

## Security Proposal for Ha'ikū Stairs



This document summarizes key elements of a security plan as envisioned by the Friends of Ha'ikū Stairs (FHS) designed to stop trespassers from accessing the Stairway to Heaven. This plan builds from more than a decade of community-based discussions.

An essential component of any managed access plan is an effective security plan that will eliminate trespassing. The goal should be close to 100% detection and interdiction of unauthorized intruders in real time, followed by arrests and citations for criminal trespassing. The following section outlines some key components of such a plan.<sup>1</sup>

### Multilayered Approach

Because no single measure is likely to be foolproof, a multi-layered approach is required. Such an approach should incorporate private security guards, special duty police officers, barriers, remote monitoring technologies, posted signs and alarms, community policing, backed by Honolulu Police Department (HPD) enforcement and criminal prosecutions. These multiple layers of security provide redundancy to eliminate pressure on any weak points in the overall scheme.

### Centralized Control

Trespassers currently reach the Stairs through many routes, approaching from several directions. It is impossible to effectively control all of them. However, the trespassers have a single objective: To climb the Stairs, they have to start at or near the base of the staircase.<sup>2</sup> The most effective strategy to control trespassing is thus to focus efforts on this centralized location on which all trespassers converge. Accordingly, as a first step, security guards should be stationed at the base of the Stairs on a 24/7 basis and patrol the first section of Stairs up to first landing (which serves as a natural choke point beyond which entry onto the Stairs is virtually impossible due to the steep terrain).

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<sup>1</sup> To develop a more detailed security plan requires access to the Stairs and surrounding land. FHS is requesting entry permission from landowners for this purpose.

<sup>2</sup> The topography of the Stairs' surroundings lends itself to the centralized enforcement strategies described here. The Stairs follow a narrow, knife-edged ridgeline that climbs over 2000 feet in elevation with sheer drop-offs present on both sides. Above the initial landing (about 500-feet up), climbers are committed to the staircase. There is no other practical way on or off. Thus, enforcement efforts can be safely concentrated on the lower portion of the Stairs. Furthermore, hikers on the Stairs are visible from several points in the Valley almost the whole way up. While trespassers will certainly approach the Stairs under the cover of darkness, very few of them will be content with climbing the Stairs and returning entirely at night. Most people will want to linger and take at least one photograph during daylight hours. They can be spotted and arrested upon their return to the bottom.

## **Remote Monitoring Technology**

In the past, guards have proven unreliable, subject to lackluster motivation and vulnerable to distraction and evasion strategies as well as bribery. Better use of technology would help them perform their assigned duties as well as ensure accountability. Hidden security cameras triggered by motion detectors installed at multiple locations would surveil the approach to the Stairs as well as traffic on the Stairs themselves. Additional cameras along a wider perimeter in the residential neighborhoods and other known trespassing vectors would provide early warning alerts of approaching intruders. These cameras should be linked to a central network that could be monitored in real-time to detect intruders. They could also be configured to trigger alarms and/or text messages that would alert guards and HPD special duty officers upon detecting intruders.

## **Police Enforcement**

Security guards by themselves have also proven ineffective because they lack the power to arrest or cite trespassers directly. An HPD special duty presence at the base of the Stairs—or quickly available back-up—is needed to ensure that trespassers face a credible threat of arrest. Until recently, the City & County paid for special duty police officers to patrol the surrounding residential neighborhoods and schools. This approach is doubly flawed. As noted, there are too many entry points to monitor them all. Moreover, arrests are only possible if intruders are actually caught in the act of trespassing. Merely acting suspiciously on a public street is not a crime. Relocating the HPD special duty presence to the base of the Stairs would allow far more effective enforcement. Trespassers all converge on this location, and anyone entering this zone without authorization is automatically trespassing and can be cited accordingly. HPD (including special duty officers) already has access to surface road underneath H-3, which goes right to the base of the Stairs, putting them in position to apprehend intruders.

## **Barriers, Brush Clearing, Signage, and Alarms**

A series of barriers (fences, etc.) should be installed to prevent intruders from approaching the Stairs' base and its lower segments from all directions. Additional barriers along a wider perimeter, including known approaches through residential neighborhoods, would secure these trespassing routes. Existing barriers should be repaired and strengthened with tamper-resistant mesh and other fortifications. Barriers would also need to be periodically inspected and repaired to stop trespassers from cutting holes and engaging in other evasive tactics. Furthermore, brush along key approach paths should be cleared to improve visibility. No trespassing signs should be posted and/or alarms with recorded

warnings installed<sup>3</sup> so that no one reaching the Stairs can plausibly claim to have stumbled innocently upon entry. The goal of these measures is trifold: (1) to deter intruders; (2) to make their approach more difficult and buy additional time for enforcers to intervene; and (3) to facilitate arrests and prosecutions for criminal trespassing by removing plausible deniability as to the willful nature of intrusions.

### **Arrests and Prosecutions**

Trespassers should be arrested and cited with Second Degree Criminal Trespassing. A series of well-publicized prosecutions resulting in hefty fines and/or jail sentences would effectively deter other would-be trespassers. Moreover, police and prosecutors should prioritize enforcement against illegal commercial tour operators who currently are profiting illicitly from organized trespassing. Their illicit operations need to be shut down and subjected to the full force of law. A special law enforcement task force would facilitate such enforcement and prosecutions.

### **Community Policing**

The community has a role to play as well. Residents and other Valley stakeholders have first-hand knowledge regarding the shifting patterns and tactics of trespassers. They can also provide early notice of breaches to existing barriers. A community policing initiative would harness this knowledge to shore up defenses and improve enforcement. Community members could also directly assist with security patrols to deter intruders, monitor cameras, combat misinformation on websites and social media, and serve as spotters to monitor illicit access. Community members would work with HPD to coordinate efforts.

### **Immediate Implementation**

All of the above measures can be implemented without waiting for a managed access solution to be implemented. The core elements—centralized enforcement, warning signs, and an initial ring of barriers—should be adopted immediately. Additional security measures including networked cameras and community policing should be phased-in as soon as possible. Once managed access is up and running, this will further enhance security capabilities and generate revenues to pay for it. Additional eyes on the scene will both deter and detect intruders.<sup>4</sup> Tour operators will have a financial interest to prevent

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<sup>3</sup> Alarms should only be deployed in sufficiently remote locations near the base of the Stairs, and the volume of recorded warning messages should be calibrated to ensure that they will not be heard or otherwise disturb residents.

<sup>4</sup> Appropriate mechanisms will be required to identify and distinguish authorized visitors from illicit intruders. We anticipate that authorized visits to the Stairs will initially be restricted to scheduled groups led by a guide, which will facilitate such distinctions. Authorized visitors should also be equipped with electronically trackable wrist bands and/or other visually distinctive markers to further aid access controls and monitoring.

unauthorized access. And the availability of legal alternatives will alleviate the incentive to trespass while gradually accommodating pent-up demand. However, residents and Valley stakeholders should not have to wait. We can and should take simple steps to combat the plague of trespassing right now.