

# FACT SHEET

WILLIAM PENN MOTT, JR

# PRESIDIO VISITOR CENTER



## ABOUT THE WILLIAM PENN MOTT, JR. PRESIDIO VISITOR CENTER

What was once the nation's premier Army post is now a vibrant 1,500-acre national park offering spectacular vistas, rich history, natural beauty, and opportunities for recreation, entertainment, and play. Millions of people are discovering aspects of the Presidio each year, but there hasn't been a place for visitors to get to know the entire park and all the adventures it offers... until now.

The new, state-of-the-art **William Penn Mott, Jr. Presidio Visitor Center** is a platform for discovery, using inspiring video, engaging exhibitry, interactive tools, and knowledgeable staff to help visitors uncover the incredible array of experiences that are possible here. It is the park's new "front door" and the launching pad for the ultimate Presidio adventure.

### Golden Gate Location

It is situated in the heart of the Presidio with views overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge, at the pinnacle of a site once dominated by a freeway. That roadway has been put into tunnels allowing for the creation of a spectacular new 14-acre landscape designed by the makers of New York City's *High Line*. The project, known, as the Presidio Tunnel Tops, will open in 2019, marking the Presidio's 25th anniversary as a national park. The Presidio Tunnel Tops will create an entirely new experience of the Golden Gate with 360-degree views of the bay, the bridge, the city skyline, and the Presidio. A new plaza where visitors can begin their park experience will be constructed around the Visitor Center. Next door is the Presidio Transit Center, which offers free shuttle service around the park and to downtown San Francisco.

### Building History

The Presidio Visitor Center is housed in a refurbished historic guardhouse and prison (Building 210) that was built in 1900 on the north end of the Main Post. It contained cells to hold prisoners convicted of violating military laws and regulations. The cost of construction in 1900 was \$18,700. It was designed for a maximum of 34 prisoners and had two large cages that could hold 14 people each, and six individual cells. Even the chimney flue had bars to prevent prisoners from escaping. The Colonial Revival style and brick masonry construction mirror that of the Main Post's Montgomery Street Barracks, built several years earlier, and contribute to the Presidio's status as a National Historic Landmark District. Most recently it was home to a bank and a U.S. Post Office.

### Adapting Building 210

Construction on the \$5 million project began June 2016 with architect Bohlin Cywinski Jackson and exhibit designer Macchiatto. The design of the new Presidio Visitor Center restores the historic two-room layout and the distinctive look of the guard and prison areas, including the original wood floors and bead board wainscoting of the guards' room (south room) and the concrete floors, sheet metal ceiling, and exposed brick walls of the prisoners' room (north room). A new ceiling has been installed below the original metal ceiling from 1900, which still exists and is in remarkably good condition. The outlines of the original jail cells are now indicated in the new wood floor in the north room. Some hardware from the original jail cells still exists in the floor (protected in place), and a new wood floor was built up over the original concrete floor.

[www.presidio.gov/visitor-center](http://www.presidio.gov/visitor-center)



Presidio  
Trust

# EXHIBITS AND FEATURES

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The Presidio Visitor Center is designed to engage and surprise, like the park itself. It invites visitors to discover the Presidio's destinations and activities and to examine the deeper stories behind how the park's history and natural landscapes evolved over time.

## In the South Room — Former Guard's Room

- **What Places Can I Visit Today? – Wayfinding Model and Digital Touchscreens**

A colorful 10-foot topographic Presidio model orients visitors to the diverse physical features and destinations in the 1,500-acre park – from the 262-acre Presidio forest to its beaches, major districts, trails, and roadways. The central feature of the south room, the model helps visitors plan their trips around the park. Surrounding the model are digital touchscreens that offer photos and short descriptions of the park's featured destinations, its 24-mile trail network, and restaurant amenities.

- **What Events + Activities Can I Enjoy Today? – Digital Calendar and Engaging Imagery**

A 7-foot by 8-foot video wall is a dramatic focal point of the south room. It showcases events happening all around the Presidio, including those offered by the park (such as Ranger walks and cultural events) and a selection of those offered by the Presidio's community of visitor-serving organizations. The screens also feature stunning video of activities and experiences that visitors can enjoy, sparking ideas for adventures and itinerary planning. An Instagram feed reveals a sampling of ways visitors are experiencing the Presidio in real time. The screens also indicate when visitors can catch the next PresidiGo Shuttle busses, which provide free service to 40 destinations around the park and to downtown San Francisco.

