
Bollards, bunkers, and barriers: securing the National Mall in Washington, DC

Lisa Benton-Short

Department of Geography, George Washington University, 1957 E Street, Suite 512, Washington, DC 20052, USA; e-mail: lbenton@gwu.edu

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Abstract. In this paper I examine the paradox of democracy and hypersecurity in one of the most significant urban public spaces in the USA, the National Mall in Washington, DC. I explore the 2002 comprehensive security plan for the National Mall. The security plan has generated heated public debate over how to improve security in a post-September 11 world, and protect highly symbolic space, while also preserving the open character of the USA's most visible and used public spaces. I conclude that so far issues of terrorism and national security have trumped concerns about public access on the National Mall. As a result this could both change the symbolic landscape as well as impede active forms of political protest, marches, and demonstrations. These changes are significant, yet have occurred without genuine public debate and participation in the planning process.

On 20 January 2005, at his second inauguration, President George W Bush took the oath of office and delivered a speech forcefully enunciating principles of extending democracy, freedom, and liberty throughout the world. This event took place amidst bollards, barriers, sentry boxes, more than 13 000 soldiers and police officers, and miles of security fences.⁽¹⁾ The irony was not hard to miss. “Washington D.C.”, observed conservative commentator George Will, resembled a “banana republic”.⁽²⁾

Responses to the potential of terrorism, whether domestic or international, have had a profound impact on this city, and in particular on the highly visible public space of the National Mall. Intense surveillance and hypersecurity have changed both the physical and symbolic landscape of the city. “In a city that symbolizes freedom, barriers abound”, noted Washington newspaper columnist Jan Cienski (2002). Indeed, “Barricades and bollards have become the newest accessory on the country’s psychic frontier... You might call it the architecture of paranoia” (Brown, 1985 as quoted in Coaffee, 2004, page 202).

In this paper I explore the paradox of democracy and hypersecurity in a post-September 11 world in one urban public space, the National Mall. Since September 11, security has been accepted as part of the war on terrorism. The authorities in charge of the National Mall have not always encouraged thoughtful and genuine public debate before accepting plans to make security fortifications. Indeed, security appears to have preempted concerns about access to public space in Washington, DC, despite growing public debate and the reality that such fortifications are ambiguous at best. This is of significant concern given that the National Mall is such a valued public space with important symbolic and spatial connections to national identity. The ‘security agenda’ has, at the moment, captured hegemonic status and so is rewriting the meaning of the Mall in a way that tells us about power relationships in national political discourse (see Johnson, 1994; 1995). In addition, security measures may physically impede the Mall’s public space, thus inconveniencing public access to memorials and other spaces or, more problematically, inhibiting the types of radical political protest such as civil rights protests, antiwar marches, and protests from marginalized voices that have historically played an important role in redefining American citizenship (Low, 2000, page 183).

⁽¹⁾ Security costs for the inauguration ran approximately \$17.5 million.

⁽²⁾ Will was an on-air commentator for Fox News Channel.

The iconography of the Mall

One of the most important and highly symbolic spaces in the United States is the National Mall in Washington, DC (see figure 1).⁽³⁾ The Mall is a public space that has, over the course of the 20th century, come to embody the discourse of democracy and freedom, and the ideology of equal access (see Foote, 1997; Loftin, 1989; Longstreth, 1991). As architectural historian Pamela Scott has noted, it is a landscape that contains a story, and visitors 'read' the Mall as a physical expression of national identity (Scott, 2002).⁽⁴⁾ She has also written that the Mall's iconography has evolved, primarily in the 20th century, as a landscape of national significance. The geographic literature on 'place as text' and on decoding the urban landscape has been developed extensively in the past fifteen years (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1993; Donald, 1992; Duncan, 1990; King 1996; Short, 1991). Although much of this literature focuses on uncovering a hidden text, in the case of the National Mall the 'text' is not hidden but loudly proclaimed in many of the brochures, tourist guides, and books about Washington, DC. Pierre L'Enfant's original plan for the city and its subsequent evolution are replete with intentional symbolism and meaning. For example, it is no coincidence that the National Mall is bound to the south by Independence Avenue and to the north by Constitution. L'Enfant's design called for the city to be the physical and symbolic embodiment of the democratic experience. His placement of the White House,

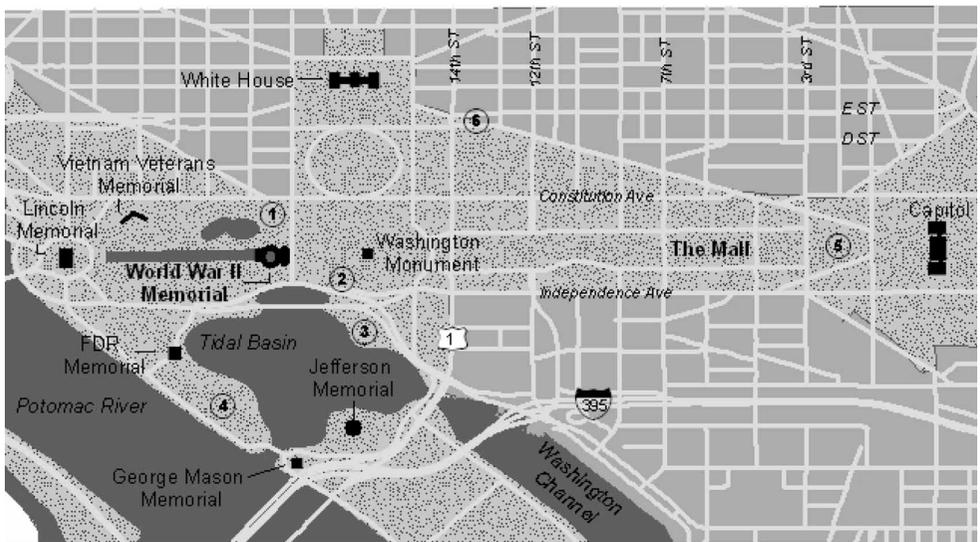


Figure 1. The present-day National Mall (map by author and George Washington University's Spatial Analysis Laboratory).

⁽³⁾ The National Mall zone stretches from just west of the Capitol, to the Lincoln Memorial. It includes the Smithsonian Museums as well as the open promenade in between them; it also includes the grounds around the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Tidal Basin, and the Lincoln Memorial. The Smithsonian Museums include the American History Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Sackler Gallery, the Freer Gallery, the Smithsonian Castle, the Air and Space Museum, and the Hirshorn. In addition, the National Gallery (not affiliated with the Smithsonian) is also included in the Mall zone, as is the recently completed National Museum of the American Indian.

