

## MAIN POST DISTRICT: VISITOR AND COMMUNITY CENTER

### PLANNING CONCEPT

The Main Post will remain the heart of the Presidio; it will be a focal point for visitor orientation and a community center where people live, work, and enjoy themselves. The Main Post's rich collection of historic buildings and landscapes will be the backdrop for visitor programs and a setting for businesses, organizations, and Presidio community services. Significant open spaces will be preserved and restored.



THE MAIN POST IS THE TRADITIONAL “HEART OF THE PRESIDIO” AND WILL REMAIN THE PARK’S VITAL CENTER

### Character, Land Use, and Open Space

In 1776, early Spanish explorers chose the gently sloping land in front of what is now the Officers' Club as the site for a new presidio, or garrison, for their northern frontier. Since that time, the Main Post has undergone continuous expansion and redevelopment in its 225-year history as the administrative center of the Presidio. Varied architectural styles and formal landscapes illustrate the complex layering of construction over time, creating an apt setting for telling many of the Presidio's stories. Today, 138 buildings (110 historic and 28 non-historic) accommodate administrative, community, and residential uses as well as support services. Many of these buildings are recently rehabilitated and host new park tenants and programs; many more remain to be rehabilitated and reused. (See Figure 3.2.)

Most first-time visitors will want to begin their experiences at the Main Post. At the visitor center they will learn about the important resources and stories of the Presidio. Here, visitors can also receive assistance in planning their visits and derive a greater understanding of the Main Post's relationship to other areas of the Presidio as well as the district's military architecture and history.

The stately aura of the Main Post will be enlivened with special events and festivities to commemorate the Presidio's past and celebrate its future. Pavement on the Main Parade Ground will be reduced, and this public open space will provide a setting for ceremonies and celebrations that complement the surrounding historic buildings.

Preferred land uses will include offices, cultural/educational uses, and housing, complemented by small-scale lodging and conference space, recreation, and some supporting retail services. Existing administrative and operational functions, such as the fire station, Presidio Trust headquarters, National Park Service Visitor Center, and child care center, will remain at the Main Post. The

Officers' Club will continue to be used for meetings, cultural events, and community activities. Existing historic buildings at the Main Post will be rehabilitated and leased.

The Main Post's historic buildings, which represent the Presidio's broadest range of architectural styles, will be preserved and rehabilitated. Some new construction may be considered in the future to reinforce historic patterns of spatial organization and complement the rehabilitation of adjacent historic buildings. Building additions or new infill construction will be carefully integrated into the post's landscape and carried out in accordance with the planning guidelines set forth in this Plan (see below).

The "greening" of the Main Parade Ground and commemoration of the historic El Presidio would create a new focus for a variety of visitor activities, and transform the quality of the open spaces. Non-historic buildings may be removed to restore historic view corridors or settings. Archeological remains will be investigated and used to help interpret the post's evolution.



THE PRESIDIGO SHUTTLE WILL CONNECT WITH REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT AT A NEW HUB ON THE MAIN POST

### **Access and Circulation**

The Main Post will be the central arrival area for Presidio visitors, and will become a lively pedestrian district. Site improvements that enhance the historic setting and open spaces will provide a clearer hierarchy of vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes. An extensive network of pedestrian and bicycle paths will be established to link the Main Post and Crissy Field. Historic circulation patterns, including pedestrian connections between areas of the Main Post, will follow historic routes as much as possible. Important streetscapes along Montgomery Street and Funston Avenue will be rehabilitated. Primary access to the Main Post will be from Lincoln and Arguello Boulevards.

Internal shuttle bus routes through the Presidio will start and end at a new transit hub/transfer point at the north end of the Main Post. The transit hub will provide transit and orientation information for visitors, and will include a waiting area and public restrooms. The Trust will cooperate with local transit agencies to improve public transit to the Main Post and a shuttle bus system will connect the transit hub to other major destinations. The reconstruction of Doyle Drive could reconnect the Main Post to Crissy Field both physically, by allowing for more access points between the two districts, and visually, by restoring important views of the shoreline and bay.



