

# Statement of Jim Meadows, Presidio Trust Executive Director, at the October 26, Public Meeting of the Presidio Trust Board of Directors

Good morning,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors, I'd like to report on the activities of the Presidio Trust for the past 12 months, from October 1, 1999, through September 30, 2000. Copies of this report will be available at the Trust library and on the Trust website.

For me, it is an inspiration to live in this beautiful park, to walk the trails and the streets of this place. It is indeed a magical place, a national treasure – one of the most beautiful natural settings in the United States with one of the most varied and extensive cultural histories. I think we all feel that way about the Presidio ... that's why we're here today.

The following quote came to my attention while speaking to the Getty Conservation Institute last month in Los Angeles. In one of their brochures, Henry David Thoreau was quoted. His words speak to the Presidio challenge: ***“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost, that is where they should be, now put foundations under them.”***

The Presidio is a castle in the air. The Trust, in collaboration with the National Park Service (NPS), needs to put foundations under this castle.

How do we accomplish this? The law charges the Trust with preservation of the Presidio as a national park in this urban environment of San Francisco. The Presidio Trust's mission is ***“the preservation of the natural, historic, scenic, cultural and recreational resources of the Presidio of San Francisco.”***

I view our challenge as falling into four major categories:

- ✂✂ protecting and enhancing resources
- ✂✂ fostering community
- ✂✂ building a sustainable future
- ✂✂ creating a people-friendly park

The most difficult challenge is balancing the various preservation, program and financial goals that face both the Trust and the NPS.

How do we balance:

- ✂✂ Historic buildings with restoration and use
- ✂✂ Diverse cultures – modern, military and prehistoric
- ✂✂ Historic forests (at least since 1890s) with native plants areas
- ✂✂ Resource protection and public use

This balancing act is what the Trust was set up to accomplish ... and we believe the most effective way of achieving this balance is to collaborate with multiple organizations.

Some of these groups are represented here today. The National Park Service, Swords to Plowshares, Friends of Mountain Lake Park, the San Francisco Conservation Corps, the Golden Gate National Parks Association, the Restoration Advisory Board, U.C. Berkeley, park tenants and residents, and many, many more.

Thank you for working with us in this exciting and important effort to save and enhance this national park site.

Our relationships with our neighbors, the City of San Francisco and the greater Bay Area are also very important.

We do impact the City of San Francisco, even though we are not a part of the city.

- ☞ We provide breathing space for the surrounding urban population
- ☞ We have an environmental connection – our watersheds flow into the bay – and offer the opportunity for extensive water reclamation
- ☞ We impact housing – and we seek to create a balance between Presidio-based jobs and Presidio housing
- ☞ We provide recreational and cultural opportunities

While we answer to a broad national constituency – the American people who provide for this national park – we value our neighbors in San Francisco who have had such an enduring and often personal relationship with the Presidio.

I am pleased to have heard from many, many people how pleased they are to see the improvements at the Presidio. But my staff knows that I always arrive at the office with a large “to do” list. Recognizing that there is still much to do, let’s talk for a moment about what has already been accomplished during this past year alone:

**The first set of results that I’d like to review involves protecting and enhancing resources of the Presidio.**

1. The first project – Crissy Field -- is one in which the Trust played only a minor role. The Golden Gate National Parks Association has raised the largest cash gift ever given to the national park system in order to fund a \$32 million restoration of Crissy Field. In collaboration with the NPS and hundreds of Bay Area citizens, GGNPA has transformed the visually most contaminated site at the Presidio into a magnificent water gateway to the park. Thanks to their work – and to many volunteers who have planted the field -- Crissy Field is today a living, sustainable sanctuary and restored natural area for people,

plants and animals. It also provides an unmatched educational opportunity for people from diverse communities – a living laboratory only a bus ride away from any neighborhood in the city.

