Crime and Planning: Building Socially Sustainable Communities

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About Me

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AND

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- Neighborhoods

- Crime Prevention

- Urban Planning
Presentation Topic

- Planners disconnect
- Issues in crime and urban planning
- Planning for Crime Prevention in practice
Crime Basics

- Over 11 million crimes in 2008 alone
- Direct costs of crime are over $20 billion a year
- Crime is associated with:
  - Decreased housing values
  - Residential instability
  - Decisions to move
  - General neighborhood decline
Most planners would agree that crime is a serious community issue and that the built environment has a serious impact on opportunities for crime and helps shape crime patterns.

However....

Few planners consider crime when making planning or urban design decisions.
Planners Disconnect

**Disconnect 1:** Belief the causes of crime are many and that planning and built environment play at best only small and relatively insignificant roles in the mechanics of crime.

- Opportunities for crime
- Built Environment
- Ignoring these issues leads to “designing in” crime.
Planners Disconnect

Disconnect 2: Overall lack of training and education on crime, its underlying causes, and its prevention.

- Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
- Presentations at APA
- Books published by APA
- Improper understanding of crime prevention and other factors.
- Those who think they know crime.
Disconnect 3: Overall lack of tools and practical guides on crime and planning.

Practical crime prevention guides have been around for 40 years, but not within Planning.

Often more important than formal education.

Without practical guides, planners are forced to fly blind.
Planners Disconnect

- **Disconnect 4**: Many planners already think they are considering crime and its consequences within their planning process.

- Saskatchewan and Mesa

- Created and abandoned

- Lack of cooperation between divisions of government
Planners Disconnect

Disconnect 5: Misconception that the goal of crime prevention is mutually exclusive from all other planning goals.

Complete Streets

Underlying message was that preventing property crime was not only an unworthy goal but that it was in direct conflict with “real” planning goals.

Belief that crime prevention is incommensurate with or not central to the pursuit of reasonable and legitimate planning goals.
Disconnect 6: While many planners readily admit that crime is an important societal issue, few think that considering crime is an important or necessary component of the planning process and their daily duties as planners.

The potential for crime is not viewed as a critical factor in making decisions about subdivisions, site plans, or zoning changes.
Planners Disconnect

- Taken together, the dynamics behind these six issues lead not only to planners who are undereducated and indifferent about the nexus of planning and crime but to a field that undervalues the importance of crime in planning decisions, potentially leading to serious long-term issues within the communities planners serve.

- Mistakes made in the form and layout of the built environment are long lasting and not easily changed.
Planners Disconnect

• Not preaching a form of environmental determinism, advocating that all planning and design decisions be made with the single-minded goal of crime prevention.

• Good planning and design are only parts of a multipronged response to crime in communities.

• While good urban planning and design are essential to reducing opportunities for crime, a real and sustained impact on crime levels within a community can come only from the coordination of numerous groups, governmental and otherwise.
Crime and Planning

- Just as crime is not uniformly distributed across a city, crime is not uniformly distributed across a high-crime neighborhood.

- Both neighborhood conditions and built environment opportunities are necessary components of a high-crime neighborhood; neither is sufficient to create a high crime neighborhood.

- At a basic level, all criminal victimization is the result of opportunities in the built environment.
Level of physical and social disorder

High

Sporadic burglary victim

No burglary victimizations

Low

Built environment opportunities for crime

High

Repeat burglary victim

Sporadic burglary victim
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• There are several areas where planning goals and practice are in conflict with the existing criminological research and policy.

• Connectivity

• Mixed land use

• Transit oriented design

• Zoning
Crime and Planning

Connectivity

- The overprovision of connectivity increases the risk of burglary.

- The limited benefits of highly permeable gridded street networks are isolated to high pedestrian activity areas in large urban areas and not necessarily suburban locations.

- The over-provision of permeability where it does not increase integration, essentially the provision of permeability without use, is a security hazard in housing areas.

- Permeability should be limited to that necessary to facilitate local journeys and sustainable transportation.
Eyes on the Streets

I hope no reader will try to transfer my observations into guides as to what goes on in towns, or little cities, or in suburbs which still are suburban. Towns, suburbs and even little cities are totally different organisms from great cities.....To try to understand towns in terms of big cities will only compound confusion.

