

PRESIDIO TRUST PUBLIC BOARD MEETING – DECEMBER 9, 2004

NOTE: The following is the best transcript available of the public board meeting of the Presidio Trust Board of Directors held on December 9, 2004. It is based upon an audio recording of the meeting.

Toby Rosenblatt: All right. Let me call the meeting to order - Public Board meeting, December 9th, of the Presidio Trust. My name is Toby Rosenblatt. I chair the Board. Sitting on my right is our Executive Director, Craig Middleton. Our other Board members here are Dave Grubb, Mary Murphy, Lydia Beebe and Don Fisher. Our other two Board members are not able to make it tonight. Joseph Yew is traveling on business and unfortunately Bill Wilson called in this afternoon from his sick bed with a terrible case of the flu and he suggested we didn't want to share that with him.

So thank you all for coming. I'd say we have a holiday season turnout! And we'll begin immediately and turn it over to Craig Middleton, our Executive Director.

Craig Middleton: Thank you. I think if people want to move up, it's okay. I don't know that it's going to fill up. We're pretty informal tonight, and want to keep it informal. And what I thought I would do - the agenda tonight is really a year-end report to talk about where we've been during the year, what the projects are that are currently underway, and what's upcoming - what you can expect in the next several months.

And I thought, well, how do you convey that in any kind of meaningful way? So I thought maybe we'd just do it geographically and we'll basically go along an imaginary walk through the park, starting at the Lombard Gate. And we'll just describe some of the

projects as we go. And then afterwards we'll open it up for not just comments but questions, and we'll keep it pretty informal. I don't imagine we'll be here too late tonight.

Let me start at Lombard Gate. Everybody knows that. And probably one of the most impressive things that you see as you're walking into the Lombard Gate these days is the Lucas LDA development on the right. That is on schedule. They tell me that all the landscaping will be in by the end of the year and then the Lucasfilm folks will start to move in in July.

Right across the street from that is a small building that used to be the Presidio Alliance Building. It's a small historic building. We affectionately call it 563. It is being renovated and will open in June as a restaurant. And then winding your way through there, you'll see currently some construction going on. The Trust is building the first phase of the Presidio Promenade, which will be a pathway, a trail, that takes you eventually from the Lombard Gate through the heart of the Presidio and to the Golden Gate. And that is underway. We're doing the first phase, which will take you past the Thoreau Center and past the YMCA in this phase. And then we'll just continue it on.

As you travel down Lombard to Lincoln and toward the YMCA, on the right-hand side we're beginning the process of excavating a landfill there. That's right across the street from the YMCA. We call it Landfill 6A, and right now we're relocating utilities there and then in the spring as soon as the rains are finished we'll be excavating the landfill. That area will be replanted with native plants and the

streambed will be delighted and there will be a trail in there. That's right in this area over here.

Now, as you continue on and you go into the Main Post you'll see some excavation going on and some work on the right-hand side just past the Fire Department. That is the first phase of a transit center, and currently we are doing work there - site work there - that will enable buses to turn around in the area, both Muni and our PresidiGo buses, so people can come to the Presidio, end up there at the foot of the Main Post, and then catch a PresidiGo bus to get around the Presidio.

Just across the street from the transit center – we're still going down Lincoln - are two buildings that are rather dilapidated. They're Civil War-era buildings and we call them Building 86 and 87. Construction will begin in the first week of January on those buildings and they will be renovated for various uses, and we'll be leasing them out. And they will open just about the same time as the Bay School, which is right across the street. And you've probably seen that also, a 1915-era barracks. And the Bay School is opening in that building in September.

Currently, the Bay School is here already in a different barracks, the Cavalry Barracks over by the Cavalry Stables. They've just started this year and they're going full speed ahead, and then they'll move into their new building in September.

Just behind the Bay School is the oldest existing streetscape in San Francisco, Funston. That's the street with all the little wooden houses

on it. And we are renovating houses going up from the YMCA on the right-hand side of Funston and leasing them out for various uses, one of which is a preschool. And, Paul, Serra Preschool starts in January, right? So they'll be occupying one of those houses in January.