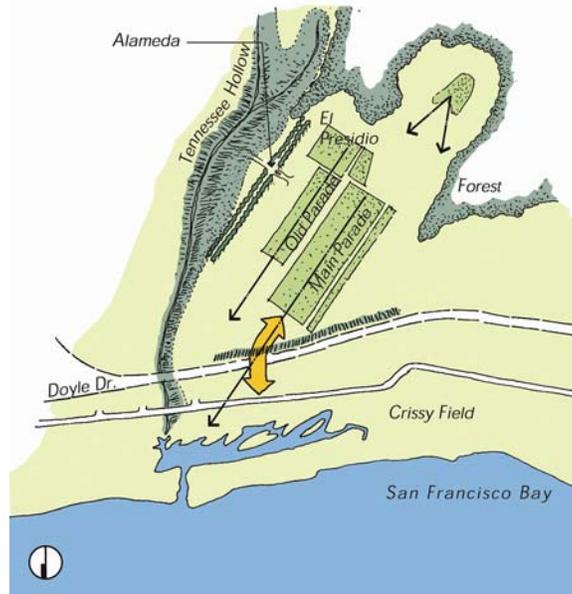
FIGURE 3.2  
MAIN POST - VISITOR AND COMMUNITY CENTER

- Maintain the Main Post as the heart of the Presidio through rehabilitation, reuse, and interpretation of historic buildings, formal historic landscapes, and natural and archeological resources.
- Preserve and refine open spaces by “greening” the Main Parade Ground, commemorating the original El Presidio, and enhancing physical and visual connections to Crissy Field.
- Establish a transit hub at the north end of the Main Post to provide safe and convenient access to transit.
- Establish the Officers’ Club as a venue for meetings, cultural events, and community activities.
- Continue existing Presidio administrative functions.
- Support National Park Service Visitor Center and interpretive functions.
- Ensure that new construction is sited and configured to be compatible with the historic district.

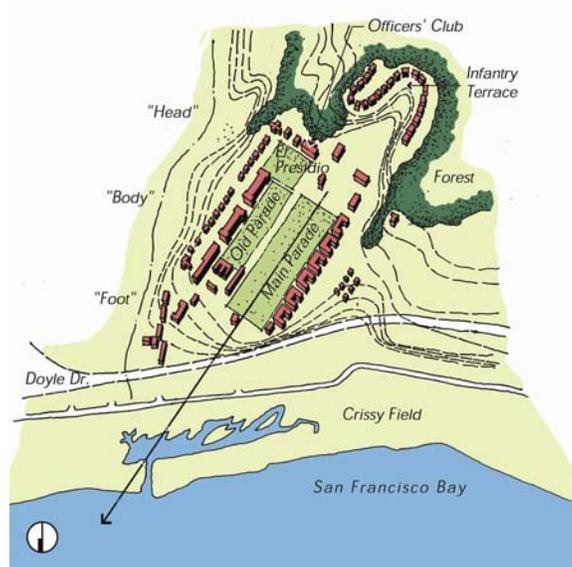
# PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR MAIN POST DISTRICT

## 1. Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

*A Long History of Development and Change.* Compared to other districts in the Presidio, the Main Post has undergone a great deal of development and change. Through all of the Presidio's major building campaigns, however, the Main Post has always been organized on a northeast/southwest grid framing central open spaces or parade grounds. This rectilinear organization has stood in contrast to the curving forms of the surrounding hills and valleys. Today, the Main Post is distinguished by clusters of buildings from every era of its history. These clusters are organized around three historic open spaces: the original El Presidio plaza, a Civil War-era parade ground (Old Parade), and the Main Parade Ground built in the 1890s. Although all three historic open spaces are still visible and still convey the military character inherent in the post's orthogonal organization, their boundaries have been somewhat compromised. (See Figure 3.2.)



THREE HISTORIC OPEN SPACES

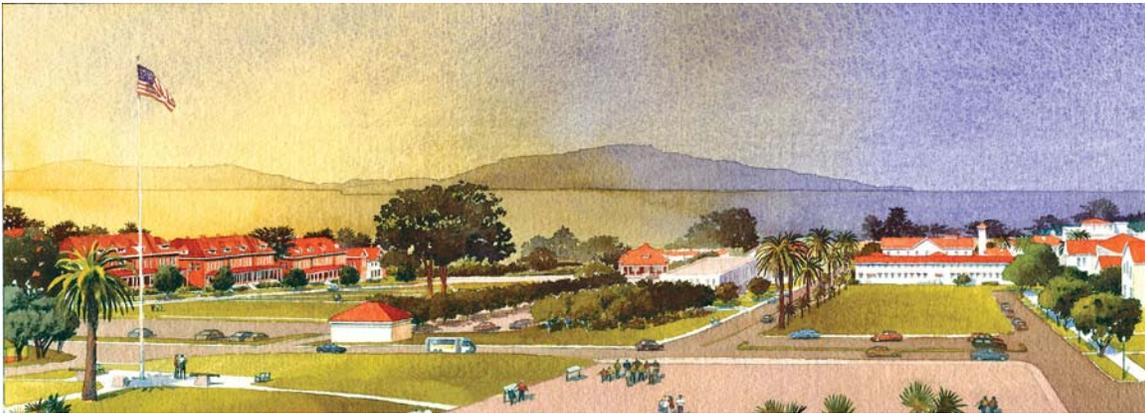


HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION ORIENTED TOWARD THE BAY

