

PRESS RELEASE



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GROUNDMAKING CELEBRATION KICKS OFF CONSTRUCTION FOR 14 ACRES OF NEW “TUNNEL TOPS” PARKLAND IN THE PRESIDIO

Speaker Nancy Pelosi Headlines the Ceremony



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (November 7, 2019) — Today, park managers and community and civic leaders, led by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, broke ground on 14 acres of new national parkland atop highway tunnels with dramatic views of the Golden Gate, the bay, the Presidio, and the San Francisco skyline. The Presidio Tunnel Tops project is the latest example of a growing international movement to improve the lives of city dwellers by turning derelict highways and rail lines into public green spaces and parkland. The new Presidio destination opens in fall 2021.

“This has been an extraordinary experience to create a new green centerpiece for the Presidio in the context of the larger Bay Area and the world-class city of San Francisco,” said James Corner, known for designing New York’s High Line. “The iconic setting is perfect for transforming highway infrastructure into a vibrant new public space.”

At the Groundmaking celebration, school groups, philanthropists, project designers, civic leaders, and park officials placed the first soil atop the tunnels, literally “making ground” for this civic project. It will eventually include gardens with native vegetation, connective pathways, scenic overlooks, a campfire circle, picnic areas, and a Youth Campus with a three-acre interactive play area designed to connect urban kids with nature. The site is immediately adjacent to the Presidio Visitor Center, newly opened in 2017, and a planned transit center.

The design was shaped by input from over 10,000 community members across the city on how they would like to use and enjoy this new parkland, made possible by the transformation of the former Doyle Drive highway into the Presidio Parkway. While the old highway once cut off the northern waterfront from the rest of the Presidio,

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the new parkway places key sections in “cut and cover” tunnels, allowing for new parkland above. When complete, visitors will be able to walk from Crissy Field to the Presidio’s Main Post for the first time in eight decades, enjoying dramatic views along the way, said Jean Fraser, CEO of the Presidio Trust: “The Tunnel Tops will provide greater access to fresh air, beautiful views, gardens, and gathering spaces where people can come to relax, play and connect with each other. Having a national park so close to downtown is part of what makes San Francisco great, and we hope it will inspire new visitors to discover the many things the Presidio, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and other national parks have to offer.”

Gift to New Generations of Park and Nature Lovers

The Tunnel Tops project is made possible by philanthropic efforts led by campaign co-chairs Lynne Benioff, Mark Buell, and Randi Fisher and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. The campaign leadership and committee members have mobilized the effort to raise \$98 million toward the campaign goal. The Tunnel Tops is created with the incredible generosity of many families and individuals who recognize the importance of this new parkland, making this a major gift to the city and the nation. During the “quiet” phase of the campaign, \$86.7 million has been raised. A public campaign for the community will kick off in spring 2020.

“It is thanks to our generous philanthropic community that we have come this far on this important project,” said Greg Moore, CEO Emeritus & Special Advisor to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. “Our donors are inspired by the many community benefits of this park-making effort to kids, families and visitors of all backgrounds. This civic place will welcome all, including non-traditional park users, with its opportunities to play, learn, and gather in a landmark place full of beauty, nature and history.”

The Presidio Tunnel Tops is a park for all—at a time when it is needed most. With no admission fee and many connections to public transit, it is dedicated to serving all our communities through open parkland, natural spaces, and lively places to grow and thrive. Randi Fisher, one of the campaign co-chairs, added: “This is an extraordinary opportunity to create an amazing place that will welcome and serve youth from across our community. The new Youth Campus will create a magical space to foster the next generation of park stewards and leaders at a time when environmental awareness and activity couldn’t be more important.”

“Tunnel Tops will connect the Presidio’s Main Post and Crissy Field for a unique experience with amazing views of the Golden Gate, bay, and downtown skyline,” said Golden Gate National Recreation Area General Superintendent Laura Joss. “This re-purposed 14-acre site will provide many interactive educational and recreational opportunities to millions of local and international visitors.”