That takes us to the Main Post, and it really is the heart of the Presidio. It always has been the heart of the Presidio. It's surrounded by buildings. The most famous iconic buildings are probably the red brick Montgomery Street Barracks. The cemetery is close by. And as you look out the Main Post you have beautiful views of the Golden Gate and the Bay. It's a beautiful place, currently a seven-acre parking lot. It's about the size of seven football fields, so it's huge. The Main Parade - this is the parade that is shown in green here - currently is not green. And we are working on a design to green up the Main Parade and to make it again the center of activity of the Presidio. We've chosen the Olin Partnership. They are well-versed in historic design and working with historically significant areas such as Independence Hall in Philadelphia and the Washington Monument in D.C. The conceptual phase of that design is nearly complete and we plan to bring that to the public for discussion in February.

Some of the other buildings along the Main Parade are buildings that we think would be very well used and repositioned as buildings that welcome the public, that have a public interface. And we have currently begun negotiations with several tenants for those buildings. In Building 104, which is this building here, we're in negotiations with the Walt Disney Family Foundation. And they are going to put their

Family Foundation headquarters there, as well as a museum dedicated to the life of Walt Disney.

Two doors down from that, we're in discussions with the National Park Service about restarting the work on the Visitors Center. That will be the Presidio Visitors Center and Museum. That will be a building that will be a primary place to become oriented when you come to the Presidio for visitors and also to learn about programs and learn about the history of the Presidio.

Two doors up from that is building that used to be the Band Building for the Army. And now we are negotiating with the Family Violence Prevention Fund for a non-violence center there.

And then next to that is the Presidio Theater, and we plan to get an RFP out on the street for the Presidio Theater for reusing that within December, so by the end of this month.

One of the things that makes the Presidio unique - it is a very unique park among the parks in the National Park system - is the fact that it was a place that was built for people, and has always had people both living here and working here. Currently, we have about 170 organizations in the Presidio and about 2,000 people living here. And we've put a lot of effort this year into the renovation of our historic homes. If you go up into the Fort Scott area - you're winding your way now this way past the cemetery and up into the Fort Scott area - the homes along Kobbe have been renovated, and I will tell you they are wildly popular. They're pre-leased before they're finished. People

want to get in before the finish dries on the hardwood floors. They are just gorgeous.

And then just across from that is the Ruckman and Storey area. That's on the other side of the Native Plant Nursery, if you're aware of that. And those have been renovated as well and are fully occupied.

This year, starting in January, we'll be working on the houses that are right up here near the Golden Gate Bridge. And when you come off the Golden Gate Bridge, they're those little houses along that road. They're called the Pilots' Row houses because they were the places where the pilots from Crissy Field lived. And we're renovating thirteen of those units now, starting in January. In fact, the work has already begun. And those I'm sure will be occupied as soon as they're finished.

Along with housing renovations comes landscape renovations associated with those housing units. And so if you go down Kobbe you'll start now to see the renovation of the historic landscapes along that street and also along Storey and of course along Pilots'. And we will be continuing to do landscape projects along the residential streets as we get money to do them. We try to plan two or three of them, two or three neighborhoods, a year. And then as we get the money to implement, we'll do that.

One that is underway currently is the East Washington neighborhood. This is down near the golf course. And it's a neighborhood that has an awful lot of cars in it and so what we're doing is pulling the cars off

the street. We're building lots behind the houses so the cars will be off the street and then as soon as we get the cars off the street we'll reorient the street - put a bike trail, bike path, on the street - and then complete it with improvements to the Ridge Trail, which goes right along the ridge over the top of the cemetery and behind those housing units. And so that will be a very nice addition and will be completed within about nine months.

If you go down into the Southern end of the park - the whole southern edge - there's quite a bit of activity going on down there as well, and I'll start from the Pacific side. The Public Health Service Hospital project is in process. We just closed on the 12th of November. We closed public comment on the Supplemental EIS for that project. We are analyzing the comments - we got a lot of it - and are looking forward to responding to all of those comments.

We're also in discussions with Forest City and also with Caltrans to look at the possibilities of an access road that would go from here onto Highway 1. All of those are productive, and after we analyze all of the comments and are able to incorporate them and respond to them we will determine what the project will be in that area.

Moving across Highway 1 is Mountain Lake. And Mountain Lake has had several issues - water quality issues, drainage issues - it's been slowly filling up. So we have a project that's been ongoing and funded by San Francisco International Airport to remediate Mountain Lake - dredge it out to make it a little larger, thereby improving the quality of the water, and building a trail right around the other edge of

it and replanting the vegetation there and making it a beautiful place for public use. So if you go out there now you'll really see a huge difference. And I will say that this could not have happened without the Airport and without the Parks Conservancy and without the people that live in this area because a lot of them have come out to plant plants and make this whole new environment happen.

