

To:

David Alexander, Gaetani Property Management

Amy Hoke, Historical Landscape Architect, National Park Service

Katharine Arrow, Lands and Real Estate Branch Chief, GGNRA, National Park Service

Laura Joss, GGNRA Superintendent, National Park Service

January 3, 2021

On Saturday, December 26, 2020 David Alexander shared with us a diagram from Amy Hoke which outlines a proposed fencing plan that cuts off the existing yard below the historic Quarters 3 and 4N/4S units from our use, and will bring the drug use, criminal activity and homeless individuals we experience daily to within 6 feet of the Q4 unit, and within striking distance of Q3 and Q2.

This is a complete surprise to residents, introduced without any discussion, and fails a promise to solicit community input that was made last year.

We request the opportunity for a dialog and the input we were promised. We also have a counterproposal to the proposed plan which we feel accommodates all interests.

For background, just over a year ago, on November 4, 2019, NPS and its contractors held a session for residents' input at the General's Quarters prior to the commencement of work on the East Black Point Landscape Rehabilitation project. During that meeting NPS [shared its project plan](#) and discussed the proposed impact on residents. The major change that NPS outlined was the opening of the northeast gate at the lower edge of the yard below Q4 to public traffic, so that the public could access the sidewalk along the upper edge of the project area, directly underneath Qs 4, 3 and 2. This will result in a substantial and continuous increase of traffic along our eastern perimeter, one that is at the moment relatively protected from foot traffic.

The residents universally expressed their concern with the proposed additional traffic, and their frustration with the already elevated levels of burglaries, drug use and homelessness which result in dozens of annual incidents, including break-ins, violent encounters, graffiti and numerous brush fires on the perimeter of the properties in addition to constant foot traffic from members of the public that do not respect existing signage. In response the NPS committed to developing a fencing plan which was discussed as immediately adjacent (west) of the existing sidewalk, and sharing that plan with residents for input prior to its implementation.

Over the last year, on a number of occasions we have asked Gaetani for details of that fencing plan. As recently as October, there were no details, and it was suggested that no immediate work was in progress.

A plan and drawings were shared just after Christmas which now deviate substantially from what was [communicated last November](#) and from the project [as represented elsewhere](#). Work

is already progressing (initial gate posts were set that same week) without any opportunity for resident input. Particularly surprising is the change to the area below Quarters 4, erecting a new fence right up against the house, and excluding residents completely from the lower grounds which for the last century has been part of the area of these houses. It's no small irony that what is being billed as increased public access and a restoration of historic gardens is exactly the opposite for those of us that are actually paying to live here. Most concerning is that homeless camps with their accompanying fire danger will be able to be made right up against the property and close to the structures in the ample cover nearby.

Residents here in Fort Mason, many of us long-term, are a unique group. We love living here, and we appreciate the unique nature of the arrangement. We understand that we-- in the scope of the time scales that the US government and parks operates within-- are but short term tenants and "custodians" of the properties we live in. Even so, a number of us have been living here what is, for us, a long time. Dan Whaley and Adam Pilger, at Quarters 3 have been here for more than 10 years-- and plan to continue. Other residents, Alex and Gail Eby at Q4N and Charles Barr at Q4S are newer, but have brought their families and are committed to a life here. Residents at Quarters 2 have been here for many years.

What is most important to us is our safety and security, and the degree to which the park service listens to our concerns. Small affordances, like the existing hedges and fencing and gates that mark the property line along Fort Mason st / Franklin st which have defined these properties for decades provide some modest but essential protection from daily incursions by drug users and "crazies", who peer in windows, start fires in and around our properties, break into our homes, and assault us both inside and outside our living spaces on a regular basis. The existing fencing and gate along our eastern edge has provided, till now, a similar protection-- the proposed fence line would change that.

Despite these protections incidents are numerous. Three years ago, at Quarters 3 we had a woman, clearly high on drugs, break into our house while we were asleep for about four hours, removing pieces of our furnishings and parts of the actual house itself to a camp she had set up until we awoke at about 4am and called the authorities. (When we demanded that she leave our home, she declared that her grandfather had willed the place to her and that it was us that should leave.)

