

# THE CLOSED CITY: DOWNTOWN SECURITY ZONES AND THE LOSS OF PUBLIC SPACE

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## Abstract

Critics often mourn the loss of public space in cities, blaming this diminution on the introduction of closed or limited-use, anti-terror security zones and their related behavioral and access controls. In this article, I describe results of site visits to catalog and assess security zones in high-profile neighborhoods in New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Specifically, I visited each city's Civic Center and Financial Districts, the former with its many civic and governmental targets and the latter with its numerous economic institutions and corporate headquarters. Using a simple tool developed and tested in a previously published study that calibrates the relative intensity of these zones, I find that 17.4% of aggregate non-building area in the three cities is now in a security zone. Interestingly, the percentage of security zone space within each public and private district is relatively similar, providing insight into how terror targets are internally and externally defined and justified. This loss of public space has serious implications on the physical and social character of cities, and deserves a more pragmatic examination than it has yet received.

## Keywords

*public space, security, right to the city, fear, representation*

## Introduction

For centuries, large cities in the US and abroad have been characterized by concepts of publicity, interaction and openness. From the sidewalk soapboxes of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to the Civil Rights marches of the 1960s to the more recent World Bank/IMF protests in Seattle, urban streets, sidewalks, parks and plazas have always been home to expressions of dissent and democratic action. Public spaces have “immemorially been held in trust for the use of the public...for purposes of assembly, communicating thoughts between public citizens, and discussing public questions” (Hague v. CIO, 1939). In some scholars' views, public spaces are the sites of public action, open communication and deliberation of opposing ideals, where marginalized and underrepresented groups voice their opinions and make themselves visible (Young, 1990; Mitchell, 1995, 2003; Marcuse, 2002; Kohn, 2004). Their ideal city is replete with public parks, plazas, streets

and sidewalks where individuals can exercise their right to free speech or disappear anonymously into a crowd.

But many claim we are losing the very publicness that characterized the physical spaces of the cosmopolitan city. From privatized plazas to secured streets and sidewalks, opportunities for free expression are waning, especially since the imposition of urban security zones since September 11, 2001. This more recent loss of public space is especially important, because it is *only* in public space that we can really engage with, and hope to better understand the ideals of diversity and difference in the city. In this way, the loss of physical space is related to the loss or demise of a functioning, democratic public realm.

This article advances the existing literature on security and public space. It builds on a previous study in New York City (Németh and Hollander, 2010) and quantifies the loss of physical space in three major US cities. While a number of studies describe the spatial impacts of anti-terror security, few have conducted analyses outside of global targets like New York (Marcuse, 2006), London (Coaffee, 2003), Washington, DC (Benton-Short, 2007) and Jerusalem (Savitch, 2008). This empirical, comparative study demonstrates that even “second-tier” cities with smaller populations and less dense downtowns have fortified their target buildings and neighborhoods and closed off valuable public space in their most popular districts.

In this paper, I describe the presence and intensity of security zones in the Civic Center and Financial District neighborhoods of three cities: New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. I employ and discuss the especially innovative and replicable method used by our team to identify, catalog and process data from the identified security zones. This study has two major findings. First, the amount of streets, sidewalks and public spaces in a security zone is staggering. Over 17% of publicly accessible space across the three cities is closed or severely limits public use, while 48% of public space in one neighborhood (Los Angeles’s Financial District) is located within in a security zone. Second, I discover that these zones manifest themselves very differently in different contexts, particularly in terms of their size, location, ownership and duration of installation.

On balance, however, I observe a geography of security zones that comports with more speculative and generalized observations of urban development impacts in the post-9/11 city (Coaffee, 2004; Marcuse, 2004, 2005; Kohn, 2004; Graham, forthcoming). Additionally, I demonstrate how to the post-9/11 security apparatus operating in US cities challenges physical, social and representational “rights to the city” by limiting access to physical space, sorting and segregating users while reducing opportunities for social learning and active engagement, and carrying with it a broader anti-terrorism rhetoric that is employed at will to restrict political expression, assembly and a

spirit of civic representation. The results of this study and the omnipresence of security zones should encourage planners and policy makers to consider them a new and increasingly pernicious land use type.