Our next phase will be the East arm, which goes right up there toward - on West Pacific, right up in that area. That is currently filled with underbrush and really needs to be opened up.

Then as you go to the East, past the Julius Kahn Playground - which of course has been renovated thanks to the Diller family, the generosity of that family - you keep going to the East and you'll notice that there's a lot happening with regard to the forest. The forest is an old forest. It was planted all at the same time by the Army in the 1880s. Half of it contains trees, about 150 acres of trees that are nearing the end of their life spans. They live about 120 years. So the forest is in need of renovation, revitalization and replanting. And in particular, if you look at the trees over here, they're in really bad shape. So we have initiated a cutting and planting program over there and, in fact, if you go over there today - tonight it's a little late, but maybe tomorrow - you'll see a whole bunch of new trees that have just been planted today and yesterday right in that area.

And I know some people have commented - some of the neighbors have commented: "Why are those trees planted in rows? It looks like a Christmas tree farm!" Well, we planted them in rows for one reason,

and that is that's the way they were historically planted. We're trying to retain the character of the historic forest, recognizing that as these trees grow - we've planted them pretty close together and as they grow they'll be thinned and then the forest will take on a much more haphazard look and a more natural look.

In addition to some of these projects we are planting both native plants and trees on remediation sites. And going back up into the Fort Scott area, there are several remediation sites. They were once landfills that have been remediated. New fill has been brought in, clean fill, and we've planted native plants on one and a species of eucalyptus on the other that we hope will be kind of a new, clean species of eucalyptus. And we're trying that out.

Also, down on Arguello - if you go down near the golf course clubhouse and down Arguello - you'll start to see some forestry projects down there. We're experimenting with pine pitch, a resistant species of pine to see how they do here and some oak, to see how it does as well.

So there's some experimenting going on. We're doing about two acres of forest a year. And, in fact, it's not enough. We really need to do about four acres of forest. But at this point we can only afford to do two.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the programs that are going on - just two, in fact. These are things that have happened this year that aren't site-specific but will have a major impact on the future of

the Presidio, I think. One of them is cyclic maintenance. We've all seen what happens when cyclic maintenance doesn't occur. We've all been to those facilities where they're nicely done when they're created and when they're built but they're not well taken care of and there isn't sufficient funding allocated to keeping them in good shape.

So this year we have started - well, we did a series of studies this year and we're implementing, starting in January, cyclic maintenance programs for landscape, for buildings, for infrastructure and for utilities so that we will be investing each year in cyclic maintenance. It's amazingly expensive. One figure I'll throw out there, just so you get a sense of the magnitude - there's a lot of painting with six million square feet of buildings and if we look at painting an eighth of the Presidio every year it's going to cost us about a million bucks a year. So that just gives you a sense - that's just painting.

So that's one program we've started. Another program that's really exciting is a philanthropic program. We have long had a partnership with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. They have helped on Mountain Lake and they help with the Native Plant Nursery and various other projects. Of course, they were very instrumental in the re-creation of Crissy Field.

But as of last month we've signed an agreement with them that is a formal partnership so that now we will be formally in partnership with them. And with that will come community involvement, community volunteerism, philanthropic funding - we hope - and the kind of support that we will need in order to do the Main Parade, do a trails

system, take care of the forest, do those four to five acres a year rather than the two acres a year that we're currently doing.

We also recently received a gift of a million dollars from the family of George and Sejong Sarlo. And if you drive out or walk out or ride your bike out to the area near Rob Hill on Washington Boulevard you'll see construction going on of a new overlook; a scenic overlook. It's absolutely gorgeous. It looks out toward the ocean. You can see the Golden Gate Bridge. And it is called Immigrant Point, and at the request of George and Sejong Sarlo it is dedicated to the contributions that immigrants have made to the City of San Francisco and to the nation. And it will be open - actually, it will be completed by the end of January but we're going to formally open it when the weather gets good in April. So we'll let you know and we hope you'll all be able to attend that opening.

