



November 15, 2013

Presidio Trust (attn: Commissary Project)
103 Montgomery Street, P.O. Box 29052
San Francisco, CA 94129
Submitted via email to commissary@presidiotrust.gov

Dear Presidio Trust Board of Directors:

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), I offer these comments on the Presidio Trust's (Trust) efforts to develop a cultural institution at Mid-Crissy Field. NPCA and its members care deeply about the protection and enhancement of the Presidio, and have engaged in nearly all major projects affecting the Presidio since it became a national park. This current effort at Mid-Crissy Field represents a major action on the Presidio and directly impacts the Presidio, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the millions of people who currently visit Crissy Field. We appreciate this opportunity to once again present our comments, and we look forward to actively participating in this planning effort as it moves forward.

NPCA is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that was formed in 1919, and with its more than 800,000 members and supporters throughout the country, works to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations.

Clearly, the Mid-Crissy Field site is one of America's most treasured and iconic landscapes, with a deep connection to the region's natural, cultural, and historical values and resources. The sheer number and diversity of proposals reflected the great interest in the opportunity to develop the site.

After closely reviewing the three final proposals and considering applicable law and policy and the public interest at stake, we believe the choice is clear. Only the Presidio Exchange (PX), sponsored by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, meets each of the Trust's stated goals and its program is truly responsive to the mission and vision of this national parkland environment.

Along with more than 2,800 NPCA members who have already weighed in to support the PX, we urge the Trust to select the PX if a choice is being made from the three proposals. We would also support the “wait and see” outcome suggested by the National Park Service and the Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund.

The PX proposal, which is the only one that connects to and makes use of the outdoor attributes of the site, could not exist on real estate outside of this specific Crissy Field national park site. Through community engagement and buy-in, the PX offers innovative and fresh programming leveraging the site-specific resources found at the Presidio and Golden Gate.

The other two proposals, while interesting in their own ways, do not meet all the Trust’s criteria and could exist comfortably and succeed on real estate anywhere in the greater Bay Area. This underscores the two proposals’ programmatic disconnect from and inconsistency with this prime national park land, managed in the public trust to further the mission and vision of the Presidio and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area that it is within.

Importantly, the Lucas proposal fails to connect with the outdoors, the Presidio, the iconic site, or its history. The clear lack of programming that furthers the site specific and park goals makes this proposal unfit for the Mid-Crissy Field site. This major void is not something that can be corrected by “tinkering with” – the core foundation of the Lucas program simply does not meet and further the most basic goals for this prime national parkland and the Presidio. Additionally, we continue to remain deeply concerned about the Lucas proposal’s building scale and design, which are inconsistent with established law and policy.

We greatly appreciate and support the comments provided to the Trust by the National Park Service – comments that we believe build on the Trust’s planning and help to further refine the desired goals and expectations of this site. The Park Service’s comments and questions raised in their letter solidify for NPCA that of the three proposals before the public, only the PX rises to the challenge to meet each of the Trust’s six goals. The design of the PX respects and responds to the surrounding landscapes and meets the standards set forth in the Trust’s policies. The programmatic content, rich in national park-relevant themes, leverages Bay Area culture, technology, and the arts to reach broad local and “tourist” audiences. Importantly, a community-based partnership process would drive programmatic content, and the content would drive the physical build-out of the building. The Conservancy’s partnership-based approach has led to a strong and deep philanthropic base that would no doubt be energized and expanded to realize the PX as a major contributor to “a park for all forever.”

We agree with comments submitted by the Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund that the PX is the best choice before the Presidio Trust at this moment and is the only proposal to meet and further Trust goals. However, we also would support the “wait and see” approach which allows the tunnel top parklands to be developed and

inform the desired visitor experience of the Mid-Crissy Field site in a smart and comprehensive way.

Lastly, the Presidio Trust is in a deliberative process. Recent news reports, if correct, suggesting that the Trust is making deals to select the Lucas proposal strains the credibility of this planning effort on public land. Amplifying this public anxiety is the fact that the Trust has yet to develop and release any third-party verified renderings of the proposals, and allow public comment on them. The Main Post Update planning process significantly strained relationships between the Trust and the park community – we urge the Trust to avoid repeating this by focusing on the already defined goals of the site, adhering to its own design laws and policies, and re-establishing public confidence in the process by making a decision that respects and furthers the purposes of the Presidio and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area that it is within.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neal Desai". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Neal Desai
Director of Field Operations, Pacific Region
National Parks Conservation Association