

I just came back from a trip abroad and was pleasantly surprised at how clean the very metropolitan Sydney downtown area was. The transit system was good, though a shot of friendliness would have done some of the drivers and ticket booth operators a world of good. One thing that struck me, though. It can be summed up with this photo:



What I thought as I passed these things all over the city--in the parks, near restaurants, all over pubs and so on--was "wow, no one even notices these things." To be fair, there could be a raging debate about the propriety of security cameras up and down the public spaces. I think it's probably true that Americans are a little more leery than most about the concept of "being watched" and this is generally true even among people who are behaving well. I did read the local paper looking for comment articles or op-ed pieces, and didn't find anything about the issue. Maybe no one really minds the cameras, since they aren't trained on people's houses or personal spaces.

As many in North Park continue to struggle against vandalism and quality of life crimes like public indecency and illegal dumping, I started to wonder whether such an option might not be a bad one for parts of our community. We could build a fortress out of the potential problems. Invasion of privacy, where would the cameras go, who would monitor them, who would pay for them, and on and on. These are all legitimate questions and concerns, but I don't think that means the conversation should be dead in the water. There are companies like Live Stream that will host cameras for a nominal fee, that would mean anyone in the neighborhood (or the city or the state for that matter) could drop in and monitor the activity, call the police, or just let

businesses know what type of activity was going on from people leaving their establishments. Maybe the knowledge that some stupid act might get a person in trouble or at least seen by a wide audience would make some people think twice about the things they choose to do.

Maybe it's not the right step, but it seems at least worth discussing...