



STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SpringHill Suites by Marriott
West Sacramento, CA 95605
June 11, 2024

STAFF REPORT: Agenda Item 9: Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park General Plan Amendment

STAFF: John Fraser, Capital District Superintendent
Jason Finley, Project Manager, Strategic Planning Division

SUBJECT: SPRC Approval on Draft General Plan Amendment

OBJECTIVE

Staff is bringing forward the Draft General Plan Amendment for Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park for proposed approval by the State Park and Recreation Commission.

INTRODUCTION

Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park resides on unceded ancestral lands of the Nisenan and Miwok people. The Fort was established after the arrival of John Sutter in 1839 and operated until shortly after the Gold Rush. The Fort was purchased and reconstructed in the 1890s by the Native Sons of the Golden West as a California Pioneer Memorial. In 1914, the State of California acquired the 5.80-acre property. Sutter’s Fort became a park unit of the State Park system in May 1962 as a State Historical Monument and was later reclassified as a State Historic Park in 1970.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission approved the Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park General Plan in February 1990. The General Plan document has effectively guided the park’s management, development, and interpretation for over 30 years.

In 2020, the California State Parks committed to reassessing historic narratives through the Reexamining Our Past Initiative. As part of that effort, California State Parks developed a new Interpretation Master Plan (IMP) in consultation with California Native Tribes and a robust public engagement process. The goal of the IMP is to provide inclusive and accurate interpretive experiences that comprehensively explore history at Sutter’s Fort. Following the tentative approval of the IMP, State Parks began the process of amending the general plan in 2023 to incorporate the interpretive direction, goals, and guidelines.



PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

The purpose of this General Plan Amendment is to update the themes, goals, and strategies for interpretation at Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park and support implementation of the IMP. This amendment removes restrictions on interpretive approaches in the 1990 General Plan and allows for greater flexibility to pursue visitor experiences that encompass a broader historical perspective. Several areas within the general plan have been updated to reflect a shift in interpretive focus toward historic inclusivity:

- Interpretive periods and themes have been amended to the 2023 IMP which includes a Unifying Theme, Primary Themes, and Secondary Themes that re-center Native American experiences and bring new critical rigor and purpose to analyzing the complicated and often violent history of Sutter’s Fort.
- Living history concepts are no longer the preferred interpretive device to examine and present history at Sutter’s Fort, however California State Parks will continue to use a wide range of immersive interpretive means to communicate the interpretive themes outlined in the 2023 IMP.
- The proposed Declaration of Purpose is updated to the approved purpose identified in the 2023 IMP.
- The proposed amendment allows rooms and exterior spaces to be used with greater flexibility and an extensive range of interpretive tools such as modern exhibits and displays which weren’t previously allowed.

RECOMMENDATION

California State Parks recommends that the Commission take action on the Draft Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park General Plan Amendment by adopting the resolution to approve the General Plan Amendment.

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

Consider approval of the Draft Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park General Plan Amendment.