The Trust contributed \$1.4 million to solve a storm drainage issue that plagued the eastern half of Crissy field. The Trust is also creating a water reclamation plant, at a cost of \$2 million, to help irrigate the over 80 acres of grass and native plants at Crissy Field.

2. Many of you know that the signature forests of the Presidio are nearing the end of their natural life spans. Working with the NPS, experts -- including representatives from the Yale School of Forestry and the Olmstead Center -- as well as the public, we have developed a plan to revitalize the forest and native plant areas of the Presidio. This “Vegetation Management Plan” (VMP) is a work in progress. Here, the key word is progress.

While the plan progresses, we are taking immediate action to extend the lives of existing trees by as much as 30 years.

This year, the Trust will spend \$1 million on forest restoration and native plant projects in collaboration with the NPS, the California Native Plant Society and others.

The Trust has hired a chief forester, Mr. Peter Erlich, who has overseen restoration efforts at Golden Gate Park for the City of San Francisco, and we are building a natural resources staff to work with the NPS on site restoration projects.

Pilot projects to test out the solutions suggested in the VMP are underway.

Our goal is to get new trees and native plants areas established and thriving while keeping our current forest healthy and strong.

3. Historic preservation is one of the Trust's major missions and requires timely efforts to prevent further deterioration of historic buildings and landscapes. The Presidio is a National Historic Landmark District. The only effective way to preserve our historic resources is to find new uses for them --- and new sources of capital to restore them.

The Trust has completed or contracted for the completion of over 250,000 square feet of historic non-residential buildings at a cost of over \$50 million. Four buildings have been renovated by Trust staff, and four large buildings have been or are being renovated by others under lease agreements with the Trust.

The Trust has renovated 758 residential units of which 301 are historic structures. Our costs have run about 35% below the cost of hiring outside contractors.

Last year, to guide Presidio restoration efforts, the Trust created Green Building Guidelines for historic buildings. These guidelines were subsequently adopted by the "Green Building Council" a national organization that sets standards for sustainable development.

This year, 80% of the materials used in residential renovation fit within the Trust's "green building" goals. For example:

- Low-flow showers are saving over 100 gallons of water every fifteen minutes
- We're using "certified sustainable wood products"
- Compact fluorescent light bulbs that are four times more efficient than incandescent bulbs

4. Mountain Lake is one of the special places in the Presidio. In collaboration with the NPS and Friends of Mountain Lake Park, – and with project management from the GGNPA -- the Trust has worked to develop a draft plan to revitalize the lake with funds partially provided by the City of San Francisco as mitigation for San Francisco Airport construction.
  
5. Tennessee Hollow is a work in progress. The Trust received a grant from the Coastal Conservancy to prepare a scope of work for Tennessee Hollow restoration. This is one of those areas that involves conflicts between the built environment and the natural environment. The Trust must balance the effects of both.
  
6. Environmental sustainability programs are central to Trust efforts to put the Presidio at the forefront of environmental concerns and sustainable living. Some of the accomplishments in the past year include:
  - A) Recycling: This summer, the Trust and NPS celebrated the grand opening of the “Presidio Reuse, Recycling and Education Center.” This program is a collaboration with the San Francisco Conservation Corps. The Center recycles twelve tons of bottles, cans and cardboard each month and is a field trip destination for San Francisco school groups.

We were pleased to receive the White House “Closing the Circle” award for buying recycled materials and the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ “Recycle at Work” award for our leadership in using recycled materials in the workplace.
  
  - B) Alternative transportation: The Trust is working with a host of organizations to provide alternatives to the automobile at the Presidio.

- ✂✂ With a \$100,000 Transportation for Clean Air (TFCA) grant, we're creating a car sharing demonstration project using the new Ford Motor Company "TH!NK" City electric cars
- ✂✂ We were also able to improve express MUNI service from the Market Street corridor to the Presidio 82X
- ✂✂ To encourage bicycle use, we're working with a Presidio tenant, the Bicycle Community Project, to develop a bike-share program
- ✂✂ To help tenants, residents and visitors move around the Presidio, we are developing a clean-fueled internal Presidio shuttle that will begin operation in winter 2001
  
- ✂✂ Salvage and Regeneration: Our goal is to use as much on site as we can – reducing our contribution to local landfills and creating a "closed loop" community.
  
