

# can a highly secure building be warm and welcoming?

by Tim Wiley

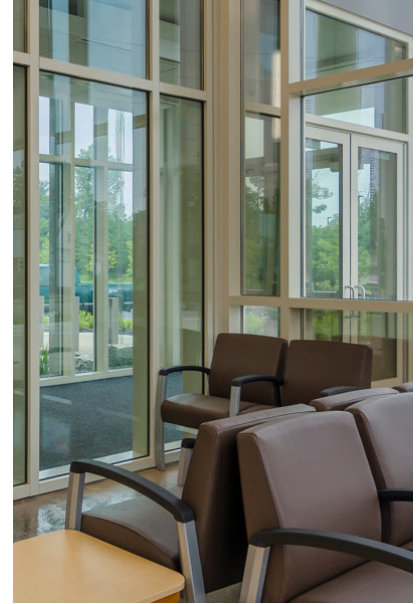
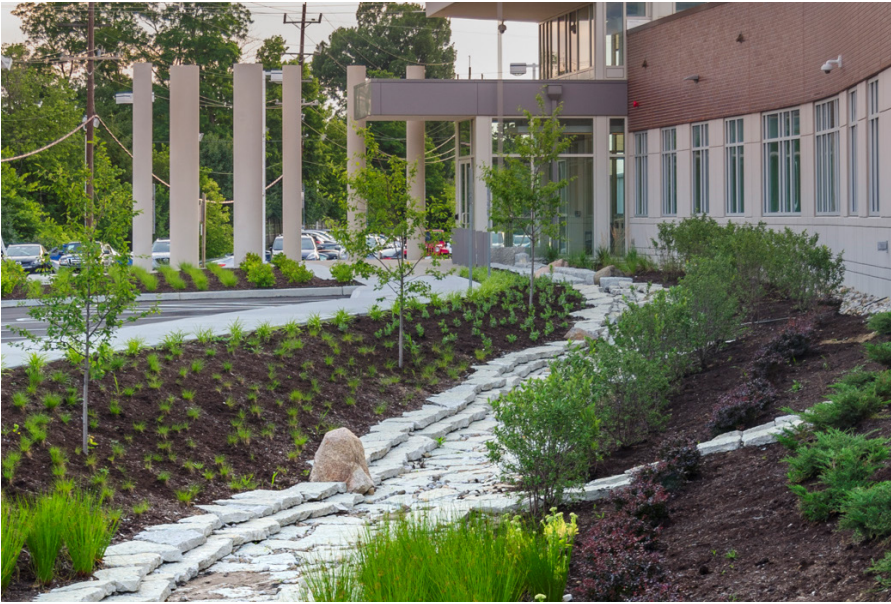


Over the last several years, our country has increasingly experienced the horror of active shooters, bombings, and vehicular assaults in public spaces. While these acts of violence have occurred throughout history, our collective awareness has heightened in recent times. Continuous news feeds and the widespread use of social media keep us informed of the most up-to-the-minute details about attacks on schools, colleges, public venues, and business facilities.

In 2018, an active shooter took the lives of three innocent victims in the lobby of Fifth Third Center in the heart of downtown Cincinnati—mere minutes from our design firm. We have good friends that work in the building and have heard the unnerving stories of survivors' experiences. This type of senseless violence hit home for us, as it has for many communities across our nation. Citizens, building owners, and government officials are now asking building designers to share their expertise on how various design elements can help deter and obstruct criminal activity.

In addition to relying heavily on our police and fire departments, building owners and city planners are now looking to design firms to implement ***Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)*** as an initial line of defense against public threats. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to design which reduces criminal behavior through subtle and strategic manipulation of the built environment.

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Previously associated only with military and civic buildings, this approach is now a fundamental design requirement for public and semi-public facilities. Regardless of the type of public space, utilizing CPTED can create a warm and welcoming environment while also providing surveillance that is easily monitored through the design of open space and clear site sight lines. Transparency may seem counterintuitive in regards to security, threats tend to fall into two categories:

- The first type of threat occurs when there is no specific target and victims are random. These are typically threats of opportunity. However, if attackers believe they are being watched, they will either be deterred or look for a softer target.
- The second type of threat has a specific target where any amount of security may not deter the action. In this case, transparency does allow many eyes on the situation resulting in a faster response time.

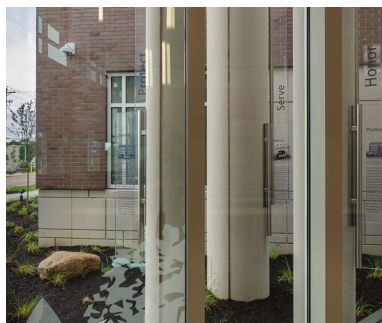
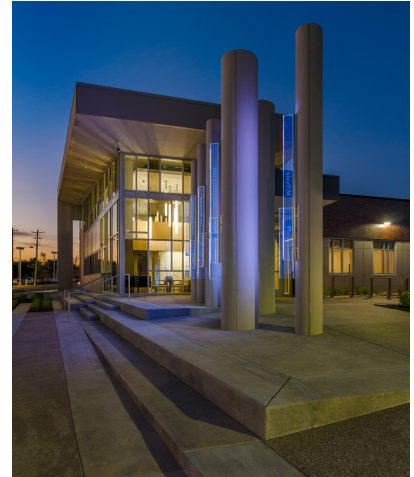
Compartmentalization or zoning is another design element that should be incorporated to slow an assailant. Zoning presents the building as a challenge to the attacker in terms of speed. First, if an attacker cannot get away quickly, then he or she may be deterred or, again, find a softer target. Second, anything that slows the attacker down allows more time for the innocent to run away. It also helps separate the intruder and allows first responders to isolate the situation.

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Other physical aspects of CPTED can include strategically placed storm water management features, vehicle access and routing, placement and design of sidewalks, landscape and seating features, bullet resistant glazing, site artwork, and thoughtful parking design. Many times, these tactics can be disguised as art. Sculptural columns can act as traffic barriers; dry creeks and landscaping can prevent a vehicle from approaching the building for an assault. At the same time, these security measures add to the site and building aesthetic, creating a friendly and approachable atmosphere for citizens in need. Finally, clear designation of public and private areas should be easily detectable and can be designated by landscape and other external design features.

These are just some of the ways architects and designers can offer improved security and protective measures in a subtle, nonintrusive way. CPTED tactics help create a safer environment without inhabitants feeling an imminent threat, or that they are hunkered down in a fortress or bunker.

While some acts of violence cannot be stopped, savvy designers are able to mitigate some of the potential attacks and limit the damage by active threats. As you consider your next public improvement project, ask your design professional about CPTED principles and how to properly incorporate technological solutions into the design. It's another simple way to make your community a better and safer place.



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Tim is the leader for emersion DESIGN's Civic Market. He is an expert in leading a team through existing conditions assessments, site planning, preliminary design, design development, and construction documentation. Tim is eager to engage and listen to the public safety community and provide unique avenues for new facilities.