There are some things I missed. It occurs to me that I didn't mention Crissy Field. Of course, Crissy Field has been wildly successful and what used to be kind of the backyard of the Presidio is now clearly the front yard, with a lot of activity going on - recreational mainly, picnicking down at the end. The Warming Hut is very popular. And then there's this crescent of buildings down at the end - we call it West Crissy. It's mostly hangars and support buildings for the airfield that was here. And then the cavalry stables - there are some brick cavalry stables - we've got three of those and seven of these, and we've put out an RFP for the reuse of those. The first phase of proposals is due in on January 7th, so hopefully in the first part of the year we'll have a

good idea about what's possible down there. We're looking for recreational, educational and cultural uses.

I should mention - we've kind of taken a walk around the park, or a drive, or a ride, or whatever you prefer - I should mention a word or two about finances because without money this park will not survive. It will not thrive. You know, we've all seen what happens to so many public areas that are not well-funded. And that is not going to happen to the Presidio - if we're careful.

But I have to say that costs are high. I mentioned the painting. There are many other costs. And opportunities for generating revenue are very minimal. We don't have that many opportunities. So we have to look at every opportunity we have to try to generate as much money as we can.

One of the ways to deal with the financial issues is to pay close attention to costs, and we are doing that. Over the past couple of years we've cut our operating budgets by about 25%. And that, I will tell you, has not gone unnoticed by those in Washington who oversee us. We had an oversight hearing in March and that was mentioned, and we got a great deal of support because of our ability to be flexible and cut costs and really watch the bottom line.

And I think as a result of that and also as a result of discussions we have had with the Office of Management and Budget at the White House about the need to invest early - early money is important and early investment is important in order to generate the kind of revenue

that we will have and need in future years - OMB has decided this year, and we just got word a couple of days ago, that for the first time in the history of the Trust they are not going to cut our budget from last year. They're going to give us the same amount of funding as they did last year. And this is at a time when Park Service and other agencies throughout the government are really facing significant - very significant - cuts. So I was very pleased to hear that, and I think that speaks well for the Presidio.

Preserving and revitalizing this place, this Presidio, is a multi-year effort. And it requires the involvement of an awful lot of people, people that are the volunteers - we've had 23,000 hours of volunteer time logged this year. That's the equivalent of about ten full-time employees. And these are volunteers who have helped in one way or another, either through docent tours or helping plant native plants, or doing something to help the Presidio over the past year. Those people are really critical to our success, as are the staff and Board of the Trust, the National Park Service, the Conservancy and our partners there, some of the institutional partners that we've developed relationships with like the Stanford University Archeology Program and UC Berkeley and the California Academy of Sciences. All of those people are critical. Donors of course are important, and just the people who come and attend events and help get the word out that this is a great place and worth preserving. So let me just say that all of these projects and the successes that we're experiencing now are a testament to all of you and the people that work so hard to keep this place wonderful. So thank you.

One of those people is a person who has worked on our staff for some time, Hillary Gitelman - since 2001, right? I think it is 2001.

Anyway, she's kind of part of the family. It seems like a long time. I would like to turn it back over to you, Mr. Chairman, for a special presentation. And then we'll open it up for questions and comments.

Toby Rosenblatt: The mention of Hillary at this point is a bittersweet moment for us because she is leaving the Trust, as you may have seen in announcements. And it's sweet for her because she's getting a wonderful new job for her career in planning at Napa County. But it's sad for us because of all the wonderful work that has been done by her and the leadership she's provided for the Presidio and the Trust and in the community. So we will miss you a lot.

Craig Middleton: Mr. Chairman, I have a resolution to make. Are you ready for this?

In recognition of extraordinary service to the Presidio of San Francisco: whereas the Presidio Trust Director of Planning since 2001, Hillary Gitelman, has tirelessly and diligently worked to preserve and enhance the Presidio of San Francisco; and whereas Hillary has been instrumental in shaping the future of the Presidio through her leadership in the development of the Presidio Trust Management Plan; and whereas - I've got a lot of whereas here - Hillary has demonstrated her dedication to the protection of the Presidio's incomparable natural, cultural and scenic resources through her careful management of resource and compliance programs; and whereas Hillary's colleagues wish to express their respect, gratitude and appreciation for her professional intelligence, drive, hard work,

commitment, and collaboration and for her friendship; and whereas the Presidio Trust Board of Directors desires to recognize the extraordinary effort and commitment that Hillary has made to the preservation and the enhancement of the Presidio; now therefore be it resolved that the Presidio Trust Board of Directors, together with the Presidio staff, hereby express their sincere gratitude to Hillary Gitelman for her dedication and invaluable contribution to the Presidio of San Francisco and for her extraordinary service with the Presidio Trust and for her enduring friendship and support. Thank you.

