

Natural Surveillance

One of the core strategies of [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#) (CPTED) is natural surveillance—the intentional design of physical spaces to maximize visibility and passive monitoring by residents, employees, and passersby. By reducing hiding spots and increasing observation opportunities, natural surveillance discourages criminal activity by increasing the perceived risk of being caught.



Visibility

Ensure public areas (streets, sidewalks, parks, and entrances) are easily visible to residents, employees, and passersby.

- **Street-Facing Windows:** Buildings with windows overlooking sidewalks or parking lots encourage passive monitoring.
- **Minimize Visual Obstructions:** Avoid solid fences, high walls, or dense shrubbery that block sightlines.
- **Indoor-Outdoor Sightlines:** Position workspaces, seating areas, or break rooms near windows to encourage observation of outdoor spaces (e.g., a café table near a window with charging ports to attract people).
- **Parking Lot Design:** Place pedestrian walkways where they are visible from buildings. Avoid large, isolated parking areas; instead, break them into smaller, well-monitored sections.

Lighting

Ensure spaces are well-lit to enhance nighttime visibility and deter criminal activity.

- **Uniform Lighting:** Avoid dark spots by using consistent, glare-free lighting.
- **Pathway Illumination:** Walkways, stairs, and entrances should be brightly lit.
- **Motion-Activated Lights:** Useful in low-traffic areas to draw attention to movement.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Use LED lighting for cost-effective, long-term solutions.



Landscaping

Maintain clear sightlines while using greenery to enhance aesthetics without creating hiding spots.

- **Follow the 2ft/6ft Rule:** Ground cover should not exceed 2 feet in height. Tree canopies should start at least 6 feet above the ground to prevent concealment.
- **Avoid Dense Plantings:** Thorny bushes under windows can deter intruders, but ensure they don't obstruct views.
- **Use Open Fencing:** Wrought iron or picket fences maintain visibility while marking boundaries.

Activity Support

Encourage regular, legitimate use of public spaces to increase natural monitoring.

- **Activate Underused Spaces:** Place benches, food trucks, or outdoor seating near building entrances. Install bike racks or public art to attract foot traffic.
- **Mixed-Use Areas:** Combine retail, residential, and office spaces to ensure constant activity.
- **Community Involvement:** Organize events (farmer's markets, concerts) to bring people into public spaces.

Natural Surveillance is a powerful, low-cost way to enhance safety by designing environments where people can easily observe their surroundings. By improving visibility, lighting, landscaping, and activity support, communities can deter crime while creating more inviting public spaces. DPrep Safety can help conduct a CPTED audit at your location and offer guidance in making it a well-monitored and welcoming space.