



Strategies in the Development of Gated Community Housing in the Context of A Safe Township and Cpted

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ABSTRACT

A safe township is one that is free from all forms of physical, social and mental threats. The local environment should engender an atmosphere of wellbeing, with the residents enjoying security, prosperity, health and contentment. In a real-life situation, however, town-planning has often been a subject of criticism by sociologists, who argue that contemporary urban planning tends to emphasize only the physical concepts and designs. This leads inevitably to increasing crime rates, especially those that involve violence and property loss. The social problems that have resulted point to planners having failed to anticipate and address the emerging problems related to crime. Town planners only cater to the physical aspects of their work; they lack due consideration for the social facets in the planning of townships, their designs and their surroundings. Hence, the safe city concept that can be achieved through the implementation of CPTED should be incorporated into security planning when developing gated community housing. This would not only reduce the incidence of crime and the fear of crime but also offer a better lifestyle for residents.

KEYWORDS : Safe Township, Gated Community, CPTED Design

INTRODUCTION

The safe township concept is an approach to resolve the security issues that tend to occur in urban areas. It is part of the agenda of the concept of liveable cities, focusing primarily on the problems of crime in the city. The concept of safe areas has become increasingly important after the UN-Habitat Nations (UN-Habitat) in 1996 highlighted the problem of increasing crime rate in cities worldwide. According to a report by UN-Habitat Nations, at least once every five years, more than half of the world's population living in urban areas with populations exceeding 100,000 on average fall victims to crime (UN Habitat). This warns that security in urban areas is under increasing threat, while the safety aspect is an important indicator of the quality of city life (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, 2010).

The importance of the safety aspect is recognized in Maslow's motivation theory. Maslow (1954) proposed the need for security as the second criterion in the achievement of quality life, where at its most basic level, there is the need for life and its physiological support. Once the basic requirements are met, there is subsequently the need for safety, followed by the need for love. This is followed, in the next stage, by the need for self-recognition or respect for oneself and, at the peak of human needs, the need for self improvement.

URBAN CRIME

In recent years, the incidence of crime has climbed alarmingly. Almost daily, we are confronted with a slew of crimes that evoke fear and concern on public safety, especially in the big cities. The incidence of crime in the cities is in fact higher than in other areas. This undeniable fact is the result of the increasing demands and pressures of life in the crowded city that lead to increased criminal behavior.

Cozens et al. (2005) states that crime and violence are among the key indicators by which to assess sustainable development. This statement is in accordance with the position of the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (1999) that every individual has the right to live in a safe community.

The crime rate in Malaysia has reportedly been on the increase since 2006. This has resulted in a reduction in the quality of life and has imposed considerable cost to the economy. The experiences from the UK, U.S. and other countries show that a reduction in the crime rate is not impossible. In the UK, for example, the overall crime rate has dropped by more than 30% since 1995. In the major cities in the U.S., like Washington, Chicago and New York, the crime rate has decreased by 50% since the early 1990s. Street crimes such as snatch thefts, robberies and gang robber-

ies not involving firearms are especially worrying. These crimes present traumatic experiences to the victims. They leave a deep impact on the people's perception of safety and this ultimately impacts their lifestyles. Fear of crime can dissuade people from straying into certain un reputable urban areas. In the more serious cases, people may even be afraid to leave home.

The existing physical environment contributes significantly to the increase in criminal activity. For example, pedestrian walkways that are too close to the flow of traffic encourage snatch-thefts. Similarly, multiple access routes to a housing area pose problems in security control. Inadequate lighting also contributes to the incidence of crime, particularly in badly-lit places or in areas overgrown with bushes.

SAFE TOWNSHIP

The Safe Township concept is based on the contention that 'Prevention is better than cure'. The concept emphasizes cooperation between government bodies such as local authorities, the security forces (police), private organizations, NGOs and society at large to combat crime in safe surroundings that are planned in conjunction with the community development agencies (Department of Urban Planning and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia). The Safe Township concept is an approach towards creating a physical environment that helps in crime prevention through environmental planning and infrastructure. The aim is for the township to be basically free from crime, while at the same time, to reduce fear of the residents towards the threat of crime.

Target areas suited to the Safe Township concept are identified by criteria such as the population density, frequency of reported crimes and areas where foreign tourists and the public congregate. It is also based on the principle that 'Prevention is better than cure'. This approach involves the residents:

- identifying the problems;
- resolving the problems
- implementing the solutions with the help of the Police and other agencies.

STEPS IN CRIME PREVENTION IN THE SAFE TOWNSHIP PROGRAMME

There are 23 steps in the three strategies of the Safe Township Programme for implementation by the local authorities, departments and technical agencies, and the public. The steps are as follows (table 1):

TABLE 1: STEPS IN CRIME PREVENTION IN THE SAFE TOWNSHIP PROGRAM

STRATEGY	STEPS FOR CRIME PREVENTION
S1: Designing the Physical Environment	L1- Separate pedestrian walkways from motorways L2- Prepare bollards L3- Control plants used in landscaping around pedestrian walkways L4- Research in crime prevention through environmental Designing L5- Sharing of crime information through GIS-based mapping L6- Review of guidelines for housing layout
S2: Strengthening the target area (target hardening)	L7- Set up Police <i>Pondok</i> L8- Install crime reminder notice boards L9- Install safety mirrors L10- Install security alarm L11- Tidy up overgrown shrubbery and areas hidden from view L12- Provide locked motorcycle park L13- Install closed circuit television (CCTV) L14- Install lighting along five-foot ways (walkways) of commercial areas L15- Ensure walkways are not hidden from view of passersby L16- Brighten up areas where people congregate L17- Disallow hawkers and vehicle parking along five-foot ways and pedestrian walkways L18- Establish various trading activities L19- Engage commercial security service
S3: Implement Social / Community Activities and Public Awareness Learning	L20- Facilitate learning L21- Install lighting in sidelanes and in the front and rear of houses L22- Prepare a Community Crime Handbook L23- Increase police patrol in housing areas

Source: Department of Town and Country Planning, 2010

THEORY OF THE SAFE TOWNSHIP

The Safe Township Concept is an approach to the formation of a physical environment that helps in crime prevention through infrastructure planning and design. It is aimed at providing neighbourhood that is not only crime-free but also one that promotes ease of mind. The Safe Township concept adopts the CPTED model in its crime prevention strategies.

