

PAR Planning Association for the Richmond

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John Pelka, Compliance Manager
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RE: Public Museum at the Presidio - Scoping Comments for preparation of the EIS

PAR has some serious concerns regarding the EIS process for the contemplated large public museum currently within your RFP process and the subject of this Scoping process. These concerns are intimately connected with the EA process currently underway for both the Main Parade Ground and for Presidio Main Post Lodging, and are tangentially related to the Tennessee Hollow Revitalization and the Doyle Drive reconfiguration.

PAR, founded in 1970, is the largest neighborhood association in San Francisco. We have a dues-paying membership of approximately 1,500 households in the Richmond District of San Francisco which forms a long border on the Presidio's southern boundary. We have been involved in every phase of the Presidio since its establishment as an entity of the NPS. One of PAR's Purposes, as stated in our By-Laws is to, "Develop and implement policies and recommendations for the maintenance and enhancement of the physical and social dimensions of life in the Richmond District." The following Comments are in direct relationship to this Purpose.

Our overriding concern is that you, the Presidio Trust, have undertaken these three separate Environmental processes involving the exact same Planning Area as defined in your General Management Plan Amendment (GMPA) – the Main Post, and that the true cumulative effects will not be fully and exhaustively researched as is legally required through the Environmental process. This same concern adheres to any mitigations which may be proposed.

In addition, the overall cumulative effects of all Presidio developments must be related to a totally comprehensive Presidio-wide, transportation and parking study which goes well beyond the Presidio's own footprint . To consider, in particular, the three projects noted above in isolation would be unthinkable. To only consider these three, and not other potential developments is unwise. To downplay the many residential and commercial districts which abut the Presidio is unthinkable.

Our overarching concern is that the impact which Presidio development imposes on the surrounding neighborhoods has been all too lightly considered in the past and mistakes have been made. It is barely considered in either the Presidio Trust Management Plan (PTMP) or the GMPA which are mainly concerned with the internal workings of the Presidio and give short shrift to environmental affects on your immediate neighbors. As an example, the traffic and parking situation in the Lombard Gate area is currently an unsolved problem greatly exasperated by the Lucas complex and the new restaurant venues.

The proposed Museum project totally skews all former statistical estimates - they can no longer even be used as reference. A new museum housing a world-class collection of modern art which has been in private hands and only available for very limited viewing will engender massive traffic and parking volumes - private cars, taxis, tour buses, etc. in this major tourist city, and to an area ill-served by public transit. It will constitute a "Blockbuster" in the true semantic sense of this term.

The Main Parade Ground planning is, in the estimation of many, already deficient in reassigning parking spaces on a logical and effective basis. It did not, unfortunately, fully consider the implications of Main Post Lodging. And neither of them envisioned a Museum of this magnitude in the future. In particular, I refer you to your Design Guideline 2 - "In keeping with the Presidio's character as a national park, ensure broad public accessibility to the premises and the program." I look forward to seeing how you intend to fully and logically address this Guideline without adversely impacting those non-Presidio areas which are in close proximity to the Presidio's gates.

The general EIS Design Guidelines, with the above noted exceptions, seem to be sufficiently comprehensive. Previous discussions regarding cultural activities and even a small museum at the Main Post or elsewhere on the Presidio have not visualized a project of such enormity. PAR strongly urges you to fully consider alternative sites for such a major institution. Sites which might be less intrusive and have alternative access. Sites which may be more conducive to a very large, 100,000s/f, institution. Why not consider sites such as the former Presidio Commissary or even the Palace of Fine Arts - next to the Presidio and soon to be vacated. Sites which would not conflict with the Main Post Area.

The scope of this EIS has an obligation to be as comprehensive as possible. It must take into full consideration not only the Presidio's own infrastructure, but the impacts on the surrounding community of San Francisco. The Museum, together with the Main Parade Ground reconfiguration and the Main Post Lodging will indeed constitute the "800 pound gorilla" directly in your/our midst.

Sincerely,

(Electronically)

Ron Miguel, President
Planning Association for the Richmond

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