The landscape of fear that has unfolded in Washington, D.C., over the past decade is not one that induces terror or even apprehension the way being in a combat zone is likely to do; nor does it evoke such feelings, as might occur when visiting the site of a concentration camp. Washington’s landscape of fear is of a more banal kind, manifesting a sense of vulnerability to unknown forces. It is a defense mechanism propelled by assuming that the possibilities of unforeseen attacks are sufficiently great to warrant allocating vast sums of money and modifying key national symbols as a partial deterrent. The steps being taken are momentous. Not only are they unprecedented, they are profoundly unlike how we have treated important public space for generations.¹

After an alien army outmaneuvered American troops and attacked an essentially defenseless Washington, D.C., in 1814, burning both the President’s House and the Capitol among other federal buildings, the nation’s leaders sought a return to normal conditions as quickly as possible. The executive mansion and Capitol were rapidly rebuilt at great expense given the extent of the nascent republic’s treasury. Both buildings were indeed embellished in the process.² No components were introduced to those projects or to the city’s infrastructure that were predicated on military defense. The outcome could have been very different, however.

Protecting cities by encircling them with fortifications in the Old World and elsewhere was still a major physical reality, even if the tactics they represented were deemed outmoded, particularly with the rise of nation states.³ The fledgling federal government
could ill afford to construct great bastions encircling the capital city, yet if such measures had been considered advantageous, a conspicuous security perimeter could well have become integral to the development of Washington over the decades that followed. As it was, military thinking dictated another course of action. Since invading armies would have to come by sea, forts strategically placed at the mouths of harbors and bays or at key points along rivers could fend off aggressors. Such facilities at the time of the War of 1812 were woefully inadequate. Thereafter, a major building campaign for permanent coastal defense facilities was initiated. A substantially remade Fort Washington on the Potomac (1816), as well as many new outposts such as Fort Sumter at the entrance of Charleston harbor (1829) and Fort Morgan at the mouth of Mobile Bay (1833) were the result.4

Military concerns lay far removed from those that shaped Washington’s landscape over the next century and three quarters. We dislike the apparatus of security that now seems omnipresent in the federal core not just because we think it is ugly or inconvenient. We have come to tolerate, even embrace, window bars, high fences, manned entry ports, and other exclusionary devices in our domestic environments out of fear of crime, but our public spaces are considered a different matter.5 They should be open and readily accessible—in appearance and in reality. This sentiment is a very old one. Even before the Revolution, this outlook differentiated some forms of our cultural expression from those of our forebears across the Atlantic and by the turn of the nineteenth century it became a pervasive pattern.

Throughout most of the Colonial period, public open space—that is, space to which the public had ready access—was minimally defined, if it was defined at all. The market square, the New England common and meeting house lot, and other land in the public realm were unadorned. They were shaped in large part by the activities that occurred on them—the exchange of goods, the grazing of livestock, the marching of soldiers, the movement of wagons and foot traffic—and by the streets and buildings that delineated their boundaries in communities of some size. The primary exception was the churchyard, which, particularly in urban settings was walled or fenced off to protect hallowed ground from grave robbers and other intruders. In rural areas, too, fencing was often used as a coral for the sexton’s livestock, which were used to keep the yard’s grass at bay.6

College grounds were another exception. From their inception, institutions of higher learning in the American colonies tended to be housed in large, multi-purpose buildings set amid open space in small communities (Cambridge, Williamsburg, Hanover) or on
the fringe of larger ones (Philadelphia, New York, New Haven). Probably the first occasion where college grounds were physically delineated and embellished was at Princeton, following the completion of Nassau Hall in 1757 for the College of New Jersey. An expansive front yard was modestly landscaped and, in all likelihood to protect that endeavor, received a perimeter fence. In the 1770s the space was given the Latin word for field or plain, campus. In contrast to the churchyard, the campus was not a place that could be secured. The fencing and other improvements were to make the place a special, but not an exclusive, one. These seemingly modest steps began a venerable tradition, repeated at hundreds of such institutions during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.7

The radical nature of early collegiate planning, however unassuming it might seem today, is clear when those freestanding buildings set amid grassy preserves are compared to their English counterparts, such as the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, whose physical organization stemmed from the monastic tradition. The practice continued through the eighteenth century, with buildings that lay along the perimeter and were oriented more to interior courts than to the fronting streets. Why English colonists broke so markedly from this order, as they most assuredly did not with other building types, and created something distinctly their own is unclear. But we can speculate to the extent that openness and accessibility, rather than closure and confinement, were held to be important attributes in places dedicated to higher education.