⁽⁴⁾ I acknowledge that the Mall has not always been a shrine of democratic values, an important landscape of commemoration and national identity. This role began with the completion of the Washington Monument in 1878 and was further codified in the 1901 McMillan Plan. It continued and continues to evolve with each new memorial and monument.

the Capitol, and the Washington Monument on two axes was explicit and intended. The McMillan Commission of 1901 completed L'Enfant's vision by extending the north–south and east–west axes of the Mall, adding the Lincoln Memorial and eventually the Jefferson Memorial. This imbued the Mall with greater symbolic power by anchoring the east–west axis—the Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial. East is the Capitol, ‘monument to democracy’, the Washington Monument is the ‘monument to freedom and independence’, and to the west is the Lincoln Memorial, the ‘monument to unity and equality’. According to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), one of the federal agencies in charge of memorials on the Mall, the axis of the Mall represents a ‘national backbone’ formed by the themes of our founding and reinforced in the 20th century by the implementation of the McMillan Plan (NCPC, 2002). It may sound abstract but visitors pick up on it.

I introduce the iconography of the Mall to suggest that key buildings, memorials, and monuments give the Mall its symbolic power (Scott, 2002). They represent ideals about citizenship, national identity, and national memory. These are, of course, continually challenged, negotiated, and redefined, in part because the Mall provides the public with a national stage upon which these issues are revisited. Alterations to these spaces—including the erection of fences and other barriers—alter the ‘text’ of the Mall by adding new interpretations of history, meaning, and national identity. Security measures will surely change the symbolism. The Mall’s iconography is widely recognized by Congress as well as by the federal agencies that have jurisdiction over the Mall (the Park Service, the NCPC, and the Commission of Fine Arts). This means that key decision makers with the authority to approve security plans that change the appearance of memorials and buildings understand the Mall’s text. The decision to implement security measures, both visible and invisible, would not be an accidental intrusion on the existing text: it would be intentional and significant.

The Mall now represents fundamental principles of democracy in both form (monuments and memorials) and function (public space). It thus conveys the expression of national identity and political discourse through memorials and monuments. Geographers have examined public statuary, memorials, and monuments as a way to uncover the dynamics at work in shaping the historical and contemporary urban landscape (see Dwyer, 2000; Heffernan, 1995; Johnson, 1995; Withers, 1996). Memorials and monuments are not merely ornamental features in the urban landscape, but highly symbolic signifiers that confer meaning on urban space and thus represent the politics of power (Whelan, 2002). Debates surrounding the design, construction, and location of memorials are significant for ‘decoding’ iconographic images within a larger complex of cultural, social, and political values (Leib, 2002). So too, I argue, are changes or alterations to these memorials via CCTV, fences, bollards, or other barriers, which also provide a glimpse of competing interpretations of memory as well as of the power relationships that can ultimately determine its realization.

The role of monuments and memorials is intricately connected to more abstract concepts of heritage and memory. Geographers and historians who conduct research into historic preservation and on heritage have convincingly argued these concepts to be socially constructed (see, for example, Ashworth, 1994; Crane, 2000; Glassberg, 2001; Graham et al, 2000; Linenthal, 1995). Similar to the literature on memorials and monuments, much of the recent work on heritage and memory reveals it is ‘invented’: it exists because a particular society says an object, event, person, or place is valuable enough to ensure that it is passed along to the next generation (Glantz and Figueroa, 1997, page 359). What is important is that memorials and other forms of heritage are created in a social/political context where culture, location, class, power, religion, gender, and even sexual orientation will influence what is considered to

be worthy of preserving as heritage (Graham et al, 2000). Since heritage, national identity, and memory are socially constructed they are also inherently contested (Dwyer, 2000). We can refer to this contest as the politics of memory. Those with the power can shape the creation of heritage or the location of a memorial; shifts in power or ideology can introduce new criteria. Nuala Johnson (1994; 1995) notes that each memorial represents a moment in time when a particular vision has captured hegemonic status, albeit briefly. This has begun to occur on the Mall with the rewriting of national history and identity from the perspectives of those who have traditionally been excluded (Native Americans, African Americans, women, and homosexuals).⁽⁵⁾

Controversy over the fortification of the Mall reveals there is both an overt and a covert politics to memory. The overt politics of memory is the political planning process by which the changes to the Mall are approved or denied, often a matter of public record. In the case of the Mall, this is a process that involves Congress and several federal agencies, and so in theory reflects a 'national agenda'. In the case of security plans for the Mall, the covert politics involves the power of one particular interpretation of the acceptability of these changes to rise above the other concerns (to capture hegemonic status). Any major development on the Mall reflects the power of a particular group of people or organizations at a specific time to determine which interpretation of proposed change will be realized.

The Mall as public space

In the 20th century, the Mall evolved into one of the most important national public spaces for public protest and demonstration, some of which have resulted in enhancing democratic values and practices, such as citizenship (civil rights, women's suffrage) or challenging political policy (strikes, antiwar demonstrations). Thus the Mall as a public space has fostered social resistance and challenges to democratic values. It is both inclusive and accessible. It has been the stage for critical debates that underlie the health of a civil society. Protests on the Mall tend to capture national attention.

The Mall, particularly the area around the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, has become an important public space for people to congregate and express ideas. The historian Lucy Barber (2002) has documented the emergence of the Mall as a focal point for public protest. She notes that 'marching on Washington' has contributed to the development of a broader and more inclusive view of American citizenship and has transformed the capital (and the Mall) from the exclusive domain of politicians into a national stage for Americans to participate directly. Critical public protests, from the 1894 protest by unemployed civil worker Jacob Coxey, to the Women's Suffrage Procession in 1913, to the Veterans March of 1932, to the Civil Rights March in 1963, to various antiwar marches during the 1970s, have made a powerful claim to the public spaces of this capital and have linked democratic ideals with public space (Barber, 2002).⁽⁶⁾

⁽⁵⁾ Native Americans celebrated the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in September 2005; African Americans—long absent on the Mall—look to the construction and completion of the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial; women have made their presence known by marching in protest on several occasions such as the women's suffragist movement and more recently the Million Mom March; homosexuals have also been moving from the periphery via protest marches and the AIDS Quilt display.

⁽⁶⁾ Although the iconic image of Martin Luther King delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech from the Lincoln Memorial steps remains powerfully associated with public protest, more recent protests and marches such as the March for Gay Rights (1993) Million Man March (1995), the Million Mom March (2000), and annual marches such as the March for Life and annual celebrations such as Earth Day have reaffirmed the importance of the Mall as a place to express visions of national politics and identity (Barber, 2002, page 228).

This is not to argue that any or all protests are equally important for extending democratic values. The civil rights marches of the 1960s, the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, and women's rights marches, and perhaps the recent immigration protests, have been highly influential in articulating or at the least reflecting a social-political movement of considerable strength (they would be defined as 'manifest protest'). Other protests or marches do not necessarily rewrite civil society—for example, the Million Mom March or the annual Rolling Thunder motorcycle parade. Nevertheless, the Mall is a public space of articulation, a stage for both uncritical celebration of national identity as well as symbolic political–social change and the actualization of political change. As Don Mitchell and Lynn Staeheli acknowledge, the Mall and Washington DC represent a national “protest landscape” (2005, page 802).