[Applause]

Female voice: I second.

Toby Rosenblatt: All those in favor?

In unison: Aye.

Toby Rosenblatt: Opposed? Adopted unanimously.

I don't think we need to take a break but I would like to invite anybody who is here tonight who would like to address the meeting on any subject relative to the Presidio - we would be glad to hear any thoughts you have.

Craig Middleton: Subjects that aren't relative to the Presidio?

Judy Hulka: I'm Judy Hulka. I'm the President of the Neighborhood Association for Presidio Planning, or NAPP. And I want to congratulate the Trust on not getting a budget cut. [Unintelligible]

Craig Middleton: Judy, excuse me. He's going to ask you to use the microphone - not that we need it in the room, but that's what gets it on the record. Thanks.

Judy Hulka: I'm Judy Hulka and I'm President of NAPP, the Neighborhood Association for Presidio Planning. And I want to congratulate the Trust on not getting a budget cut from OMB this year. We know how tight it is in Washington, and I think that does show us that you're working very hard and responsibly for the neighborhoods. And I also hope that in 2005 we can bring out a lot more neighborhood support for the projects and a greater understanding of where you're headed. Thank you.

Craig Middleton: Thank you, Judy. Anyone else? Yes, please?

Anna Sylvester: Hello. Thank you for letting me speak tonight. I'm Anna Sylvester. I'm a brand-new resident of the Presidio, and I'd just like to say I'm really thrilled to be here. Thank you.

Craig Middleton: Where do you live?

Anna Sylvester: I live at 800 Quarry.

Craig Middleton: Oh.

Matthew Slotnich: Good evening, members of the Board. My name is Matthew Slotnich, and I'm a representative of the Golden Gate Audubon Society. And I'd just like to take the opportunity to thank you for involving our organization in the park. We really appreciate working with you all. We've had some good accomplishments over the past year, and we look forward to accomplishing much more in the future. And I'd just like to wish you all a happy holiday season.

Craig Middleton: Any other . . .

Margaret Zegart: I'm Margaret Zegart. And I appreciate all the opportunities we have to give ideas and comments. I feel they're well received. And certainly the staff works very well with you, and it's a pleasure to know that the Presidio is proceeding.

And I was wondering about the Thornton area behind the old Presidio Hospital area. I think that now is the digital area? I don't know what's happening there and you didn't mention that. And I know there were some very interesting meetings that were held in Planning - a federal hospital area? And they were going to do urban - a kind of urban area to complement the Lucas project? And I wondered if that's on schedule.

Craig Middleton: Anybody want to comment on that one? Paul?

Paul Osmundson: I'm Paul Osmundson, Director of Real Estate. The Thornburg Road area is the one that you're referring to. It's the street that runs towards

the West from the Lucas project. We are currently negotiating with a restaurateur for the buildings that are closest to the LDA project. In 2005 we'll be looking at putting that entire collection of historic buildings out to bid to try to bring activation and use to it.

Female voice: I would just add I think - I really am interested in that part myself because I think it actually is one of the areas where you see a streetscape that already exists and buildings that are historic but obviously in really poor repair. I think that would be a generous way to describe their current state. So I think we're hoping that as the flow of the area develops and gets more fully fleshed out with LDA coming on line, that's a great opportunity to try to actually create more community within the Presidio. And for those of you who are residents - I used to live here, and it's such a great place to live but there are some things missing - like there's no place to walk down that actually has a streetscape.

So I think it's a really exciting possibility. And it presents its challenges because the buildings are historic and need a lot of work but I think our thought is that in the near term that's an area where it would really be exciting for people to look into revitalizing those historic buildings.

Margaret Zegart: Thank you. And then there's one other thing, the luminaries. When my children were young we used to - on Christmas Eve there would be wonderful luminaries. I think they were along Kobbe and on top of the Montgomery Street buildings. There were wonderful competitions between the residents to have Christmas - there were Santa Clauses

and sleighs and all kinds of things. And I think those would be nice,
and have a happy holiday.

Female voice: Thank you.

Craig Middleton: Thank you.

Anyone else? If not, I will thank everybody for coming and for your
remarks. This is really refreshing. And I'll ask for a motion to
adjourn from one of you.

Male voice: [Unintelligible].

Toby Rosenblatt: Okay.