



ATLAS SAFETY & SECURITY DESIGN, INC.

March 1, 2022

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

SB522 – State and Local Parks – Child Safe Zone Program – Establishment (Equitable Access to Safe Parks Act)

Testimony of Randy Atlas Ph.D., FAIA, CPP, CPTED

Position: SUPPORT

I am writing to SUPPORT SB522 - State and Local Parks – Child Safe Zone Program – Establishment (Equitable Access to Safe Parks Act).

I reviewed the SB522 Child Safe Zone Program. I am America's only architect / criminologist, and certified as an advanced CPTED practitioner and trainer through the International CPTED Association. I received my Doctorate of Criminology from Florida State University, a Masters in Architecture from the University of Illinois, and a Bachelor of Criminal Justice degree from University of South Florida, and Bachelor's of Architecture from the University of Florida. I am president of Atlas Safety & Security Design Inc., based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I am a registered architect in Florida, nationally accredited with National Council Architectural Registration Board (N.C.A.R.B.), and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. I am a Certified Protection Professional (CPP) from the ASIS International, and an appointed member of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Premises Security Committee, which developed the new NFPA 730/ 731 premises security standards and guidelines. I am a member of the Florida Design Out Crime network, a Board member of the International CPTED Association (ICA), a member of the International Society of Crime Prevention Practitioners, and the International Association of Counterterrorism and Security Professionals, and member of the International Association of Professional Security Consultants. I am an internationally recognized trainer and author on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). I authored the book, "21st Century Security and CPTED," in 2008, and the 2nd Edition in 2013. I teach an on-line E Learning CPTED Certified Practitioners course at www.cpted-security.com that is certified by the International CPTED Association.

The Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) methodology is directly applicable to the planning, design, and use of parks, green spaces, and recreational areas. Proper safe park design requires an appreciation of who, why, what, where, when, and how the park will operate in order to deter crime and acts of incivility. Why is the park going to be needed and by whom? What is the mission or purpose of the park, and what are the activities that are allowed and encouraged? Who are the legitimate users of the park? Where is the park located so it can encourage maximum use and achieve maximum natural surveillance? When is the park available for use? How will the park achieve the design goals according to the mission statement and risk assessment? These simple questions launch the CPTED risk assessment process and help developers, designers, and government entities understand how to better design parks. They provide the direction and tone that a safe park design should take.

A crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) risk assessment includes a thorough physical survey of the any Park project by evaluating the drawings and site for each of the basic CPTED strategies and approaches. Basic CPTED strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Natural Surveillance – The placement of physical features that maximize visibility. This can be achieved by examining the physical structure of the pool and the surrounding grounds, including shrubbery, lighting, video, surveillance, window placement, fencing, and other types of physical features.
2. Mechanical (Video) Surveillance – Using the strategic placement of video surveillance equipment for maximum benefit, including paying attention to outdoor security concerns in the parking lot and entrance.
3. Access Control Management – The use of signs, well-marked entrances and exits, and landscaping to guide people and direct the flow of people. Consider restrictions of access to various areas using real or symbolic barriers. Additionally, examine the landscaping and areas to reduce access to unsupervised locations on the pool facility. Finally, evaluate the current process used to funnel access to the point of entry.
4. Territorial Reinforcement – Evaluate the risk areas for clear delineations of space, expressions of pride or ownership, and the creation of a welcoming environment. Determine the need to create or extend a “sphere of influence” with the use of physical designs, landscaping, and signage. Evaluate if public areas are clearly distinguished from private ones.
5. Order Maintenance – Evaluation of the staff’s responsiveness to minor unacceptable acts and provide recommendations for measures that can be implemented that clearly state acceptable behaviors.
6. Physical Maintenance – Assessing the repair and general upkeep of the space. Recommendations for incorporating CPTED based maintenance into the existing maintenance plan to help preserve property value and make the pool and support spaces a safer place. For example, evaluate internal spaces for graffiti, lighting, and stairways.

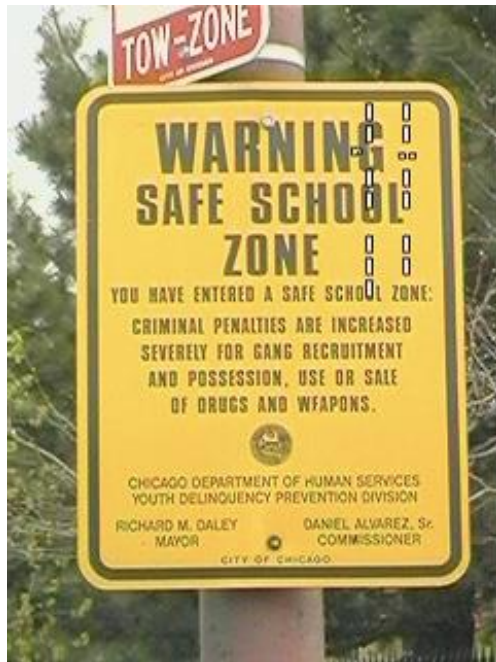
CPTED principles, performance standards, and strategies are used during project development review to identify and incorporate those design features which reduce opportunities for criminal activity to occur. The effectiveness of CPTED is based on the fact that criminals make rational choices about their targets. Unfortunately, targets in parks include children. Through use of CPTED principles, the built environment can be designed and managed to ensure:

- (1) The greater the risk of illegitimate users being seen, challenged, or caught; the less likely they are to commit a crime;
- (2) The greater the effort required to commit crime and incivilities the less likely opportunistic criminals are to commit a crime;
- (3) The lesser the actual or perceived rewards, the less likely persons are to commit a crime;
- (4) Opportunities for criminal activity are minimized.