- ✂✂ This means that we'll "deconstruct" Letterman Hospital and LAIR, recycling 93% of the materials
- ✂✂ It means we have a vigorous composting program, composting 140 cubic yards or twenty dump trucks worth of organic material each year

**The second set of primary themes that I'd like to discuss is fostering community within the park.**

1. There is a growing diverse park community at the Presidio. One policy of the Trust is the creation of a diverse group of organizations, non-profit and for-profit, that directly and indirectly enhance the Presidio. The Presidio already benefits from the Thoreau Center, a center for innovation with primarily non-profit tenants.

**A)** Twelve new organizations have decided to join the Presidio community in the past year including the The Guardsmen, Drew School, Lexnet and the

Jewish Community Center. One new organization of which we are most proud is “Swords to Plowshares.” Currently, 100 formerly homeless veterans are participating in Swords’ Veterans Academy, where they receive job training, health care and support. Eventually, we hope some of these vets will join our staff at the Presidio Trust.

- B)** Two-hundred-eleven new residential households bring the Presidio’s community to 831 households. These include market rate, short term leases, a student housing program, a preferred renter program, a public safety program and a growing live/work balance where 37% of all residential leases are to people working at the Presidio.
- C)** Community outreach remains a major goal of the Trust. For the past 18 months, the Trust has hosted monthly public workshops on various planning topics related to the Presidio’s future. Response to public input has led the Trust to undertake the “Presidio Trust Implementation Plan” (PTIP) effort to update the GMPA to reflect the present day challenges, opportunities and changed circumstances faced by the Trust.

In addition the Trust has started regular Facilities Open Houses, a formal speakers bureau (such as the Getty environmental outreach), supported the Tenant Council and residential outreach and restarted the organization “People for the Presidio” as an additional sounding board for public input.

- D)** Government relations are an important outreach for the Trust. In addition to our annually required reports, Trust employees keep local, state and national officials apprised of Trust activities throughout the year.

And, of course, we are indebted to the members of the GGNRA Advisory Commission, who spend countless volunteer hours serving as one of our most important conduits for obtaining public input.

**The third primary theme I'd like to discuss involves the Trust's activities for building a sustainable future.**

- 1) The Presidio Trust Implementation Plan process is underway. This is a process to update the GMPA for area B of the Presidio, in light of new opportunities and changed circumstances since the 1994 plan was published. The final scoping session will be held on November 15<sup>th</sup> from 6-9 p.m. at the Log Cabin. This session will focus on plan alternatives and financial analysis of alternatives. The next step is publication of a draft plan and Environmental Impact Statement early next year – for review and comment by the public.

This plan is a way to outline an updated vision for the Presidio, one that includes: how to use innovation and technology to save resources, provide a methodology to tell the “Presidio stories” and enhance our goals to become a center for research, education and sustainable practices.

- 2) The Presidio institute at Fort Scott is being studied with a grant from three major philanthropic foundations. The concept of the institute is to provide a preeminent center for research, discussion and policy planning on major issues facing the Presidio, the nation and the world – with a possible focus on the intersection of thoughts about the environment and new technology.

One key reason that Congress created the Trust was to encourage the use of innovative public-private solutions to difficult issues.

- 3) Environmental cleanup is an example of a problem that is not unique to the Presidio – but common to all military base closures. The Trust offered a first-of-its-kind solution. Cleanup is ongoing at the Presidio with the Trust in the role as lead agency. In an historic agreement among the Army, NPS and the Trust, the Army is paying \$100 million (\$61 million received) to the Trust for clean up. In addition, the Trust purchased \$100 million in environmental insurance to cover any potential overruns.
  