That perspective increasingly shaped public space in the governmental sphere after the Revolution. A major precedent, and probably the first time a preserve was earmarked to adorn a governmental seat, was set in 1736, when the Pennsylvania Assembly determined that the remainder of the block occupied by what later became known as Independence Hall would be left “a public open green and walk for ever.” A portion of the tract was acquired in 1739; the remainder three decades later. A seven-foot-high brick wall was erected around the perimeter and the premises were entered through very imposing gates, perhaps in an attempt to generate a sense of sanctuary from the urban environment, where animals of many kinds often roamed at large. For other reasons, too, the city streets were not considered particularly welcoming or even safe places. Construction of the Walnut Street Prison—intended as a model for penal reform—directly across the street from the square in 1773–76 could only have reinforced the appreciation of enclosed grounds. What was known as the State House Garden afforded a sanctuary for at least the more prosperous members of society who
would have felt at ease there. But soon the tract also became a staging ground for public protest against British authority. After the Revolution, the Garden began to be embellished in 1784 under the direction of a rich planter from Jamaica, Samuel Vaughan, who introduced gravel walks, benches, and over one hundred elm trees. Over the ensuing decades the park served not only as a place of resort, but also as a locus of labor and racial protests, abolitionist speeches, and patriotic celebrations. In 1828 the wall was reduced to three feet and capped by an iron fence. Two years later, the space was christened Independence Square, its symbolic associations with liberty codified.  

As a national shrine and as a seat of state government until 1799 and of municipal government thereafter, Independence Hall appears to have been an important prototype for the siting of major public buildings in the early republic. A number of state capitol selected the pattern of being set in demarcated grounds that were soon landscaped, including those of the capitol of Connecticut (1793–97), Massachusetts (1795–97), and New Hampshire (1816–23). A primary difference, however, lay in the frontality of these spaces, to which the buildings were unequivocally oriented. The principal elevation of Independence Hall faced the adjacent street even though the garden front became the more iconic over time, sporting a tower that was added in 1749–53 after the adjacent land had been purchased.

The most important model for placing a major governmental building well back from the street, surrounded by a generous skirt of embellished open space was the New York City Hall. The result of a competition held in 1802, the city hall was arguably the most impressive civic building in the nation when it was completed a decade later. The expansive, eleven-acre site was similarly unprecedented. It was part of what had been a larger common on which the British had erected a barracks and debtor’s prison. In the 1760s, the space harbored public protest over restrictive British laws. During the Revolution the common became a strategic defense post for the Royal Army as well as the home of a notorious prison. In the 1760s, the space harbored public protest over restrictive British laws. During the Revolution the common became a strategic defense post for the Royal Army as well as the home of a notorious prison. Following independence an almshouse was added to the ensemble. The lower part of the common may have been chosen for the new city hall because it was readily available, but its historical associations and the extent of open space in which the intentionally grand building would rise were likely factors in the equation as well. The tract itself was embellished with trees and walks; by 1821 it was enclosed by a low iron fence. Renamed the Park, it ranked among the finest public spaces in the country. Its size and attractiveness spurred the construction of elegant houses along the facing streets,
but soon its importance as a civic place, one where the swelling, increasingly fragmented population of the city could nurture a sense of democratic fellowship at celebrations and other events became paramount. An account of 1845 remarked that “the park is the centre of New-York…. Everybody who comes to New-York, makes the Park the nucleus around which his ideas of Gothamian localities arrange themselves.” This setting was markedly distinguished from its Philadelphia forbear in both its size and its perceptual connection to the fast enveloping urban world. What began at Princeton, probably as a matter of practicality as well as an emblem of local pride, had not only become a common feature of the campus, but also, probably by no direct or conscious route, now assumed consequential civic overtones.

While capitol s and large city halls remained the exception in the young republic, the courthouse was a far more common fixture, one that became a key yardstick of progress in the ever more intense drive for city building. For many citizens, the courthouse was the most important seat of government. Throughout most developing parts of the nation these buildings enjoyed a position of conspicuous centrality. From occupying a space defined by the intersection of principal streets, as at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which was a highly influential model at the turn of the nineteenth century, the courthouse came to be placed in a landscaped square, around which the town developed. The courthouse’s importance was thus underscored not just by its key position in the community, but also by the spatial preserve that was both a major civic and social ground. Through the courthouse square, what had been anomalies in Philadelphia and New York became regularized and a standard component of the urban landscape.

