CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED) RECOMMENDATIONS

CHINATOWN

PREPARED BY

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A partnership of the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service, The Family Centre of Northern Alberta, and United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

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BACKGROUND

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audits and subsequent recommendations are grounded in the principles of *surveillance*, *access control*, *territoriality* and *maintenance*. These First Generation principles are central to designing and modifying environments in ways that are more likely to reduce criminal opportunity and activity as well as to deter disorder behaviour. Conversely, utilizing the principles in design should increase intended users of spaces and prosocial activities.

Recently a more holistic approach has been reflected in CPTED with the introduction of Second Generation principles which look beyond physical design and account for social context. Second Generation CPTED includes principles of *social cohesion*, *connectivity*, *community culture* and *threshold capacity*. Often the impact of these principles are more difficult to capture and do not appear as closely linked to crime prevention; nonetheless they are just as relevant to community safety as are First Generation principles. Although a community building approach has always been advocated for within CPTED, the Second Generation more clearly connects community involvement to implementing strategies.

Although the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design have had success in increasing the perception and realities of community safety, it is important to note that no single strategy will remedy all concerns. There is an interconnection between strategies and principles and there is the impact of the larger context in which a space exists. There is also the possibility that strategies can have both positive and negative consequences. Therefore time should be taken to explore possible unintended consequences and develop strategies to mitigate negative impacts. Due to the ever changing context and varying impacts it is good practice to implement strategies, monitor for impact and adjust as necessary. This practice is particularly important in an environment where conditions appear entrenched and regressing is likely to occur. Often it is during this monitoring and upkeep phase when individuals may see little success and feel defeated, especially if strategies need to be reapplied to prevent any slippage on impact.

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HISTORY

Chinatown has a significant [history](#) and contribution to culture in the city of Edmonton. Although the space and dynamics have changed over the years, and a division between the north, commercial area and southern cultural area is evident, the footprint identified by the City of Edmonton as being part of the [Chinatown and Area Business Improvement Area](#) is generally north of 105 Avenue to 110A Avenue and east and 101 Street east to and including much of 97 Street. The cultural influence extends into a portion of the Downtown Business Association and Quarters Redevelopment area as well as Louise McKinney Park where the Chinese Gardens are located. It is important to note that there is a concentration of support services and social agencies within this space and in the community of McCauly and its neighbours Boyle Street and Central McDougall. The Royal Alexandra Hospital, numerous faith organizations and the ICE District are also in close proximity and are influential. This area and McCauley are consistently among the highest Edmonton Police Service call for service and crime and disorder neighbourhoods in Edmonton. Many conversations regarding the revitalization of Chinatown include themes around safety. That being said, concerns are likely to be a result of the larger complex social context as opposed to any one feature of the neighbourhood.

Many of the concerns and issues regarding safety in Chinatown are not new and are not necessarily a result of the businesses, clients/customers, or residents, rather there is a much greater context and dynamic influencing the area. Factors such as proximity to the downtown core, concentration of predatory retailers, social agencies, availability of similar goods/services being more widely accessible, generational and cultural perspectives, abandoned properties, etc. are influencing the ability to tackle issues and achieve success. There have been many stakeholders, residents, businesses and property owners who have attempted to impact change over many years in regards to very complex and entrenched dynamics. The writer is not naive to how deflated those involved may feel nor does the writer assume to have expertise over the dynamics in the space or intricate knowledge of the numerous strategies implemented or underway. Therefore the following recommendations are offered with the utmost respect for the experiences of those who have placed considerable effort into the area.

FIRST GENERATION CPTED

One goal of First generation strategies is to decrease the sense of anonymity while establishing who the guardian is and increasing the sense of ownership. This is done by applying multiple strategies across different principles, while ensuring that the ongoing application and maintenance of efforts is being realized.

THE PRINCIPLES[1]

Surveillance: *decrease the sense of anonymity by increasing areas where people are being observed (real or perceived). Measures range from natural and informal to formal and mechanical.*

Access control: *strategies which limit access to a location in favor of intended users while increasing the perceived risk of antisocial behaviour.*

Territoriality: *means of establishing a sense of ownership of a space, who has a vested interest in the space and who is responsible for the area. Defining public, semi-private and private space contributes to establishing territoriality.*

Maintenance: *the regular care and upkeep of a property which conveys a sense of pride of ownership and increases the perception that someone regularly attends to property to ensure it is in good repair.*

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[1] Adapted from the Edmonton Police Services CPTED Assessment Template and The International CPTED Association (ICA) Primer in CPTED - What is CPTED?

