

## CRISSY FIELD (AREA B) DISTRICT: BAYFRONT RECREATION AND CULTURAL DESTINATION

### PLANNING CONCEPT

Crissy Field will remain the “front yard” of the Presidio, with uses and improvements that complement the spectacular bayfront park that the Crissy Field shoreline (Area A) has become. Sensitive site enhancements and visitor-oriented uses will transform the area south of Mason Street in “Area B” into a friendly, welcoming place. Important open spaces, historic resources, and natural resources will be protected and their viability ensured. The Presidio Trust will work with the National Park Service to ensure that the successful improvements made to Area A are carefully considered and complemented by activities and changes within Area B.



THE TRUST WILL SEEK APPROPRIATE USES FOR BUILDINGS SOUTH OF MASON STREET THAT COMPLEMENT AND ENHANCE EXISTING BAYFRONT ACTIVITIES

### Character, Land Use, and Open Space

Originally an ecologically rich stretch of coastal marsh, the Crissy Field (Area B) planning district has been dramatically reconfigured by years of use. In 1921, when an airfield was established on the site, Crissy Field was the first and only Army Air Service coast defense station on the West Coast. Military use of Crissy Field continued through the 1970s.

Area A of Crissy Field, managed by the National Park Service, is largely open space that encompasses the historic airfield (newly restored as open space), an 18-acre tidal marsh, wetland, beach and dunes, a shoreline promenade, meandering trails, and dedicated bike lanes along Mason Street. The Area A section of Crissy Field has become a popular bayfront park for recreational activities. The Torpedo Wharf complex is another popular site for visitors, with a newly established warming hut and continued use of the pier for fishing.

The Crissy Field (Area B) planning district south of Mason Street contains about 40 buildings, including the crescent of former airplane hangars and airfield support buildings at the west end, historic warehouses at the east, and the Commissary and PX in the center. (See Figure 3.3.) The former Cavalry Stables, constructed in 1914 to support Army cavalry troops, lie south of the historic airfield in a small forested valley facing the bay. Both Areas A and B of Crissy Field contain known prehistoric sites, and the potential for finding additional prehistoric and historic sites is high.

Some of the district’s natural values, such as the marsh and bay views, are obvious; others are more subtle, taking the form of hidden remnant wetlands and rare serpentine habitats. Important natural vegetation in the planning district includes the most intact and diverse fore dune community in San Francisco. Remnant seeps, creeks, and wetlands are found in the Cavalry Stables area and on the cliffs

adjacent to Doyle Drive. The planning district also contains remnants of Tennessee Hollow, once linked to the former Crissy Marsh; today, its waters reach the bay through storm drains.

The cultural and recreational amenities of the bayfront area will be part of a larger visitor-oriented district composed of Crissy Field and the Main Post. In addition to the shoreline opportunities in Area A, people will be able to walk along a pedestrian promenade on the south side of Mason Street. Preferred building uses will include cultural facilities and educational programs celebrating the area's diverse historical, cultural, and natural resources. Reuse of the Commissary as museum space will be a priority; an alternative museum location would be within the hangars along West Crissy Field.

Some lodging along Crissy Field would be appropriate, and could be accommodated through rehabilitation of Stilwell Hall and adjacent structures, possibly with an annex or addition. Other buildings will offer recreational activities and serve visitor needs. Replacement construction south of Mason Street would require future site-specific public input and analysis. The planning guidelines set forth in this Plan (see below) are intended to ensure that any infill development would be sensitive to the prevailing architectural treatment, scale, massing, and orientation of the historic building clusters.



LOOKING OUT TOWARD HISTORIC CRISSY FIELD

Major open space connections from Crissy Field (Area B) to other areas of the Presidio will be pursued, and existing connections enhanced. Projects will include the restoration and extension of the Tennessee Hollow creek system and riparian corridor to link with the Crissy tidal marsh, and improvements to the connections between the Cavalry Stables area and Crissy Field (Area A). Important remnant natural features, including natural dunes, serpentine habitats, and riparian areas near Doyle Drive, the bluffs, the Cavalry Stables area, and the Tennessee Hollow creek corridor, will be protected and restored in accordance with the *Vegetation Management Plan* (VMP).



FIGURE 3.3  
CRISSY FIELD (AREA B) - BAYFRONT RECREATION AND CULTURAL DESTINATION

- Rehabilitate and reuse the historic line of buildings along Mason Street for uses compatible with open space and recreational opportunities provided in Area A.
- Protect and restore remnant natural systems to the greatest extent possible.
- Pursue appropriate measures to ensure the ongoing health of Crissy Marsh.
- Enhance connections between Tennessee Hollow and Crissy Marsh.
- Consider eventual reuse of the Commissary, along with nearby Building 640, for museum space.
- Pursue the rehabilitation of Stilwell Hall for lodging.
- Ensure that any new construction is sited and configured to be compatible with the historic district.

The Presidio Trust is committed to the long-term health of the Crissy Marsh, and in collaboration with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Association, has initiated a technical study to consider options for ensuring the long-term ecological viability of the marsh. (See Chapter One.)