A concurrent creation of civic space occurred in New England with the rise of the village as the town center and the development of ornamental greens as its focal point. An important precedent for such spaces occurred at Boston’s common, a then peripheral grazing field that began to receive rows of trees around its border as early as 1728 and that became a locus for new development in the rapidly expanding city by the century’s end. Far more often, however, greens were created using all or part of the meeting house lot. New Haven’s green, which had received some embellishments by the 1780s, was among the earliest and largest examples. Most New England town centers did not emerge until later decades. By the 1840s, the tendency to improve land fronting the meeting house (the Congregational Church) had coalesced into a distinct phenomenon, with the space cleared of stumps and stones, graded, some trees planted, and often perimeter fencing to prevent the creation of random
paths. So adorned, the New England green became no less important than the courthouse square as a defining element of community and a destination for public activities rather than just a place to traverse.¹²

The idea of a governmental seat as a midspace object accentuated by a park was also employed at an early date in Washington. Significantly, it did not originate here, but reflected what was becoming a widespread practice—a truly democratic process, if you will.¹³ When the Capitol was well on its way to completion, the grounds started to receive embellishment in 1816 and a part-time gardener, John Foy, was hired two years later. The result was a potently iconic temple of democracy enframed by lawn and groves of trees in a preserve (Figure 1). Initially, this work entailed gardens to the east of the building and separated from it by a broad plaza. In 1828, the semi-circular space flanking the Capitol and extending to the west was likewise improved. Architect Charles Bulfinch, who designed these improvements, included high iron fences and gatekeepers lodges—both rarities at that time—in order to keep roaming animals, including livestock, at bay.¹⁴ But even if they were separated from the adjacent blocks, the Capitol grounds became an important destination in their own right, not for events or protest, but as a place of resort from which one could get a sweeping view of the still nascent federal city.

Significantly, the setting was antithetical to anything urban as it was then known. The park became as integral to defining the character of place as was the building. A skeptic might argue that lack of funds and the excruciating slow pace of development in Washington were root causes, but neither explains why this setting figured so prominently in idealized depictions of the scene through the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 2).¹⁵ Significantly, too, the park setting was by no means a foregone conclusion. Its does not seem to have emanated from the L’Enfant Plan of 1791–92, in which an enormous “Congress House” and “President’s House”

![Image of U.S. Capitol, general view of west front, watercolor by John Reubens Smith, 1828, before Bulfinch fence and gate houses installed around this portion of the grounds. (Library of Congress)](Figure 1: U.S. Capitol, general view of west front, watercolor by John Reubens Smith, 1828, before Bulfinch fence and gate houses installed around this portion of the grounds. (Library of Congress)
stand amid grand, presumably paved courts in the European tradition, as at Versailles, with which he was intimately familiar. The evolved Capitol landscape also stood in pronounced contrast to the ways in which major public spaces in European capital cities had developed in preceding centuries. From Paris to St. Petersburg, the grand square—paved and surrounded by important buildings—still represented the hallmark of civic and national stature. The importance of these spaces came not from routine use, but rather from their monarchial associations and in some instances as staging grounds for the exhibition of military and political might or the celebration of major events—all choreographed and exceptional performances. The park, by contrast, lent itself to everyday occurrences by small groups of people, even individuals, while it was far less suited to official ceremony. The fact that the Capitol, like many courthouses, rose in the middle of such a precinct rather than facing a square or similar space suggests that consciously or otherwise, Americans were seeking to establish a very different symbol for their governmental institutions.