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Typically CPTED audits and assessments evaluate properties individually and make unique recommendations for each location. However, when considering First Generation principles, there are a number of 'universal' strategies that would apply to most, if not all locations. Therefore the following set of recommendations are applicable to most locations and are only roughly categorized by their principle due to the overlapping impact strategies can have.

Target hardening measures to all entrances and access points must be evaluated, including any pedestrian accesses, delivery doors/loading docks and windows. Generally door frames should be made of metal as should doors and which should have a solid core, unless they are glass. In this case shatter resident film is recommended. Deadbolts should have a minimum of 1 inch throw and a full length strike plate is recommended to deter attempts to pry doors. There should be a locking mechanism for any windows that can be opened and they should be treated with shatter resistant film as well. Depending on the nature of the business and the customer base, additional measures such as access cards or visitor sign in could be deemed appropriate. The business type and floor plan may also dictate if additional measures can be taken, ie. a hostess stand or reception desk, strategically placed counters/barriers, or furniture act as control measures that convey messaging to differentiate semi-private and private spaces. Additional precautionary measures regarding the placement of cash registers or high valued products should be taken and these items should not be in the path of travel of an access point. Access control strategies can be less mechanical and more informal. Strategies such as welcoming walk-ins, asking if they have an appointment, or accompanying guests/customers/clients into semi private areas of the business can be considered. For sites that have rear or alley entrances, all access points should be treated similarly, if not with greater reinforcement. These spaces typically do not benefit from other CPTED strategies. Chimes signaling that someone has entered the business/ building can have a number of positive impacts. They notify staff that someone has entered the business and they will need to greet them and be attentive but they also reduce the sense of anonymity among patrons.

Natural surveillance strategies are ones which increase visibility in and around a space. Passers-by, patrons, staff or emergency services can perform this function. The ability to see into a site

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is enhanced by reducing the number of obstructions between the inside and surroundings of a property and those who are capable of performing surveillance. Vegetation between the sidewalk and site, or windows covered with signage or otherwise obscured, inhibits the ability of passersby to casually observe. Poor sightlines offer areas of cover and increases the sense of anonymity, as well as the sense that one will not get caught because no one is able to see. It also prevents patrons and staff inside from anticipating what is outside of the site which could cause them to happen upon an unsafe situation upon exit. Therefore, any coverings on windows and doors should be very limited and any vegetation or other obstructions should be minimized. Products and structures inside of a business should be placed in a way that allows areas to be easily observed, this can be done by using low shelves, an open concept or convex mirrors. Staff consistently walking through and monitoring the space is important. Natural surveillance is enhanced by the effective use of lighting which should be bright white, LED and consistent around the exterior of a property, avoiding highs and lows. Mechanisms to avoid vandalism should be in place; light fixtures can either be out of reach or enclosed. Attention can be drawn to vulnerable areas by enhancing the lighting in the space. Motion sensor lighting can often be used effectively as they provide the perception that someone is present to turn them on. Businesses/neighbours can work together to increase lightings' effectiveness. For example; lighting may only need to be installed on one building to help illuminate the space between two buildings, as long as the fixtures are positioned in a way that lights up the whole space. Or lighting can be installed at wider intervals on one building if the adjacent building has lighting installed at the same interval but opposing locations. Mechanical and formal surveillance strategies include security cameras and security personnel. Well placed security cameras, ones that capture entrance points, areas that are difficult for staff to monitor or access infrequently and vulnerable areas (such as areas with higher priced merchandise) benefit from high quality/resolution video cameras. Sufficient lighting will help ensure that video quality is enhanced. Reputable dealers/installers are likely in the best position to inform camera location and angle to maximize coverage. Signage and messaging about cameras can decrease the sense of anonymity as can having various camera angles displayed on a monitor that patrons can see. Alley or infrequently used access points can greatly benefit from security cameras. As they would increase surveillance of those areas. It is important to note that if cameras are not continually monitored, having a high quality output can enhance the investigative benefit of the footage. Security personnel can help establish and reinforce expectations and boundaries, however

their role must be clearly defined to ensure they are able to maintain their authority as well as their own safety.