Jane Jacobs
Crime and Planning

Connectivity-Suggestions

- Essential to determining how to balance connectivity correctly is to analyze the expected use and context of the area.

- The correct level of connectivity is different for a mixed use high-activity area near the downtown of a city than it is in a single-family residential, low-activity area in a more suburban location.

- Low-activity single use residential areas do not have the population nor the daytime activity levels to provide the surveillance and territoriality that are necessary to support highly connected street networks.
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Connectivity continuum
Minimum levels of connectivity
No developments with only 1 access point
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Mixed Land Use

- Property crimes and robbery victimization are more likely in mixed land use locations.

- At low levels, increasing diversity of uses increases homicide, assault, robbery and property crime.

- If density is made high enough, homicide and assault victimization decrease, but robbery victimization increases.

- Territorial theory finds that residents provide better security near their homes than nonresidents; nonresidents increase anonymity on a street; and nonresidential uses create “holes” in residential area security.
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**Mixed Land Use-Suggestions**

- The solution is not a pure crime prevention model or a pure planning model, but rather a balanced approach that promotes the benefits of both approaches.

- Similar to connectivity, the biggest issue with respect to mixed land use arises in low activity areas, such as a low-density suburban area.

- In practice, mixed-land-use developments located within traditional downtown areas or in infill/redevelopment areas are more likely to be low in crime because of the level of activity that facilitates crime prevention.
Mixed Land Use-Suggestions

* The key to maintaining security while promoting mixed uses is designing the uses so that they are walkable, but not so close that they produce anonymity and create surveillance holes.

* This model has already been achieved in communities that have “functional” mixed-use, where the uses are close enough to easily walk to, but do not share the same block space.
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Zoning

- Single-use zoning leads to concentrations of crime by type according to the zone type. Single-use clusters opportunities for certain crimes in particular areas of a city, allowing these areas to “specialize” in a crime type.

- The number of residential housing units is a strong measure of attractiveness; as density of units increases so does the burglary rate.

- Areas with high amounts of multifamily dwellings tend to have higher crime rate.

- Higher crime rates in high multifamily zones are a function of opportunities created by zoning requirements such as large surface parking lots and the absence of lighting requirements.
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Zoning-Suggestions

- In this context it is most important to discourage the continued overuse of single-use zoning.

- Large single-use residential areas, whether single-family or multifamily, not only lead to a host of problems associated with traffic and environmental concerns, but help to concentrate crime in certain areas of a city.

- Multifamily developments should be allowed in much smaller densities and comingled within single-family areas.

- The concentration of multifamily housing in large apartment complexes in five or six areas throughout a city helps facilitates the concentration of property crimes.
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Transit

- When robbery and assault happened at train or subway stations (not a common occurrence), it was more likely to happen at night, in areas of poor visibility and when overall ridership was low.

- Crime is particularly concentrated in the critical intensity zones near stations as opposed to the stations themselves.

- Critical intensity zones are characterized as places with not too few potential victims and not enough potential witnesses. In addition, these areas have a lot of cash based service businesses (legitimate and illegitimate) making them ripe for victims.
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Transit

- Bus stops that were most vulnerable to victimization were those with a presence of nearby negative uses (bars, liquor stores, check cashing stores) located near alleys and had poor natural surveillance.

- Very little victimization occurs on public transit because of high surveillance and presence of uniformed staff.

- Criminals rarely if ever use public transit to travel to commit crime, preferring to stay in locations they know best.
Critical Intensity Zone

Level of victimization

High

Transit stop location

Intensity of land use

Low

Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3
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Transit-Suggestions

- When transit stations are built, crime prevention needs to focus not just on the design of the stations, but on the design of the pathways to and from them as well.

- Official “paths” should be created on the sidewalks and pedestrian ways to and from transit stations.

- These paths should incorporate proper signage, effective lighting and possibly even differentiated paving elements to identify safe routes to the stations.

- Police patrol strategies be designed to focus on the official and unofficial pathways during critical victimization times, such as late at night.
Practical Planning for Crime Prevention

Lexington KY Examples

- Secured by Design: Voluntary program
  - Comprehensive Plan
- “Owning” Crime in the planning Process
- Coordination of Divisions for purpose of a full review.
- Big Data: Neighborhood monitoring
- Zone Change information
Questions??

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