- **Who Shaped the Presidio Over Time? - Voices of the Presidio Exhibit**

A small alcove known as the Provost Office uses photos, audio, and art to express the viewpoints of many groups and people who have shaped the Presidio across centuries. The room features ten shadowboxes created by representatives from various communities describing what the Presidio means to them. The perspectives include the Ohlone community, veterans, young people participating in park educational programs, organizations based at the Presidio, residents who have formed a new kind of community in former military housing, and many others.

## In the North Room — Former Prisoner's Room

- **How Has the Presidio Evolved Over Time? – Changing Landscapes Gallery**

The Presidio's four major geographic zones are celebrated through a gallery that illustrates how the park's landscapes have evolved over time. Large graphic panels, videos, interactive experiences, and touchable objects showcase the Main Post (the historic heart of the park and the cultural center of the visitor experience); Crissy Field (historic Army airfield turned recreational oasis); the Golden Gate ("defender of the gate" and platform for iconic views); and the Southern Wilds (the largest area of the park, characterized by natural habitats, open space, trails, and contemplative experiences). Visitors will walk away with an understanding of the key stories and events that define the Presidio.

- **How Are the Presidio's Stories Connected? – Interactive Digital Table**

A large touchscreen interactive table that sits at the center of the Changing Landscapes Gallery helps visitors make connections among the people, places, objects and events that have shaped the Presidio. Here visitors can understand the bigger picture of what occurred and why – from the Ohlone through the Presidio's use as a military post under three flags through its current chapter as a distinctive national park site. The experience offers greater context, inspiring visitors to search out the settings where events occurred.

- **Where Can I Gather? – Program Area with Video and Artifacts**

A small presentation area will showcase a revolving series of topical videos showcasing aspects of the Presidio's history, natural environment, and current park offerings. The room is an ideal place for school groups and others to get oriented before beginning their park adventures. An adjacent display area will feature a changing array of artifacts and activities that introduce the park to visitors.

- **Where Can I Visit Next? – Golden Gate National Recreation Area North Porch**

At the north end of the Visitor Center is an alcove with magnificent views toward San Francisco Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Marin Headlands. A graphic panel illustrates other popular destinations within the 80,000-acre Golden Gate National Recreation Area (such as Lands End.), of which the Presidio is the centerpiece. The room overlooks the future Presidio Tunnel Tops site, affording visitors a vantage point to watch the project take shape over the next two years.

- **What Items will Support My Visit? – Interpretive Retail**

In conjunction with the Presidio Visitor Center's exhibits and orientation features, the interpretive retail area, which is represented in both the north and south room, offers a changing collection of high-quality merchandise interpreting the many themes of the Presidio, as well as tools for exploring the park. Books, clothing, and commemorative items will help visitors get out to explore, learn, and play.

## **The Presidio Visitor Center Operates in an Innovative Way**

It is jointly run by the three agencies responsible for the Presidio's two-decade transformation from a military installation to a new kind of national park – the Presidio Trust, the National Park Service, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. These agencies are also responsible for creating the Presidio Tunnel Tops. The Presidio Visitor Center will include interpretive services from the National Park Service highlighting the Presidio's natural and cultural significance. The Presidio Trust will help visitors plan an amazing adventure in the park through orientation and itinerary planning. Retail services provided by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy will complement and enhance the visitor experience.

## **About William Penn Mott, Jr.**

William Penn Mott, Jr. was a lifelong supporter of public parks, which he successfully championed during his tenures as superintendent of parks for the city of Oakland, general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, and director of California's Department of Parks and Recreation. He founded the non-profit California State Park Foundation in 1969, and was later appointed as director of the National Park Service, a post he held from 1985 to 1989. As special assistant to the National Park Service, he was assigned to support the conversion of the Presidio from military post to national park. He died in 1992.

## **William Penn Mott, Jr. Presidio Visitor Center**

210 Lincoln Boulevard, on the Presidio's Main Post, San Francisco  
Open Seven Days a Week, 10 am to 5 pm – beginning February 25, 2017  
Tel. (415) 561-4323  
Visit [www.presidio.gov/visitor-center](http://www.presidio.gov/visitor-center) for details