

HOME & GARDEN

Homeowners can deter criminals through CPTED

Simple things can improve safety on properties

BY JESSICA KELLER
HERMISTON HERALD

When Hermiston Police officer Erica Sandoval cruises through town, she knows what she likes to see on neighborhood properties.

Sandoval likes to see well-maintained yards and landscapes. She likes to see well-defined entry points and shrubs and trees that are pruned to certain heights. She likes to see identifiable addresses and fences that don't block views of residences.

Sandoval is not looking for a property to buy, however, but, rather, they appeal to her because they mix form and function by not only looking nice, they also are less likely to be targeted by opportunist criminals.

As Hermiston Police Department's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design specialist, one of Sandoval's duties is to educate residents about what changes they can make to their properties to make them safer and less attractive to criminals.

"The big thing with CPTED, is you want to make the criminal stand out," she said, adding there are plenty of ways to do that without diminishing from a properties aesthetic appeal. "You don't want to make it look like a prison. You want to make it natural looking and pleasing."

Sandoval said CPTED focuses on four concepts: natural surveillance, creating natural access, territorial reinforcement and maintenance.

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

Sandoval said one way to make a property less desir-

able for criminals is by incorporating design features that increase visibility so people — homeowners, neighbors or police — can clearly see and identify activities that should not be taking place.

"It's about using what's out there to create open spaces," she said.

One of the goals of natural surveillance is to eliminate hiding places.

A key way of doing that, Sandoval said, is maintaining foliage. The rule homeowners should follow is making sure shrubs are no bigger than three feet tall and the bottom canopy of trees is at least seven feet from the ground. The idea behind the 3-7 rule is that most people cannot crouch lower than three feet when hiding, nor will tree canopies hide someone if they are kept seven feet from the ground.

Another way to achieve natural surveillance is by making sure that fencing or foliage does not block visibility of a yard or house. Sandoval said fencing that is medium height and that has slats or gaps in it are ideal because they still look nice but don't entirely obscure views into a yard.

Fences that do not have gaps in them or are on the taller side are not good for maintaining visibility and they give people hiding places, she added.

She also suggests people plant a low-growing shrub on the inside of the fence because it adds to the visible appeal and it also reinforces the idea that it is a boundary to a property.

"It's always a good idea to reinforce a fence by combining it with that type of shrub," she said.

Another way to create natural surveillance is by installing lighting to illuminate dark areas, especially at night.

"The old philosophy was to install flood lights," Sandoval said.

Plant list for natural access control

Master Gardener Bill Dochnahl said homeowners can use a number of spiny or thorny plants that will help establish barriers or deter people from accessing certain areas of properties. Not all of the plants conform to the suggested height requirements recommended through CPTED, which should be factored into homeowners' placement of the foliage. Dochnahl said plants zoned 5 and 6 typically grow best in this region.

- Climbing roses, ideal for planting on trellises or sides of houses.
- Rugosa rose, several varieties, grow three to four feet wide but can be trained to conform to a certain height.
- Pyracantha, grow to 8-10 feet tall, which

can be planted in areas where homeowners want others to avoid going.

- Japanese barberry, which come in purple, light yellow and red. The dwarf type is columnar and is typically four feet tall and 18 inches wide. The shrubby type can grow between four to six feet. Dochnahl said they don't grow very quickly and are deer resistant.

- Blackthorn

- Oregon grape, which Dochnahl said can be pretty hard to control if not pruned and maintained.

- William Penn barbers

- Holly, cousin to the hollyhock tree

- Mugo pine, which is more of a shrub and can grow from three to four feet to seven feet tall.

Flood lights, however, are frequently not cost effective because of the high wattage of light bulbs; plus, in a residential neighborhood, by installing flood lights, homeowners run the risk of having the lights shine in neighbors' houses, which may irritate them.

She said there are other options available, including LED lights, which have a much longer life before burning out and come in lower wattages that produce soft-lighting that is bright enough to illuminate an area but not waste energy or distort colors.

"It's enough light to see if there's something going on," Sandoval said.

NATURAL ACCESS

Sandoval said natural access refers to how people enter and exit properties and creating a defined, understood entry point to a residence, encouraging people to gain access to a residence through an established route.

"We're trying to create a celebrated entrance," she said.

Homeowners can use landscaping and foliage

to create natural access by planting shrubs or flowers or installing lights along walkways, creating a path to the front door.

"Criminals do not want to be in the open, and this will draw attention to them if they use anything but the celebrated entrances," Sandoval said.

TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

Sandoval said territorial reinforcement refers to using natural landscaping or other features, such as decorative fencing and porches, to establish borders — between properties and public, semi-private and private areas.

"A lot of people here do the bark and flowers," she said, referring to laying down bark and planting flowers, which not only creates boundaries between public and private areas, but it is attractive, as well.

Homeowners can also create territorial reinforcement by also planting bushes or foliage that have thorns or spines on them to discourage people from accessing properties or places on their prop-

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