

LETTERMAN DISTRICT: RESIDENTIAL AND WORKING CAMPUS

PLANNING CONCEPT

The Letterman district is the most urban of the planning districts, and has a long history of intensive land use and development. It will continue to be a compact, mixed-use office and residential area with support services, visitor amenities, and transit access. Historic buildings will be rehabilitated. Infill construction, which would be for residential uses with some supporting non-residential, will complement historic building clusters and landscapes. The pedestrian-friendly, campus-like environment will be enhanced, and a network of public open spaces, including a new seven-acre park in the eastern part of the district and a restored Tennessee Hollow in the west, will complement the central historic working core. On the eastern edge, a major facility will be the Letterman Digital Arts Center, which is currently under development.

Character, Land Use, and Open Space

Situated at the main entrance to the Presidio, the Letterman district is the site of the former Letterman Hospital, which was established in 1898 and provided medical services to soldiers for almost a century. The original hospital complex, which included hospital wards, clinics, offices, warehouses, and ancillary buildings, has been significantly altered over time. Remnant historic buildings and an orthogonal street layout create the district's distinct urban character. (See Figure 3.4.) Most of the surviving historic buildings and cultural landscape features are in the western part of the district. The eastern portion of the district contains the 23-acre site of the future Letterman Digital Arts Center. The main entrance to the Presidio, the historic Lombard Gate, is located just east of the 23-acre site. The remnant Tennessee Hollow stream forms the western edge of the district.

Historic buildings will be rehabilitated, and the Letterman district will remain a mixed-use community with office space, housing, and support services including food service. The 23-acre, 900,000-square-foot Letterman Digital Arts Center will be more consistent with the scale and architectural character of the historic district than the buildings it replaces. The Digital Arts Center will provide a large, public open space at Lyon and Lombard Streets, replacing an asphalt parking lot and offering opportunities for passive recreation. Parking will be provided underground.



THE LETTERMAN DISTRICT WILL BE A VIBRANT AREA SUPPORTING OFFICE, RESIDENTIAL AND VISITOR USE



- Generalized Areas of Development
- Historic Building
- Non-Historic Building
- Digital Arts Complex (Concept Design)
- Planning District Boundary
- Area B Boundary

Planning District Area	60 acres
Existing Total Building Area	1,360,000 square feet
Maximum Permitted Building Area	up to 1,490,000 square feet
Maximum Demolition	30,000 square feet
Maximum New Construction	160,000 square feet
Land Use Preferences	office, residential, and service retail

FIGURE 3.4

LETTERMAN - RESIDENTIAL AND WORKING CAMPUS

- Re-establish the historic courtyard and connect it with other open spaces and formal landscapes.
- Use new construction to articulate the character and density of the historic district.
- Consider removal of non-historic dormitories (Building 1028) and replacement with more compatible housing west of the historic hospital complex.
- Maintain and enhance the pedestrian scale and mixed-use campus setting.
- Create a new entrance from Doyle Drive into the park as part of the Doyle Drive reconstruction.
- Protect and restore Tennessee Hollow.
- Retain historic Lombard Gate as the primary, formal entrance to the park.

The central courtyard of the former hospital complex will be re-established by relocating existing parking and by installing landscaping. The Trust will consider removal and replacement of non-historic housing in previously developed areas west of the historic complex, to provide more compatible residential structures close to work sites. These proposed changes would enhance the historic setting and reinforce the coherent, pedestrian-oriented character of the complex.

Access and Circulation

The Letterman district will become more accessible via all modes of transportation; transit and transportation improvements will allow access without a car. The Lombard Gate will remain the ceremonial entrance for visitors, while a redesigned Gorgas/Richardson entry will be used mainly by residents and employees.



A CONCEPTUAL SKETCH SHOWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS AND CONTEXTUAL DESIGN WITHIN THE HISTORIC HOSPITAL COMPLEX

The Presidio's internal shuttle system, as well as improved pedestrian and bicycle paths, will establish better connections between the Letterman district and other areas of the Presidio. The historic entrances at Chestnut Street (pedestrian only) and Greenwich Street (pedestrian and bicycle) will be re-established. Roads within the complex will be converted to pedestrian use whenever possible, and a hierarchy of local streets will be established.

Historic streetscapes will be preserved and rehabilitated. Alternatives currently under consideration for the reconfiguration of Doyle Drive anticipate a new Presidio entrance in the northwestern part of the Letterman district, which will significantly improve vehicular access. The new entrance will be designed in a manner that complements other site enhancements envisioned for the district.