*Hierarchical Organization.* Another characteristic of the Main Post is its hierarchical organization from top to bottom (south to north). The “head” of the post is located at the south end, with commanding views across the Main Post and beyond to the bay. It includes the Infantry Terrace housing, chapel, Officers’ Club, and theater. The mid-section, or “body,” of the post consists of parallel, repetitive rows of barracks that step down the gentle slope and face the parade grounds. The north end, or “foot,” of the post is a collection of service-oriented buildings set atop a bluff overlooking Crissy Field and the bay.

#### SPATIAL ORGANIZATION AND LAND PATTERNS GUIDELINE

- Maintain the Main Post as the “heart of the Presidio” through rehabilitation, reuse, and interpretation of historic buildings, open spaces, and archeological resources. Consider selective placement of compatibly-scaled infill construction and/or landscape treatments to strengthen the articulation of the historic open spaces and provide a rich visitor experience.



A CONCEPTUAL SKETCH SHOWING THE KEY GOALS OF “GREENING” THE MAIN POST, COMMEMORATING HISTORIC EL PRESIDIO, AND IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

## 2. Buildings and Structures

*Archeological Resources.* The Main Post contains a wealth of archeological resources, most notably remnants from the Spanish/Mexican “El Presidio.”

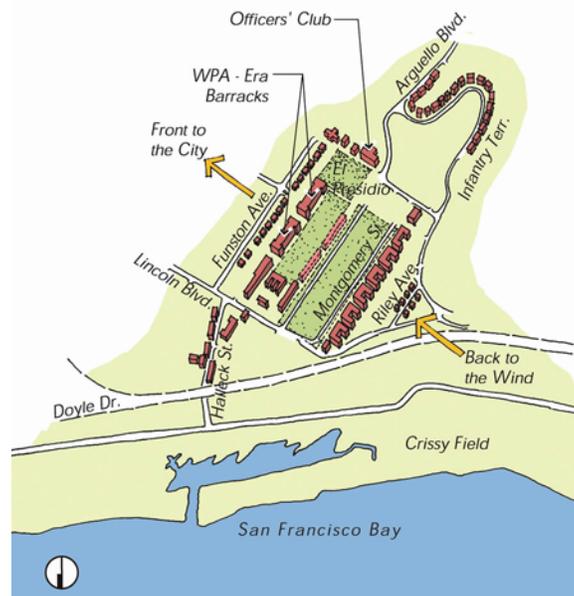
*Distinct Building Groups.* The Main Post consists of several distinct building ensembles that contrast in age, building scale and type, and relationship to the landscape. The most dominant ensembles are the parallel rows of repeating structures that comprise the body of the post. These buildings are oriented along the northeast/southwest grid established by the first Spanish colonial quadrangle.

*Architectural Styles.* The Main Post contains the broadest range of building styles found at the Presidio. These structures represent the Presidio’s major building campaigns from 1776 to the present. Styles range from brick Colonial Revival and stucco Mission Revival to Queen Anne style and World War II temporary wood frame structures.

*Distinct “Fronts” and “Backs.”* Another characteristic of Main Post buildings is their orientation. The buildings all share a distinctly two-sided character, with a ceremonial front side facing a formal street and/or parade and a rear side facing an alley or service area.

### GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

- Research, protect, enhance, and interpret the significant archeological resources of El Presidio as a more visible element of the Main Post.
- Through coordinated rehabilitation of buildings and adjacent historic landscapes, retain and enhance the key historic building clusters, streetscapes, and neighborhoods that define the Main Post.
- Re-establish historic connections between buildings and their associated parade grounds and open spaces.
- Orient new buildings or structures to reinforce the historic framework and layout of the Main Post. Scale, massing, height, materials, and color of infill construction must be compatible with the character of adjacent buildings. Maximum height should be no more than 30 feet to 45 feet.



A COLLECTION OF DISTINCT BUILDING GROUPS

### **3. Open Space/Vegetation/Views**

*Distinct Landscape Elements.* The landscape and buildings of the Main Post reflect nearly 225 years of human activity. The forest on the steeply sloping southern hillsides provides a dramatic backdrop to the post and striking contrasts to the formal parade grounds. The open bluff along the Main Post's northern edge offers spectacular views of San Francisco Bay and the land features beyond. Small remnants of the once ecologically rich Tennessee Hollow creek and riparian corridor punctuate the eastern edge of the post.

