

Dear Members of the Board of Directors of the Presidio Trust:

The Presidio Trust is considering new development plans at the Main Post that would irrevocably change the future of the Presidio. Your names will be forever associated with this misguided decision. I am writing to request that you step back from your plans, understand the depth and breadth of public opposition to this proposal, and do not put a museum, large hotel, and multiplex theater on the Presidio.

I am concerned about the proposed commercial developments at the Main Post of the Presidio for the following reasons:

The “Streamlined” Environmental Impact and Planning Process. The Presidio Trust has adopted a fast-track approach to evaluating the proposals to build the art museum and hotel. The planning process for the Lucas development was over three times as long. This project is opposed by every local historical organization and neighborhood group, numerous preservationist organizations, and the National Park Service. Please slow down and do it right – with input from all interested parties.

Historical Integrity and Landmark Status. The Main Post is an area steeped in history. From the Miwok Indians, to Spanish explorers, to the founding of San Francisco and the establishment of El Presidio in 1776, this area of land has played a critical role in the history of the city, the state, and the nation. The historic buildings surrounding this area are reminders of the men and women who served our country during the First and Second World Wars. Thousands of soldiers are buried in the national cemetery, just a few hundred yards away from the Main Post. These development plans are entirely inconsistent with the Presidio’s historical significance and would threaten its National Historic Landmark District status.

The Size, Scope, and Design of the Proposed Museum. This Museum does not belong in a National Park. The proposed design – with glass walls, white masonry, and an outdoor sculpture garden – is more appropriate in an urban setting with buildings that can both complement and soften the effects of this structure. Its size and scope are inconsistent with the natural environment and open setting, as well as the architecture of the Main Post’s existing buildings.

Loss of Recreational Facilities. In a city with scarce open space and limited family-oriented recreational facilities, the removal of a bowling alley and tennis court seem unjustified. Furthermore, the Main Post and surrounding area provide an open, traffic-free area for bicycling, running, and the enjoyment of a park-like environment.

Congestion. At a time of concern about global warming and the carbon footprint of our activities, it is completely irresponsible to propose an art museum and hotel that are projected to attract nearly two million more visitors a year to the Presidio. The vast majority of these visitors will arrive by automobile. Furthermore, museums and hotels attract other forms of transportation, including tourist buses, delivery trucks, and taxi cabs. BART, the Caltrans station, and the ferries are over three miles away from the Main Post, and Muni is reducing its limited service to this area. The Presidio is not designed on a traffic grid, and the Main Post is a mile away from the nearest entrances.

The Tipping Point. Change can progress slowly before suddenly reaching a critical mass. The results can be unpredictable and can happen quickly. The Disney Family Museum, which is already preparing to open on the Main Post, is expected to attract 400,000 new visitors a year. A massive museum, a 100+ room hotel, and a multiplex theater will produce rapid development that will transform this magnificent national park into an urbanized, high impact “city within a city.” No one wants this ultimate result, but this is what the Presidio Trust is about to approve. Please reconsider this decision.

San Francisco would benefit from a new art museum. However, the Presidio is the wrong location. The museum should be located at a better site in San Francisco that is more accessible to the public and tourists who are near Caltrain, BART, Muni, hotels, convention centers, and other cultural institutions.

Sincerely,