Preferred uses at the Cavalry Stables will be cultural and educational. The stables and paddock for the U.S. Park Police Mounted Patrol will remain and be a place for telling the story of the cavalry and the role of the Army in the patrol and management of early national parks. The pet cemetery will be maintained at its present size as a point of interest and meaning for the Presidio community. The long-term location of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Park Archives and Records Center, currently located in one of the former stables buildings, will be determined through a park facilities needs assessment.



CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL USES ARE PREFERRED FOR THE HISTORIC  
CAVALRY STABLES

**Access and Circulation**

The Marina Gate at Mason Street will remain the primary entrance to Crissy Field (Area B), supplemented by access from the Main Post along Halleck Street and from the stables area along McDowell Avenue. Mason Street, the historic road that extends from the Marina Gate entrance all the way to Fort Point and that forms the boundary between Areas A and B, will continue to be the central circulation spine of Crissy Field. A north-south connector for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles traveling between the Main Post and Crissy Field will be maintained.

The California Department of Transportation's planning for Doyle Drive will directly affect circulation at Crissy Field. The project could yield several transportation benefits for the Presidio. (See Chapter Two.) Future studies will also explore a possible land connection between the Main Parade Ground at the Main Post across Doyle Drive to Crissy Field (Area B).

New transit services, such as the Presidio internal shuttle service and the MUNI E-Line streetcar if extended from Fisherman's Wharf in the future, could serve future cultural and educational amenities located at Crissy Field (Area B). Another future possibility is a water taxi/ferry service located at Torpedo Wharf in Area A, connecting Crissy Field with other parts of the San Francisco waterfront and areas of visitor interest such as Angel Island and Marin County.

Parking at Crissy Field (Area B) is limited and scattered in lots of varying sizes south of Mason Street. Smaller lots in between and behind buildings supply a moderate amount of parking for the western part of Crissy Field (Area B) and overflow parking for the East Beach area. The Presidio Trust will continue to work with the National Park Service on overall parking management strategies for Crissy Field (Areas A and B).



A CONCEPTUAL SKETCH SHOWING THE REVIVAL OF WEST CRISSY FIELD'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS WITH LIMITED NEW CONSTRUCTION AND A VISITOR FOCUS

## PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR CRISSY FIELD DISTRICT

### 1. Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

*Crescent of Hangar Buildings.* The main organizing feature of the Crissy Field (Area B) district is a 1.4-mile row of former industrial buildings tucked against a bluff overlooking the historic airfield, former rail lines, and marsh lands along old Mason Street. These buildings and related support structures at Crissy's west end provide a backdrop to the restored airfield. At the east end, warehouses mark the Mason Street entrance. The major exception to this pattern is in the PX/Commissary area, where non-historic post-World War II buildings are oriented toward adjacent parking lots rather than to Mason Street and the bay beyond. The relatively large floor plans of these buildings stand in marked contrast to the repeating rhythm of historic Crissy warehouses and hangar structures elsewhere along the row.

*Stables and Bluffs.* The former Cavalry Stables, a distinctive cluster of low-scale brick buildings nestled in a valley break from the west bluffs, are oriented toward the bay, somewhat separate from the rest of Crissy Field. When viewed from the waterfront promenade, the bluffs frame the crescent of buildings against a backdrop of open space. Views from the bluffs include dramatic vistas of the historic airfield, marsh, and San Francisco Bay.

### SPATIAL ORGANIZATION AND LAND PATTERNS GUIDELINE

- Preserve the historic line of buildings along Mason Street at the east and west ends. Reinforce the context of the historic airfield. Reinforce the southern Mason Street edge, in areas set apart from the historic clusters, through modifications or replacement of existing non-historic buildings or other site improvements. Protect and restore remnant natural systems (including coastal bluffs) to the greatest extent possible.

