



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

September 25, 2017

Ms. Ann M. Sarver
Facilities Environment Specialist
6013 Benjamin Road, Suite 205
Tampa, FL 33634
Ann.M.Sarver@usps.gov

Via Email

Re: **Richmond Main Post Office, 1025 Nevin Avenue, Richmond, CA 94801
Comment in Response to Consultation Notice of August 17, 2017**

Dear Ms. Sarver:

Thank you for your letter initiating consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the prospective sale of the Main Post Office in Richmond, California. Last February the National Trust wrote to United States Postal Service (USPS) real estate staff to express our concerns about the process by which the USPS proposes to dispose of the building (attached). Specifically, we were – and are still – concerned that the decision to sell has been made prior to exploration of alternatives and the completion of the Section 106 process. Our previous letter is attached and we ask that USPS incorporate those comments in this review.

Determination of Effect

We do not believe USPS has correctly applied all of the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in the Section 106 regulations (36 CFR § 800.5). The Richmond Main Post Office was purpose-built as a public space in downtown Richmond. The covenant as proposed does not mitigate this loss because it does not commit future owners to retaining such function. While the covenant provides some assurances that the building's architectural features will be protected, it does not guarantee that the use of the building will remain a public venue. Therefore, unless the covenant terms are changed to account for this loss, the preparation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is warranted to establish agreed upon measures to resolve the adverse effects of the undertaking.

Timing of Consultation

In its 2014 report *Preserving Historic Post Office: A Report to Congress* the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation stated that “reasonably foreseeable and cumulative effects must be assessed by the USPS **before making a decision to relocate functions** and cannot be delayed until later when deciding how exactly to dispose of the no longer needed property” (emphasis added).¹ However, the USPS notified the community of its intent to relocate services long before initiating the Section 106 process.

Further, a recent offer letter from USPS to the City of Richmond provides concerning evidence that the decision to sell has already been made. In that letter USPS requested over \$2m in cash for the property together with a 50 year no-rent leaseback. The fact that

¹ Available at <http://www.achp.gov/historicpostoffices.pdf>, p. 29.

the City's acceptance of this letter would constitute a legally binding contract raises alarms about the extent to which USPS has made its decisions prior to the completion of the Section 106 process.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and we strongly urge the USPS to reconsider its disposal decision. In the meantime, we urge you to initiate consultation promptly under Section 106 of the NHPA, and we appreciate being included as a consulting party in that review.

Please contact me at (415) 692-8083 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian R. Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian R. Turner
Senior Field Officer & Attorney, San Francisco Field Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Attachments

- National Trust letter of February 7, 2017 expressing strong objections to a “disposal notice” which appeared on the Richmond Main Post Office in January 2017.
- September 13, 2017 letter from USPS to Richmond Mayor Tom Butt.

Cc (via email):

Reid Nelson, Tom McCulloch, Javier Marques, Kelly Fanizzo & Najah Duvall-Gabriel, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Daniel Delahaye, Federal Preservation Officer, US Postal Service
Julianne Polanco & Tristan Tozer, California Office of Historic Preservation
Tom Butt, Mayor, City of Richmond
Alicia Gallo, Richmond Main Street