We've had at least a half dozen break ins, attempts and burglaries in the last five years just in Quarters 3 alone. The lower units at ground level at Quarters 2 have been victims of numerous break-ins and are particularly vulnerable because their bedrooms are just feet from key entry points. Last year a man came onto the property at Quarters 4 and threatened Charles' daughters. Quarters 4 is also the location where fires are regularly set in the immediate surroundings. The fire department has been called at least once each year, often for fast moving fires set by campers that threaten the landscaping and structures. Two years ago, a fire was started by homeless just a hundred feet below Q4 and Q3 in the Eastern Black Point project area which required nearly eight trucks and two hours to fully douse. Please check the

Park Police blotter for exhaustive evidence of these events-- and these are just the incidents we or others bother to report.

Rest assured that it takes a special kind of person to be willing to deal with the existing situation simply as it is. All of us dread the time when someone breaks in who means real harm to us and our loved ones. Indeed you might ask why we still continue to live here? It's a question we ask ourselves. Till now, the tradeoffs have been acceptable but key factors like these proposed changes are the kind of things that tip the balance.

The Q4, Q3 and Q2 properties exist in a unique part of the park. We are closest to the areas that provide the best cover and camping locations for criminals, drug abusers and homeless. The tip of Black Point, in the area behind the garage, by the cannons, the slope below them, the northernmost path that loops above the water pumping station and the project area itself provide ample locations for folks to camp overnight and who use these places to do drugs and where the majority of fires have been started. There are individuals camping in these areas most days of the year. We see the proposed change in access as a direct invitation to bring this activity, which up till now has taken place at least 50-100 feet from our homes and behind double chain link fences and hedges, to literally less than 10 feet from our homes.

In particular the bushes and lawn directly below Quarters 4, if granted public access, will become prime camping locations similar to the area around and below the cannons. This is not hypothetical. These areas are particularly removed from the street, and away from casual patrols. The idea that the park is inviting this activity to within feet of our houses while simultaneously denying us access to this area is extraordinary to us.

The park police already turn a blind eye towards the existing camping and drug use, and over the last decade have been unable to increase enforcement to deal with the threats as they exist. Since Fort Mason is served by a single patrol station at the western edge of the Presidio, a 10 minute drive away, often when we do call, the response is substantially late. Expanding the required patrol area and Increasing the threat surface will not result in an improvement to our security.

What we're asking for-- as tenants who want to continue to call these places our homes-- is what we consider to be a small accommodation by the park relative to the proposed plan.

***We are asking that you keep the fence to the original proposed location discussed last year***, i.e. within a couple feet of the lower sidewalk that is being opened up. ***We are also asking that you make the fence double height***. The existing double height chain link fence is a somewhat effective deterrent because it requires climbing. (Even so, people regularly scale it.) The new proposed fence is only single height. Law abiding visitors in the daytime we're not as concerned about-- what worries us the most is the continuous, law-breaking behaviour that happens after hours and the likely dramatic increase of it that will result if it's invited to within feet of our homes. A very real benefit to the park is that these modest modifications would substantially reduce the threat of fires to these historic structures.

We request the opportunity for a dialog with the park on these matters as promised to us last year.

Signed,

Alex Eby, Quarters 4N  
Anna Eby, Quarters 4N  
Layla Eby, Quarters 4N  
Gail Gettler, Quarters 4N  
Charles Barr, Quarters 4S  
Larry Barr, Quarters 4S  
Phoebe Barr, Quarters 4S  
Sophie Barr, Quarters 4S  
Chris Gallelo, Quarters 3  
Adam Pilger, Quarters 3  
Dan Whaley, Quarters 3  
Chase Hathaway, Quarters 2  
Julian Alvarez, Quarters 2  
Javier Garcia LaBougle, Quarters 2  
Ginger Wilson, Quarters 2