### **(In)secure space**

Personal security, defined herein as the freedom from danger or uncertainty, is an essential component of a lively, functioning, vibrant urban environment. While we may argue that experiencing a bit of the “unknown” helps us grow and learn, most rational actors will not enter a space in which they know they will be harmed. Indeed, we could argue that safe spaces engender more sustainable cities. Economically, safety and security are related to population increases, real estate premiums and increased retail spending. Ecologically, part of making places safer is improving the physical conditions and cleanliness of parks, open spaces and streets and sidewalks. And most importantly, many argue that we should all have equitable access to safe public spaces, and the most vibrant and well-used spaces often have the some of the lowest crime rates (see New York’s Bryant Park or Paley Park) (Jacobs, 1961; Whyte, 1988).

While urban space management is often predicated on creating safe environments, a number of critics describe how a hyper-securitization or militarization of the urban environment tends to filter users into oppositional categories, thus limiting the accessibility of spaces to only those deemed desirable or appropriate (Mitchell, 2003; Németh, 2010). Owners and managers charged with instilling a sense of security and order in a site frequently deem any activities or persons falling outside of the mainstream as “out of place” and as threats to the normal public order. Such transgressors are seen to “threaten to bring about a meaning for place that is not favored by those involved in creating the [dominant] discourse” (Cresswell, 1996, p. 59). This sorting of bodies enforces notions of exclusivity and devalues claims to universal representation; Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) suggest that “the paradox is that the law and order response kills the city it is purporting to save” (p. 6). Others have gone so far as to signal a rapid demise or death of the public realm in this context (see Sorkin, 1992).

While this study documents the physical response of cities to post-9/11 terrorist concerns, it is important to note that security and the fortressing of public space was a major issue before these events, as a quick perusal of the literature demonstrates (Davis, 1990; Zukin, 1995). Most of these critics claim that rhetorical concerns about the safety and security of residents, employees or shoppers have been used for decades to explain away the production of inhospitable or interdictory spaces (Flusty, 1994). These spaces subsequently

exclude those deemed undesirable or inappropriate by employing associated surveillance, policing, access and regulatory controls.

Still, a quick stroll around New York, London or Hong Kong makes clear that the post-9/11 security apparatus has adopted a more militarized tenor. In an increasingly calculated anti-terror response, public space is dotted with gun-toting security guards, signs displaying the day's threat level (orange?, yellow?, green?), and armored vehicles blocking former entrances and emblazoned with fresh Department of Homeland Security (DHS) logos. But the organization and clustering of security measures has also changed after 9/11. Even before this date, surveillance cameras and security guards patrolled the odd high-profile space surrounding a bank or governmental building and deemed a grave risk for a potential terror attack.

But what are the broader impacts of this security imposition? To address this question, I introduce a conceptual framework based on the "right to the city" discourse occupying much recent urban geography and sociology research on public space.

### **Right to the city**

Derived from Henri Lefebvre's eponymous tome (1996 [1968]), I find that three interrelated entitlements comprise this right: the right to access *physical* urban space; the right to be *social*, to express oneself and interact with others; and the right to *representation*, belonging and citizenship.

The first right simply denotes the right to *be* in public space, to occupy and inhabit it (Franck and Paxson, 1992; Kohn, 2004; Marcuse, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Whyte, 1988). Some even argue that public space is "one to which *anyone* has access, a space of openness and exposure" (Young, 1990, p. 213, my emphasis). The second right is the ability to live a cosmopolitan lifestyle, one that provides the option to engage in unmediated interaction or to retreat into introspective anonymity (Lofland, 2000). This right implies the chance to lead "an urbane, full, diverse life" (Marcuse, 2005, p. 782) that finds "renewed centrality [in] places of encounter and exchange" (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968], p. 179; cited in Mitchell, 2003, p. 19). The third right involves the ability to actively produce space and determine one's own vision of "the good life" (Young, 1990, p. 37). This right entails opportunities for representation, participation and appropriation, and involves meaningful access to decision-making channels (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968], p. 174). But because determining "the condition of one's action" often occurs in defiance of the owners, managers or regulators delimiting desirable actions in public space (Young, 1990, p. 37), *claiming* this right can involve radical acts of protest, dissent or resistance to hegemonic powers threatening this right of representation (Mitchell, 2003).

