

STATEMENT OF CRAIG MIDDLETON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESIDIO TRUST

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 14, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address members of the Committee about the work of the Presidio Trust, the federal government corporation created in 1996 to preserve the Presidio of San Francisco as an enduring resource for the American people.

Today, I want to leave you with two key messages:

The Presidio Trust model for sustaining the park independent of taxpayer support is working. The Trust is on track to become financially self-sufficient by FY2013. The Trust has also worked effectively to leverage federal dollars to attract private dollars to the park; the current ratio of private investment to federal investment is greater than 4 to 1.

The Presidio is becoming a national park site of distinction. Its unique community of 7,000 people living and working within the park is thriving and helping to sustain the park; the challenges associated with the largest historic preservation project in the country are being met; opportunities to make connections with adjacent urban populations are being pursued. And the scenic beauty of the Presidio is being enhanced.

At the Presidio Trust, we take great stock in measuring success. While there is significant focus on accomplishing financial goals and meeting statutory requirements, we also measure progress against four “pillars” that define our work. These pillars – environment, history, community and service – are lenses through which we view and evaluate the totality of the work at the Presidio.

Environment: Our aim is to transform a centuries-old military post into a national park site of distinction, distinguished environmentally not only by its restored plant and animal habitats, but also by a track record of using sustainable practices in the redevelopment of historic buildings and infrastructure. To this end, we recently received the Presidio’s first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold level certification for an historic rehabilitation project from the U.S. Green Building Council. This will be the first historic rehab in San Francisco to receive a gold certification in this category. Nine additional historic rehabs in the Presidio are expected to achieve LEED certification in the coming months.

A dedication to environment has also resulted in a partnership that will convert a group of long-empty historic buildings into a green campus for organizations working in the emerging “green” economy. The campus will produce all of its own energy and will result in a net carbon footprint of zero.

History: Standing sentinel over much of the development of the American West – from 1776 through to the present era – the Presidio has many stories to tell. Trust archeologists, partnering with educators from Stanford University and the University of California, are painstakingly uncovering the original foundations of *el Presidio*, the Spanish fort that preceded the American base. These excavations provide an opportunity to teach people – particularly 4th graders – about the history of California and the West. Last year, over 1,500 children participated in hands-on classroom activities that have been set up in temporary quarters near the *el Presidio* site.

This year, a new archeology learning center is under construction that will enable the Trust to house and expand our offerings to young people. Next door, the historic post Officers’ Club will become a Heritage Center, where the public will learn about the varied threads of Presidio history and their relationship to the development of the Western United States.

Community: Unique among national park sites, the Presidio houses a community of tenant organizations and residents who provide the park its financial sustenance and offer a nucleus of daily activity that has brought back much of the vibrancy of the earlier military community. Today, over 2,700 people live in the park’s former military housing, and more than 200 organizations have located in Presidio buildings, attracted by the Presidio’s beauty and historic significance. New and refurbished recreational amenities – 14 neighborhood playgrounds, 6 ball fields, running and biking trails, upgraded landscapes – have brought benefits to the surrounding community of San Francisco and have helped make the Presidio one of the most sought-after places to live in the area.

Proximity to urban populations has enabled the Presidio to serve a broad and diverse mix of people through programs in the park. A recent exhibition about America’s role in the Philippines during the Spanish American War provided an opportunity to work closely with local Philippine-Americans; the heroic Presidio story of Nisei patriotism through their involvement in a Military Intelligence School designed to crack Japanese codes during WWII has provided opportunities to connect with the local Japanese-American community. The Trust-funded “Camping at the Presidio” program, operated in partnership with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, has served over 2,400 children from underserved neighborhoods, offering them the opportunity to camp under the stars and enjoy the camaraderie of a campfire.

Service: The Trust believes that the legacy of service is perhaps the Presidio’s most important quality. Last year, on Veterans’ Day, the Speaker of the House joined us to commemorate a new overlook perched atop a hill at the edge of the Presidio’s historic national cemetery, and to rededicate ourselves to the ethic of service to country and

community. Last month, we joined with our partners, Swords to Plowshares, a highly-effective organization assisting veterans, in a day of service working in the park. Volunteer programs offer opportunities for people to serve in the park and last year resulted in over 40,000 hours of stewardship work in the Presidio. We look to the theme of service as the inspiration for new uses in the visually-stunning campus at Fort Scott, a former station for coastal artillery troops, situated in the Presidio on a bluff overlooking the Pacific.

There has never been any question that the Trust would need partners – financial and programmatic – to accomplish the daunting task of transforming America’s longest continuously operating military post into a national park site. The Presidio, with its antiquated structures and infrastructure, and with its share of environmental contaminants, shares many of the challenges faced by communities all over this country who are dealing with the decommissioning of military bases. The National Park Service in 1994 estimated the capital needs of the Presidio as totaling over \$1 billion; we now know that this estimate understated the costs. We know that it is essential to leverage federal funds with investments of private and philanthropic dollars, and we accomplish this with partners.

Private revenue and tenant investment in the Presidio totals \$1.2 billion over the past decade, more than four times the federal investment made during the same period. Many have funded the rehabilitation of the historic buildings that they have leased; many are also offering public programming that supports the four pillars that I mentioned earlier. Some are philanthropic organizations or individual donors who have underwritten key park improvements, such as a trails program and campground. As we look ahead, we anticipate that the Presidio will continue to be distinguished by its ability to attract partners who provide talent and dollars for transformative work in the park.

Appropriations are essential to this partnership strategy, and to achieving the objective of financial self-sufficiency. Thanks to the strong support of this Committee, the strategy is working. As a result of careful investment, the Presidio Trust has reduced its reliance on federal dollars to fund park operations. Over the past 12 years, appropriations as a percentage of the overall budget have been reduced from over 95% in FY1998 to less than 20% in FY10.

Today, I am pleased to request *less* funding than the Trust requested last year. The President’s FY2011 Budget proposes \$15 million, 35% percent below the FY10 enacted level. As we continue to replace federal operating funding with earned revenue, we will continue to request less funding in each successive year.

The Presidio Trust prides itself on its ability to act responsively, to think entrepreneurially, and to deliver on its promises. With your support, we will continue to preserve the Presidio, open it to more public use, rekindle its legacy of service to our nation and community, and reduce our reliance on tax dollars to fund our work.

The Presidio's transformation into a national park site is one of the most interesting and remarkable base realignments in the country – one that is bringing together funding and expertise from government, the private and non-profit sectors, and the philanthropic community. Congress created the Presidio Trust to lead this effort. Thank you for standing with us over the past decade. We look forward to your continued support as the Presidio fulfills its role in the public life of the nation.

Again, I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for inviting me to testify today, and for your continuing work on behalf of all of our national parklands. I would be pleased to address any questions that you may have.