Recent challenges and restrictions to public spaces such as the Mall have been documented by numerous scholars (D Mitchell, 1995; 2003; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005; Sorkin, 1992). Restrictions on public space are worrisome to those who have analyzed the historically important role of public space as a site for the formation of citizenship, and as a conduit for discussions on civil society (Habermas, 1989; K Mitchell, 1997; Staeheli, 1997). Significant research has demonstrated the powerful role of public space and of the public sphere as reflections of economic or political changes (Bondi, 1998; Schmelzkopf, 1995). Public space is important to social change because it provides a space for representation. Others scholars have described the decline of urban public space at the expense of the rise of more privatized spaces that don the carnival mask or provide a theme park environment (Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1991; 1995). Setha Low identified three kinds of protest that take place in public space: manifest protest (such as public demonstrations by marginal or outcast groups), latent protest (such as the symbolic struggle for representation in the form of memorials or other forms of architecture), and ritual protest (fiestas, parades, and carnivals that temporarily invert the everyday social structure and hegemonic meanings of the public space) (Low, 2000). The Mall has been a place where all three types of protest have occurred, making it an arena for the social reproduction of national memory, national identity, and democratic ideals.

Public space exists in a number of realms: the expression of civil rights and assembly, recreational space, open space, and as sites of memory and memorialization. In this paper, I distinguish between 'active citizenship' in public space and 'passive citizenship', both of which take place on the Mall. To build on Low's ideas, the Mall provides space for active citizenship, which I define to include both ritual protest and manifest protest: political protests, national celebrations, and public gatherings. These forms of protest actively engage in the social production of social and political values. Active participation seeks to include rather than exclude 'undesirables' and it often attempts to extend or reinforce notions of citizenship and democracy (see D Mitchell, 2003). In this respect, 'active citizenship' enhances the vibrancy of civil society. I contend that security plans may impede or inhibit active citizenship on the Mall. On the other hand, passive citizenship involves the consumption of public space. I define passive consumption of public space on the Mall to include activities that do not seek to confront or challenge existing social relations. These include picnicking, playing ball, jogging on the path, or visiting memorials and monuments.⁽⁷⁾ These uses, while important,

⁽⁷⁾ I acknowledge that memorials are not necessarily passive; in fact, they can act as radical political statements. But late-20th-century trends in memorial design and visitor services have tended to create memorials as spaces to be passively consumed. Some have referred to this trend in museums and memorials as 'edutainment' and note that there has been a recent impulse to 'explain' through our monuments rather than to commemorate, assuming visitors are both ignorant and impatient. This is more passive consumption of memory.

do not necessarily contest democratic values and enhance civil society. While public access to passive citizenship may be impeded by these security plans, the result may be more of an inconvenience.

The role of the Mall as public space and commemorative space is an important case study because much of the work on restrictions to public space has focused on municipally controlled urban public space (such as civic plazas, streets, public parks, or squares and areas around public buildings) or on quasi-public space (such as shopping malls or gated communities). What has been largely absent is a discussion on challenges to national public space: for example, the federally owned space of urban national parks and historic sites. The power relationships between federal and municipal governments may play out differently in federally controlled space because federal public spaces, such as the National Mall, are inherently different—they may be *in* a city, but not *of* a city—since these spaces are controlled not by municipal governments and planning departments but by Congress and federal agencies. Hence memorials and monuments placed on federal public spaces encounter a different type of political process, one which may not be attuned to local or regional concerns but is more connected to a national political agenda. In other case studies examining changes or restrictions to public space, conflict often occurs around two opposed ideals about public space: leisure and recreation versus political protest, or perhaps more accurately public space as exclusive versus inclusive (see D Mitchell, 1995; 2003). Because the Mall is a national park, its underlying mission, by law, is to remain accessible to the public. This accessibility has preserved its role as a national commemorative space as well as a center stage for political protest.

In addition to the larger politics involved in revisiting issues of national memory, history, and identity, there is also the more explicit or overt politics to the Mall. Any change or development to the Mall must first be designated through federal legislation, or approved by Congress, which is itself often responding to broader social–political pressures to reconsider national identity or threats to security. Congress can impact the meaning of the Mall by approving or killing bills proposing a change.

The other key political player is the National Park Service. Since 1933, the Park Service has primary jurisdiction over the Mall. It is in charge of general maintenance as well as master plans. In addition, several federal and local agencies are involved in approving any memorial or monument or changes to existing ones including: the Commission of Fine Arts, the NCPHC, the Army Corps of Engineers, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the DC Office of Historic Preservation (the sole representative from the city). These federal agencies answer primarily to Congress and not necessarily a local constituency. They have been accused of fostering a culture that seeks little, if any, genuine public participation in the planning process (Feldman, 2004, personal communication).⁽⁸⁾ Some of the administrators in these agencies have been in their jobs for some twenty years, making it difficult to challenge these ‘fiefdoms’ (Feldman, 2004, personal communication).

Although the Mall is geographically located in the District of Columbia, there exists a complex relationship between the DC government and the federal authorities over the Mall. The Mall and the city share a common master plan, early history, and evolution, but they are also distinct spaces. Because the Mall is federal space, the city lacks authority over how it is used and developed. Recently, other planning controversies, such as the 2001–03 debate over the location of the World War 2 Memorial, reveal how little influence the Mayor and his Planning Office have over the process

⁽⁸⁾ Interview with Judy Scott Feldman, chair of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall (NCSOM): numerous in-person and telephone conversations throughout the year.

(Benton-Short, 2006). For example, nearly every member of the DC political elite expressed opposition (including the Mayor and the DC Congressional delegate) to the location of the recently completed World War 2 Memorial, yet they had little power to reverse the site selection or to force the federal agencies to revisit their decision in a public forum. The Mall is deeply embedded in national politics and thus subject to broader debates about which people and events should be remembered, and which should not. Thus changes to the Mall can be seen as associated with and part of a broader national (rather than local) discourse on memory and national identity.

Fortressing public space

In times of war and conflict, it is not unusual for there to be visible forms of fortifications in the urban landscape. Fortification of urban space is not merely a recent phenomenon. Washington, DC has been impacted by several periods of heightened security and fortification, including the War of 1812, the Civil War, and World War 2. To prepare for the British invasion of 1812, fortifications were constructed around the District perimeter (which sadly proved ineffective as British troops burned the Capitol and the White House to the ground without encountering any resistance). In a scene eerily reminiscent of the 2005 Presidential Inauguration, the 1860 inauguration of Lincoln took place in a capital city bristling with bayonets for his protection. As the union disintegrated, the summits of the city hills were transformed into a ring of Forts—Fort Reno, Fort Totten, Fort Lincoln—that remain today (although these are now part of the national parks of the Capital). Subsequently, the war transformed the Mall (albeit temporarily) into grounds used for horse stables, cattle pens, corn houses, hay sheds, and quarters for officers and men. These wartime changes, while a part of the historical layers of the Mall, proved temporary. Despite a history of fortifications during wartime, none of these has had the potential for permanent, long-lasting changes as the proposed security plan of 2002. This is because these fortifications, while articulated as a response to the war on terrorism, are unlikely to be dismantled should the war ever end; the proposed visible and invisible forms of fortification and surveillance have geographic and political implications that resonate beyond the short term.