Features of the Presidio Tunnel Tops

- **Gateway Plaza.** The social and connective center of the park, hosting the Visitor Center and Transit Center, Gateway Plaza welcomes people arriving via public transit. From there, visitors can begin their visit to the Presidio.
- **Campfire Circle.** The Campfire Circle is a gathering place for both day and night with a central fire pit and plentiful seating. Torrey pines, banksia, cypress, and other evergreen trees provide shade. Its location at the edge of the Main Post and adjacent to the Gateway Plaza, affords stunning views on the Main Post barracks.
- **Golden Gate Meadow.** One of the largest single areas of the Tunnel Tops, a serene landscape of grasses and perennials framing a generous open lawn that will become San Francisco’s go-to place for picnicking, kite-flying, family gatherings, and more.

- **Cliff Walk.** Running along the upper edge of the embankment, the Cliff Walk offers continuous 360-degree panoramic views of the Golden Gate Bridge, the bay, the native bluff planting, and the Outpost below while connecting the major overlooks and gathering areas across the site from east to west. Various overlooks and sculptural seating evoke the native Presidio landscape.
- **Parklands Overlook.** One of three iconic overlooks situated along the Cliff Walk, the Parklands Overlook offers incredible views of the lower Tunnel Tops, the bay and the horizon. Carefully shaped topography blends the Overlook into the bluff, creating a fully open and highly dramatic experience.
- **Presidio Steps.** Connecting the Cliff Walk to the Youth Campus below, the Presidio Steps help visitors navigate the steep bluff elevation change while also stopping to enjoy the views. Stepped seating with wide grassy terraces facing the Golden Gate Bridge provide spaces for casual lounging.
- **Crissy Field Center Youth Campus** will be a major feature of the Tunnel Tops. It will include a rehabilitated Crissy Field Center, new Learning Labs, a new Field Station, new youth Courtyard, and the Outpost, an innovative play and learning environment designed to connect children to nature. The new campus will offer dynamic spaces for families, school groups, educators, and visitors alike for drop-in or yearlong programs.
- **Field Station.** Adjacent to the nature-rich Outpost and Crissy Field, a new kind of Field Station will be developed where school groups, program attendees, children, families, and all Tunnel Tops visitors can experience exhibits and activities designed to inspire wonder about nature in the Presidio—and in backyards, neighborhoods, and local parks.
- **The Courtyard.** The new heart of the Youth Campus, bordered by the Field Station, the Lab Building, and the Crissy Field Center, the Courtyard is a critical amenity for the youth programs, featuring flexible space for gatherings including an outdoor BBQ area with picnic tables and planters.
- **The Outpost.** A unique child-friendly landscape of multi-sensory and place-based learning, exploration, enquiry, creativity, and adventure, immersed in the Presidio's native habitat. Outpost features are geared toward a wide variety of play experiences while providing a range of physical challenges, opportunities for free play, learning, and discovery. The Outpost serves toddlers to 13-year-olds, with some elements and experiences geared towards teens and high school students involved in the youth mentorship programs run by the Crissy Field Center.

About the Partnership for the Presidio

The Partnership for the Presidio works to sustain the Presidio's natural beauty, preserve its history, maintain its funding, and create inspiring national park experiences for visitors. Two federal agencies manage the Presidio jointly: the National Park Service and the Presidio Trust, with support from their non-profit partner, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. Together, the partnership has transformed America's most coveted military post into the crown jewel of one of the most visited areas in the national park system.

About James Corner

James Corner is Founder and CEO of James Corner Field Operations, based in New York City, San Francisco, Philadelphia, London and Shenzhen. James has devoted the past 30 years to advancing the field of landscape architecture and urbanism, primarily through his leadership on high-visibility, complex urban projects around the world, as well as through teaching, public speaking and writing. Important urban public realm projects include New York's highly-acclaimed High Line; Chicago's Navy Pier; Seattle's Central Waterfront; London's South Park at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; Hong Kong's Victoria Dockside; and Shenzhen's new city of Qianhai, a new coastal city for 3 million people.

Tunnel Tops Website: www.PresidioTunnelTops.org

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