A sense of vested interest and ownership of a space should be established. If the space is a business the location/business name and address should be clearly displayed. This should be done on all entrances, especially if there is a back alley as it makes it easier for someone trying to determine their location and eases emergency services' ability to find a location. Welcoming signs and statements can be personalized and humanize the owners/staff, such as 'Family owned since 1984'. Information with behavioural expectations, such as 'limited cash on premises' or 'abusive behaviour' policies should be displayed. If the space is a parking lot, vacant lot or greenspace, efforts to delineate between public, semi-private and private property should be enacted. This can be done via landscaping and surface or flooring treatments, signage, and access control measures. The guardian of the space should be identified in some way and similar strategies to enhancing safety should be used in these spaces, in fact, they may require a more concerted effort as they are more likely to be spaces identified as more anonymous. Although there are many efforts in place to identify and brand the larger area, there may be other opportunities that can be identified, potentially through beautification, streetscaping or artwork.

Maintenance efforts are essential to increasing community safety and these efforts transverse other CPTED principles. Territoriality and maintenance are connected in many ways; if a property is well maintained it signifies that someone frequents the area, there is someone who cares for and has concern over the area as well as decreases anonymity. A lack of maintenance indicates that a higher threshold of antisocial behaviour is acceptable. The development of a maintenance plan should be done and put into place alongside the implementation of any other First Generation strategies. This plan should identify a person who will monitor the property for any damage or vandalism, determine how and to whom that information will be reported and have a plan for repairs. If the property occupant is not the owner, a commitment from the property owner should be obtained. Naturally, the sooner damage can be repaired the better, this will prevent the further decline of the properties condition, convey that someone has a vested interest in the property and help establish responsible use and social norms for the area.

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Although addressing safety by way of reducing the opportunity for criminal behaviour is important, Chinatown may be better served by identifying opportunities to impact social disorder and how these behaviours are evidenced. For example, instances of graffiti, litter, discarded clothing or needles, individuals displaying erratic or aggressive behaviours such as fidgeting or yelling, impact perceptions of safety however, are not necessarily criminal acts. Exploring strategies around these manifestations could identify creative opportunities and capitalize on the expertise and vested interest of various stakeholders.

SECOND GENERATION CPTED

Second Generation principles may not appear as closely connected to safety as are target hardening and First Generation strategies; however they can be equally as impactful and in fact provide greater depth and longevity. Success will not occur while implementing a singular strategy in isolation and without consideration of the larger context. There often are not immediate impacts evident when implementing Second Generation strategies, this can be disheartening and lead to resistance. Therefore the rationale must be conveyed to stakeholders and expectations must be managed. If the impacts of strategies are not given sufficient time or maintenance to actualize, they will not have the intended or potential outcomes. Also, it is important that Second Generation strategies reflect a GBA+ lens (some consider this to be Third Generation). The experiences, interests and needs of all users should be taken into consideration and the community should be involved in the creation, implementation and maintenance of strategies. Their feedback should also be sought when analyzing impact.

THE PRINCIPLES[2]

Social Cohesion: *how social relationships are established and how they can be enhanced or maintained. These relationships should have a focus on solving local problems.*

Connectivity: *what linkages exist to the area from those outside the space including how are people accessing the space and how is inclusivity and diversity promoted. These linkages can be physical as well as social.*

Community Culture: *is there a common sense of community and purpose within the area and how are culture and social norms are conveyed.*

Threshold Capacity: *does the space have the capacity to support its intended use and is there a diversity of uses.*

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[2] Adapted from the Edmonton Police Services CPTED Assessment Template and The International CPTED Association (ICA) Primer in CPTED - What is CPTED?

RECOMMENDATIONS

A great deal of work is being done within Chinatown and the surrounding communities to establish a greater sense of vibrancy, safety and wellbeing; features which are not mutually exclusive. Chinatown is fortunate to have a diverse group of stakeholders, each with a varied but vested interest in the area and expertise that can inform Second Generation opportunities. The writer respectfully offers recommendations without the full awareness of previous efforts, those in development and what is currently being implemented. It is important to note that a great deal of the content of the well thought out Chinatown Strategy is reflective of Second Generation CPTED principles. If implementation continues, an increase in safety will be achieved byway of the Actions under each Pillar and subsequent economic development. Similarly the Chinatown Business Association and the Chinatown Transformation Collaborative hold considerable expertise and many of their activities bolster Second Generation principles.

