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San Francisco's Presidio Marks 25 Years as a National Park Site

Dramatic transformation from military post to one of America's most visited park sites

San Francisco, CA: (October 1, 2019) – Today marks 25 years since the U.S. Army marched out of the Presidio for the last time, and the storied military installation – whose founding pre-dates that of San Francisco – began its transformation into a beloved national park site.

The Presidio's future wasn't always certain. Though slated to join the national park system should the Army ever leave, thanks to 1972 legislation by U.S. Senator Philip Burton creating the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, elected officials and the community were stunned when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) recommended in 1988 that the Army post be decommissioned, lowering its flag for good.

Park or Private Development?

The Army's impending departure touched off years of local planning and intense debate in Congress about the fate of the 1,500 acres at the Golden Gate. The National Park Service (NPS) estimated that restoring the Presidio's historic buildings, infrastructure, and natural areas would take a \$600 million investment—a disproportionate amount of the system's annual budget. The transformation also called for mobilizing planning and redevelopment beyond the traditional scope of the NPS. Some in Congress believed the Presidio should be sold to private developers, with proceeds lowering the national debt.

The Presidio formally transferred to the national park system a ceremony on October 1, 1994. To provide for a successful park transformation, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, civic and environmental leaders, and the nonprofit Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy mobilized community and bipartisan Congressional support for a bold idea. They created a partnership-based approach to managing and funding the Presidio that would create a nimble new federal agency to steward the Presidio in collaboration with the NPS, and with the support of the Parks Conservancy. Congress created the Presidio Trust in 1996 and required that the agency operate without taxpayer support by 2013.

One of America's Most Visited National Park Sites

A quarter-century later, this tri-agency partnership, with the addition of volunteer and philanthropic support, has transformed the Presidio from Crissy Field to the peaks of its forested ridgetops. Some 312 buildings have been rehabilitated, restored wetlands delight birders, families walk or ride along the Presidio's 24-mile trail network or drop into the park's museums, and a Visitor Center greets first-time park-goers. The Presidio now welcomes 7.5 million visitors each year. It's also home to 200 organizations and 3,000 residents, whose rents keep the Presidio on solid financial footing.

"The transformation of the Presidio from Post to Park over the last 25 years has exceeded our wildest expectations," **said Speaker Nancy Pelosi.** "Under the bold leadership of the Presidio Trust, this vibrant and thriving urban park has been essential to engaging, educating and inspiring our community and the millions who visit every year. The Presidio is the 'Guardian of the Golden Gate' and thanks to the tireless work of leaders, activist and determined citizens, it will continue to enrich the lives of countless Bay Area residents for generations to come."

"The Presidio is a national treasure. It would have been unthinkable for the public to lose access to this extraordinary natural oasis and historic gem," says Amy Meyer, an original champion of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and a founding member of the Presidio Trust board of directors. "Twenty-five years ago we imagined what was possible here, and now the promise of the Presidio has truly come to life."

"Seeing land that was once the longest-serving U.S. military post become successful as a great American national park site is fitting and highly satisfying," said William Grayson, Chair of the Presidio Trust Board of Directors. "The Presidio will continue to be protected for the welfare of the American people, and serve in perpetuity as a place of enjoyment for all."

The Presidio Today

Natural Resources

When the Army left in 1994, many natural areas were in a state of decline, with wetland and riparian habitats eroding and the 300-acre forest planted by the U.S. Army in decline. Today, approximately 600 of the park's 1,100 acres of open space have been restored at sites like **Crissy Field, Mountain Lake,** and the **Tennessee Hollow Watershed.** These projects have brought back acres of riparian and salt marsh landscapes, planted thousands of native plants and re-introduced native species. They have revitalized watersheds, provided for an increase in wildlife habitats, and restored one of the last remaining natural lakes in San Francisco. These areas provide urban visitors with an up-close experience of nature and outdoor enjoyment.

Historic Buildings

The Presidio is designated a National Historic Landmark District and is one of the largest and most ambitious historic preservation projects underway in the United States. Of the 870 structures in the Presidio, 470 are on the National Registry of Historic Places, and more than two-thirds have been fully or

partially rehabilitated for use as private residences and commercial businesses, generating revenue that is put back into the park. The Trust has repurposed historic buildings for visitor recreation in the airplane hangars at Crissy Field, which house **Planet Granite** and **House of Air**. Others include the **Presidio Visitor Center**, The **Presidio Officers' Club Museum**, **Inn at the Presidio** and **Lodge at the Presidio**, the **Walt Disney Family Museum**, and **The Commissary** restaurant. And 24 miles of hiking and 25 miles of biking trails, eight scenic overlooks and group camping sites at **Rob Hill Campground**, add to the visitor experience.