The rise of security policing, new forms of surveillance, and control of urban spaces is a subject scholars have explored in recent years (Davis, 1990; 1998; Fyfe, 1998; Gold and Revill, 2000; Sorkin, 1992). Mike Davis (1990) diagnosed what he calls ‘fortress cities’ as a response to perceived urban disorder and decay, primarily from domestic sources. He has noted that the car bomb could well become the ultimate weapon of crime and terror, and predicted that the urban authorities might create fortress-style rings of steel as a counterresponse (Davis, 1998; see also Coaffee, 2004). Martin Pawley (1998) wonders if the ‘architecture of terror’ will replace the signature building in the future; others have prophesized the demise of the skyscraper.

The fortress metaphor describes a landscape that is demarcated by physical borders such as gates and walls as well as by often invisible surveillance devices such as CCTV that watches city streets, parks, and gated communities (see Fyfe and Bannister, 1998). This is a vision of a city that can be controlled. Some see this as dystopian; others see this as empowering (Lees, 1998; 2004). The ambiguous nature of security remains unresolved, however. Much of the work examining the fortress city has focused on semipublic space (shopping malls or urban gardens) or on private space (gated communities or privately owned businesses). Much less attention has focused on the fortification of genuine public space and few have looked at federally designated public spaces, such as national parks, historic sites, or other federal land (see, however, Coaffee, 2004).

The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent global war on terrorism have altered the articulation of security and fortifications of both private space and public space in cities around the USA. More recently, specifically after September 11, 2001, urban scholars have examined the threat of terrorism on cities such as London (Coaffee, 2004) or Belfast (Brown, 1985; Jarman, 1993). Many accounts present bleak portrayals of future urbanism and design as the invocation of “national security” may trump issues of public access and public space (Coaffee, 2003). The stakes have changed, but it is unclear how the need for improving security translates into acceptable levels of fortification and loss of public access to public space. This is happening in other cities around the world—New York, London, Los Angeles, and Tokyo, for example, where bollards, bunkers, and other barriers have been placed around selected ‘high-risk’ targets and buildings. When security measures are particularly visible in capital cities, such as Washington, DC, the symbolic impact of fortress architecture is elevated to represent a national discourse of war, fear, and entrenchment.

Commentators have discussed the costs and benefits of adopting counterterrorism measures in the face of real or perceived terrorist threats (Brown, 1985; Coaffee, 2003; Davis, 1998; Graham, 2002; Pawley, 1998). Up until the early 1990s, many cities had no comprehensive security and defensive strategy; attempts to design out terrorism occurred specific target by specific target and often after an event raised the issue or highlighted vulnerability, or after a direct threat was made⁽⁹⁾. Reconceptualized ideas about terrorism have led to new and dramatic urban counterresponses. Terrorists now target global cities to attract global media publicity (Coaffee, 2004, page 201). Since the 1990s terrorists have focused on economic infrastructure and financial zones; as a result so did many counterterrorism measures. Since September 11, 2001, however, it is clear that symbolic targets—such as monuments, memorials, landmark buildings, and other important public spaces—are increasingly at risk. The responses have been highly intense and visible counterterrorist measures.

In this paper I describe this impulse to implement intense and often intrusive security measures as ‘hypersecurity’ to suggest that anything designed to protect people and spaces has been given instant legitimacy when associated with the phrases ‘national security’ or ‘war on terrorism’. These hypersecurity measures are often quickly approved, but are not necessarily effective. For example, the Department of Homeland Security’s Color Codes have been at best an enigmatic disappointment which imply an impending terrorist strike, but provide little in the way of steps to protect oneself. Washington, DC is frequently under ‘Code Orange’, although most of the public has little understanding of what this means beyond the inconvenience of additional street closures.

Many counterterrorist responses amount to little more than extensions of ongoing trends (Coaffee, 2004). September 11 has given urgency and legitimacy to overt fortressing of ‘at risk’ sites; the National Mall is a good example. Some of these changes are visible (the fortressing of monuments and memorials); some are invisible (CCTV on the Mall, for example). In theory, changes to federal public space, such as the Mall, should involve significant public input through an open planning process. The security plans for the Mall, however, did not engage this process; rather they were fast-tracked as a response to urgent threats to ‘national security’. Such fortressing and restrictions to public space may result in the erosion of civil liberties. Additionally, there are those who are concerned that fortification of the Mall will fundamentally change

⁽⁹⁾For example, wrought-iron security gates were installed at Downing Street in London only in 1989. It was not until after a small private plane crashed on the south area of the White House grounds in 1994 that Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House was closed to vehicular traffic.

the symbolic space as much as the physical space. Concerns over the loss of civil liberties, restrictions to public access of public space, and the implied messages of a new hypersecurity-oriented Mall reveal that fear and fortification have dominated at the expense of protecting public access and preserving the Mall's iconography. As such, fortifications to and restrictions of this public space are antithetical to its symbolic role in national discourse.

Washington DC's emerging bunker mentality: security before 2001

Since the mid-1990s there has been an "alarming proliferation of unsightly and makeshift security measures" in DC and specifically on the National Mall (NCPC, 2002, page iii).⁽¹⁰⁾ Many of these barriers were hastily erected as 'temporary' antiterrorist measures after the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, when it became clear that small trucks could be used as high-explosive car bombs. More barriers were added after the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Most of the fortification was done piecemeal, by different federal agencies for different purposes, scattered throughout the city. One of the more visible forms of antiterrorist measures in place for many years has been the closure of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Street (immediately north of the White House). Pennsylvania Avenue was closed to vehicle traffic shortly after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. The closing of such a major thoroughfare in the city has involved rerouting more than 35 bus lines and moving more than 35 000 automobiles a day onto side streets.

The most ubiquitous form of security has been the Jersey barrier, a mass-produced large block of concrete roughly 10 feet long by 3 feet high (see figure 2). It is inexpensive (each costs approximately \$500), and portable (it can be picked up and placed where needed by a small tractor). The proliferation of Jersey barriers has drawn scorn both from tourists and residents and from federal planners. Many of the security measures installed around the city, notably the Jersey barriers and chain-link fences,



Figure 2. A typical Jersey barrier sits in front of and to the sides of a makeshift guard shack on 17th Street, near the White House grounds (photograph by author).

⁽¹⁰⁾ These include all federal buildings, selected municipal buildings, and public spaces in tourist areas.

are more suitable for a highway construction site than for sensitive historic areas of the capital. Admittedly, these are only temporary (although many have been in place now for a decade). But, officials have been unable to agree on an alternative that would provide adequate security without intruding on the city's historic landscape (Wheeler, 2001).

These 'interim' security measures have threatened to become permanent fixtures in the city's landscape, in part because there was no money for anything nicer and also because there has been a lack of coordination in planning new security. The nation's capital has become a fortress city peppered with bollards, bunkers, and barriers. Although some have argued that these are only temporary, security measures have nevertheless changed the symbolic landscape in the capital city.⁽¹¹⁾ One editorial deplored "the ugly new look of the Capitol, which resembles nothing so much as a communist-era border strewn with ad hoc fencing, upended sewer drains and bored officers sitting in late-model cars with the engines running" (*The Washington Post* 2004a).

