



State Park and Recreation Commission
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, California 94296-0001

June 1, 2024

Dear California State Parks and Recreation Commission,

On behalf of the Friends of Sutter's Fort, we are writing to express our strong support for the proposed General Plan Amendments for Sutter's Fort State Historic Park and to respectfully urge your vote in favor of their adoption.

The Friends of Sutter's Fort is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) cooperating association dedicated to preserving, educating, and inspiring at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park. Our mission is to ensure that this landmark serves as a vibrant hub of community and learning for generations to come. We envision a future where Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is a beacon of historical education and cultural enrichment, seamlessly blending the past with the present to inspire a diverse and engaged community. We strive to foster a dynamic and inclusive gathering space, ensuring that Sutter's Fort remains a vibrant and accessible destination for all, now and for generations to come.

Friends of Sutter's Fort has a long history, tracing its roots back to 1979 when it was known as the Sacramento Historic Sites Association. In 1990, the association split into several nonprofit organizations, each dedicated to a specific State Historic Park in Sacramento. Since then, our sole purpose has been to support, protect, and enhance Sutter's Fort State Historic Park and its programs. Our long history and deep connection to this State Historic Park provide us with a unique perspective on the impacts of the proposed changes.

Friends of Sutter's Fort have enthusiastically participated in the Fort State Historic Park. These updates are overdue and are consistent with the multi-year efforts by California State Parks to transform the way history is interpreted at Sutter's needs of park visitors and our community, including the needs of Tribal Nations. We have been pleased with the diligent and thorough efforts undertaken by California State Parks to engage our diverse community, listen to feedback, and create detailed and thoughtful management and planning documents that will guide the future of this historic site.

We believe that the updates to the Interpretation Master Plan and General Plan will create a more welcoming, engaging, and accurate experience for all visitors. For decades, the history shared at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park has been restricted to a narrow viewpoint focused on the period between 1839-1850, primarily from the perspective of white, male settlers. This limited perspective ignored the experiences and perspectives of Native American tribes and other groups whose lives were fundamentally changed by settlers and subsequent westward expansion. This oversight was increasingly noticed by visitors, even by students who often learned a broader

history in elementary school. The new plans provide a much more comprehensive history of the site and are consistent with California State content standards for education.

The programs and activities at Sutter's Fort SHP were once dominated by living history demonstrations. The new plans proposed by California State Parks allow for a richer, more complex, and engaging experience that educates visitors about all the people who lived, worked, and traveled through Sutter's Fort. While living history demonstrations and interpretation may still be an element of the visitor experience, they will not be the only method of engagement available to park staff and volunteers.

Friends of Sutter's Fort is particularly enthusiastic about the new themes proposed by California State Parks for the historic site:

- The western landscape dramatically changed when perceptions of economic opportunity brought both greed and immigration to California creating immediate and lasting conflicts between Native and non-Native people.
- Sutter's Fort SHP stands as a "laboratory of learning" where all people can better understand all perspectives of California's diverse, complex, and sometimes tragic past through a visitor experience that is reflective, analytical, and inclusive.
- In pursuit of his economic aspirations, John Sutter built his business enterprises on the exploited labor of indigenous people and minority immigrant groups, along with diverse tradesmen, shaping California's cultural relationships in a manner that persists today.

These primary themes, along with secondary themes exploring impacts on natural resources, Alta California, and the experiences of overland immigrants including the Donner Party, who viewed Sutter's Fort as a place of refuge, provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the historical significance of the site.

We also embrace the General Plan's vision for programs, special events, and exhibits that will increase opportunities for Sutter's Fort SHP to meet the needs of the community with broader and more innovative approaches. These will appeal to numerous interests such as architecture, nature, and agriculture, and inspire visitors to learn more even after their visit.

It is imperative that the General Plan amendments be adopted by the California State Park and Recreation Commission. Your prompt action will have tremendous impacts, solidifying the commitment to accuracy and inclusion at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Linsey Fredenburg Humes
Friends of Sutter's Fort

Cc: Senator Ashby; Asm McCarty