

News

‘It’s insane’: Trump moves to ‘dramatically reduce’ Presidio Trust through executive order



The federal agency was established by Congress in 1996 to oversee the 1,500-acre San Francisco park. |

Source:

Courtesy Charity Vargas/Presidio Trust

<https://sfstandard.com/2025/02/19/donald-trump-moves-to-abolish-the-presidio-trust-through-executive-order/>

By **Gabe Greschler**, **Max Harrison-Caldwell**, and **George Kelly**

Updated Feb. 20, 2025 • 3:35pm

Published Feb. 19, 2025 • 9:27pm

In a stunning executive order Wednesday evening, President Donald Trump attempted to make sweeping cuts to the Presidio Trust, the federal agency established by Congress in 1996 to oversee the 1,500-acre San Francisco park.

The order, titled “Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy,” calls for “dramatically” downsizing the federal government, describing the trust and other named agencies as “unnecessary.”

The order also targets the Inter-American Foundation, the United States African Development Foundation, and the United States Institute of Peace, saying they should be “eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law.”

The impact of the order was not immediately clear Wednesday evening, but Trump’s move is almost certain to result in legal action — and swift condemnation from San Franciscans.

“It’s insane,” said Phil Ginsburg, general manager of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, which oversees city parks but not the Presidio. “It is such a thriving and successful space for everyone — not to mention its ecological and environmental importance. ... Everyone enjoys the Presidio, no matter who you voted for.”



The Presidio is a former U.S. Army post that was transferred to the National Park Service in the 1990s. |

Source: Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu/Getty Images

The order states that the head of each agency must submit a report to the Office of Management and Budget within two weeks confirming compliance.

The Presidio Trust said in a statement that the organization has abided by the 1996 law that created it. It added that the park remains open while awaiting the OMB's review.

“We are confident that our activities are all statutorily based,” the statement said. “The Presidio [is] a one-of-a-kind national park site, and all of its services and business will continue to operate as normal, welcoming visitors and serving all who live and work here.”

Related

Is Trump's Presidio crackdown about efficiency — or revenge?

Marie Hurabiell, a former Presidio board trustee who was appointed by Trump in 2018, called for patience as the order is implemented. Because the park has a self-sustaining financial model that makes it largely independent of federal funding, the repercussions could be minimal, she said.

“In my experience, the trust is an extremely well-run, self-sustaining entity – it is NOT funded by taxpayers,” she wrote in a statement. “The trust does a really good job of keeping that place running efficiently and effectively.”

The trust's most recent budget filings, for fiscal year 2025, show projected total operating revenue of \$184 million, with \$139 million in projected costs. This leaves a surplus of around \$46 million. The trust's reserves appear to be in good shape, with an \$87 million surplus forecast for 2026.

The park has 200 commercial tenants and 2,900 people in housing.

The park, originally a Spanish fort from the 18th century and later a U.S. Army post, was decommissioned in the late 1980s after the U.S. Department of Defense decided to close down military bases around the country. Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi helped establish the Presidio Trust after debates over what to do with the green space that holds numerous military buildings.

The trust is controlled by a seven-person board. Six are appointed by the president, while the seventh is chosen by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

In a statement provided to The Standard, Pelosi's office said the order is

being carefully reviewed.

“In 1996, the Presidio Trust Act was passed in a bipartisan way when Republicans held the majority in Congress and has retained bipartisan support ever since,” the statement said. “The Presidio Trust is statutory and it has been protected from assaults over time by its statutory strength.”

Her office helped secure \$200 million in federal funds for the Presidio in 2023 for maintenance projects, “bolstering the Presidio’s climate resilience and ensuring that the park remains free and open to the public for years to come,” the trust said at the time.

Mayor Daniel Lurie said in a statement that his office is ready to “support Speaker Pelosi and our federal partners” to protect the park.

“The Presidio is a crown jewel of San Francisco and a national model for how public land can serve the public,” Lurie said. “San Franciscans can rest assured the Presidio is not going anywhere.”

Guadalupe Ceja works for Futures Without Violence, which has offices in the Presidio. She expressed concern that cuts to the trust would have far-reaching impacts.

“It’s a ripple effect,” Ceja said after getting off a shuttle bus in the park Thursday morning. “You downsize something, you have to cut a lot of things in order to downsize. And cutting those things is going to affect something else.”

Scott Jampol, who was dropping his child off at a high school in the Presidio, said the park is “indispensable” because it has housing, businesses, arts organizations, and special events.

“To have it kind of seemingly be attacked for no real reason other than malice seems inappropriate,” he said.

State Sen. Scott Wiener said Trump’s order is legally dubious.

“The Presidio Trust is a national treasure — a self-sustaining trust that’s created a flourishing and vibrant Presidio,” Wiener said. “But Trump can’t tolerate success if it’s not about him or enriching him. So he’s trying to kill it off. This action is legally questionable at best. We’re not going to go quietly. When it comes to the destruction Trump is inflicting, we will have the last word.”

Gabe Greschler can be reached at ggreschler@sfstandard.com

Max Harrison-Caldwell can be reached at maxhc@sfstandard.com

George Kelly can be reached at gkelly@sfstandard.com