Memorials and monuments on the Mall have also been fortified significantly since the mid-1990s. Prior to September 11 two highly visible temporary security measures at



Figure 3. The Washington Monument has been ringed by temporary Jersey barriers from 1998 – 2005. The small, shack-like building up against the monument is the screening facility that one critic called a 'misplaced tool shed' (photograph by author).

⁽¹¹⁾I acknowledge that many other US cities have implemented similar security measures. DC is unique, however, in the number of 'at risk' buildings simply because any federal building is considered at risk. So, too, are tourist destinations (such as the Mall). Most other cities will have several such buildings; state capitals and the federal capital have far more. As a result, the visual impact is more omnipresent.

the Washington Monument included the ring of Jersey barriers and a visitors screening facility attached to the monument entrance (see figure 3). Reactions to the long-standing ‘temporary’ security measures at the monument have been the subject of ongoing criticism. Architectural critic Ben Forgey called the Jersey barriers “a tawdry concrete necklace”, and said they were a ‘disfigurement’ on an important public space (Forgey, 2001). The ring of Jersey barriers was an emergency measure, “ready-made Maginot lines” that do the job, albeit without any aesthetic quality. These temporary security measures have created a visual paradox: the Washington Monument’s size, its simple geometry, its soaring symbolism honoring not simply a president but the historic moment of the nation’s founding, has been contrasted against an out-of-scale attempt to protect the monument.

Both the Jefferson Memorial and Lincoln Memorial have been similarly fortified. The posting of a sign to clarify that the Jefferson Memorial is in fact open highlights how confusing and intimidating it can be to fortress memorials (see figure 4). In response to growing concerns about the unsightly nature of security, and to the message of vulnerability communicated through the appearance of haphazard security, Congress charged the NCPC in 2000 to work with other federal agencies and the private sector to create a comprehensive urban design that would provide security while maintaining the “unique character of the Nation’s Capital” (NCPC, 2002, page ii).⁽¹²⁾

While much of the security plan was developed prior to 2001, the events of September 11 radically increased the sense of urgency to implement the plan and also shifted the discourse on national security in a way that has dominated discussions about how the plan would impact the Mall’s public spaces.



Figure 4. A sign in front of the Jefferson Memorial (photograph by author).

⁽¹²⁾ The NCPC, established in 1924, is the central planning agency for the federal government. The commission reviews federal and District master plans and is the lead design agency for all federal land in the District. Among the agencies and commissions that worked on the security design are: NCPC, General Services Administration, National Park Service, Architect of the Capitol, DC Office of Planning, Secret Service, DC Department of Transportation, Homeland Security Council.

Hypersecurity and the National Mall after September 11

“We look like a nation in fear.”

Editorial in *The Washington Post* (2002)

“Can I take a picture of your gun?”

An eighth grade student from Indiana to a US Capitol police officer with assault rifles strapped to his chest (*The Washington Post* 2005)

Although security measures around the Mall and the memorials had been in place since the mid-1990s, security became even more significant and highly visible after the September 11 attacks. Some of the visible changes included increases in bollards and barriers around memorials and an increased number of National Park police cars parked in strategic places on the Mall and around the memorials. Other changes impacted only specific events (such as the 4 July celebrations); still other changes were invisible, such as the installation of surveillance cameras on the Mall. The urgency and immediacy of security changes indicated that ‘hypersecurity’ has occurred with little thoughtful discussion about how it would change access to either the active or passive use of this public space.

Watching over the Mall

In March 2002 the National Park Service announced that it would begin round-the-clock video surveillance at all major monuments on the Mall (Wheeler, 2002). CCTV cameras were installed for the first time to monitor public areas in and around the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial (see figure 5), the FDR Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Korean War Memorial. Before approving the funds, Congress held a hearing. John Parsons, Associated Regional Director for the Park Service’s National Capital Region, testified that the \$3 million program was justified because “these icons of democracy are high targets



Figure 5. A camera mounted atop the Lincoln Memorial (photograph by author).

of terrorist activity. That is the camera's sole purpose" (Parsons, 2002). He also noted that US Park Police would use cameras "in public areas where there is no expectation of privacy" (Parsons, 2002). What is especially interesting is that Parsons acknowledged that, "although the process of planning the CCTV system and obtaining funding for it had begun prior to September 11th, the installation of this technology became a higher priority after the tragic events of that date" (Parsons, 2002). Other than this hearing, the decision to install surveillance occurred with little public input or discussion.

Reactions have been mixed, highlighting the ambiguity over the use of CCTV. Proponents of video surveillance and CCTV say it makes it possible to cover larger spaces with the same number of personnel (Koskela, 2000). They point to a nationwide 2002 Zogby poll that reported 79% of those polled favored video surveillance in public areas (Metaska, 2002). In addition, it is true, that for many, the presence of security cameras reaffirms a level of safety in a place that is a known terrorist target (Lees, 2004).

On the other hand, it is also true that the impact of CCTV on active forms of citizenship in public space has not adequately been studied. Scholars have critically examined the power of the watcher and have uncovered the problematic nature of the politics of seeing and of being seen (Koskela, 2000). Opponents to CCTV cite several reasons: the discomfort of being watched, the symbolism of cameras in a city that represents openness, and the possibility that cameras will inhibit radical protests.

A recent *Washington Post* article featured comments from several out-of-town visitors including one who noted, "I feel not as safe. I feel less at ease. You feel watched—you notice all the cameras" (Schwartzman, 2005). DC Council member and now mayor elect Adrian Fenty commented, "At first, I thought Washington, because it's prone to more terrorist attacks, would be a place where visitors would want cameras, but I agree now with my colleague who say Washington should be a beacon of freedom" (quoted in Fahrenthold and Nakamura, 2002). Another Council member expressed a similar concern, noting "these cameras have been set up to deal with demonstrations and dissent. This will have a chilling effect and discourage citizens from demonstrating openly here in the capital" (quoted in Fahrenthold and Nakamura, 2002). Despite DC Council concerns, the Park Service made no attempt to revisit the issue through public dialog, highlighting again the lack of power of the DC government to influence federal agencies long used to the 'sole' authority over the Mall. As of late 2004 the Park Service had no written policies to cover video surveillance, yet the system was in place and functioning.