*Open Spaces, Unique Places.* The Main Post includes ceremonial spaces as well as intimate ones. District features include the parade grounds, the Funston Avenue streetscape, and the Montgomery Street barracks, as well as remnants of the historic entry circle, garden, and pathway (known as the "Alameda") at Presidio Boulevard/Funston Avenue. Large, monumental spaces are punctuated by features like the flagpole, the firehouse, the former powder magazine, and the Centennial Tree. These landmarks add human scale to the landscape, have symbolic value, and help orient visitors.



## THE PLAN PROPOSES IMPROVING PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE MAIN POST

### GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE/VEGETATION/VIEWS

- Retain and enhance historically significant open spaces such as the El Presidio plaza, the Civil War-era Old Parade Ground, the Main Parade Ground, and Pershing Square; designed landscape features such as the historic Alameda entrance; streetscapes such as Infantry Terrace, Halleck Street, Funston Avenue, and Montgomery Street; and the Presidio Chapel landscape.
- Restore the Main Parade Ground and reinforce the edges of historic open spaces through new design features.
- Commemorate and/or delineate the location of significant historic elements of the Main Post such as the El Presidio walls and building footprints and the Alameda entrance.
- Improve pedestrian and visual connections between the Main Post and Crissy Field (Area B). Reinforce the historic connection along Halleck Street. Incorporate an open space connection to Crissy Field (Area B) as part of the planning for reconstruction of Doyle Drive.
- Maintain small structures and symbolic objects, such as the Centennial Tree located on the Main Parade Ground, the cannons, and the flagpole, that evoke a sense of the Main Post's history.
- Re-establish historic views and visual connections, such as those between Infantry Terrace and the Main Parade Ground. Retain and enhance views from the Main Post to the bay.

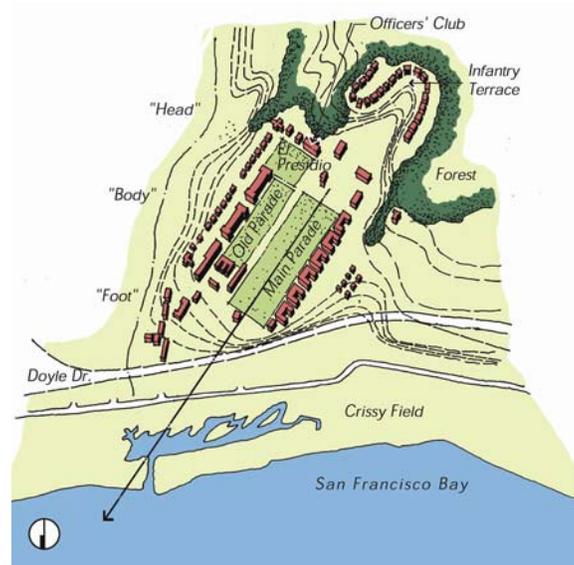
### 4. Circulation and Access

*Where All Roads Meet.* Throughout its history, the Main Post has been a destination. From the earliest days of the Spanish garrison, roads from Mission Dolores, Yerba Buena (today, downtown San Francisco), and the Castillo came together at the Main Post. These roads laid the foundation for today's primary streets. Today, the Main Post continues to serve as a hub for Presidio tenants, residents, and visitors. Most of the historic roads and paths remain, including remnants from the Alameda entrance at Presidio Boulevard, as well as Funston Avenue and Lover's Lane.

*Street Patterns and Multiple Entries.* As the Main Post expanded, a rectilinear pattern of streets grew outward from the El Presidio plaza, establishing a hierarchy of entries. Key entries include the former Alameda, the Halleck Street service corridor to the north, the southern arrival at Arguello Boulevard, the Lincoln Boulevard/Montgomery Street guardhouse checkpoint, and Sheridan Avenue to the west.

## GUIDELINES FOR CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

- Simplify the road network, clarify the circulation system, and establish a hierarchy of routes at the Main Post, maintaining Lincoln Boulevard and Arguello Boulevard as the primary entrance roads to the post.
- Retain the historic Halleck Street connection to Crissy Field, and enhance this connection for pedestrian use.
- Consider removal or reduction in size of large surface parking lots. Consider options for parking to serve visitors and tenants. Locate smaller surface lots near buildings they serve.
- Develop a pedestrian and bicycle path network and connect key points within the Main Post. Consider limiting automobile traffic to re-establish “El Presidio” as a pedestrian zone.
- Develop a transit hub for internal shuttle and regional transit connections in an accessible and recognizable place at the north end of the Main Post.



ORTHOGONAL STREET SYSTEM DEVELOPED FROM EL PRESIDIO QUADRANGLE