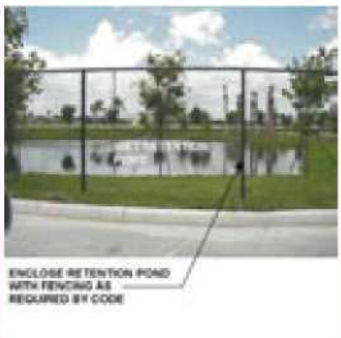
Florida Safe School Design Guidelines

Strategies to Enhance Security and Reduce Vandalism



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Strategies to Enhance Security and Reduce Vandalism

A Research Report for the Florida Department of Education, Office of Educational Facilities

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This document updates and replaces the 1993 Safe School Design Guidelines. Portions of the original 1993 document written by The Florida Center for Community Design + Research, University of South Florida, have been incorporated into this report.

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Introduction

Fundamental Ideas and Orientation

The Guidelines presented here are based on the fundamental idea that the proper design and management of the physical environment can help prevent and deter criminal behavior in Florida's schools and community colleges. The growing body of scientific evidence to support this suggestion comes from the field of place-based crime prevention, which early on produced theories of Defensible Space (Newman 1973), Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (Jeffrey 1971, 1977, Crowe 2000), Environmental Criminology (Brantingham 1981), and Situational Crime Prevention (Clarke 1997). These initial, interconnected approaches to crime prevention have produced a modern stream of research and applications that explore crime prevention strategies relative to educational institutions and their unique place in society (see for example Schneider et al, 2000, American Institute of Architects 2001, Duke 2001, National Crime Prevention Council 2002). This work is applicable to Florida schools and community colleges, and these Guidelines illustrate - through text and drawings - how school architects, facility managers, risk managers, planners, and others can translate these crime prevention ideas into action. This guide also is intended to serve school resource officers, school administrators, and the general public as well.

Research Approach

The Guidelines are based on research and studies of schools and crime prevention from across the United States and the world (see the Bibliography, Appendix B) on site visits to schools and community colleges throughout Florida conducted by the research team, and on survey responses gathered between May 15 and August 14, 2002, from a wide variety of individuals who have day-to-day responsibilities dealing with school and community college design, safety, and administrative issues (see the Research Report, Appendix A). Their experiences and insights as noted in questionnaire responses and through telephone interviews, as well as the input of the Project Steering Committee, have contributed significantly to the quality of the information and ideas contained in this document.

Organization of the Guidelines

The organizing scheme of the Guidelines is to move from the largest level or scale of concern - the school or community college "Site Design" - progressively down to the smallest and most specific scale of concern - "Systems and Equipment." In so doing, the Guidelines present the design principles identified in Section 423, 7 (h) of the 2001 Florida Building Code - *"Natural Access Control, Natural Surveillance and Territorial Integrity"* and, where applicable, related *"Management"* concerns that are either identified in the Code principles or are suggested by them.

To facilitate ease of use and cross referencing to the Florida Building Code's principles, the Guidelines provide *bullet points* that summarize the most significant elements within each scale of interest and that are keyed, in order of their presentation, to each design principle in the Florida Building Code. For example, at the first and largest scale of concern "Site Design," the Guidelines focus on "Natural Access Control" which is the first design principle identified by the Florida Building Code. Each subsequent element such as "Site Perimeter" is numbered for reference purposes. Following the bullet points, the Guidelines present a more detailed discussion of the points in relation to the major heading. So, for example, under "Site Design" Section 1.7 "Landscaping," the text discusses factors that "must be considered when planning landscape arrangements on school campuses."

Drawings and graphics are provided adjacent to the text that illustrates the most salient design (and, in some cases, management) aspects pertaining to each principle identified. It is important to note that the drawings are for illustrative purposes only, and are not meant to provide prescriptive design solutions.

The Linkage Between Design and Management

The scientific literature dealing with place-based crime prevention demonstrates that the design *and* management of places go hand-in-hand. It is easy to think of these as separate concerns, but they are intimately connected in "real world" application. This is especially germane to schools and community colleges, where day-to-day uses of places can easily affect their original design intent. One simple example to illustrate this is the design of windows facing building entryways to facilitate surveillance, a fundamental crime prevention principle. If administrators allow staff or students to obstruct the windows (by closing blinds or covering them with posters), their effectiveness is severely compromised. Management policies and practices must therefore be linked to design so as to complement crime prevention and deterrence on a continuing basis. That being said, we emphasize that these guidelines are not intended to dictate management practices or policy, which must remain the province of individual school districts, community colleges, and their respective administrators. Rather, our concern is to highlight the importance of thinking through the connections between design and management so that local administrators can better appreciate the implications that their decisions may have on facility design and use, and ultimately on crime prevention.