The planning and design of parks and recreational spaces include those special areas that communities use to relax and play. Many park designs encourage a wide range of activities and

attract a wide range of users. Urban designers and landscape architects create green spaces and parks with varied purposes and, therefore, parks are a study of scale.

When designed well and widely used, parks help create a sense of community. Parks bring people together and add cultural richness to the community. Parks are a source of recreation, which can create great spaces for people to use. As cities undergo renovation and growth, there is a direction to add open spaces, riverwalk trails, bike trails, skateboard parks, and simple green spaces.



Safe zones for children have precedent in the proximity to schools, and businesses that create a safe place for a child in distress to seek shelter and assistance.

When is a park viewed as safe, fun, and successful? As a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) practitioner, I often have to evaluate the green spaces and parks that are included in and around multifamily housing developments, and commercial properties. I am often left with many unanswered questions about park design. For example, many parks experience crime, vandalism, graffiti, drug use, and drug dealing. These types of activities are a conflict of use and of users. Playgrounds for infants or small children are often placed in leftover spaces at the end of a site or an apartment building. Locating swings and sandboxes in an area that has little or no natural surveillance can invite older kids who may use the play areas, inappropriately. One common result I see is play areas or parks being abandoned or used by undesired persons. When I see parks, green spaces, and play areas in isolated areas, I wonder: what was the developer, planner, or architect thinking? Was that design decision because parks are a non-income-producing real estate, and go in the *leftover* spaces? Was there any consideration of how the parks were going to be used and by whom? In fact, too often I witness such incongruent recreational activities linked together in the abandoned leftover spaces on a site.

We must learn to better design parks, green spaces, trails, and outdoor recreational spaces with CPTED principles. Most parks in urban locations need to incorporate territoriality to clearly define what is considered public property and what the park is. Too often, I observe behavior reflecting a public misunderstanding that parks and green spaces are *no-man's land* (*no-persons land*). Some think park space is fair game for all kinds of inappropriate or illegal behavior. In fact,

parks are owned property by the federal, state, or local government entity, or the private sector. Because those groups control and then assign someone to maintain the park, ground rules can be set regarding proper legal legitimate usage.

CPTED access control decisions will impact where the most desired, observed, and desired use areas are located. Entrances should be well defined and celebrated with signage, ground rules, and lighting. Fencing should be used along the perimeter of the property where it is reasonable and appropriate, as determined by the risk threat assessment.

Parks are generally areas that combine green spaces with defined areas for recreation, seating, or special use. Where natural foliage and plantings are dense, it is unreasonable and impractical to prune them for natural surveillance. In fact, the dense undercover can act as a natural barrier and does not invite normal pedestrian use. Sidewalks and trails invite use by intended and unintended users; therefore, wherever possible, natural surveillance and unobstructed sightlines is desired adjacent to the paths of mobility.

In order to get the desired outcome of legitimate activities in the parks, it is important to have basic rules of behavior posted in easy to observe locations. CPTED uses the principle of inducement of shame, and removing the excuses, for inappropriate behavior. Posted ground rules are essential to accomplish that goal. Signage rules can make transgressors think twice by inducing shame, and removing excuses for inappropriate behavior, especially regarding vulnerable children. The signage should state the hours of usage, what types of activities are allowed and not allowed, and who enforces the rules, and the consequences.

The CPTED perspective on the challenge of crime and children vulnerability, is fairly straightforward: if you build it, they will come! The park designer, park rangers, or police agency must diagnose the risks clearly. Accordingly, the pathways should either be lit and patrolled, or secured and closed off and posted as no trespassing areas. There is little room for compromise. The risks outweigh the benefits.

Many cities around the world support art in public places. Often, a percentage of funding from all capital improvement projects in a city is dedicated to having art in the public forum. The most typical location for public art is in parks. Placing art in public spaces is an extension of CPTED's use of generating legitimate activity support. By providing amenities, like art, the park will attract the type of users that are desired. CPTED practitioners have used public art as an activity generator or attractive magnet of desired legitimate activities. The legitimate users will displace the illegitimate users, and attract capable guardians (parents, teachers, supervisors, coaches, tourists, sightseers, etc.) and increase natural surveillance and supervision.

I support enhancing access to safe public parks, from both a community health perspective, as well as an economic development perspective, and resulting in the improvement to the quality of life of the children and parents using these facilities. In addition to prominently placed signage, improvements suggested in the principles of CPTED include enhanced lighting, and improved natural access, and enhanced patrol and security. According to the CPTED literature, much of that I have written, the basic guiding principles to safety in parks includes: access control (gates, fencing, furniture placement), territorial reinforcement (signs, trees, paving), natural surveillance (on-site surveillance during programming and visibility from roadways), and maintenance (making timely repairs to broken equipment, painting over graffiti, etc).

In the past, parks and recreation areas were placed in areas where there were limited opportunities for visibility, as residents did not want to be disturbed by children playing, or have their line of sight interrupted by playgrounds, so parks were located in isolated areas, away from housing, and then surrounded with trees and shrubs. This trend created an environment ripe for crime and unsupervised disruptive behaviors, and parks were eventually perceived as unsafe places. Access control, signage, maintenance, territoriality, all principles of CPTED, have a great deal of application when it comes to parks, and open recreational spaces. As these principles have been successfully applied the parks, they become more inviting and people feel safer. The proposed SB522 will be a good start to improve the conditions of these critical amenity spaces, and as a result improve the quality of the experience and lives of the young people who use them.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Atlas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy I. Atlas Ph.D., FAIA, CPP, CPTED