These physical, social and representational rights are challenged by a noticeably hardened and militarized urban landscape after 9/11. Impacts on the physical landscape are, of course, the most visible effects of urban security; their cataloging is frequently the subject of analyses by architecture and urban design critics. Social impacts define the feelings and perceptions of individuals and groups (often characterized by fear and unease) confronted with a growing security presence. Impacts on the representational nature of space refers to its increasingly constricted use by certain populations, particularly those expressing political dissent or exercising rights to free assembly.

### *Physical impacts*

In terms of physical impacts, some critics claim that the hardened post-9/11 fortifications have produced a segregated and separated society, one characterized by a distinct “architecture of terror” (Benton-Short, 2007). Such a militarized landscape is mostly found in dense, populous, global cities, and is akin to Trevor Boddy’s (2008) architecture of dis-assurance, the symbol of which might be the concrete Jersey barrier. Boddy contrasts this visual or emblematic security – which may be less effective in stopping actual attacks – with what he calls “passive-aggressive” urban design: built-in, mostly invisible security measures. This latter style has become increasingly common and is a statutory requirement in most new development projects, including New York City’s Freedom Tower project at the former site of the World Trade Center.

Indeed, many critics lament the increasingly powerful role played by the security expert in such development projects (Campbell, 2008). Architects, planners, engineers and urban designers are now forced to defer to the security expert, or to particularly stringent DHS protocols, when making design decisions. But since liability remains a primary concern, many professionals turn willingly to the security expert in an attempt dissolve personal liability. The problem is that the security expert’s goal is to make a space or building as safe as possible; broader social concerns often fall to the wayside. I would argue that this is part of larger trend in which planners and designers, often in an attempt to devolve responsibility and remain blameless in case of legal challenge, allow outside consultants to provide “expert” opinions or judgments that then become memorialized in future plans (Graham, 2004, p. 11; Mitchell, 2003, p. 5). This tendency in the planning field has, for example, allowed often antiquated single-use zoning regulations to take precedence over mindful debate over appropriate design standards, and has encouraged the sprawling, market-driven development patterns the field is now trying to combat (Ben-Joseph, 2005).

### *Social impacts*

Social, or emotional, impacts are harder to judge, but many agree that a fortified urban landscape can increase fear and distrust of the other. Davis (1990) makes this clear in his oft-cited argument that the “social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilization itself, not crime rates” (p. 224). The Federal government-based National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) worried in a 2002 report that such a severe mobilization of security measures would increase “fear and retrenchment, and undermine the basic premises of an open and democratic society” (in Boddy, 2008: 282). But just as use and rights to public space are differentiated, so are perceptions of security felt differently. These perceptions might differ based on whether the measure is temporary or permanent (and built-in), or whether the security zone is located at a public or private building (Boddy, 2008; Savitch, 2008). While this article does not address the impacts of security on personal perceptions, the empirical examination accounts for zone differences, enabling future studies concerned with fleshing out these psychological effects.

This architecture of fear also manifests itself in even our most mundane activities. Graham (2004) claims that the invasion of hyper-security perpetuates a vicious circle of fear as anti-terrorist strategies such as bag checks and fingerprint readings creep into everyday life. He also maintains that formerly normal occurrences (a handbag left on a subway, a car abandoned for several days) cause major street closures and (often) media circuses (Graham, 2004, p. 12). In addition, the positioning of security measures in hyper-secure cities mark unsecured spaces as “ready for attack” or not worthy enough to be protected in the first place.