While the park became as much an emblem of American democracy as the Capitol, the vast space extending westward in L'Enfant’s plan, a space that by the early 1810s was known as the Mall, remained a fragmented assemblage of spaces. Not until the Senate Park Commission Plan of 1901–02 was a coherent program given to this precinct that was eventually realized. In the meantime, however, the park idea was systematically presented for this space, beginning with Benjamin Henry Latrobe’s master plan for the Capitol grounds of 1815, followed by the much more ambitious proposals of Robert Mills (1841) and Andrew Jackson Downing (1850). These schemes were advanced, of course, before any major municipal parks were realized. The Mills and Downing plans can in fact be considered key predecessors to the municipal park phenomenon and they underscore the strong link that existed by mid century between the park and national identity.
The rising stock in embellished grounds was further fuelled during the 1830s and especially thereafter by the widespread embrace of nature and of things fashioned in a naturalistic way—a sensibility predicated on moral and practical as well as esthetic concerns. Naturalistic grounds at institutions for the mentally ill and other hospitals, as well as at institutions of higher learning, were advanced for the beneficial effect they had on the mind, spirit, and even the intellectual acumen of those to whom they were directed. Likewise the large municipal preserve, of which Central Park became the foremost paradigm, was cast as having an equally valuable impact on the urban population as a whole—the lungs of the city, as it was called, where people could regenerate themselves physically, socially, mentally, even spiritually.19

When Frederick Law Olmsted—who, with Calvert Vaux, had created Central Park and a fast growing number of other such settings and who was key to forming the nascent field of landscape architecture—prepared a master plan for the Capitol grounds in 1874 he elaborated upon and codified what had occurred there for several decades.20 At the same time, the plan was of a new order (Figure 3). Instead of architecture comprised of small structures created to embellish a landscape predominantly composed of natural elements, those latter elements were orchestrated to showcase the Capitol, which had been greatly enlarged over the two decades previous. In so doing, Olmsted integrated the naturalistic vocabulary of the municipal park with the decades-old vernacular practice of enhancing an important governmental building through landscape, raising that practice to a high art in which the interplay of architecture, plants, and topography formed a richly integrated visual unit.

The Capitol was the centerpiece from many vantage points. It was no longer set in an open area, offset and along much of the west side nearly obscured by trees, but a part of a complex, intricately manipulated space. Through landscape, the building was framed, emphasizing changes in its aspect with movement from one spot to another, its great size mitigated by an active interplay between artifice and nature. All these effects were possible because the grounds

Figure 3: “General Plan for the Improvement of the U.S. Capitol Grounds,” Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect, 1875. (Architect of the Capitol)
were nearly doubled in size, incorporating land consolidated to accommodate the Capitol extensions of the 1850s. With enlargement, they were given a new sense of unity; the divisions between east and west sections and intruding avenues eliminated.

As at Central Park or other preserves of his doing, Olmsted was adamant that when looking from the outside the precinct, the perception be one of openness and accessibility. The iron fence and stone gates that Bulfinch had designed were replaced by a series of low stone walls, embellished at entry points, but otherwise minimizing perceptual and actual separation (Figures 4–5). This infrastructure formed an ornamental border, not a boundary, and served as visual base for the foliage beyond—unobtrusive, subtle notations of the preserve that carried no overtones of exclusion. Olmsted fervently opposed an iron fence perimeter for Central Park, quoting John Ruskin that such treatment “always means thieves outside or Bedlam inside.” He also opposed architect Richard Morris Hunt’s 1861–63 proposal to construct ornate gates at southern entries because of the aristocratic connotations they possessed. Gates suggested exclusivity even if Hunt’s would not have functioned that way. Adornments that carried the wrong signals were to be avoided at all costs.

If the Capitol grounds did not constitute a large, multi-purpose municipal park in the precise way of those in New York, Brooklyn,
Philadelphia, and a growing number of other cities, they enjoyed a similar core function. Olmsted’s design, punctuated by his massive west terrace, codified what had become a well-established role of the grounds as a destination for people—where they could freely circulate, bring their families and friends, take in the view from the new west terrace, or perhaps just contemplate in a place where one did not have to have business to partake in the scene. The Capitol was, as most state capitols remain, a building to which the public had ready access, but, with Olmsted’s design, the ground ever more became a destination in their own right.

The Capitol grounds again offer sharp contrast to European counterparts. Many parliamentary houses of the nineteenth century were not readily accessible and had no dedicated grounds of their own, as in Vienna, or had open space that served little real public function, as at Budapest, Berlin, and, earlier, London.