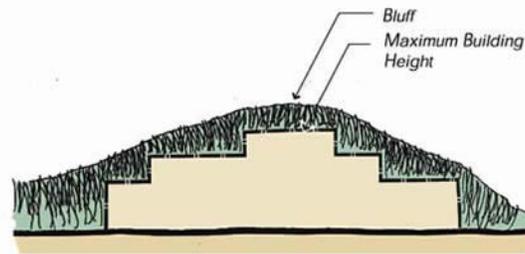


LINEAR ORGANIZATION OF BUILDINGS OVERLOOKING HISTORIC AIRFIELD AND MARSH

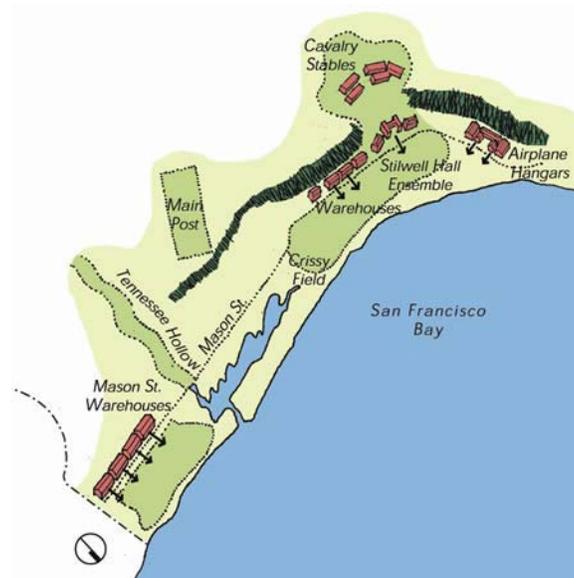
## 2. Buildings and Structures

*Distinct Clusters of Historic Buildings.* The historic buildings in Area B of Crissy Field are organized into distinct clusters facing Mason Street. Air hangars, warehouses, and administrative buildings at the western edge of the historic airfield, and the warehouse cluster at the east end are oriented toward Mason Street and the former rail lines that once served the Presidio's north waterfront. The historic Crissy buildings form a consistent built edge along the south side of Mason Street. The buildings are relatively modest in scale, creating a distinctive rhythm along the street broken only by the setback of historic Stilwell Hall (Building 650) and the adjacent buildings. The former Cavalry Stables are set apart from the main space of Crissy Field, and form a separate building ensemble.

*Open, Industrial Architecture.* The historic buildings at Crissy Field (Area B) are characterized by white walls and red roofs, with an openness that allows for strong connections between interior uses and street life. The stables are low-scale brick buildings with slate roofs.



BUILDING HEIGHT AT BLUFF



DISTINCT HISTORIC BUILDING CLUSTERS

## GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

- Rehabilitate historic building clusters and their landscapes to re-activate the Mason Street edge along the historic airfield.
- Ensure that new buildings or building additions are compatible with adjacent historic buildings in scale, massing, and materials, and that their design integrates the historic relationship of indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Site any new buildings or building additions in a manner that respects historic Mason Street and other aspects of the historic context.
- Protect steep bluff slopes. Preserve views to and from the bluffs and Main Post by keeping the height of any new buildings or building additions below the bluff profile (30 to 45 feet).
- In the siting of new buildings and site improvements, consider and assess effects on both known and as-yet unknown archeological sites at Crissy Field (Area B).

### 3. Open Space/Vegetation/Views

*Bluffs, Dunes, and Marsh Land.* The diverse natural habitats of Crissy Field (Area B) include bluffs, dunes, grassy areas, and marsh. The western coastal bluffs provide an ecologically important backdrop to the lowlands, offering areas of dense forest and native plant communities such as bluff scrub, coastal scrub, live oak woodland, and serpentine scrub. In contrast, the portion of Crissy Field (Areas A and B) north of the bluffs is a flat, open area, with a grassy airfield and undulating dunes.

*Bay Views.* The Mason Street corridor is open, offering views across the restored airfield and marsh to the Golden Gate Bridge and the bay. A few stands of trees exist along the Golden Gate Promenade, and a hedgerow of trees defines the eastern border of Crissy Field (Area B). The gently sloping hollow at the Cavalry Stables offers splendid views under the Doyle Drive viaduct across Crissy Field to the bay beyond.



OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOW COASTAL AND UPLAND HABITAT

## GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE/VEGETATION/VIEWS

- Create safe and inviting open space connections between Crissy Field (Area B) and other parts of the park (i.e., Main Post, Letterman, and Fort Scott).
- Preserve Mason Street as an open streetscape with expansive views. Retain the “open” setting and feel of Crissy Field; limit the introduction of vast, new landscape plantings.
- Explore options for open space connections between the Main Parade Ground at the Main Post and central Crissy Field (Area B) as part of Doyle Drive’s reconstruction.
- Reconstruct Doyle Drive to preserve views to and from the bluffs and Main Post, and maximize views along Halleck Street, Tennessee Hollow, and from the Cavalry Stables.
- Preserve the hollow at McDowell Avenue (where the Cavalry Stables are located) as a grassy, open clearing surrounded by forested steep slopes.
- Protect and restore the ecological communities on the western bluffs.



THE PRESIDIO TRUST IS COMMITTED TO THE LONG-TERM HEALTH OF CRISSY  
MARSH

#### 4. Circulation and Access

*Mason Street.* Mason Street, where a rail line once connected Crissy Field (Area B) to Fort Mason and lower Fort Mason, is the main vehicle circulation route through Crissy Field. The principal access point is from the east, through the Marina Gate.

*Connections from the South.* Connections to Mason Street from the south are along Gorgas Avenue (connecting to Letterman), Halleck Street (connecting to the Main Post), and McDowell Avenue (connecting to the Cavalry Stables).

#### GUIDELINES FOR CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

- Maintain historic Mason Street as the primary east-west circulation spine at Crissy Field (Area B) and enhance pedestrian and bike access.
- Enhance pedestrian connections to the Main Post, the Letterman complex, and the Cavalry Stables.
- Enhance access with transit links to the rest of the Presidio and the city.
- Consider establishing new parking areas for Crissy Field and Main Post visitors in locations that are unobtrusive yet readily accessible to activity areas.



MASON STREET AND KEY CONNECTIONS