### *Representational impacts*

As we close space for real or purported security concerns, we threaten the publicness, diversity and difference that make our cities vital and attractive. Marcuse (2002) argues that the imposition of security zones limit civil liberties and downgrade the general quality of city life (p. 601). The security imperative is often referred to when public officials limit normal protest; this process undermines the democratic control of a city by its residents. In this regard, the War on Terror has hit home, as officials use security concerns to justify the “prevention, repression and control of mass citizen political mobilization in cities” (Warren, 2002, pp. 614-615).<sup>1</sup> As these concerns limit public dissent,

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<sup>1</sup> However, this argument assumes that localities always act as unconscious agents of federal agencies, which is not always the case. The recent controversy over the National Parks Service’s (NPS) proposal to construct a permanent, seven-foot tall wrought iron fence around the Independence Mall in Philadelphia was met with fervent disagreement from state and local government officials as well as residents and neighborhood organizations. Ultimately, NPS’s proposal was defeated (Salisbury, 2006).

protest and social activism, they limit opportunities for groups – especially traditionally marginalized groups – to have their opinions and viewpoints heard. This constriction of the political public realm thereby reduces opportunities for the exercise of *active* citizenship and representation (Benton-Short, 2007; Gould, 1996; Young, 2000).

Yet many authors argue that truly inclusive public space no longer exists, while some claim it never existed at all. Traditionally marginalized groups, such as poor people, women, ethnic minorities and young persons, have always had limited rights to occupy public space as personal characteristics and backgrounds have always structured our experiences of public space (Ruddick, 1996). Even nostalgic allusions to the robust inclusiveness of the Greek *agora* are defeated by evidence that access to these common areas was denied for females, slaves and foreigners (Mitchell, 2003, p. 132; see also Fraser, 1990). Kristen Day (1999) argues that then and now, “the interlocking systems of race, class and gender [as well as sexuality or activity] generate experiences that differ materially for each combination of traits” (p. 307). As experiences in and of space are socially and contextually differentiated, and as rights are extended to some and not to others, the very notion of physical public space being truly public or representative must be questioned.

Even so, this discussion helps us understand that physical public space is linked to the development of an inclusive public realm. Some claim public *space* takes on meaning only insofar as it is the site of the development of the public *sphere*, while conversely, the public sphere requires “the occupation or active creation of public space” in order to have one’s voice heard (Blomley, 2001, p. 3). This relationship between physical public space and the political public sphere is based on notions of citizenship and a conception of who is represented in the public sphere, or who appears in public space. And because public spaces are the loci of power and politics, they are spaces of representation, where individuals and groups can make themselves visible (Mitchell, 2003, p. 33). In this sense, the very possibility of an inclusive, representative public *realm* wanes when the public *space* in which one might exercise rights of speech, assembly or political dissent begins to disappear (or shrivel) (Flusty, 1994; Savitch, 2008). Space becomes homogenized and normalized, eliminating any hopes for an ideal “unorchestrated play of difference” (Young, 1990 cited in Mitchell, 2003, p. 229).

Nonetheless, while a number of studies address the loss of the public realm, very few touch on the actual loss of physical space where these rights to the city can (or cannot) take place. I do not claim that all public space is truly public, open, or inclusive. But as we lose the actual ground on which the *possibility* of unmediated interaction exists, we limit the rights to the city that these security measures purport to maintain and safeguard in perpetuity.

Therefore, the rest of this study addresses this omission and quantifies and assesses the increasingly prevalent and palpable loss of urban space.

## Methodology

### *Site selection*

This empirical examination looks at the imposition of security zones in three large US cities: New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> I selected these cities for three major reasons. First, in 2008 each ranked in the top five in funding received through DHS's Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI). DHS considers each a Tier I urban area due to their high-density and high-threat nature (Department of Homeland Security, 2008). Ostensibly, assessments in these cities allow me to witness security measures at their most pronounced. Second, each city has a distinct Civic Center filled with public, governmental structures and a separate Financial District replete with private banks and financial institutions. Visits to both districts enable a better understanding of which landmarks represent terror targets and shows whether different security approaches are employed to protect different types of buildings. Third, these three cities – and the districts studies in each – differ in size, population, density and geographic location, allowing us to determine whether security zones do exist in smaller cities far from the September 11 attacks (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Built form statistics**