In Washington, the planning vocabulary changed once again with the master plan developed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and other members of the Senate Park (popularly known as the McMillan Commission) at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, that scheme, which became a catalyst for city planning in the United States, was even more strikingly open—no walls, no overt boundaries of any sort, just grass, sidewalks, trees—the stuff of a prosperous residential neighborhood—a seamless continuum of accessible space. Even as it looked to Old World precedents for much of its inspiration, the McMillan Plan was new, fresh, synthetic, and vigorously American. Over the nearly three-quarters of a century that it took to implement this scheme, its details got even simpler, the spaces more neutral, the atmosphere more relaxed (Figure 6). This is the federal core of Washington we have come to know and love—as much a public park as a tourist destination or staging ground for events—a precinct deeply rooted in tradition and the product of many layers of development spanning over two centuries.
No wonder we are repulsed when this great plain of democratic spirit is riddled with Jersey barriers, concrete planters, vehicular blockades, warning signs, and other paraphernalia of a hyper-security agenda (Figure 7). Most such impediments are temporary, cobbled together quickly after the debacles in Oklahoma City and New York. They will go away. Many of them have already been removed. The focus of concern should instead be the permanent measures that are replacing temporary ones—measures over which there is little opportunity for true public debate; measures that are likely to remain in place for decades, perhaps generations; measures that may prove very consequential in framing how future generations of Americans view our democracy and also on how other nations view us.

Much concern exists that such measures be fitting from an aesthetic viewpoint, that they possess the kind of simplicity and dignity that makes them appropriate to the federal core, and that they send positive signals symbolically as well. Far less concern has focused on their functional ramifications beyond narrow ones of security enhancement, which may be of little or no concern to those who plan them. While the fifteen and sixteen hundred blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue, closed since 1995, now have been handsomely remade, the space is not like a great European square or a promenade, it is just big, and like so many urban renewal schemes of the 1960s it is often woefully underpopulated (Figure 8). The absence of cars does not necessarily attract people. Moreover, the security plan of which it is a part closes off a twelve-square-block area in the heart of the city. It has rendered many other blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue underutilized—both in terms of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and in terms of adjacent businesses. Pennsylvania Avenue has ceased any semblance of being the most important thoroughfare of the city; for a street of its extent, it is conspicuously bereft of movement and life. The change has also added greatly to congestion on boundary streets. Equally unfortunate is the resulting image of a White House that for the first time in over two hundred years
years has been rendered perceptually remote. A place that used to be routinely experienced by the thousands of people who passed by daily is now most often seen as a backdrop to newscasts.

The visitor center that is under construction at the Capitol carries no less ominous overtones. Its enormous downward ramps flanking the east front’s primary axis will not be that conspicuous, its proponents claim, but this assertion evokes the one that people cannot see a glass wall if it is transparent. What symbolism will such a place carry? What associations will it evoke—entry to a tunnel or to a mine? What about the experience, one where most of the public will now get a virtual tour of the Capitol, nothing more? What about the fact that this orientation to American democracy occurs underground? Will the fact that a thousand or more people could easily be trapped in this super-sized bunker without easy means of egress in an emergency attract terrorists?

There is no shortage of paranoia. There is also no shortage of hubris. The more likely an agency is deemed to be a terrorist target, the more important is must be in a city obsessed with power and hierarchy. Much of this landscape of fear occurs inside, where visitors, for example, must go through a rigorous search, then must be met and escorted by a relatively high-level agency employee for any meeting in the Department of the Interior’s vast headquarters building. Neither the precautionary nor the status-seeking impulses are new; what has changed is the acquiescence of allowing them to pervade daily life in the federal precinct.

Will what is now euphemistically called Capitol Square—the area that contains the Capitol, congressional office buildings, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court—become a cordon sanitaire, removed from the rest of even the federal core? In all likelihood the public outcry would be too great, the logistics too daunting. But the more prosaic technique of perimeter security using bollards has become a common one, lining streets in profu-
sion including to an extent that is perhaps unmatched anywhere. Their message is as clear and direct as, if less banal than, those of Jersey barriers.

Some parts of the federal core are faring better. The engaging landscape plan of the National Museum of the American Indian precludes much in the way of bollards or other overt security infrastructure. The National Gallery of Art has done even better with the East Wing, placing a rim of rocks amid trees as if they were an art installation around much of the building’s perimeter. A few other plans are likewise designed to suggest general landscape improvements rather than anti-terrorist measures.

The importance of citizen involvement, including protest, in this atmosphere is underscored by what has occurred at the Washington Monument. Several years ago, the National Park Service proposed an egregious scheme in the name of security. Visitors wishing to enter the monument and take its tiny elevator to the observation room near the top would have to go into a removed, underground checkpoint, thence proceed through a tunnel to the monument’s base. Vigorous opposition from citizen and other groups appears to have been an important factor in the eventual scuttling of the plan. A growing number of public officials also seem to have realized that herding tourists through subterranean paths to experience prime national symbols is not an appropriate course under any circumstances.