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR LETTERMAN DISTRICT

The planning guidelines respond to the key character-defining features of the Letterman district. The Planning and Design Guidelines for New Development and Uses on 23 Acres Within the Letterman Complex will guide new construction on the Letterman Digital Arts Center site as well as undertakings (short of new construction) for the Letterman district as a whole.

1. Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

Letterman Hospital. The Letterman district has a history of intensive land use and development that has left strong physical imprints on the site. The historic Letterman Hospital established in 1898 was an inward-looking complex, with a fine-grained pattern of streets and a dense grid of connected medical pavilions stepping down the site's gentle slope and organized around a central courtyard. By 1980, about two-thirds of the original complex had been demolished, and the courtyard had been turned into a parking lot. Just north of the historic hospital, a group of historic hospital service buildings and a set of warehouses oriented toward the rail line survive largely intact.

Panama Pacific International Exposition Site. In 1915, the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) took place on filled lands that included the east end of the Letterman district. The PPIE featured an open, axial layout of freestanding pavilions organized around the dome of the Palace of Fine Arts, the only landmark structure from the fair that still stands today. The site was redeveloped in the 1960s for the Letterman Army Medical Center and the Letterman Army Institute of Research, and today is the site of the future Letterman Digital Arts Center that is currently under development.

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION AND LAND PATTERNS GUIDELINE

- Re-establish the active character of the historic hospital district by rehabilitating the Thornburgh Road/Gorgas Avenue buildings and restoring key open spaces. Consider compatible infill construction to reinforce the historic character and density of the district. Enhance connections to adjacent planning districts



CONTRAST BETWEEN FINE-GRAINED PATTERN OF HISTORIC HOSPITAL AND OPEN LAYOUT OF PPIE SITE

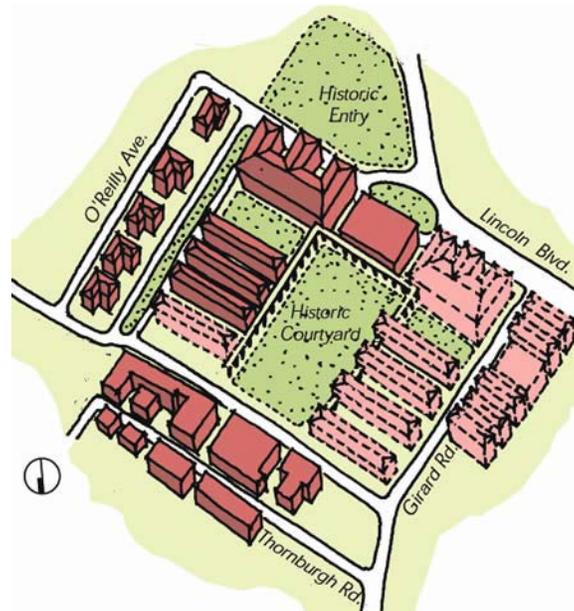
2. Buildings and Structures

Historic Hospital Building Layout. The historic Letterman Hospital site is defined by an historically significant building pattern. The careful orthogonal arrangement of narrow hospital pavilion buildings was designed to maximize natural building ventilation. Enclosed galleries linked the individual pavilions, forming connected building ensembles. The entire complex surrounded a central courtyard.

Building Materials and Colors. Buildings at the Letterman district reflect a variety of architectural styles, but are typically simple, low-rise military structures with minimal decoration. A common color scheme and palette of building materials unify the diverse collection of buildings.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

- Retain and reinforce the fine-grained historic building patterns of the district.
- Orient new buildings parallel to the street in keeping with the rhythm and character of historic buildings. Any new building forms should be simple and functional in the tradition of military architecture found at Letterman and throughout the Presidio.
- Ensure that any new buildings or building additions respect the historic building setting, scale, and design principles (e.g., rectangular building arrangements enclosing outdoor courtyards, slender hallways or breezeways between buildings). Scale, height, massing, color, and materials of new construction should be compatible with historic building clusters. Maximum height should be between 30 feet to 45 feet.
- Ensure that infill buildings in the western historic portion of the site respect the edge of the historic former Letterman Hospital courtyard.



