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Second Generation CPTED: The Case of North Central, Breaking Down the Barriers

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Introduction

CPTED, throughout its evolution, has addressed the issues of urban design, crime and remedial problem solving strategies. These strategies have, over the years, proven effective and rational yielding reasonable solutions. The key in these cases is the successful implementation of appropriate problem solving strategies. This process implies open channels of communication, a fundamental requirement for success. To this end, the human factor should be included.

The Human Factor

Second Generation CPTED is reaching beyond the physical environment to draw in the human factor. This factor brings with it a world of problem solving opportunity. Forcing change or acceptance on neighbourhood residents can meet with resistance. This resistance can lessen the efficacy or doom a project to failure. Solutions reside on two pillars. First, the correct identification of a problem, and second the successful implementation of strategies to correct the problem. Typically, this process entails analysis of some combination of census data, field data and public opinion. It also includes the operational protocols of professional observers. Among these are police, crisis workers, social workers, justice and health care workers and educators. Overall, it is the common perception or misconception used by the observer that dictates the identification of a problem.

All too often neighbourhoods with “stigma” present to the observer a preconceived misunderstood image that represents the neighbourhood both internally and externally. Residents locating in Regina’s North Central neighbourhood do so for many reasons. It is, above all, an affordable neighbourhood. Households with limited income or those reliant on government transfer payments are often left with few other choices. Into this fabric we must now weave the threads of ethnicity and socio-cultural diversity within a common socio-economic milieu.

The City

Regina is located in southern Saskatchewan at the northern extent of the Great North American Plains and celebrated its 100th Birthday in 2003. Within the context of the



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new world, this area is very recently settled and has doubtless experienced some of the most dramatic and timely modification to the local environment. Migrating Great Plains aboriginal Indians still held closely to tradition as late as the early to mid 1900s. Hunting and gathering was now supplemented by odd jobs in agriculture and small towns. In terms of expansionist Empire we are still on a frontier, vis-à-vis the clash of cultures. Undercurrents of distrust are a major stumbling block to even attempting to implement strategies aimed at solving or limiting the problems. To attempt to chisel away at the problem of the magnitude of those presenting in North Central Regina in isolation is doomed to failure. To endlessly measure, monitor, quantify and debate in committee has thus far done little to renegotiate a deal with North Central Regina and the city at large. Barriers are so high, thick and guarded as to have made the neighbourhood virtually an impenetrable fortress. All the best professionals with all the best intentions have not been able to put the neighbourhood back together again.

Demographics

The city of Regina has one of Canada's highest crime rates per capita. Much of the statistics are generated among the aboriginal Indian population. At the provincial scale, aboriginal adults make up 8% of the provinces adult population, yet they are 76% of adult admissions into custody. Aboriginal youth make up 15% of the provinces youth population, yet have an incarceration rate of 74% of the provinces youth population. When compared with the National criminal code average rates of 7,590 cases, Regina leads the nation with 14,722. Much of the crime is common assault, assault with a weapon, robbery, prostitution and drugs.

North Central Regina has the highest incidence of lone parent households at 920 with 160 male and 760 female parents respectively. From a total neighbourhood populations of 10,500, about 3000 are aboriginal Indian and 7,500 are non-aboriginal. A high proportion of the population has less than grade 9 education or incomplete high school. From the total population of 7,600 residents, aged 15 years and over, 3,860 have not completed high school, 1,100 have completed grade 12 or a trade, and 335 have a bachelor degree or higher. From the same 15 years and over population, 4,200 people are in the labour force with 3,400 employed and 815 unemployed, while 3,400 persons are not in the labour force. Unemployment rates for the neighbourhood are 19%, nearly twice that of the city. 58% of income comes from employment while 31% of households receive government transfer payments.

47% of households are below the poverty line. The largest segment of the population makes under \$10,000 per year with average household income at \$26,000 per year, just over half of the average city value of \$48,000. With median household income at \$20,700 compared to \$40,800 for the city, North Central is among those neighbourhoods with the most need for property improvement. Of the 4,215 occupied homes, 1,975 are in need of repair with 365 requiring minor repair and 610 major repairs. Collectively, the indicators show a neighbourhood in need of multi-disciplinary remedial problem solving strategies.