Instead, only the perimeter security plan was implemented. Inspired by the eighteenth-century English convention of a “ha-ha”—a change in grade that was devised to keep livestock away from the immediate grounds of country houses and to be imperceptible from the householder’s vantage point—vehicular assault is thwarted through a series of gently curving walkways and retailing walls that for the first time visually connect the monument with its grounds (Figure 9). The effect conveys no sense of being a barrier of any sort. Indeed, probably much to the distress of Park Service...
grounds personnel, visitors can hop on or off the retaining walls as easily as they can traverse the lawn in all directions, ignoring designated paths. High maintenance; good message.

Many places will be more overtly barricaded. One can readily move through the barriers, of course, but the defensive signals are strong (Figure 10). Will these devices avert terrorism? Most all of the external efforts now are devised to impede vehicular-carried bombs. They do nothing to prevent bombs carried by individuals or by any other conveyance. They do nothing to prevent terrorists from attacking a freight train loaded with chemicals of the kind that routinely makes its way under the Capitol. They do nothing to prevent dirty bombs. As we know from the Israeli experience, the most secure places can be subject to terror if an opposing force is sufficiently determined to instigate it.

Will the bollards and all the other devices seem as peculiar fifty years hence as bomb shelters do today?30 Perhaps. But bomb shelters were out of sight. Most other security measures of that period were likewise discreet. When Harry Truman was nearly assassinated by Puerto Rican nationalists while temporarily residing at Blair House no attempt was made to alter the landscape. But now we have convinced ourselves that we are more threatened and the measures we take today intrude heavily into the public realm. We subject ourselves to them daily. Could it be that our mundane landscape of fear is more functionally analogous to the technically ambitious program of flood control in southern California, which, recent analysis has shown, is not wholly responsive to the many unpredictable qualities of nature and which may accentuate the problem rather than curbing it in some instances?31 Or does the analogy run closer to actual function of those majestic coastal fortifications constructed after the War of 1812 that only performed their intended purpose once—when our nation was warring with itself less than five decades later?

Figure 10: Capitol grounds, general view looking northwest, showing newly installed bollards along inner drive. Photo author 2005.
Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Henry Millon, former dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art for allowing me to co-organize a symposium and to edit the resulting anthology on the history of the Mall, endeavors that greatly enhanced my interest in the subject. The late J. Carter Brown, in his capacity of chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts; and the late Charles Atherton, long the commission's secretary; Cynthia Field of the Smithsonian Institution; Nancy Wetherell of the National Capital Planning Commission; Judy Scott Feldman and W. Kent Cooper, leaders in the National Coalition to Save Our Mall; and colleagues on the Committee of 100 on the Federal City all have contributed to my thinking on the subject. Many of those ideas coalesced when I served on an external review panel for a master plan for the Capitol precinct in 2004–05, for which I thanks Alan Hantman, Architect of the Capitol, and his staff. Susan West Montgomery's subsequent invitation to make a historical presentation before that office as part of a colloquium orchestrated by the National Association of Olmsted Parks was an important additional opportunity to refine my thoughts.

Special thanks go to Mary Hancock for inviting me to be the lead speaker at the Society for National and Transnational Anthropology's session held during the American Anthropological Association's 104th annual meeting in Washington and to her initiative to bring the papers to publication. Lisa Benton Short, Arleyn Levee, Pamela Scott, and Dell Upton graciously shared the fruits of their research with me while I was developing this article and Dell provided me with an abundance of insightful suggestions after reviewing a draft.

The historical observations made in this essay draw from a wide range of scholarly literature on the built environment, yet little of this work focuses on the constructing or use of public space. The late Spiro Kostof was a leader among architectural historians in his holistic approach to analyzing physical, functional, and symbolic facets of urban space. See his *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Though History* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992). Zeynep Celik, et al., eds. *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) is a testimonial anthology to Kostof prepared by former students and colleagues. Another major contribution to this sphere of inquiry has been made by historian Mary P. Ryan's analysis of spatial uses in New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco: *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

My aim in this essay is to underscore the importance of understanding spaces that seem so much a part of our lives that they are generally taken for granted. Much more research is needed on the historical aspects introduced here before they can be analyzed in depth. A parallel narrative exists with the emergence of the residential square at the turn of the nine-


colleges such as Vassar had grounds that were assiduously guarded. On the other hand, state colleges, many of which were co-educational at their founding or not long thereafter, were conspicuously accessible as were many small private institutions for males.


