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## New Fisher museum plans as objectionable as the old

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Tuesday, December 2, 2008

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The Presidio Trust has just disclosed plans that would allow the Fisher Contemporary Art Museum to be built directly across from the Main Parade Ground. The new plans, like the original one to build the museum on the Main Parade Ground itself, already face significant opposition.

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The new site is where the Presidio preschool, senior center and Herbst Exhibition Hall now stand. These facilities would all be demolished, along with the bowling facility and tennis courts.

The Fisher museum would be sited at a higher elevation and directly overlook, unobstructed, the entire Main Parade Ground. The proposed museum would be much larger - 40 percent bigger - as the plans now call for 140,000 square feet, instead of 100,000 square feet. Under one variation, a 20,000 square-foot unit of the museum would be on the Main Parade - a key objection to the original plan.

The trust, the federal agency that oversees the former military base that is now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, also continues to propose construction of a 100,000 square-foot hotel complex on the eastern side of the Main Parade Ground.

Here are the main objections:

**A Contemporary Art Museum is incongruous with the Historic Main Post.** A large contemporary art museum has nothing to do with The Presidio, nothing to do with its history, its natural environment or any other park qualities. Yet the trust proclaims that a contemporary art museum is to be the catalyst to revitalize and animate the historic heart of the Presidio.

The guiding principle of the National Historic Landmark District design standards is that development must preserve each district's historic sense of place. Thus, the design standards will have to be very strictly interpreted, and the

design elements very strictly adhered to in order to ever have the Fisher conform to the standards of a historic heart of the Presidio. (It is difficult to imagine the Fisher conforming with its planned large outdoor abstract sculptures on the roof and/or terraces.)

**The design violates the 'one-down/one-up' rule.** The rule is that no new building may be built on the Presidio larger than one demolished. The Presidio Trust has never justified its disregard of this rule, which bars a 140,000 square-foot museum (as well as the planned hotel) unless the complexes are broken up into smaller units. The rule was established in the 1978 Golden Gate National Recreation Act, as well as in the Presidio Trust Act, and it was enforced in a 1986 federal court decision. An alternate version of the new plans calls for a museum built as a cluster of units, but another persists in proposing a monolith.

Continued disregard of this rule in the trust's proposals is unjustifiably wasteful of the time of the National Park Service and the other Signatory parties' efforts to evaluate those plans, and the public's efforts to relevantly comment on them.

**Nearby residential neighborhoods will suffer from increased traffic.**

The Trust's projections are that the Fisher museum, the hotel and other Main Post attractions will eventually attract 1.75 million additional visitors each year, with the Fisher alone accounting for some 300,000 visitors. However, a more realistic visitor count would be more than 500,000 a year, most arriving by private vehicle. Moving the Fisher 100 yards or so south would do nothing to change the impact on nearby streets and residential neighborhoods.

**There is no compelling reason to put the museum on the Main Post.**

There are a number of first-rate museum sites in other parts of the city, all accessible to residents and tourists via public transportation. Indeed, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors has two resolutions pending that urge the Fisher

museum be built in the city rather than in the Presidio. Almost every neighborhood, civic, environmental and historic preservation association and group that has spoken to this issue has opposed the idea of building the Fisher Contemporary Art Museum and a large hotel on the Main Post, the core of the Presidio National Historic Landmark District.

There is no reason why the Presidio Trust's most recent plans should make any difference in the public discussion - except, perhaps, to elicit even stronger opposition.

*David P. Bancroft is a long-time San Francisco resident, an attorney and a member and supporter of four art museums.*