The Strategy



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We know that there are myriad solutions in the CPTED repertoire. This neighbourhood is no different from that of a large American inner city slum and similar locations in the United Kingdom and Australia. Their mere appearance is a message, an image, and a fortress impenetrable. How then to begin? We know that Second Generation CPTED has solutions. Solutions that would aid in the directional change and begin the remedial process, turning crisis into plan, desperation into direction and dysfunction into positive action. To this end it was determined that an incursion into North Central must be made. Who among the bureaucrats dare enter? For those brave enough, would they be listened to and trusted? The answer is NO!

To break trail into the social, economic and cultural frontier that is North Central Regina required the aid of individuals from within the neighbourhood. The only way to gain entry is through the grass-roots level, as inclusion and empowerment of a neighbourhood peer plants the seed of positive intention. Outsiders would never be approached, a dialogue unlikely and openness impossible, because the neighbourhood cannot be betrayed.

The Plan

A solution was devised to promote, organize, and educate key neighbourhood individuals through contact with the Regina Police Service, through its community-based North Central Service Centre. These individuals would in turn contact various City Based Organizations (CBOs) or neighbourhood organizations working with local young people. These youth typified the neighbourhood. They *were* the neighbourhood. It was argued that the inclusion and empowerment of these individuals was the device that would bridge the gap, or allow entry to the fortress, our “Trojan Horse”, if you will. These youth were familiar with and known to the neighbourhood population.

The first step was organizing the players, which led to the second, opening the channels of communication with the neighbourhood population, thereby, attempting to begin the pre-stages of neighbourhood mobilization, with neighbourhood youth being the catalyst. The question to be asked was *What is the neighbourhood and who are the people?* Like most neighbourhoods, North Central Regina contains a cross-section of residents. Long-time resident seniors have greatly decreased in number. Increasingly, young populations with new families, students, low-end workers and the unemployed have moved in. A neighbourhood such as this also draws the social fringe elements. There are issues of mental health, violence, substance abuse, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), sex trade workers, youth crime and drug dealers, all of these and others in an economically depressed socially stigmatized neighbourhood. A neighbourhood stigmatized by local residents and the city at large.

The intention of this project was not to generate yet another report repeating a catalogue of the same statistics. Rather, it was to begin the mobilization of a neighbourhood immobilized by external stigma and internal dysfunction. There exists a spatial clustering of people with low income, low education and no opportunity in the context of exclusion from the city proper. Over the years there have been many studies, reports, strategies and commitments. All have been unsuccessful and the problem continues unabated and is gathering momentum. Gangs have recently begun



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to make headway into the neighbourhood, creating an environment of ghettoisation, a collective of individuals that share a common bond to the area. People of all groups seek to maintain some vestige of social cohesion and economic, religious and cultural identity. So too is the case with residents of North Central Regina.

Methodology

To make neighbourhood and social inroads, a strategy was developed by which the channels of communication would open from neighbourhood residents to facilitators and volunteers. To this end, a series of “Refreshment Break Block Parties” were undertaken. The “parties” were carried out over a four-day period, with sessions in the morning and afternoon. The operation was further divided into a “Meet and Greet” and “Information Days”. The purpose of the meet and greet sessions was to invite residents to come to an impromptu event to meet the volunteers and each other. The purpose of information days was to invite residents to the breaks and offer a selection of information booklets. By so doing, the researcher could determine local residents’ needs, issues or concerns.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was undertaken over four consecutive days from August 5th to 8th, 2003. Each day was split into morning and afternoon sessions. Two breaks (each of an hour) were held each morning and two each afternoon for a total of 16 breaks. Because of the unpredictable nature of residents, a stratified sample was chosen over a random sample. The blocks were selected based on the residence of key individuals residing on a given block, specifically North Central Community Board Members.