Civil libertarian groups expressed concern that video monitoring might discourage demonstrators, especially those who protest government policy from a radical perspective on either political spectrum. The conservative *Washington Times* in an editorial entitled "Big Brother and the Park Service" noted that taking steps to preempt terrorism is a good thing, but pervasive monitoring is not the hallmark of a free and open society, "such an invasion of public spaces must be condemned" (*The Washington Times* 2002). The NCSOM commented,⁽¹³⁾ "if we have to destroy our freedom in order to save it, let's at least take a little time to think it through. There's absolutely no assurance that cameras are the answer to protecting our monuments" (NCSOM, 2002a). People feel entitled to move about the capital freely, but fortifications and video surveillance

⁽¹³⁾ The NCSOM was organized in 2000 as a direct response by World War 2 veterans and other concerned citizens who objected to the design and location of the proposed World War 2 memorial. This grassroots citizen's group has evolved over the last several years to include issues of development on and changes to the National Mall. It is a nonprofit 501c(3) whose charter directs it to "protect, preserve and enhance the National Mall and its environs as our national gathering place and symbol of Constitutional principles, its open character, spaces and sweeping vistas."

communicate fear and retrenchment and undermine the basic premises of an open and democratic society (NCPC, 2002, page 1). At this date, it is too early to tell if CCTV will prevent active protest. What is clear, however, is that the Park Service and the NCPC did not thoughtfully discuss this potential before implementing the system.

In addition to the installation of surveillance cameras and significant restrictions to access to the Mall for special events, there is other more intrusive and permanent security architecture proposed for the Mall. The NCPC's 2002 security plan for the National Mall may impact the Mall by curtailing public space and articulating an architecture of fear and vulnerability in a place that stands for democracy, freedom, and public access.

The NNCP's comprehensive security plan

Although work on the comprehensive security plan began before September 11, it was completed and approved in 2002. The plan attempted to balance the need for perimeter security with the need to maintain the vitality of the public realm. It openly acknowledged that it focused security solutions based on one type of security threat (and one only): unauthorized vehicles approaching or entering sensitive buildings or monuments (NCPC, 2002, page 5). The plan did not address bombs carried by pedestrians, air attack, or chemical and biological weapons. This is worth noting, since implementing this security plan fully would not provide security against any and all potential threats.

As a way to mitigate the impact of an explosion originating from a vehicle parked or in motion, the NCPC recommend establishing a 'standoff distance' of some 100 feet. The standoff area would allow for pedestrian traffic, but would not allow vehicles within this perimeter. The standoff zone would provide the space for security barriers as well as checkpoints to screen individuals, property, and vehicles. In order to secure this standoff zone, the NCPC recommended a variety of streetscape security elements that were to be incorporated into security components in perimeter areas.

The NCPC security plan identified six security zones in DC, of which one was the National Mall.⁽¹⁴⁾ The security plan for the Mall was to be "functional, attractive, cost effective and *reflective of democratic values*" (NCPC, 2002, page 33, my italics). I highlight this objective because it reveals that planners were aware of the importance of public space on the Mall and attempted to balance security needs with public access. Some aspects of the plan are more successful at balancing security and public access. However, there are other aspects of the plan—notably that for the Washington Monument—that appear insensitive to public access and the symbolic nature of the monument.

Plans to improve security for the monument stretch as far back as 1973, when the National Park Service first proposed constructing an underground visitor center, connected by a tunnel to the monument. Due to lack of funding, these plans were never pursued. But like a phoenix, this idea has risen several times since. In 1993 the National Park Service again raised the idea of the underground visitors' center but dropped the plans when Congress rejected the high cost of the project and questioned a study by

⁽¹⁴⁾ The other five zones included: (1) the White House; (2) the Federal Triangle, which includes the Treasury, the National Archives, the Ronald Regan Building, the FBI, and the Department of Justice; (3) the West End, including the State Department, the General Accounting Office, the Department of Interior, the Federal Reserve; (4) the Capitol; and (5) the Downtown, which includes most of the municipal government buildings. Geographically, the zones covered by the security plan represent a small part of the city (perhaps 20% of its land area), but contain most federal buildings in the district.

geologists that concluded it was possible that an underground center would destabilize the monument because of the soil types and high water table (NCSOM, 2002b).

In 2000, the Park Service conducted a preliminary planning study of a revised underground center. The study was completed just prior to the fall of 2001. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Park Service went into panic mode, surrounding the monuments with row upon row of Jersey barriers, stationing police cars around their grounds, and installing surveillance cameras on each of the memorials (Feldman, 2004, personal communication). A month after the September 11 attacks, several Park Service officials testified to the NCPC and to Congress that the Washington Monument, in particular, was at an increased risk of terrorist activities, and stated that a threat to the monument was a threat to national security. The Park Service requested authority and funds to construct the underground visitors' center and tunnel as quickly as possible.

In the late fall of 2001, the National Park Service held a private, invitation-only design competition for 'security improvements' to the monument (NCSOM, 2002b). It completed the new plan for security in December, 2001. Installing permanent security measures on the National Mall, and particularly at the Washington Monument, became a high priority for Congress and the Department of the Interior, which responded by allocating \$20 million for the initial implementation of the new security plan.

Three important elements were part of the design: first, removing the Jersey barriers and replacing them with some security design element to protect the perimeter; second, constructing the underground visitors' center; third, building an underground tunnel to connect the center to the monument. The original concept for the underground visitors' center and tunnel was not part of a security plan but part of a visitors' enhancement plan; but, in the post-September 11 world, the center and tunnel became integral to 'security'. This led some to criticize this as a deliberately rushed process invoked in the name of 'security'. The NCSOM felt that the Park Service had seized on the climate of fear and pushed through its long-desired underground visitors' center and tunnel on the pretense of national security. One commentator observed, "the bad idea of digging up the Mall suddenly gained prestige when it could be presented as part of a terrorism prevention package" (Leigh, 2003). *Washington Post* columnist Jonathan Yardley concurred, noting: "improved security is one thing and a construction binge of exceedingly doubtful efficacy is quite another... under the pretext of protecting the Monument against truck bombs and other forms of vehicular assault (jet airplanes don't seem to have crossed its radar screen), the NPS [National Park Service] has come up with a bizarre plan" (2002, page C2).

The final security plan, estimated at \$40 million, entailed the replacement of the Jersey barriers with sunken walkways that were to be configured as a series of ovals extending east and west from the monument plaza (see figure 6). The 12-foot wide walkways were to be located some 400 feet from the monument, sunken into the ground 3–4 feet deep, and would serve as a vehicular barrier.⁽¹⁵⁾ The cost of constructing these sunken walls was approximately \$20 million. The underground visitors' center would be approximately 20 000 square feet and would house displays, restrooms, and a ticket booth. After being screened by US Park Police, visitors would then travel through a 400 foot tunnel to enter the elevator. The second part of the plan would cost \$20 million, and the total cost was \$40 million.

⁽¹⁵⁾The security-oriented landscape design was conceived by Philadelphia landscape architect Laurie Olin.

