

NASHVILLE CIVIC DESIGN CENTER

Fear and Design

Randy Hutcheson
Planner

Even in the days prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, government agencies were using makeshift devices to protect buildings from potential terrorist attacks. The urgency increased after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City in 1995 by a United States Citizen, and quickly escalated after the third major attack on September 11th, 2001. These makeshift security measures visually and physically show the fear of or nation: a fear that has rarely been a part of our national vocabulary for public buildings/places. In a free and open democracy, is it possible to design security measures that fortify our openness as a society, enhance the visual and psychological beauty of the public realm, and provide the security necessary to protect public and private buildings?

In October of 2002, the National Capital Planning Commission addressed this core issue. In their plan *The National Capitol Urban Design and Security Plan*, they developed a security plan that effectively addressed the following concern: "Yet, the nation must not guard against terror at the expense of a long-standing national ideal: the appreciation-indeed, aspiration-for openness, accessibility, and comfort within the public domain". This concern was addressed in the following manner: "The goal of the Plan is to restore the beauty and dignity of the Nation's Capitol by integrating building perimeter security into an attractive streetscape and by coordinating the design and installation of streetscape project".

The National Capitol Urban Design and Security Plan also states that "while the plan was prepared to address the needs of federal facilities, specifically those in the Nation's Capitol, its principles and concept can easily be applied to other public and private lands throughout the nation." Considering the great number of Federal, State, and Local government buildings in Nashville, the document provides us with a set of guidelines to use when considering security measures at government and private buildings. Expressing our openness as a community is paramount when designing new public/civic buildings.

All too often, our quest to achieve security is translated into large setbacks, concrete barricades, and "quick fixes" such as temporary planters. These security measures are not acceptable solutions. In Nashville, we must strive to restore beauty to civic areas that are currently disfigured by temporary security measures. The security and design document produced for our Nation's Capital should be used in Nashville as a guide to address issues of security for public and private buildings. Openness can and must be expressed in the design of our civic places/spaces. We must strive to achieve the primary goal set forth in *The National Capitol Urban Design and Security Plan*.



In Nashville, our goal is to restore the beauty and dignity of our State's Capitol City by integrating building perimeter security into an attractive streetscape and by coordinating the design and installation of streetscape projects.

The National Capital Planning Commission. *The National Capitol Urban Design and Security Plan*. Washington D.C.: October 2002.