	Population (2007 est.) <sup>a</sup>	Building footprint (acres)	Parcel footprint (acres)	Public space footprint (acres) <sup>b</sup>	Area (acres)	Area (sq. miles)
<b>New York City</b>	8,274,527	--	--	--	14,581.4	22.8
Financial District	--	19.0	23.1	4.2	36.7	--
Civic Center	--	10.1	16.4	6.2	28.6	--
<b>Los Angeles</b>	3,849,378	--	--	--	300,224.0	469.1
Financial District	--	19.2	25.0	5.8	40.5	--
Civic Center	--	26.5	39.3	12.9	65.3	--
<b>San Francisco</b>	799,183	--	--	--	29,888.0	46.7
Financial District	--	22.0	37.1	15.1	59.8	--
Civic Center	--	26.2	54.3	28.0	82.1	--

<sup>a</sup> Population estimates accessed at <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/tables/SUB-EST2007-01.csv> on February 13, 2009.  
<sup>b</sup> All publicly accessible, non-building space (including sidewalks, plazas, parks, empty lots). Calculated using equation: parcel footprint – building footprint = public space footprint. Some subtraction differences occur due to rounding.

### *Assessment criteria*

<sup>2</sup> While Washington, DC has the second-highest amount of UASI funding, and likely has the most pronounced set of security measures, it has neither a distinct Civic Center (as traditionally defined) nor a Financial District. In addition, it would likely be an outlier in this national study, as entire districts of DC are closed to the public. Finally, several studies (most notably Benton-Short, 2007) have discussed the imposition of security zones in the city, while little scholarly analysis on this subject has been directed at Los Angeles or San Francisco.



Officials create security zones that control use and behavior by employing three sets of restrictions: surveillance, access and behavior. As the extent of these restrictions varies from zone to zone, I develop an objective set of assessment criteria to differentiate methods and classify security zones based on their overall level of restriction (see Table 2). These criteria are derived from a tool previously tested in a study focusing solely on New York City (Németh and Hollander, 2010).

**Table 2: Security zone classification criteria**

	Level of restriction		
	None	Moderate	High
Access	No physical impediments to access	No entrances blocked but some temporary physical impediments to access	Permanent physical impediments to access or entrances blocked
Surveillance	No security personnel present	One security guard present	Several security personnel present
Behavior	Behavior unrestricted	Behavior limited by either physical or legal restrictions	Behavior limited by both physical and legal restrictions

Each zone is assessed on these three categories. Each zone receives 1 point for any *moderate* restriction and 2 points for any *high* restriction. If the zone's overall score is 0-1, it is considered an "open" zone; if its score ranges from 2-4 it is considered "limited" in nature; and if it scores a 5-6 it is deemed a "closed" security zone.

### *Data collection*

As security concerns have always been at the fore, it becomes quite difficult to determine why existing measures (such as ever-present security cameras) were originally implemented and whether they were in place before 9/11. But to be clear, this study is not a before-after examination of public space management techniques. Instead, I take a snapshot of what actually exists on the ground, setting a baseline for future studies assessing the changing impacts of security zones on the urban experience. However, the assumption is that the intensity with which government agencies and property managers have fortified and militarized global cities has increased since 9/11, so while recognizing that a number of security measures existed before this date, this field research aims to identify urban landscape features that have a distinct anti-terror purpose.

In November and December 2008, two field researchers were sent to each city to collect data over several days. To enable a convenient but comprehensive data collection process, our research team developed a sophisticated web-based, Geographical Information System (GIS) that allowed field researchers to collect, edit and upload GPS data and photos in the field, on the same day the

data was collected. The researchers accomplished these tasks using an iPhone, an inexpensive iPhone application, a laptop, a high resolution digital camera and readily available and widely used Open Source software. The overarching goal of the process that we developed was to make the field researcher's tasks as user-friendly and intuitive as possible. Our team accomplished this by concentrating on building in robust backend support into the data collection process. The system was also quite simple to learn, and training for the field research took around four hours.

