



Peoria Police Department
MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 2, 2008
TO: Larry J. Ratcliff, Chief of Police
FROM: Jay Davies, Staff Services Manager
THROUGH: Donna Marcum, Deputy Director
SUBJECT: Rio Vista Park/Desert Harbor border

In response to a request to evaluate the installation of a fence from a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) perspective, On April 1, 2008, I surveyed the area along the river bed adjacent to the Desert Harbor community. One of the primary objectives of CPTED is to design facilities and amenities to encourage legitimate users and discourage illegitimate users. The two are inversely proportional: when the presence of illegitimate users rises, legitimate users will decrease, and vice versa.

There are a few recommendations I would make with respect to the area. First, there are a number of trees along the east side of the wall that should have their canopies trimmed to six feet above the ground and/or the top of the wall. Currently, those trees provide considerable opportunities for concealment. Additional landscape with thorns or similar characteristics could be planted along the east side of the wall to discourage pedestrians from climbing over the wall, which should also discourage pedestrians from crossing the street mid-block. Although the street appears to have adequate lighting, it would seem that lighting within the river bed itself, including along the trail, could be improved. Greater visibility at night would invite legitimate users while discouraging illegitimate users.

In my opinion, the addition of a fence along the perimeter would result in undesired consequences. First, the fence would create a physical and psychological barrier for those who would gather in the river bed for criminal activity. They could reasonably assume they have a layer of protection against citizens or law enforcement at the street level who would have to find an access point in order to intervene with the criminal activity. Conversely, a park amenity that is integrated with – rather than separated from - a neighborhood would act as a deterrent to criminal activity. For citizens concerned about crime in the area, installing a fence would likely have the opposite effect. Additionally, access by emergency personnel would be limited. Police responding to suspicious activity would have their access limited, and suspects trying to elude police would have a greater likelihood of success. Emergency medical personnel responding to injuries sustained by park users would have their access options impeded as well. As has been the case with other barriers in the area, those who routinely access the park may be inclined to modify and/or damage the fence for their own convenience, and create an eyesore and additional maintenance costs while defeating the purpose of the fence.

It is my recommendation that the City not install a fence in this area, but consider instead the installation of additional lighting along the path and in the river bed, trim existing landscaping as described, and install additional landscaping along the wall.

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