



SAN YSIDRO SMART BORDER COALITION

A voluntary group of united leaders and stakeholders in the immediate region of the San Ysidro Port of Entry

December 8, 2008

Jane Lehman
Regional Historic Preservation Officer
US General Service Administration
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3434

Re: San Ysidro Port of Entry Expansion Project, Section 106 Consultation

Dear Ms. Lehman

After revision and discussion of your initial Section 106 consultation letter dated 10/10/2008 regarding the treatment of the Old US Custom House (hereinafter referred to as "Custom House"), the San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition, representing the majority sum of the San Ysidro Community, find the following:

Whereas:

- We agree with GSA's findings, after the application of the Criteria of Adverse Affect found in 36CFR Part 800 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), that absolute demolition of the Custom House will have an adverse affect on historical property in our nation's Southwestern-most land port of entry.
- While benefits derived from renovating the Custom House in place do not outweigh the additional cost added to the San Ysidro Port of Entry Reconfiguration Project ("Project"), the San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition insists that its style and design be prioritized as to express the history and context of the international border between the United States and Mexico.

We find:

- The Community of San Ysidro does not support the complete loss of the Custom House, a picturesque part of our community for over forty years.
- As concluded in the Page & Turnbull, Inc. Relocation Study, commissioned by GSA, the Custom House is an excellent example of a small public building designed in Spanish Colonial Revival Style. Its architectural style and history are significant enough to place it on the National Registry of Historic Places. However,

Founding Organizations

Border Transportation Council

Business Interests in Government (BIG) Committee

Casa Familiar

Hearts and Hands Working Together

San Ysidro Business Association

San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce

San Ysidro Planning Group

San Ysidro Transportation Collaborative

- Due to the relocation costs, the additional need of interior restoration or construction and the resulting continuance of the Custom House being inaccessible to the general public, the San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition does not believe any of the three relocation options studied by Page & Turnbull provide benefits that outweigh the extreme costs they would incur.

Therefore:

- To facilitate the implementation of a southbound pedestrian crossing, adjacent to the current northbound pedestrian crossing; To retain stewardship of the style, design and historical importance the Custom House has to the community and country; And to fulfill GSA's stated desire to "maintain the historic association between the building and the border crossing," the San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition proposes the following:
 - The dislocation of the Custom House façade from the current building and relocate it to serve as the façade of the proposed central plant, planned to be located at the eastern extreme of San Ysidro Blvd.
 - To offset adverse affect to the region by this proposed undertaking, and to justify the added expense of relocating the Custom House's façade, the San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition proposes a second story to the planned central plant that would function as a conference/ meeting space available to the public.

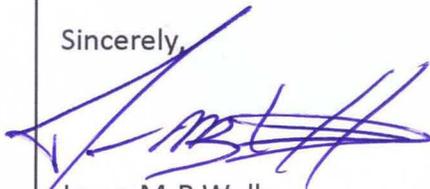
It is the Smart Border Coalition's intent that the proposed space serve as an "international conference center." Its position east of the pedestrian inspection facility and location literally "at" the border would offer secure access from both the US and Mexico through a walkway just north of pedestrian inspection.

- Demolition of the remaining structure of the Custom House – contingent upon fulfillment of the prior two points.

Ms. Lehman, We look forward to working with GSA and their appropriate contractors in this regard; and further look forward to the Section 106

Consultation meeting here in San Ysidro in early February. Please feel free to contact us should you have any further questions or concerns in the meantime.

Sincerely,



Jason M-B Wells
Organizer