Welcoming and Serving Visitors

Over the past 25 years, innovative programs have brought youth and families to nature. The Crissy Field Center serves 24,000 youth per year, with the goal of serving 100,000 following the completion of the new Tunnel Tops Youth Campus in 2021. Field trip programs provide place-based environmental learning to hundreds of schoolchildren each year, and the Camping at the Presidio (CAP) Program serves 6,000 youth per year who traditionally have not had access to camping experiences. Visits to the Presidio are supported via the Shuttle Bus program, and partnerships with the San Francisco Public Library and the YMCA. Each year over 5,500 volunteers show their appreciation of and connection to nature, art and history, by donating their time to provide more than 80,000 hours in visitor and resource projects throughout Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Presidio Tunnel Tops

The next transformational phase is underway with construction beginning on the Presidio Tunnel Tops, the 14 acres of new parkland on the tops of the Doyle Drive Tunnels. Designed by James Corner Field Operations, the designer of New York's High Line, the site will reconnect the Presidio's Main Post with Crissy Field and add new visitor amenities such as a Youth Campus, natural playground, fire circle, food court, gardens, paths and overlooks with stunning views of the Golden Gate Bridge, the Bay and the City. The Presidio Tunnel Tops is being created with generous philanthropic support from our community. The Parks Conservancy is leading this \$98 million campaign. To date, \$76.7 million has been raised or 78% of the goal. A public campaign for the community will launch in spring of 2020 and the project will be completed in fall of 2021.

Milestones in the Presidio's Transformation

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| Circa 700 | Ohlone tribes inhabit the land |
| 1776 | Spain establishes El Presidio de San Francisco military fort |
| 1822 | El Presidio becomes a Mexican frontier outpost occupied by the Mexican Army |
| 1847 | The U.S. Army takes control during the Mexican-American War |
| 1962 | The Presidio is declared a National Historic Landmark |
| 1972 | The Golden Gate National Recreation Area is established with the provision that the Presidio may be included in its boundaries "should it not be needed for military purposes" |
| 1989 | Base Realignment and Closure Commission announces Army will close the Presidio |
| 1994 | The Presidio is transferred to the National Park Service |

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| 1996 | The Presidio Trust Act establishes the Presidio Trust as an independent federal agency to work in partnership with National Park Service and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy |
| 1997 | First Presidio Trust Board appointed |
| 1999-2010 | Housing rehabilitation and leasing begins in 22 residential neighborhoods |
| 2001 | The Crissy Field and Crissy Field Center open to the public |
| 2001 | The Presidio Trust and NPS adopt a Vegetation Management Plan |
| 2002 | The Presidio Trust adopts the Presidio Trust Management Plan |
| 2003 | The Presidio Trails and Bikeways Master Plan is adopted; PresidiGo Shuttle system is launched; Planet Granite, La Petite Baleen, House of Air, Roaring Mouse Cycles, and Batters' Box open at Crissy Field |
| 2005 | Letterman Digital Arts Center, a critical commercial and financial anchor, opens |
| 2007 | Restoration of the Tennessee Hollow Watershed begins; Camping at the Presidio program at Rob Hill Campground begins |
| 2008 | The Presidio's art program begins with Andy Goldsworthy's <i>Spire</i> |
| 2009 | Walt Disney Family Museum opens in the Montgomery Street Barracks; construction on Doyle Drive begins |
| 2010 | The 36-acre Public Health Service District opens as a residential neighborhood |
| 2011 | The Main Parade Ground is transformed to green lawn space for public events such as Presidio Picnic and the Presidio Kite Festival |
| 2012 | Inn at the Presidio opens in the rehabilitated bachelor officers' quarters; El Polín Spring is restored |
| 2013 | The Presidio Trust becomes financially self-sufficient – taxpayer support ceases |
| 2014 | The Presidio Officers' Club reopens as a museum and cultural center |
| 2016 | The Korean War Memorial opens to the public |
| 2017 | The Presidio Visitor Center, a partnership with the NPS and the Parks Conservancy, opens; Lodge at the Presidio opens as the park's second historic hotel |
| 2019 | The rehabilitated, 600-seat Presidio Theatre opens; Presidio Tunnel Tops breaks ground; Quartermaster Reach marsh restoration scheduled to break ground |
| 2021 | Presidio Tunnel Tops scheduled to open |

About the Presidio Trust

The Presidio Trust is an innovative federal agency created to save the Presidio and employ a partnership approach to transform it into a new kind of area within a national park. Spanning 1,500 acres in a spectacular setting at the Golden Gate, the Presidio now operates without taxpayer support, is home to a community of residents and organizations, and offers unique recreation, hospitality, and educational programs to people throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and the world. To learn more, visit www.presidio.gov.

About the Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Golden Gate National Recreation Area, situated in and around San Francisco, is the most visited park in the National Park Service, hosting more than 15 million visitors in 2018. A diverse park with abundant

recreational opportunities, as well as natural, cultural, and scenic resources, it encompasses more than 82,000 acres across three counties. The park also administers two other NPS areas, Fort Point National Historic Site, a Civil War era fortress built on the northernmost point of land in San Francisco, and Muir Woods National Monument, which comprises an impressive stand of old growth coastal redwoods in Marin County. www.nps.gov/goga

About the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

The Parks Conservancy is the nonprofit membership organization that supports the Golden Gate National Recreation Area—the most-visited unit in the national park system in the United States. Since 1981, the Parks Conservancy has provided over \$550 million in support to the parks, rallied more than 275,000 volunteers, and pioneered innovative park stewardship and education programs. The Conservancy's work is made possible through the dedication of its members and donors; contributions from foundations, businesses, public agencies, and generous individuals, as well as earned income from the operation of park stores, cafes, and tours. Learn more at parksconservancy.org or call (415) 561-3000.

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