

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Preservation Partners Shape the Redevelopment of Historic Presidio San Francisco, California



“This success story illustrates the dynamics and positive outcome of partnerships and transparency in the Sections 106 and 213 process. The Presidio, with its rich cultural history spanning back to the Ohlone people, the Spanish, Mexican, and American occupation, necessitated the Presidio Trust to reach out to all of these groups to understand how the people lived, their complex stories, and how keeping the integrity of place is important to not only California but to the world. Congratulations to all who participated in this consultation process and the leadership of the Presidio Trust to produce the Main Post Update that truly reflects the heritage of the San Francisco Presidio.”

— MILFORD WAYNE DONALDSON, FAIA  
California State Historic Preservation Officer  
2004-2012

Photos: Above, construction at the Main Post District; Right, aerial photograph of the Presidio of San Francisco (photo by Edward Betts)



### THE STORY

The Presidio of San Francisco (the Presidio) was a fortified location dating to 1776 when it was established by the Spanish and then held by Mexico. In 1849, it became the headquarters for U.S. Army operations on the Pacific Coast and was expanded to include several areas, each focusing on an aspect of military life. The most important being the Main Post District (MPD), which was the heart of the Presidio's day-to-day operations. In 1962, it was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) as one of the best collections of military architecture in the U.S. In 1989, the Presidio ceased to be an active military installation under the Base Realignment and Closure process. The closure was completed in 1994, and the Presidio transferred to the National Park Service (NPS). This transition from military installation to park use was difficult, and concern for its future mounted. In 1996, Congress passed the Presidio Trust Act establishing the Presidio Trust (the Trust), a new federal agency with the mission to preserve the integrity and culture of the Presidio. The legislation provided that the Trust would manage the lands and infrastructure of the Presidio.

### THE PROJECT

In 2007, the Trust was presented with a proposal to create a contemporary art museum. It took the opportunity to reimage the MPD as the hub for visitor orientation and community services. In addition to the museum, other projects included were an archaeological laboratory, restoration of the Main Parade Ground, and the development of a hotel. This suite of projects became known as the Main Post Update (MPU).

### THE 106 PROCESS

The Trust, the federal agency carrying out this project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects are likely to ensue.

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Photos: Left, Family Day kite festival on the newly restored Main Parade Ground; Right, Presidio Trust Section 106 consultation meeting on the MPU.

The Trust had entered into a Programmatic Agreement (PA) in 2004 to meet its overall Section 106 responsibilities. However, the proposed MPU had the potential for substantial effects to historic properties, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) elected to participate early in the process. Other parties in the consultation included the California State Historic Preservation Officer, NPS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Presidio Historical Association.

As the consultation progressed, many unresolved issues pertained to the compatibility of the MPU with the NHL and construction on or near the Main Parade Ground. This led to the ACHP requesting a Section 213 report, which conveys the views of the NPS on an undertaking's effects on NHLs. In its findings, the NPS believed that implementing the proposed MPU would impair the integrity of the NHL to a degree that could not be resolved. In 2008, to assess these issues, the ACHP and the consulting parties focused on the effect to the integrity of the NHL posed by the scale, design, and location of new construction and rehabilitation. Consulting parties worked together to craft a solution that would accomplish the goals of the MPU while maintaining the integrity of the Presidio's outstanding historic properties.

Consultation concluded in 2010 with a separate PA for projects specific to the MPU. The PA outlined specific treatments and design review and development of an MPD design guideline. The proposal for the museum was withdrawn in 2009, the result, many believe, of concerns raised in the consultation that such a museum would not be a good fit.

## THE SUCCESS

The Trust was created to lead the development of a new model for a national park, to be used for both public and private interests that supported the preservation of the Presidio. In working with private parties, the Trust was able to achieve financial independence in 2013, based in part on the projects undertaken under the MPU. As a federal agency, the Trust used the Section 106 consultations on the MPU for ongoing engagement with stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to their management challenges. In 2016, the PA was amended to better assist tenants in using the federal historic preservation tax credits. Ongoing economic activities at the Presidio continue to demonstrate the value of the Section 106 process to promote collaboration among organizations with varying interests and concerns to achieve a unique preservation success.

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#### Consulting Parties:

Presidio Trust  
 ACHP  
 California State Historic Preservation Officer  
 National Park Service (Pacific West Region and Golden Gate National Recreation Area)  
 Cow Hollow Association  
 Descendants of the de Anza and Portola Expedition  
 Laurel Heights Improvement Association  
 Marina Community Association  
 National Parks Conservation Association  
 National Trust for Historic Preservation  
 Neighborhood Association for Planning at the Presidio  
 People for a Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
 Presidio Historical Association  
 San Francisco Architectural Heritage  
 Sierra Club  
 Barbara Voss (individual)

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



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