



The Site Security Design Guide

U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service



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**U.S. General Services Administration
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Foreword

Since the founding of our country, federal buildings, courthouses, customs houses, and border stations have served two crucial functions in the symbolism and operation of our government. They have the responsibility to express to our fellow citizens the stability and endurance of their government, while representing the openness and transparency that is vital to our democracy. This responsibility continues to motivate us today, even as we respond to changing security requirements that call for innovative physical solutions.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) sees the evolving need for security as an opportunity—to achieve the best design, contribute to the sustainability of the environment, create a portfolio of buildings that will endure into the future, provide safe and productive federal workplaces, and improve the communities in which we work.

In meeting these responsibilities, we demonstrate how thoughtful security design can represent permanence and encourage citizen participation. Increased setbacks can become active public spaces, physical restraints can serve as seating areas or landscape features, and new amenities can both increase the safety of federal employees and integrate our public buildings into their neighborhoods.

This *Guide* establishes the principles, explores the various elements, and lays out the process that security professionals, designers, and project and facility managers should follow in designing site security at any federal project, be it large or small, at an existing facility or one not yet built.

The collaborative, multidisciplinary approach reflected in this *Guide* sets the standard for GSA, by defining a security philosophy that supports successful public building projects into the future.

David L. Winstead
Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration



The most successful site security solutions create safe and welcoming places that improve the quality of the public realm.

Introduction

The mission of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is to provide safe, productive, world-class workplaces for federal agencies and the public that they serve. These include several thousand facilities nationwide, encompassing federal office buildings, courthouses, border stations, and other building types where more than 1 million people work every day.

The inclusion of counterterrorism elements in the design and management of these federal facilities is of prime importance, while the fundamental need to provide high-quality workplaces remains. These workplaces extend beyond the front door and the curb; indeed, as a significant presence in neighborhoods across the country, the quality of the federal workplace derives from the economic, social, and environmental context in which our public buildings reside. Security must support this vital urban development role that the government plays in this setting.

The challenge is significant. Over the past several years, while many projects in both the public and private sectors have devoted substantial resources to security, protection often has come at the expense of the workplace and the surrounding environment, with no significant risk reduction. At times, security concerns have prompted design solutions that impede the public realm or have driven agencies to leave urban locations altogether. These approaches undermine community vitality and compromise the everyday life of a facility for fear of the unlikely event.

The struggle to incorporate security effectively has been instructive for all involved, however, and one point has become quite clear: In order to effectively reduce risk to life and property, without losing the places and environments we value, we must apply balanced approaches to every aspect of security—from the design,

construction, and operation of our buildings to the design, construction, and management of their sites and surroundings.

In this *Guide*, we focus on the latter realm—the ability of sites and their surroundings to contribute to effective risk reduction, while providing high-quality environments. Site security is not just an obligation, but an opportunity. This *Guide* emphasizes practices that enhance both the security of federal buildings and the quality of the public realm, at the levels of the street and the entire city.

GSA created this *Site Security Design Guide* to assist the designers, security experts, customers, and other decision-makers who are entrusted with developing security countermeasures at new and existing GSA facilities. The process described in this *Guide* leads to secure, well-designed site security solutions that complement and respect their context. This approach is applicable to nonfederal facilities as well. This *Guide* supplements—it does not replace—appropriate security criteria, analysis tools, and other GSA project planning guidance.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This *Guide* suggests principles, tools, and processes for implementing successful site security projects at buildings under GSA's care. It describes an innovative approach, as well as test cases of typical conditions found at GSA facilities. A broad group of internal and external stakeholders, including the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Marshals Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, nationally recognized private-sector designers, and such professional organizations as the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects, contributed to the development of this *Guide*. It recommends working with a similarly wide range of stakeholders on these projects.

Recognizing that specific technical requirements will change over time, the *Guide* should be used in conjunction with the latest applicable security criteria and risk analyses. With these in hand, the *Guide's* four chapters provide a site security team with a principled starting point, sample solutions, and a proven process for balancing effective security with good urban design and efficient use of resources:

Chapter 1 (Vision and Hallmarks) lays out principles for effective site security design, noting the importance of a strategic, comprehensive, collaborative, and long-term approach to site security.

Chapter 2 (Guidelines for Elements and Innovation) develops these principles further by showing how they apply within six site “zones” common to most facilities. It highlights security elements—both familiar and innovative—and describes how to integrate them into various urban design contexts.

Chapter 3 (The Site Security Design Process) explains how a Project Team can bring together a sufficiently broad stakeholder group to assess a site's context, evaluate risk factors, and collaborate to develop design solutions, beginning at the earliest stages of project planning. This process corresponds to security projects of any size or budget.

Chapter 4 (Test Cases) applies the *Guide's* recommended tools and processes to several scenarios that span the range of expected site conditions. The specific design solutions and overall process of each test case provide strategies for implementation at a variety of facility types.

Just as risk changes over time, our understanding of risk grows, and more sophisticated countermeasures become available to us. Effective, integrated security requires constant creativity and persistence as we reassess and balance risk and apply new ideas to meet its challenges.

This *Guide* is intended to be a resource and inspiration throughout this important, ongoing process.

This Guide supplements the appropriate security criteria for a federal project. The Interagency Security Committee's ISC Security Design Criteria for New Federal Office Buildings and Major Modernization Projects: Parts I and II, the U.S. Marshals Service Judicial Security Systems: Requirements and Specifications, and the Department of Homeland Security's National Infrastructure Protection Plan are among the resources for determining project-specific security criteria.