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June 1, 2009

Mr. Craig Middleton, Executive Director  
Presidio Trust  
PO Box 29052  
San Francisco, CA 94129-0052

Dear Mr. Middleton:

San Francisco Architectural Heritage (Heritage) offers these comments on the 2009 Draft Finding of Effect for the Main Post Update, which focuses on projects at the Main Post of the Presidio—and the El Presidio historic archeological site known as “F1.” While Heritage supports the plan to enliven and green the Main Post and to enrich visitors’ experience, Heritage has concerns about the cumulative effect of the projects as presented.

We offer the following suggestions to minimize adverse effects. These are aimed at ensuring preservation of the integrity of this area of the National Historic Landmark District (NHL), while accommodating many of the projects the Presidio Trust seeks to undertake. Please note that the current designs for the proposed lodge, theater addition, and Contemporary Art Museum (CAMP) are at best schematic. We request that, when and if the designs develop further, they be presented to Heritage’s Issues Committee for more detailed review.

1. Construction of CAMP @ 100,000 sq ft
  - a. The recently revised design for the CAMP is a significant improvement, but more design development is needed. We look forward to reviewing a more refined design, which better articulates how the CAMP will sit in this historic setting, as well as a detailed landscape plan.
  - b. Heritage does not support the relocation of the well-positioned Red Cross building (#97), which would diminish the integrity of this resource and its relationship to the Main Post. Further, relocation of building #97 has the potential of disturbing the F1 archeological site. The CAMP should coexist and relate well to the Red Cross Building. We recommend that further study be

- conducted aimed at allowing it to remain *in situ*.
- c. With regard to the “greening” of the parade ground of the Main Post, the new plans should reflect the Post’s plan, history, axes, and relationship to the rest of the NHLD.
  - d. While we are delighted with the proposed adaptive reuse of building #101 for education programs, and favor the positioning of the CAMP back-of-house functions to a low structure south of Moraga, we have concerns about the demolition of the extant library (#386). Specifically, we question whether its demolition is required as a result of either off-street parking requirements or the construction of the CAMP. We recommend its preservation and possible incorporation into the CAMP design.
  - e. Construction of an appropriate CAMP could establish a synergy with the new Disney Museum in building #104, and along with the rehabilitation of building #101 could showcase how historic preservation, adaptive reuse and new, contemporary design can successfully co-exist within the historic context.
  - f. The physical appearance of the CAMP, coupled with the historically appropriate “greening” of the Main Post, would enhance the visitors’ experience. CAMP’s low, plant-covered roof forms defer to the upright historic brick row to the west, in contrast to the ungainly siting of the extant 1988 bowling-alley building.
2. Construction of new “lodge” @ 80,000 sq ft and café @ 5,000 sq ft
    - a. We recommend a new lodge design scheme that focuses on adaptive reuse of extant structures near the Main Post parade ground. While we appreciate the proposed reframing of the parade ground and restoration of the Anza streetscape that would result from the proposed new lodge, Heritage views the three proposed new buildings, even as recently scaled back, as intrusive on the Main Post. We recommend, for example, adaptively reusing building #s 86 and 87 in a lodge scheme, and possibly constructing two new buildings (of smaller scale than the three proposed) along the same line. We also suggest exploring adaptively reusing buildings on the west side of the parade ground.
  3. Entrance reconfiguration and 18,000 sq ft addition to 14,000 sq ft Presidio Theater
    - a. Heritage urges the retention of the original Moraga Street theater entrance as the primary entrance for the theater building; the exterior loggia could be adapted as part of the existing lobby. We are opposed to dividing the theater’s auditorium. It should be

preserved for other functional uses in the Presidio, with the new construction devoted to smaller-sized theaters.

- b. We find it difficult to evaluate the conceptual plans for a theater addition, and how this addition will affect the historic theater. We look forward to reviewing more developed plans on the proposed rehabilitation and additions to the historic theater as the project moves forward.
4. "Pedestrianize" sections of Anza. We are not opposed to designating certain street blocks within the Main Post as pedestrian only, as long as the original street grid is maintained.
5. Barracks #s 40 and 41 could be moved off-site (rather than demolished) to mitigate the loss. This would allow for future historical archeological investigation and interpretation on the F1 site.
6. We conclude with the reminder that every effort must be made to assure that the integrity of the NHLD is retained.

Heritage appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important project and would like to remain involved with this iterative design process.

Sincerely,



Jack A. Gold  
Executive Director

Cc: Michela Alioto-Pier, San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
David P. Bancroft, Save the Presidio  
Charles Chase, San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission  
Frank Dean, Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
Boyd de Larios, Descendents of Anza Portola Expeditions  
Neal Desai, National Parks Conservation Association  
Milford Wayne Donaldson, SHPO  
Becky Evans, Sierra Club  
John Fowler, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
Anthea M. Hartig, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
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Tia Lombardi, Presidio Trust  
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Mark Nagel, Cow Hollow Association  
John Rahaim, San Francisco Planning Department  
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Gary Widman, Presidio Historical Association