In the field, one researcher used an iPhone and its XifPix application to efficiently collect GPS points and photos of each security zone and immediately upload the data to Picasa (Google's photo editing software). The other researcher took high resolution digital photos and used the database software developed by the team to score each security zone based on the assessment criteria noted in Table 2 above. This researcher also noted in the built-in database whether the security measures were temporary or permanent, and whether the zone was located at a public or private building. Returning from the field, the researchers were able to edit the photos in Picasa and upload the edited photos and GPS points to the project website ([securecities.com](http://securecities.com)). Once uploaded to the website, the software built by the team immediately calculates the total area of each limited or closed security zone polygons, also aggregating these data to provide totals for the entire district.

This data collection and processing system was remarkably successful, which we can attribute to the close coupling of the Security Zone assessment criteria, the Open Source database software (PostgreSQL/PostGIS and MySQL), the middleware (Google's Picasa) and the data collection device (iPhone). In addition, software on all three platforms is standards compliant, allowing for the free exchange of data between platforms. Our team feels this system is easily replicable in other cities, and the database schema developed for the application was designed in order to add data collection activities in other cities to the project website with ease.<sup>3</sup>

## Results

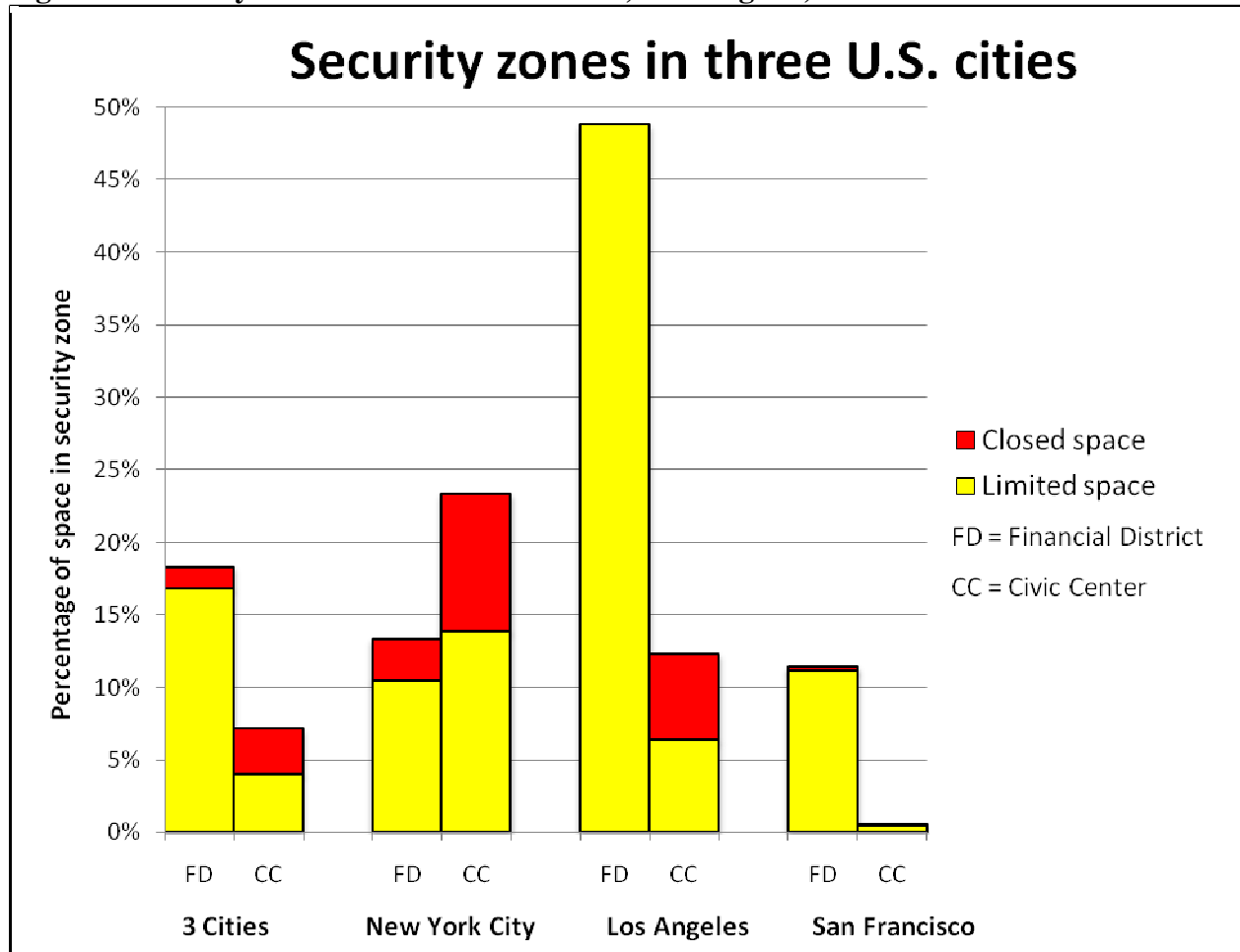
I determined how much space has been lost to limited or closed security zones, by dividing each district's total area of limited or closed security zone space by the district's total public space area (see Table 1 for more detailed explanation). These are rather generous percentages, since the total public space area includes parking lots, alleys and other often inaccessible or unusable land