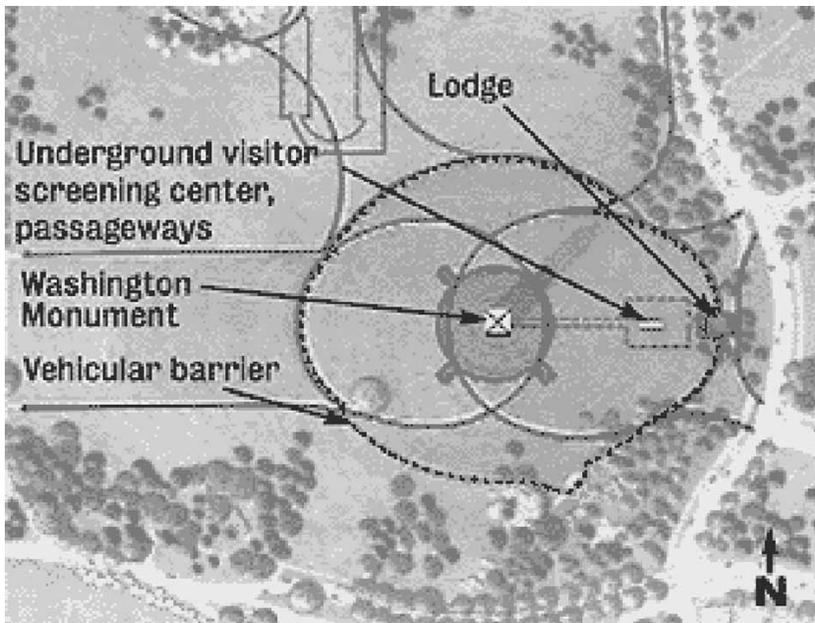


Figure 6. Map of the security plan (NCPC, 2002, page 39).

Reactions to the security plan for the Washington Monument

The debate over the plan for the Washington Monument reveals the politics of security discourse, as the battle over interpretation of security strategy, of aesthetics, and of how this would transform space becomes clear (Ogborn, 1993). Underlying the debate are issues about accessibility and about the symbolism of security at the monument.

Supporters of the security plan felt the design was unobtrusive and that the pathways were graceful, and reminiscent of how ha-has hid in the English romantic landscape (Forgey, 2002a). They argued that an underground solution would be the safest and most efficient way to move visitors to the monument; adding interpretative exhibits and a bookstore was an efficient use of that space. Many of the supporters for the plan came from the federal agencies that worked with the NCPC to formulate the plan.

But, for the most part, reaction in newspapers and television—the main venues for public discussion on this issue—was more critical. Opponents of the plan felt these changes would impair public access and the character of this public space. Some noted the paradox of approaching a soaring obelisk connoting freedom and openness in a manner that resembles a burrowing, frightened animal. “There is something terribly wrong with getting in to the Monument via an underground passage—sneaking into monuments—would be wrong physically and symbolically (Forgey, 2002a). Harry G Robinson, III, acting Chairman of the Commission on Fine Arts, commented, “maybe the best tourist experience of the Washington Monument is not by walking through a tunnel into it” and Commission of Fine Arts Secretary Charles Atherton added, “nobody is happy to see people approach the Washington Monument in a tunnel” (Hsu, 2002). Atherton also noted that “the essence of the Mall is freedom of access. And as soon as you embark on creating such a space of freedom, you’re bound to always invite the abuse of that freedom. I don’t see how we can ever preserve that freedom and protect the park from the kind of attack that it’s been subjected to” (quoted in Santana, 2003).

The citizens' group NCSOM criticized the Park Service for "refusing to examine viable alternatives to its wasteful and destructive plan that will deface rather than enhance the Monument" (NCSOM, 2003). They argued that a simple perimeter retaining wall or a combination of walls and bollards bordering the streets around the monument would preserve the historic open spaces and be much less visually intrusive and wondered why this was not considered in the planning process (2003). Feldman, Chair of NSCOM, speculated that the Park Service may have pushed for the sunken walkways to ensure the underground center would be built as well since both would involve considerable construction in the same general location (Feldman, 2004, personal communication). NCSOM also argued that hand-carried explosives, if detonated inside the underground facility, would put more people at risk and increase the threat of entrapment. In addition, the sunken walkways *will* change how people can use this area for celebration, protest, and recreation, and so this major change to the Mall has occurred without true public discussion and debate.

Construction of the walkways began in 2004, and was completed in the summer of 2005. However, plans for the other two parts of the security plan ran into Congressional resistance as concerns over the underground visitors' center and tunnel have influenced politicians on the Hill.

Subterranean fixes

Plans for an underground visitors' center at the monument complement a recent trend in designing underground structures in places where space is limited. In addition to plans for an underground center at the Washington Monument, there have been several other underground centers proposed in Washington, DC. In 2003, the Park Service proposed constructing an underground White House 'museum and education center' and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund plans to create a sunken visitors' center adjacent to the memorial. In 2000 Congress approved the US Capitol Visitors Center, currently under construction.⁽¹⁶⁾

USA Today noted,

"Washington's bunker mentality grew after the September 11th events; hidden structures deep below the earth will better protect tourists, it's believed. But these subterranean spaces defile the very monuments they aim to serve. They lack the essentials of open, human structures, daylight, fresh air, outdoor views, and a sense of connection to place. Forcing visitors to burrow like groundhogs diminishes the meaning of our nation's treasured architecture" (Dietsch, 2002, page 13A).

Supporters counter that underground centers improve security and do not disturb landscaping; opponents liken it to DC's version of the Big Dig.

Criticism of the plans for the monument reflect that many see the area as both the physical and symbolic expression of democracy and freedom. In an interesting exchange of semantics at a 2003 panel discussion, one audience member criticized the 'underground tunnel', to which one of the principle architects replied, "it's not a tunnel, it's a concourse". Robert Hershey, president of the DC Society of Professional Engineers, shot back: "it's a crypt".⁽¹⁷⁾

It is true that our monuments have become icons—and targets—because of their political symbolism. On the one hand, security measures reaffirm safety during a time

⁽¹⁶⁾ The Capitol Visitors Center, when completed, will be a three-level underground center of some 580 000 ft² (two thirds as large as the Capitol itself) and will house a security checkpoint, orientation center, a 600-seat cafeteria, gift shops, two 250-seat theaters, and congressional office space. Its projected cost is some \$400–500 million (Lee, 2003).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Personal observation, 2003, at a planning meeting that included officials from the NCPA, Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Park Service: verbal exchange during panel discussion, April.

of war. At the same time, however, the fear of terrorism should not dictate the design of structures.

“What we have done in the name of security after September 11th—and even before—has done terrible damage not only to the beauty of the city but to its meanings. This is the capital of an open democracy, but it comes off as a confused, fortified compound. Security emplacements encroach upon our most hallowed monuments. They surround our most important political institutions. What we are getting is a distorted story” (Forgey, 2002b).

An editorial in *The Washington Post* commented: “In the name of public safety, Washington is slowly disappearing. Concrete barriers stand as silent sentinels between people and their national shrines. What’s happening in the city may serve some security interests, but the denial of public access is not in the national interest” (2004a, page A18). A few months later, another editorial noted that the Park Service, while legitimately concerned with keeping the nation’s monuments secure, was pushing through measures that ultimately reduced public access—a self-defeating outcome. “Of what value are the shrines if they are sealed off or made more difficult for the public to reach? Openness and public access are hallmarks of American freedom, even at the risk of enemies seeking to exploit what we hold dear” (*The Washington Post* 2005).