11The pioneering study in this realm is Edward T. Price, “The Courthouse Square in the American County Seat,” *Geographical Review* 58 (1968): 29–60. Robert E. Veselka, *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000) affords a more detailed examination. Illustrations of numerous examples can be found in compendia such as Mary M. Ohman, *Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses* (Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981); and Willard B. Robinson, *The People’s Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails, and Municipal Buildings* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association and Center for the Study of Texas History, University of Texas, 1983), chapters II and III. Colonial courthouses, like their English prototypes, were characteristically situated in tight urban environments, facing the market square. Many of these buildings in the Chesapeake region were an exception in their open, rural settings; see Carl R. Lounsbury, *The Courthouses of Early Virginia: An Architectural History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).


13The somewhat rural character of Washington’s early development has been ascribed to the convictions of Thomas Jefferson; see, for example, C. M. Harris, “Washington’s ‘Federal City,’ Jefferson’s ‘federal town,’” *Washington History* 12 (spring-summer 2000): 49–53, 160–61. While Jefferson’s imprint on the capital was certainly an important one, the later development of the Capitol grounds may well have reflected a much more broadly held viewpoint.


Details of versions of this oft-illustrated plan appear in Longstreth, *The Mall in Washington*, pls. XI and XIII.


Scholarly accounts of Central Park numerous. Among the most informative are: Elizabeth Barlow and William Alex, *Frederick Law Olmsted’s New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art and Praeger,

20 The Capitol grounds have received less scholarly attention in print than they deserve. See Reps, David C. Streatfield, “The Olmsteds and the Landscape of the Mall,” in Longstreth, ed., Mall in Washington, 117–20; Beveridge and Rocheleau, Frederick Law Olmsted, Chapter 8; and Allen, United States Capitol, 345–59. Detailed analysis is found in an article in progress by Arleyn Levee (“Olmsted’s Vision for the U.S. Capitol Grounds”), to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for sharing it with me.

21 Analysis of Olmsted’s treatment of park borders warrants further study. The incident over the proposed gates, on the other hand, has been frequently discussed. See, for example, Rosenzweig and Blackmar, The Park and the People, 196–99 (quote on p. 199); Francis R. Kowsky, Country, Park & City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163–64; and Robert A. M. Stern, et al., New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 98, 102–04, which also notes that Olmsted’s former associate, Calvert Vaux, advanced an even more elaborate set of entry arches in 1874.

22 Among the many proposals for Washington’s monumental core, the McMillan Plan has received by far the greatest amount of attention from scholars. Among the most recent are: Richard Longstreth, “Continuity and Change on the Mall, 1791–1991;” Thomas S. Hines, “The Imperial Mall: The City Beautiful Movement and the Washington Plan of 1901–02;” Jon A. Peterson, “The Mall, the McMillan Plan, and the Origins of American City Planning;” and Streatfield, “The Olmsteds,” in Longstreth, ed. The Mall in Washington, 11–18, 79–100, 100–16, and 117–42, resp. Peterson’s thesis, which delineates how the scheme became a springboard for the new field city planning, is fully developed in Jon A. Peterson, The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840–1917 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), Chapter 4. The most copious account, drawing extensively from existing scholarship, but placing the scheme in an international context, is found in Wolfgang Sonne, Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century (Munich: Prestel, 2003), Chapter II.

23 For a sampling of newspaper coverage, see Arthur Cotton Moore, “D.C.’s Bunker Mentality,” Washington Post, 8 June 1996, C8; Stephen
ms., 2005. I am grateful to the author for sharing a copy of this article in progress with me.


To my knowledge, relatively little has been written about the implications of increased security inside buildings of the public and private sectors alike. However in Washington, New York, and some other cities many buildings to which the public once had ready access are now entered only by prior arrangement. See, for example, David W. Dunlap, “So, You Think You Can See a Landmark?” *New York Times*, 20 Jan. 2006, A16. Recently, when visiting Greensboro, North Carolina, I was intercepted by a security guard on the steps of the downtown post office and told I could not enter the building because I had a camera.