There is evidently a very diverse mix of users in the space, many of whom appear to have competing interests and needs. It is essential to move forward with efforts that are underway to bring everyone together and to hear those needs. It can be assumed that everyone wants a sense of safety, however what that looks like and how that can be achieved will vary. It is hoped that commonalities can be identified and capitalized on when developing strategies to increase community safety. It is difficult to provide definitive recommendations as to how to estable cohesion without fulsome and ongoing engagement and consultation from different parties however much of this work appears to be underway through the Safer McCauley initiative and the McCauley Revitalization. Many of the strategies that further economic development also increase connectivity for those who are outside of the community. By enhancing features that bring people to the area, such as Chinatown as a cultural experience with a guided walking tour, cultural ambassadors, interpretive signage, promoting unique features, etc. and by exploring other opportunities that may make it more desirable to come to Chinatown such as free parking, public transportation, wayfinding signage, etc. those who are outside of the community may feel more motivated to come to the area and have a greater sense of connectivity. It is equally as important to maintain and enhance connectivity for those who live or work in close proximity to Chinatown. Consulting with this population regarding how to gain their ongoing commitment to the area will be important as this and the Chinese cultural community will likely be the

strongest economic and social base for the area. Therefore opportunities to incentivise their participation in the local businesses and cultural experiences should be explored. A means of increasing connectivity is through community events. If these highlight all the area has to offer those who may be interested will have a variety of reasons to be drawn to and stay in the area for a longer period of time. In order to create and maintain momentum it may be beneficial to have smaller, more frequent events or experiences.

Likely due to the diversity of uses and users in the area, it appears that a consistent and common community culture has not been achieved. Means of identifying and establishing the desired social norms must be developed. This must include establishing parameters around respectful use of the spaces. Again, there is a great deal of work focusing on issues such as problematic properties, back alley cleanliness, beautification, concentration of services and predatory retailers, etc. all of which contribute to the social expectations and way of being within the community. First Generation efforts to maintain the area are essential as they support the establishment of community culture. Animating spaces without the actual presence of people yet conveying the perception that people frequent the area may be an important first step. As mentioned earlier, maintenance enhances this. Overfilled garbages, long grass, faded paint, dilapidated structures, etc, signals the threshold of what is acceptable and how people are allowed to use the space is low. This also sends the message that few people with a vested interest frequent the area to monitor how it is kept.

The opportunity to encourage new and local individuals to use the space is complicated by the complex needs and shifting concentration of some users. The diversification of users, how people are interacting with the space and who feels comfortable in the space (as well as why or why not) has been impacted. Efforts to shift the concentration of users to one where everyone has a sense of belonging and safety will undoubtedly be beyond complicated and multifaceted. It will likely need to take the larger social and political context into account. Advocacy regarding policies and the provision of social services may be necessary and most certainly the involvement and cooperation among all stakeholders.

SUMMARY

It is hoped that through the consistent application of First Generation CPTED principles the built environment in Chinatown can provide a backdrop for the implementation of Second Generation strategies. Ensuring that spaces are evaluated for their adherence to strategies pertaining to access control and surveillance; with sightlines and lighting being points of focus, establishing ownership through territoriality and maintenance and the design of structures and spaces will help deter criminal and disorder behaviour. Second Generation strategies can then help address the complex social dynamics in this area. These strategies often take a lengthier period of time to have their impacts materialize which then requires the steadfast commitment to their implementation. However, many actions are either in development or underway as a result of the committed and coordinated efforts of area stakeholders.

Enhancing safety through the application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles can present a conundrum; people are reluctant to go into spaces where they feel uncomfortable or unsafe; however, the presence of people with prosocial intentions contributes to increasing safety. First Generation Principles help reduce crime by reducing opportunity, decreasing anonymity and increasing the sense of ownership while Second Generation strategies try to address the social environment. Since strategies can have an impact on multiple categories and also positive and negative consequences it is important to monitor implementation and adjust as necessary, while giving enough time for outcomes to be realized.