DC Mayor Anthony Williams, who is also member of Bush’s Homeland Security Advisory Council, admitted, “a little more openness is called for. I think we’ve struck the balance too far toward security” (quoted in Dwyer and Hsu, 2005). Williams expressed concern about the potential loss of access, noting “we cannot allow the symbols of American freedom and democracy to be transformed into fortresses of fear” (quoted in *The Washington Post* 2004b). As I mentioned earlier, however, city political elites have very little influence over the federal agencies in charge of planning on the Mall.

The planning process and public input

In addition to the controversy over how these new security measures would change public access and the symbolism of the Mall, there have also been concerns over the planning process and procedure for this highly public space. For example, the Park Service refused to allow the public review of plans for the underground visitors’ center and tunnel, saying: “the details are security-sensitive” (NCSOM, 2003). Feldman countered: “The Park Service is violating the spirit and letter of the law when it simply declares by fiat that it alone will decide what the taxpayer is and is not competent to review”. She continued, “the Park Service’s proposal is a 30-year-old plan that the Park Service is trying to retrofit as a security measure and is ramming through and telling the public to get lost” (NCSOM, 2003). The Committee of 100 on the Federal City, a citizens planning and preservation group, also argued against the plan, saying it was faulty on many counts and that better, simpler, and cheaper alternatives could secure the monument without jeopardizing public safety. The NCSOM has also argued that the security panic is not just a manifestation of the fortress of fear mentality, but also testimony to a fundamental structural and management problem that continually challenges the integrity of the National Mall. The National Park Service is a powerful steward; it often exempts even itself from its own rules. For example, law requires each project to complete an environmental impact statement. Despite this fact, the National Park Service relied on a 30-year-old 1973 Environmental Impact Assessment to back its plans for the underground visitors’ center (Feldman, 2004, personal communication).

In response to increasing public criticism in the fall of 2003, Senator Byron Dorgan (Democrat, Nebraska) sponsored an amendment (S. Amdt. 1777) to block the funding for the underground visitors' center and tunnel.⁽¹⁸⁾ Dorgan noted, "the question of whether this would be a necessary and important contribution or simply a tragic waste of taxpayer money has not been answered" (quoted in Reel, 2003). The Senate committee concurred with Dorgan and voted to withhold funding for the underground center and tunnel. Shortly after, the Park Service announced it had abandoned plans for the underground visitors' center and tunnel, but work is slated to begin soon (2006–07) on the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials.

Conclusions

The debate over security on the Mall has revealed several important themes that link to broader issues about security, commemorative space, and public space in a post-September 11 world. The security plan, when fully implemented, may change both the physical and symbolic space that the Mall represents. The aesthetics of security communicates a message that it is at odds with the iconography of the Mall as the embodiment of democratic values of freedom and openness. Given the Mall's powerful iconography, it is not an inconsequential act to alter the symbolism through the fortressing of memorials and monuments. Such a change should occur only after genuine public debate and discussion, something I believe was lacking in the process of creating the security plan.

The security plan may restrict or make difficult public access for both active and passive citizenship. While the impairment to public access for the viewing of memorials or for ball games is perhaps more inconvenient than inhibiting, what remains unclear is how more active forms of citizenship, particularly radical protests or strikes or marches, may be affected. Because the Mall allows for 'active citizenship' in which protests and marches can actively renegotiate democracy, liberty, and justice, security measures such as bollards and barriers, as well as CCTV, could inhibit these types of important contestations of democratic values. Impeding or curtailing the use of the Mall in this way may result in the Mall becoming a public space that grows increasingly more passive.

The procedural issues raised about the planning process and the lack of public input highlight the politics involved and the power to restrict public participation in public spaces such as the National Mall. The rhetoric expressed in support of all these hypersecurity plans reveals that since September 11 concerns over security have trumped concerns over how implementing security measures will impact the meaning and geography of the Mall. This leads me to wonder whether the prioritization of security over access to public space may be linked to a broader social-political agenda that seeks to restrict public space in general. While this remains to be seen, what is more discernable is that a 'security agenda' has, at the moment, captured hegemonic status and so is rewriting the meaning of the Mall in a way that tells us about ideas which are dominating national political discourse, as is often the case with 'security' in a time of war.

Issues about security on the National Mall might not seem as pressing in our war on terrorism, but, in the long term, they ask interesting questions about national identity, national history, and how we value public space. In a new hypervigilant, hypersecure post-September 11 world, we have spent a lot of money trying to provide the appearance of universal protection of all the buildings and all the people

⁽¹⁸⁾ Dorgan is the ranking Democrat on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee.

in them even though this is impossible.⁽¹⁹⁾ It is not reasonable to expect people whose job is to minimize danger to exercise moderation in their security plans, or to accept increased risk in the name of democratic access. But security plans should not proceed without debate. In a democratic society, security should be a collaborative and public process—since September 11, security officials seem to have not only the last word but the only word. Security is important, but this analysis points to the need to balance precaution with the right to access and the right to experience historically important public space. This balance has been sadly lacking in the planning discourse with regard to the National Mall.

A note about the methodology

Since 2001 I have been attending planning meetings, observing protests, and informally speaking with many of the key decision makers. I am also a member of the NCSOM, and in 2005 was elected to its Board of Directors. In this capacity, I have attended Congressional briefings, met with administrators in federal agencies, and have spoken informally with many of the coalition members. NCSOM has also graciously allowed me access to its archives. For this paper I relied on my own scribbles and notes from conversations, planning meetings, and public forums and, where possible, I attempted to confirm my recollections with sources such as newspaper articles (which is one reason I have made extensive use of newspaper articles and editorials). While I acknowledge the limit of using newspaper reportage, I have tried in this instance to use it to show evidence of debate and resistance to federal plans (and also to support my observations and discussions). Most of my ‘interviews’ were informal discussions, but given the circumstances they were the best I could do (a public planning meeting, for example, was not an appropriate place for a formal interview). Public officials, particularly those in administrative positions in the key federal agencies, have resisted granting formal interviews. I suspect that they felt my association with NCSOM meant I would be critical of their position regardless of merit, although I attempted to assure them that my interest was in presenting a balanced and informed analysis. Such is the risk of participant observation, particularly when one is associated with a specific point of view. In these cases, I have tried to confirm their positions and statements in newspaper articles. I also feel that the use of newspapers in this instance was a representation of ‘public discussion’ because the public was largely shut out of the planning process and had few forums for discussion other than through popular media. It is clear that the ‘public’ was not invited to planning meetings, particularly those where decisions were made. Indeed, the National Park Service, CFA, and NCPC were passive in their outreach to the public—they might print the time and date of the meeting but would neglect to mention where to go. The issue of ‘public’ discussion of national landscapes—how and where such public debate would occur—is of interest to me and is an issue which I am currently exploring in greater depth in another manuscript. I would contend that, while *The Washington Post* commented most frequently on the controversy, the large number of articles and editorials in newspapers around the country lends legitimacy to the idea that this continues to be a ‘national landscape’.

⁽¹⁹⁾ In December 2006 the streets around the Washington Monument were closed for several hours when security forces were cautious about an abandoned backpack. This took place after the completion of the new security walls.

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