



Renovating the Fort Ross Visitor Center

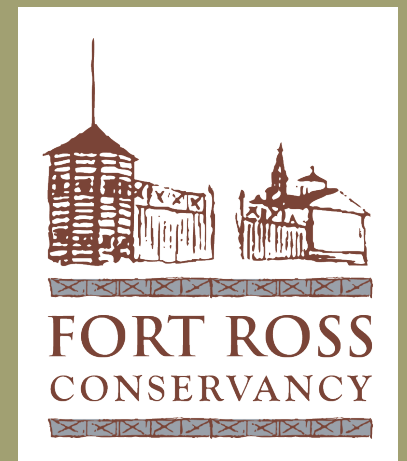


Photo by Paul C. Miller

today

The Fort Ross visitor center is the gateway to the park. It orients people to the park's cultural, natural, and recreational resources and provides a staging area for groups and interpretive programs. Exhibits give an overview of the park's major cultural stories; an extensive research library and archives provides information to the researcher and student; and an audio-visual room presents park films and other media. The visitor center accommodates special events, guided tours, and educational seminars, and is a valuable resource to the Fort Ross community.

The current visitor center has:

- Small exhibit space/museum with outdated exhibits
- Gift shop/welcome area where visitors receive orientation information
- Multipurpose room for viewing films
- Small but excellent reference library
- Outside deck with picnic tables
- Comfortable seating area
- Administrative offices for staff
- Accessible restrooms

the challenges

The visitor center was constructed in the late 1970s, and exhibits were installed in the mid-1980s. Since then, visitor needs have changed. Current exhibits cover the history too narrowly, rely too heavily on text based displays, and don't utilize technology. Stakeholders, visitors, and park staff have expressed a desire to expand the cultural and natural interpretation to include new research and presentation methods, and to present this material utilizing contemporary museum practices.

The visitor center building should be renovated and expanded to address:

- Better access to the museum displays and artifact collections
- Outdated technologies
- Inefficiency in public circulation
- Lack of assembly space that allows gatherings, rotating exhibits and informal events
- Absence of catering kitchen that would be used to serve weddings, conferences and parties, and would allow staff to sell fresh food, coffee and tea.
- Insufficient space for library facilities
- Inadequate support and storage space



the vision

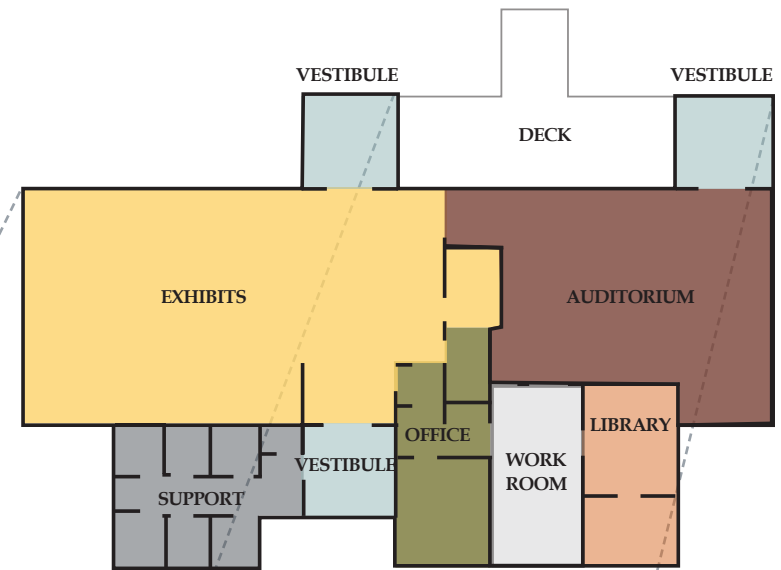
In 2011, with funding from Renova Fort Ross Foundation, Fort Ross Conservancy and California State Parks worked with a local architect to draft a preliminary architectural plan for a Visitor Center upgrade.