During the first two days August 5th and 6th, facilitators went door to door and invited residents of each selected block to a meet and greet. Morning invitations were carried out at 9 A.M. for the morning breaks and 1:30 P.M. for the afternoon breaks. Residents were informed of the refreshment break and encouraged to come to the street and join facilitators at the meet and greet. At approximately 10 AM. and 3 PM, facilitators returned to the selected locations with juice (orange and apple boxes) and fruit (apples and oranges) provided by Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH). The juice and fruit were set up at the selected locations and facilitators waited for the invited residents. Conexus Credit Union, the only bank remaining in the neighbourhood, provided a door prize. Residents were encouraged to enter the raffle. During the last two days (Aug 7th and 8th), the breaks followed the design of the first two days, but morning and afternoon groups were switched. In addition to the refreshments, a selection of information booklets was offered for the residents taking. The subject matter and number of booklets chosen was monitored.

In total, 141 households were invited to the refreshment breaks. Over the course of the four days, facilitators and volunteers made 166 contacts. Of the 166 attendees, 45 (27.2%) were adult female, 30 (18%) were adult male and 91 (54.8%) were children. Of the 75 adults attending, and without knowing whether attendees came from invited homes, 53.2% of residents invited attended the refreshment breaks. In total, 139 juice boxes were handed out to 84% of attendees and 124 pieces of fruit handed out to 75% of attendees. In total 22 booklets were handed out. ‘Keep Kids Safe’ was the number



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one selection at 7 units. Second, was 'Gang' information at 6 units and third was 'Neighbourhood Watch' at 3 units. Two copies of 'Single Parent' booklets and one each of 'Block Parents', 'Abuse of the Elderly' and 'Older Adults and the Law' were handed out, as well as 33 colouring books and 32 packs of crayons given to the children. Though the number of information booklets taken does not seem great, it did indicate a great need. It must be remembered this is a resistant neighbourhood. The willingness to attend and to take the booklets was a clear indicator of the desire by neighbourhood residents to begin a rapport and deal with the issues.

This research undertaking was not typical in design and strategy. Many of those youth helping had various degrees of experience with literacy, criminality, behavioural and social problems. Their efforts were aided and guided by supervisory staff. It was, after all, the residents' project. Any confrontation, criticism or correction could easily cause barriers to rise, thus stalling the project. The fact that residents responded by coming out, trusted the staff by taking refreshments and later by taking away literature indicated that this small, brief incursion into the neighbourhood was a success. The pilot project will greatly aid in planning strategies for the next incursion into the neighbourhood. Based on the literature chosen by residents, the team can tailor the next literature selection to more specifically address neighbourhood residents' issues.

Policy Recommendations

1. Fearless evaluation of all existing services to determine their efficacy.
 2. Eliminate duplication of services and redundant services.
 3. Redirect resources towards services that reflect the needs of the community, for example:
 4. A tool bank and property maintenance program.
 5. Increased sports and recreational activities for youth.
 6. Support for young families through education, in-home aid and parenting skills.
 7. Improved public transportation system in the neighbourhood.
 8. Enhancement of community policing services and continuity of personnel, with the goal of making the police *your friend*.
 9. Develop strategies to increase neighbourhood participation in local issues such as health, crime, and services like libraries, schools and community centers.
 10. Develop programs aimed at bridging the gap between the ethnic groups in the area.
 11. Create an atmosphere attractive to business, to encourage development of a grocery store, retail outlets and professional offices (medical/legal).
 12. Create policy for greater accountability for landlords and tenants.
 13. Develop a sense of community and safety through police targeting drug dealers, prostitutes and gang members.
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14. Using principles of CPTED and Second Generation CPTED to evaluate, implement and monitor changes to the built environment and the socio-demographic conditions to stabilize the neighbourhood.

Conclusion

The North Central “Refreshment Breaks” could be considered a success. Residents were invited, and they responded. They talked, laughed and met other residents. They brought their children. They took away literature representative of their concerns. No one told them what to do or where to go. No one questioned them. They were allowed to be there on their terms. The residents’ willingness to come out to the breaks shows a potential willingness to work toward positive change. If this change comes from within, it will take hold and mobilize a neighbourhood immobilized in stigma. The positive response received at the refreshment breaks in the hardest part of the neighbourhood indicates that there is a desire for change by even the hardest residents. To date, positive change in the neighbourhood has been elusive. Disappointments followed every project, as no change was ever affected. In what was a downward spiral within the boundaries of North Central Regina can now emerge the beginnings of positive change through the use of Second Generation CPTED.

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