HISTORIC HOSPITAL CHARACTERIZED BY BUILDINGS AROUND CENTRAL COURTYARD

3. Open Space/Vegetation/Views

Topography and Views. The topography of the Letterman district falls gradually from south to north toward San Francisco Bay, offering uninterrupted views of the bay, Crissy Field, and the Palace of Fine Arts. This slope has guided development of the district throughout its long history.

Contrast Between Designed and Natural Landscapes. The designed landscape of the Letterman complex provides a rich cultural context and a sense of place, and sits in stark contrast to the Presidio's forest and native plant communities. The district's open space has historically consisted mainly of small formal open spaces with ornamental plantings and formally planted streets. Fragments of this vegetation remain to this day and provide the framework for future landscape design. Tennessee Hollow forms the district's western boundary and is an important component of its natural and cultural history.



FORMAL OPEN SPACES CONTRASTING WITH MEANDERING ENTRY DRIVE AND STREAM CORRIDOR

GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE/VEGETATION/VIEWS

- Ensure that planning and design efforts consider connections and relationships to adjacent districts - the Main Post and Crissy Field (Area B).
- Design new landscape elements in keeping with historic character-defining elements. Consider new plantings as a part of the overall design of the site to articulate and better define historic open spaces and entry sequences.
- Maintain or restore the following formal spaces as key components of the Letterman open space system: the seven-acre park in the 23-acre Letterman Digital Arts Center complex, the former Letterman Courtyard (currently a parking lot), the historic hospital's entry and formal landscape, and the historic street and pedestrian corridor along O'Reilly Avenue.
- Restore and protect Tennessee Hollow as a vibrant ecological corridor and a unique backdrop to the developed environment of the Letterman district. Coordinate restoration of Tennessee Hollow with future planning for the Main Post, Crissy Field (Area B), Doyle Drive, and the Letterman district to ensure that the corridor provides an ecologically rich and complex buffer between planning districts.

- Locate any new buildings to preserve and frame historic views. Important view corridors include those oriented toward the Palace of Fine Arts and along Thornburgh Road toward the Golden Gate Bridge and the city skyline.

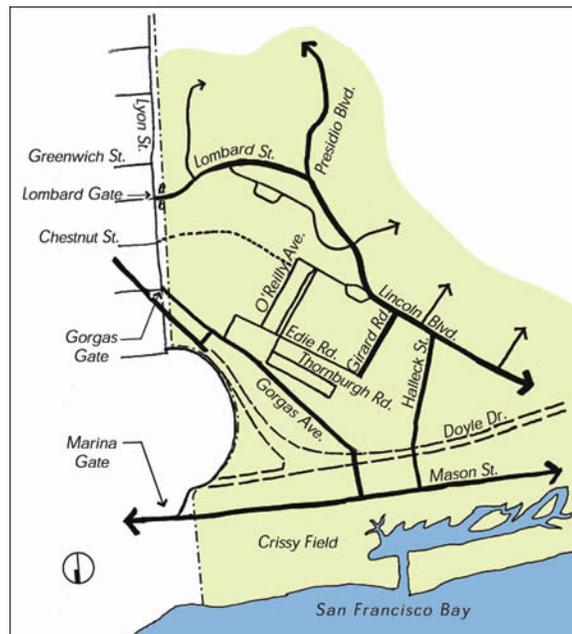
4. Circulation and Access

Lombard Gate. Letterman has always been the most accessible area of the Presidio. The Lombard Gate has been the main entrance to the Letterman district and the Presidio for most of the site's history.

Historic Access Points. The Gorgas/Richardson entry is the historic service access that brought injured soldiers and goods to the district during wartime via rail connections from Fort Mason. The pedestrian gate at the end of Chestnut Street was also once an important connection, as was the trolley car route that entered the Presidio at Greenwich Street and ended at the southern edge of the historic Letterman Hospital.

GUIDELINES FOR CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

- Retain the historic Lombard Gate entrance as a primary, formal entrance for park visitors.
- Ensure that a compatibly-designed new entrance from Doyle Drive serves as the main vehicular entry for tenants and visitors to the Letterman complex.
- Ensure that the orientation of streets and buildings respects the orthogonal grid and historic patterns of spatial organization.
- Preserve Gorgas Avenue as a link to Crissy Field (Area B) and as the primary access for employees of the Letterman Digital Arts Center.
- Re-establish the historic pedestrian entry at Chestnut Street and provide access for pedestrians and bicycles (no vehicles) at the historic Greenwich Street entry.



HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE PRESIDIO