The team inventoried the park's existing needs and developed the following goals:

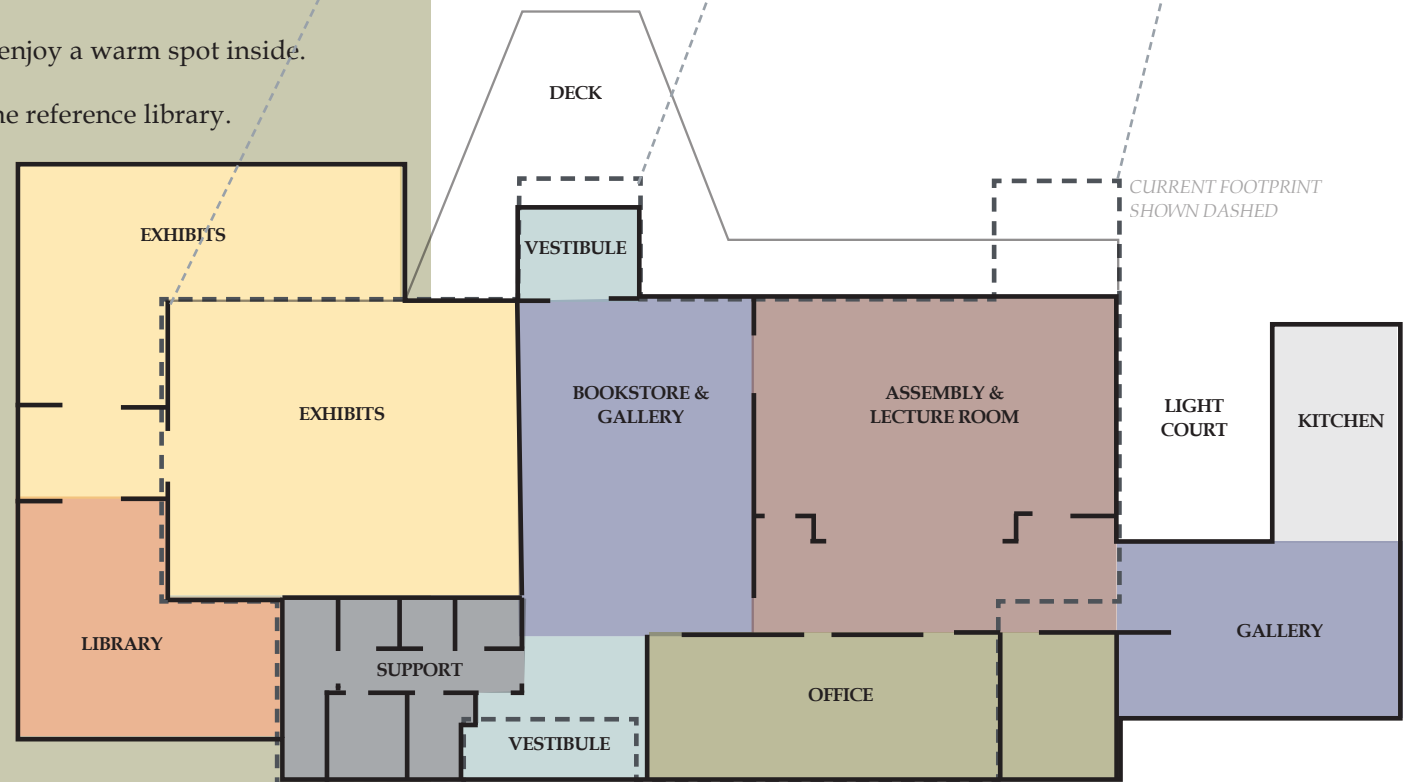
- Update the museum infrastructure to take advantage of technology and new museum design.
- Expand the footprint of the museum to allow for broader and more dynamic coverage of the historic eras.
- Provide a catering kitchen that would allow us to sell refreshments, rent out the visitor center and the kitchen for events, and offer programming that includes a kitchen for meal preparation and serving.
- Provide a place for visitors to eat and enjoy a warm spot inside.
- Increase office space and storage.
- Increase the size and accessibility of the reference library.
- Add a private staff bathroom.
- Update the museum store to include modern sales techniques and equipment.
- Create an integrated reception area with the museum store. Its functionality would ensure a single volunteer could easily assist visitors and provide security in the building.

It is anticipated that the Visitor Center renovation and expansion will be a phased project. The preliminary cost assessment of phases is as follows:

PHASE I	Due Diligence, Design and Interior Renovation - \$500,000
PHASE II	Exterior footprint - North Wing - \$500,000
PHASE III	Exterior footprint - South Wing - \$750,000; Exhibit fabrication - \$1,250,000



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED EXPANDED FOOTPRINT

Fort Ross needs your help



In Cooperation with
San Francisco, CA Architect: **PAGE & TURNBULL**