The prevention of crime through environmental design (CPTED) has been discussed by Jacobs (1961), while Jeffery (1971) has introduced the CPTED concept in his book (Doran & Burgess, 2012). Christian & Vania (2012:315) have updated several CPTED principles in preparing a guide for town planners. Crime incidence in the environment can be reduced through the CPTED principle of stimulating surveillance, fostering territoriality and shrinking the area of conflict where crime may occur, and in doing so control access to those outside of the community (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972).

Four basic principles are incorporated in the CPTED strategy, i.e. natural surveillance, access control, territoriality, and maintenance (Cozens, 2002; Parnaby, 2007; Hedayati, 2012). The first principle, territoriality, involves the exploitation of the physical outlay to counter both the incidence of crime and the opportunity for its occurrence, thus supporting a safe environment (Newman, 1972; Poyner, 1983; Crowe, 2000). The second principle, natural surveillance, requires planning that is conducive to residents' activities that take place under security surveillance at any given time or place (Patrick, 2006). The third principle, access control, emphasises the regulation of the entry and exit of outsiders from the guest area. Finally, the fourth principle, maintenance, serves to present and sustain a good image of the community, with emphasis on the esthetic aspects and integrity of the area (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Territoriality is a principal element in CPTED where a balance is struck between spaces that are deemed private or public through the erecting of barriers, both real and symbolic. Symbolic barriers can be in the form of signboards or other superficial changes to the road, whereas real barriers can be structures such as fencing around residential areas (Paul Ekblom, 2010). The CPTED components are condensed into six characteristics (Figure 2.7), viz. territoriality, surveillance (natural and formal), access control, target hardening, image and maintenance, and activity support (to support other activities in crime pre-

vention (Cozens et al., 2005, Gronlund, 2012).

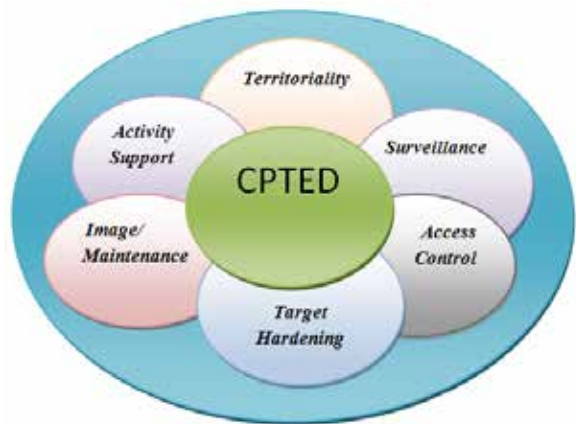


Figure 1: CPTED components

Source: Gronlund, 2012: 287, Figure adapted from Cozens et al., 2005

STRATEGIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GATED COMMUNITIES IN THE SAFE TOWNSHIP CONCEPT

Gated residential communities enjoy tighter security as compared with other residential areas. The safe township strategy is to strengthen the target area in order to improve and upgrade facilities in areas targeted for improved security. There are nine out of 23 crime prevention measures in this program match the provisions and requirements in the development of Gated Communities (as in the table opposite -Table 1and Table 2), namely through:

TABLE 2: GATED COMMUNITY HOUSING STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFE TOWNSHIP PROGRAMME THROUGH CPTED

Crime Prevention Strategies in Gated Community Housing
In general, crime prevention throughout the Gated Community housing is adopted as the first strategy. (Physical Environmental Designing) and the second strategy (Strengthening the target area).
The Gated Community Development supports the provisions and requirements of the Safe Township program. One of the key concepts in the Gated Community housing development is the improvement of resident safety. Nine out of 23 crime prevention measures in this program match the provisions and requirements in the development of Gated Communities (as in the table opposite), namely through:
i. Step 1: Separate pedestrian walkways from vehicular traffic
ii. Step 3: Maintain landscape shrubbery around pedestrian walkways
iii. Step 10: Install security alarms
iv. Step 11: Tidy up overgrown shrubbery and areas that are hidden from view
v. Step 13: Install Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)
vi. Step 14: Install lighting along five-foot ways (walkways) of commercial areas
vii. Step 19: Engage commercial security services
viii. Step 21: Install lighting in sidelanes and in the front and rear of houses
ix. Step 23: Increase security patrols in housing areas
Nevertheless, this development will only support the mixed residential areas, whereas the Safe Township Programme covers the entire town, including the central town area.

Source: Table adapted from Department of Town and Country Planning 2010.

CONCLUSION

The concept of a Safe Township and the principle of CPTED should be applied from the outset of planning in the layout and structures constructed in any new gated community and guarded neighbourhood. The CPTED concept can also be adopted in existing residential areas where security is lacking and the area is susceptible to crime. CPTED is structured on the idea that effective planning of the physical environment will not only deter crime but also promote the quality of life for its residents in gated community.

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