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<sup>3</sup> I thank Michael Hinke (Cloudshadow Consulting) for helping to draft this section and for his detailed explanations of technology and terminology.

use types. A cross-city comparison is shown below in Figure 1, accompanied by Table 3, which provides some detailed percentages. After Table 3 I provide some general findings across all three cities, followed by a more detailed discussion of findings by city.

**Figure 1: Security zone data across New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco**



**Table 3: Security zone data**

	Limited space	Closed space	Total space
<b>3 Cities</b>			
Total	12.5%	5.4%	17.9%
Financial District	16.9%	1.5%	18.4%
Civic Center	4.0%	3.1%	7.1%
<b>New York</b>			
Total	12.2%	6.2%	18.4%
Financial District	10.5%	2.8%	13.3%
Civic Center	13.9%	9.5%	23.4%
<b>Los Angeles</b>			
Total	32.2%	16.0%	48.2%
Financial District	48.8%	0.0%	48.8%
Civic Center	6.4%	6.0%	12.4%
<b>San Francisco</b>			
Total	4.3%	0.2%	4.5%
Financial District	11.2%	0.3%	11.5%
Civic Center	0.5%	0.1%	0.6%

### *Limited vs. closed*

The amount of limited security zone space in all districts is remarkably lower than the closed space. This is likely due to the assessment criteria and scoring which only provides a “closed” rating to spaces with extensive access, surveillance and behavioral restrictions. In addition, it is more politically palatable to provide a space that subtly filters users instead of closing space off completely to the public (Németh, 2010).

### *City vs. city*

It is immediately clear that Los Angeles has the highest amount of space within a security zone (a total of 48.2%). However, most of that is limited space, and the vast majority of this secured space is in the Financial District. Also clear is that only 4.5% of publicly accessible space in San Francisco’s Civic Center and Financial District is within a security zone. One explanation again relates to the political palatability of implementing these measures in a city with a history of civic engagement, protest, and political action (San Francisco) versus a downtown area largely devoid of such activity one perhaps more accustomed to the security imposition (Los Angeles) (see Davis, 1990; Flusty, 1994; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998).

Another possible explanation for this discrepancy is that both San Francisco’s Financial and Civic Center districts have a border on Market Street, the location of all of the city’s downtown Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations. As such, we can assume that many more downtown San Francisco workers arrive via public transit and walk to work than workers in corresponding districts in Los Angeles. The more people walking and occupying public space, the more attention is ostensibly paid to the quality and publicness of the sidewalks and public spaces of a neighborhood. And as San Franciscans generally walk or cycle more than Angeleños, we can assume that this premium placed on open space only increases. Finally, the Civic Center and Financial Districts in San Francisco are noticeably more “mixed use” in character than the rather mono-functional downtown of Los Angeles. This mixing generally means that less non-motorized transit is required in taking care of daily needs (cafés, restaurants, banks, convenience stores, etc.) and more activity is undertaken on foot. Again, this land use pattern generally prioritizes a quality, pedestrian-based urban experience, including a network of open, accessible public spaces (Cervero, 1998).

