

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2008

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Neighborhoods Oppose Fisher Art Museum in Presidio

San Francisco neighborhood groups are seeking city government help to address issues related to controversial projects planned for the Presidio.

A resolution introduced yesterday to the Board of Supervisors by Sup. Michela Alioto-Pier asks that the Presidio and the City/County of San Francisco Transportation Work Group analyze traffic and transit issues involving huge increases in projected visitors to the park if the projects are approved.

On June 3, the Board of Supervisors is expected to vote on a companion resolution establishing a watchdog coalition to focus on Presidio projects, including a contemporary art museum underwritten by Gap founder Donald Fisher, a large hotel, and movie multiplex within the park's Main Post. Sponsored by Alioto-Pier, the resolution responds to residents' outcry about the Presidio Trust's development plans and their negative impact upon the historic park and nearby neighborhoods.

The proposed Presidio Neighborhood Work Group, composed of representatives from key neighborhoods, city departments and the Mayor's Office, would address massive new construction on the Presidio's Main Post. The group would consider proposed changes to the Presidio Trust Management Plan (PTMP) and the Trust's Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) related to the plans.

The Trust will release the SEIS in early June, and has scheduled a public meeting on July 14 to solicit comments on its findings.

In a letter sent last week to Sup. Alioto-Pier, the Marina Community Association joined with the National Park Service, Cow Hollow Association, Presidio Historical Association, and nearly 50 more neighborhood groups affiliated with the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods (CSFN) and Neighborhood Associations for Presidio Planning (NAPP) to oppose the current plans for the modernistic 100,000 sq. ft. contemporary art museum to be located on the Main Post of the Presidio, a national historic park.

Donald Fisher has proposed the museum to house his private art collection on the Main Post, which was founded in 1776. The Marina Association cited its concerns with the museum design, location and transportation/parking issues as well as the fairness and transparency of the process by which the Presidio Trust is evaluating Fisher's controversial proposal.

“Mounting opposition to the plans proposed by the Presidio Trust and Donald Fisher reflects the strong feelings of the true owners of the Presidio -- the citizens -- that this unique historic park must not be destroyed,” said Presidio Historical Association (PHA) President Gary Widman.

“The Trust is supposed to preserve and restore this most historic area, not urbanize it,” Widman said. The historical association, a small nonprofit, has spearheaded the opposition to keep the Fisher Art Museum off of the Main Post.

The Cow Hollow Association, which represents more than 1800 residences adjacent to the Presidio, had earlier issued a strong statement opposing Fisher’s museum being built on the Presidio’s old Main Post.

In mid-April, CSFN, with more than 30 sponsoring associations, passed a resolution opposing a large museum on the Main Post. The Coalition expressed its concerns with the threat new construction poses to the site’s historic integrity. The resolution also asks that the Presidio Trust develop traffic, transportation and parking plans that could affect the neighborhoods.

The National Park Service expressed serious concerns about the proposed new construction on the Main Post to the Presidio Trust in early April, asserting that the museum and hotel would have an “adverse effect” upon the park, imperiling its National Historic Landmark (NHL) status.

On May 16, the National Trust For Historic Preservation, a prominent nonprofit organization, sent the Presidio Trust a letter slamming changes to the Main Post that would result from the Fisher Art Museum, hotel and movie multiplex.

Other critics of the Trust’s plans include the Descendants of the Anza and Portola Expeditions, preeminent San Francisco landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, and Charles A. Fracchia, Founder and President Emeritus of the San Francisco Museum & Historical Society.

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Founded in the 1950s, the nonprofit Presidio Historical Association (PHA) has worked in cooperation with the National Park Service and Presidio Trust since 1994 to advocate for preserving the integrity of the Presidio’s National Historic Landmark District, located within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). PHA created a museum for the Army when it was based at the Presidio. Earlier, PHA helped restore historic Fort Point at the base of the Golden Gate Bridge.