- 4) “Smart Buildings” are another area in which the Trust is using technological innovations that are good for the environment and applying them to the renovation of Presidio buildings. Trust-renovated buildings are using sustainable materials (80-90%), recycling materials (Letterman 93% recycled) and providing increased energy efficiency – using new products for lights, heat and energy management.

Working with other federal and state agencies, we are building a water reclamation plant that will save \$1.7 million each year in water and sewer costs.

Our first co-generation plant will save half a million dollars in energy costs in its first year of operation.

As we modernize our automobile fleet, we are replacing gasoline-powered cars and trucks with electric and natural gas-powered vehicles.

**The fourth major theme is creating a people-friendly park.**

When Congress and the President established the first urban national parks in the 1970s, the idea was to bring the national park system to the

people of the United States --- in the communities where they live. As a unique park surrounded by a dense urban environment, the Presidio must serve its local community as well as a national and international visitorship.

1) Many cultural events are held at the Presidio and sponsored or aided by the Trust including:

- ✂✂ The Earth Festival – part of world-wide Earth Day
- ✂✂ Presidio Pasados – celebrating the beginnings of the Spanish Presidio in 1776 and the birthday of San Francisco
- ✂✂ Memorial Day – honoring our nation’s veterans
- ✂✂ National Japanese American Historical Society – commemorating the contributions of Asian Americans to our history and culture
- ✂✂ Buffalo Soldiers – a program conducted by the NPS in one of the Presidio’s historic cavalry stables.
- ✂✂ Aloha Festival – celebrating the cultures of Polynesia

2) Visitor services planning is a joint project of the Trust and the NPS. Together, we held a symposium with 60 invited national experts and also sponsored focus groups and planning workshops.

The challenge is to tell the diverse stories of the Presidio’s natural and cultural resources and enhance the visitor experience at the Presidio. The challenge will be met by using the NPS expertise and Trust staff expertise and funding, coupled with modern technology, to make a visitor interpretative plan work at the Presidio; one that is customized to each visitor.

- 3) The Smithsonian Institution collaboration is moving forward. We have the significant benefit of Mr. Michael Heyman on our board – the former secretary of the Smithsonian -- as the Secretary’s designee.

While we work together on creating a series of excellent museums at the park and finalizing a formal Smithsonian relationship, we are also beginning this year a series of visiting exhibitions and festivals designed to make the Presidio a pre-eminent cultural destination.

Our first show will open in Spring. “Unseen Treasures – Imperial Russia and the West” comes from the Russian National Museum and illustrates the connection between czarist Russia and California. There is even a direct connection with the de Anza party that established the Presidio – a love story between the daughter of commandante Arguello and a Russian explorer. I won’t tell you how the story ends – you’ll have to come to the exhibit to find out.

- 4) Many other projects have been completed in the past year including:

- ✂✂ Bay area Ridge Trail – first completed “Millennium Trail” link in the USA
  - ✂✂ Trails and bikeways planning
  - ✂✂ WW II Memorial restoration
  - ✂✂ Arguello Gate restoration and trail improvement
  - ✂✂ Information kiosks – which will be installed this year at 17 sites within the Presidio
  - ✂✂ Trust library enhancements
- Management of special events at the Presidio

I think that as you walk, bike or otherwise move around the Presidio, you’ll agree that fiscal year 2000 has been a very productive year --- and that, together, we’ve made great strides in protecting and enhancing the park.

I hasten to add that we have accomplished all of the work that I have mentioned – in collaboration with our friends in other organizations – and at reduced cost to the taxpayer. In 1998, 86% of Presidio funding was from federal appropriations. We have dropped that to 45%. And our budget request for next year will be even less.

As I view the state of the Presidio today, I believe we are on the right course. Although we still have some distance to go to ensure the long-term protection of this place as a national park, I have confidence that, working together, we will help create a brilliant and lasting future for this remarkable Presidio.