



## Becker Morgan Group Emphasizes Student-Focused Safety & Security in School Design: Part 2

### Site Development & Maintenance

In Part 1, we discussed the role of building design in educational facilities and creating secure environments conducive to the emotional experience of learning. In **Part 2** of this 3-part series, we will discuss site design strategies to provide a safe and secure environment for students and the community.

Since issuing Part 1, the country has continued to witness new tragedies – 40 school shootings this calendar year to date – including Uvalde, Texas and elsewhere, while reliving past tragedies via ongoing legal proceedings regarding the Sandy Hook Elementary and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings. These events remind us of the continued relevancy of this topic and provide lessons learned. It is essential that security measures be considered in school design and implemented by district personnel to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, and staff.

### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, commonly known as **CPTED**, is a design strategy that identifies several major principles for safe schools. The primary objective is deterrence - to prevent unwanted visitors from gaining access to a school campus and avert the impact of natural threats.



## Natural Surveillance

**Research in criminal behavior** indicates crime can be prevented if there is a perceived risk of detection. A physical environment can be designed to positively influence human behavior. This is accomplished by maximizing visibility and creating environments that foster positive social interactions. This strategy applies to views from inside the building to the exterior, from adjacent properties to the building, and throughout the site. Examples illustrating compliance include large view windows to the exterior, well-lit entrances, parking lots and travel paths, low landscaping materials, transparent fencing, elimination of hiding places, and provision of spaces that promote public use.



## Natural Access Control

**Facility users and visitors** can be physically guided by strategic placement of entrances/exits, landscaping, fencing, and lighting. Main entrances should be clearly defined and well lit. Highlighting the main entrance for visitors is one safety precaution that includes natural surveillance and access control. Visitors will be able to easily identify the entry, and schools will be able to identify those straying from the main path. Landscaping should establish a designated pedestrian path and create buffers between public and private zones. Signage should provide clear direction, and security mechanisms should be implemented to provide multi-layer security. These mechanisms include locks on doors and windows, as well as security and surveillance systems at the building perimeter and throughout the site.





## Territorial Reinforcement

**Territorial reinforcement** uses natural attributes to delineate between private and public areas. The surrounding landscape can subtly invite or deter guests from certain areas. Setting up a perimeter around the school site does not have to create a harsh view. Trees, rocks, and other natural features can create a softer appearance, while still enforcing the boundary of the school. Landscaping, hardscaping, and site amenities such as flags, seating areas, and signage promote pride and ownership. Parking and pedestrian paths should not be an afterthought. School-related vehicular accidents are a primary cause of injury in K-12 schools. Keep the students safe by providing parking and drive aisles that do not cross pedestrian routes. By using territorial reinforcement, students know where they can and cannot walk.

## Activity Support

**Activity areas** can be located so people become part of the natural surroundings, thereby enhancing natural surveillance. These areas encourage positive social interaction. Examples include outdoor classrooms, athletic fields, playgrounds, and community event areas such as pavilions, amphitheatres, and inviting seating walls.





## Maintenance & Management

**Routine and preventative** maintenance is needed to uphold territorial reinforcement efforts. Property maintenance demonstrates the Owner is watching over the property. Maintenance includes repairing damaged property, replacing nonfunctional lights, removing graffiti, and maintaining landscaping and trash-free grounds. Beyond putting a school's "best foot forward", all of these efforts serve to establish a sense of pride of place for students and staff alike.



## Basic Design & Management Strategies

**To enhance security**, these CPTED principles should be considered during the planning and design phases of your project, but these measures are only effective if properly managed and maintained. Although the selection of strategies to be utilized will depend on specific site conditions and programming requirements, the final built environment will result in a friendly, inviting, and safe place for students and the community. In Part 3, we will discuss establishing secure building perimeters and methods for detecting and responding to safety and security events.



## Resources

[www.edweek.org/leadership/school-climate-safety](http://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-climate-safety)

[www.amfam.com/resources/articles/loss-control-resources/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design](http://www.amfam.com/resources/articles/loss-control-resources/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design)