Scope of the Guidelines: Conflicts and Contradictions

While the Guidelines seek to be as specific as possible, because of the great variety of conditions found in Florida schools and community colleges, they are necessarily presented to address issues in a general manner. In that sense, the Guidelines do not differentiate between new construction and old construction, or between elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, or community colleges. The research team recognizes, however, that there are indeed differences among regions of Florida, urban and rural areas, and among design, construction, management, budget, and crime issues that affect each of these levels and types of institutions. Administrators are advised to make specific adjustments based upon the unique need of their school or community college. Where possible, the Guidelines suggest approaches or strategies that may be useful to them in that process.

Definition of Terms

ACCESS CONTROL:

The general design/management strategy that is intended to decrease opportunity for crime by denying or increasing the effort required to approach a target or gain entry to a target area. This may also create or increase the perception of risk to the offender. Access control is generally categorized into three types—natural, mechanical, and organized:

> **Natural:** the use of design, including spatial definition and designation strategies, to deny or increase the effort and risk of entry and detection to offenders. Natural access control strategies tend to be more cost effective when they are "designed into" the structure beginning with the initial, schematic planning phases than added by retrofit.
>
> **Mechanical:** the use of locks, hardened or reinforced doors, gates, fences, bollards, or other similar "target hardening" devices or structures to deny or increase the effort and risk of entry and detection to offenders. These may also be complemented by electronic devices associated with surveillance strategies below.
>
> **Organized:** the use of human guardianship (whether formal, as in the employment of police or private security personnel, or informal, as when regular employees or residents control a target's site entry) to protect a target or target area by denying entry or increasing the real and perceived effort and risk of entry and detection to offenders.

MANAGEMENT:

Used here in terms of crime prevention theory and practice, management is the appropriate and effective use of resources, including personnel, equipment, and supplies, to preserve, sustain, or repair owned or controlled property so as to achieve crime prevention goals. Wilson and Kelling's "broken windows" theory (1982) suggested that small levels of environmental disorder (such as a broken window, graffiti, uncollected trash, etc.) provide "cues" that no one cares about places (and hence, they are attractive to offenders). There is a presumed developmental sequence to such disorder, such that small problems lead to larger ones, including the possibility of criminal behavior. The function of responsible management, in this context, is to maintain property under their control so as to not send out the "wrong" environmental cues.

SURVEILLANCE:

The general crime prevention strategy that seeks to decrease crime opportunity by keeping intruders under observation and/or by increasing their perception of the risk of being observed Like "access control" above, surveillance is generally divided into three types—natural, mechanical, and organized:

> **Natural:** the use of design, including spatial definition and designation strategies, to increase the actual abilities of guardians to observe intruders, as well as to increase the *perception* of intruders that they may be observed by others. Examples here would include the placement of windows near building entryways and the design of entrance paths so that they put pedestrians in view of observers.
>
> **Mechanical:** the use of mechanical or electronic devices for observation purposes, such as mirrors,

closed circuit television (CCTV), or sound recording devices. Visual observation is greatly facilitated by appropriate lighting which can help reduce crime opportunity by increasing perceived risks relative to the chances of being observed and can also help reduce the fear of crime.

Organized: the use of human guardianship (whether formal, as in the employment of police or private security personnel, or informal, as when regular employees or residents observe a target or target site) to increase the real and perceived effort and risk of entry and detection to offenders.

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY:

A phrase derived from Oscar Newman's original notion of **"territoriality"** (1973) which focused on **the physical environment's capacity, through the design and marking of space, to create in users and residents the sense of *responsibility* for and *control* of that space such that they will protect and defend it, if necessary.** Territorial integrity and territoriality are promoted by the clear definitions of boundaries such that intruders (as well as "legitimate" users) can easily determine whether spaces are "public" or "private" in nature. In well-marked and bounded places, intruders can be easily observed and are likely to be challenged by legitimate users or by space guardians. Examples of markers are real space borders and barriers (such as fences and gates, which also serve as access control devices), as well as symbolic markers of space such as street pavers, ornamental gateposts, or entryways. Other space markers which augment territorial integrity include signs and posted maps, which also serve as way finding devices and can be used for "rule setting" in places. Territorial integrity is further promoted by effective access control and surveillance techniques, as defined above.