Association—led the effort. Fifteen additional neighborhood associations have provided donated supplies and food for meetings and events. The Steering Committee is considering whether to apply for a community development block grant to further their progress.

Advanced CPTED training provided by NCPC took place in the summer of 2009. Canal Avenue Pocket Park has applied for a grant to install a higher fence, further improve the playground, get trees trimmed, install extra lights, and place a surveillance camera in the park. There are also hopes to build a small pavilion roof over the tot lot and picnic area.

Next, the site's Weed and Seed Steering Committee will focus on a bus stop shelter on a busy city bus route that is uninviting and used more by homeless persons and criminals than commuters. Troy, by reclaiming its roots and birthright through concerted Weed and Seed and CPTED efforts, is well on its way to enriching the entire community.

## Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Time and time again, sites that engaged law enforcement early in the process produced results that benefited the community in substantial ways. Code enforcement strategies produced timely results that showed the rest of the community, early on, the value of the Weed and Seed CPTED effort. Communities that shared, promoted, and marketed CPTED strategies with all segments of the community produced more buy-in across the board than communities that kept CPTED as the purview of the police or others. Top-down and bottom-up inclusion of residents, elected officials, and other government administrators into the work and goals of Steering Committees advanced the Weed and Seed effort productively, more so than community Steering Committees that worked in relative isolation. Steering Committees and CPTED Subcommittees that engaged major community players (public utilities, railroads, businesses, school systems, city/county/state departments, faith-based institutions, etc.) produced sound results from CPTED-inspired strategies. Communities can use the relatively small gains of CPTED strategies to compound investment in the bigger picture of community safety, crime reduction, and quality-of-life improvements. Communities that used all the resources available to them from CCDO, including CPTED training and technical assistance providers, and kept in constant contact with the providers and CCDO staff, showed accelerated improvement over communities that did not avail themselves of such CPTED resources.

The experiences of this training and technical assistance effort lead to a recommendation that the following practices and elements be kept in mind when serving a Weed and Seed CPTED initiative

1. **Include those who will be most affected by the effort to help plan and carry out the effort.** Engaging and enlisting Weed and Seed site residents, business owners, and institutions in the assessment of the problem, identification of potential solutions, and work plan will increase the buy-in and investment in the effort and produce success.
2. **Get a big table.** Including stakeholders, affected parties and individuals, and solution providers at the same meetings, discussions, and on distribution lists for publications can lead to clearer understanding of the issues, needs, impact, and strategies. This allows the group to discuss what each group can realistically bring to the table. For example: some groups can supply volunteers, but no money; others may be able to provide money and little else. Some partners may be able to provide influence (access to local leaders), etc. Be sure to include catalysts from the community who can bring the issues into focus. Engage champions to carry the message beyond the site's Weed and Seed Steering Committee's reach. Engage public utilities, city/county departments, political leadership, residents, and businesses.

3. **Include law enforcement early in the process.** When law enforcement is involved early, the crime prevention strategies employed can drastically reduce the amount of calls for police service and provide additional free training to members of a law enforcement agency which, in turn, can free up other resources in the agency. Law enforcement has resources, skills, information, and wisdom to effect positive changes on the crime prevention front in the community.
4. **Seek “win-win” solutions.** Articulate the benefits for all parties when strategies are to be employed. For example, law enforcement will receive fewer calls requiring a response; businesses will benefit from consumers not afraid to venture into some areas, whether by day or after dark; and youth will have resources and assets to engage their time and energies productively.
5. **Employ “The sky’s the limit” thinking to group brainstorming.** Be open to creative, cooperative solutions. Think outside the box for funding ideas (forfeiture assets, civic-minded law firm interest accounts, grant opportunities) and strategies.
6. **Look to other model communities and strategies.** Examine tried strategies or successful efforts from like communities for application to current needs or issues.
7. **Start with accomplishable tasks;** build on and celebrate those successes.
8. **Keep an eye on the CPTED principles as a way to address an issue.** Think of CPTED as a lever to start a cascade of improvements in the community.
9. **View a community from an “asset-based” lens;** not what’s missing, but what assets are present in the community—a community center, fire station, park, school, house of worship, U.S. Attorney’s Office, institution of higher education, volunteer force, etc.
10. **Use the resources provided by the Community Capacity Development Office.** There is a wealth of free, useful information on the website (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/ws/welcome.html>) specifically for Weed and Seed sites and site Steering Committees, including training and technical assistance providers (e.g., NCPC). If a training and technical assistance provider is used, keep in contact and use it every step of the way. Draw from the CCDO staff to secure useful resources, information, and evidence-based models.

## Conclusion

When community residents, leaders, merchants, and other invested stakeholders were able to articulate the problems that diminished the community's quality of life and perception of safety, those who could provide solutions (government agencies, law enforcement, code enforcement, public utilities, and others) were able to match strategies to address the articulated problems. Often it was determined that getting the right persons or agencies "around the table" made all the difference. The NCPC CPTED training sessions and the follow-up technical assistance enabled that kind of solution-seeking with parties and entities that effected needed change. Engaging political leadership, government agencies, law enforcement, business leaders, public utilities, private industry, and area residents was a strategy that had significant impact on solutions to problems the community endured every day. On occasion, it was a matter of enforcing existing codes and regulations to maintain private property; in other instances it was redesigning traffic flow, police patrols, or street lighting that made a huge difference. Holding public utilities, railroads, school systems, residents, and others accountable for their responsibilities contributed ready solutions to problems that had vexed communities for years and, in some cases, decades. Some issues remained complex without easy, ready solutions, but the inroads against blight, crime, and community deterioration made by applying CPTED principles had a cascading effect that energized communities and geometrically contributed to further solutions.

While no one strategy, CPTED included, can ameliorate all the issues confronting a community, the CPTED principles can provide low-cost, simple fixes that pay high dividends in community safety, the perception of safety, the reduction of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life indicators Weed and Seed sites seek.





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