### *Financial District vs. Civic Center*

On balance, the percentage of security zone space in the Financial Districts (18.4%) is higher than security zones in Civic Centers (7.1%). This difference is rather skewed by the extremely high percentage of security zone

space in Los Angeles's Financial District (48.8%) and the relatively non-existent amount of security zones in San Francisco's Civic Center (0.6%). This is an important finding, as it shows that post-9/11 fortressing is also taking place throughout private districts. This shift from the barricading of civic structures to a focus on financial institutions is likely due to the fact that the target of the 9/11 attacks was a privately owned building. In fact, one could argue that the destruction of a massive financial institution such as the World Trade Center is perhaps more disruptive to the overall operation of the country than would the targeting of a Federal Courthouse or City Hall. Indeed, London's "ring of steel" surrounds The City, the capital's banking district, while neglecting many of the civic institutions (10 Downing Street, Westminster Abbey, Tower Bridge, etc.) (see Coaffee, 2003, 2004 for more discussion of the "ring of steel"). Still, this equal treatment of the public and private buildings as potential terror targets is the fullest expression of our society's dual commitment to both market and civic imperatives (Németh and Hollander, 2010).

Another potential explanation for the higher percentage of security zones in the Financial District is that it is more acceptable for city dwellers to encounter security guards, surveillance cameras, posted regulations, and access restrictions around banks and financial institutions. We have come to expect this treatment of private buildings, while the model of fortified civic structures is perhaps a more recent reality.

An additional explanation is that the physical layout and siting of buildings and structures in these two *types* of districts generally differs due to architectural convention and zoning regulations. Architecturally, Civic Centers are generally surrounded by large swaths of open space, as most were built decades ago (when the "building in the park" style was *de rigueur*). On the other hand, Financial Districts are generally built at higher densities and building heights. Because these privately constructed skyscrapers are, for the most part, privately owned, developers build to the extents of the zoning envelope, which often leaves very little open space at the street level. Therefore, there is less total publicly accessible space in most cities' Financial Districts than in their Civic Centers (see Table 1). This decreases the "denominator" when calculating the security zone percentage in the Financial Districts.

It is immediately clear, for example, that Los Angeles's Financial District has the highest amount of limited security zone space (48.8%). Following the logic proffered above, this high percentage is due to zoning allowances that reduce the amount of *total* public space in the district (most buildings are built out to the right-of-way with little setback), *and* to the architectural conventions that often include significant grade and elevation changes to separate the public and private realms. These urban design tactics serve to further distinguish the corporate, employee zone from the less desirable zone of normal city-dwellers,

including homeless or unemployed persons (Flusty, 1994; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998).

## New York City

Figure 2: New York City districts



Figure 3: Security zones in New York's Financial District and Civic Center





## Los Angeles

### Figure 4: Los Angeles districts



**Figure 5: Security zones in Los Angeles’s Financial District and Civic Center**



# San Francisco

Figure 6: San Francisco districts



Figure 7: Security zones in San Francisco's Financial District and Civic Center





## Discussion

### *Physical/geographic impacts*

The post-9/11 security response plays out in a fundamentally different physical pattern. First, security measures like cameras, guards, or search and seizure provisions can be found at nearly every public space imaginable, from the pre-school playground to the local café. Second, the urban response is more systematic and organized, as large, continuous swaths of land are now cordoned off with cones, metal barriers or planter boxes. These new security zones swallow up vast amounts of valuable land and shrink opportunities for the democratic and social purposes noted earlier (Hollander and Whitfield, 2005; Savitch, 2008; Németh and Hollander, 2010).

Overall, the diminution of the public realm was palpable in five of the six neighborhoods (San Francisco's Civic Center district was noticeably absent of security zones). Clearly, the security zone is a new land use type and deserves more earnest consideration by the planning and development community. Fewer and fewer open public spaces remain for the hundreds of thousands of workers, residents and visitors who frequent these districts. With less public space remaining, city workers and dwellers have fewer opportunities for interaction and political expression: the very vitality of the city is put into jeopardy.

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