

Date: April 21, 2021

To: 22nd DAA Board of Directors  
Executive Staff

From: Becky Bailey-Findley  
Strategic Planning Facilitator

Re: **Planning Concepts about Place and Community**

It is evident that the Board members and staff have a deep appreciation for the Del Mar Fairgrounds and what it contributes to the community. So many of you described the meaningful connection to the “place” - Del Mar Fairgrounds - felt by so many individuals and groups. This consistent thread in the pre-planning interviews and surveys led me to prepare a white paper on various concepts of “place” and the meaning they provide to those who gather at these places. I believe these concepts mirror your perceptions and understanding of the true value of the Del Mar Fairgrounds and I hope that in sharing them with you prior to the strategic planning workshop on Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, you will feel affirmed in your understanding of and appreciation for the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

### **Concepts Related to Places that Build Community.**

#### **1. Zocalo**



The Plaza de la Constitución in Mexico City was the first public square to be called Zocalo.

Zocalo, a term of Mexican origin, invokes the characteristics of a *diverse* public square, marked by *community interaction*, a *beehive of activity*, and meeting in an *inclusive, equity-based environment*.

This central plaza design dates back to 1573, King Philipp II of Spain. The public square in this early concept was designed to be the religious, political, economic and cultural heart of the city.

#### **2. Third Place**

In community building, the **third place** is the social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place"). Oldenburg, who coined the concept, calls one's "first place" the home and those that one lives with. The "second place" is the workplace – where people may actually spend most of their time. Third places, then, are "anchors" of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. In other words, "your third place is where you relax in public, where you encounter familiar faces and make new acquaintances."

Other scholars have summarized Oldenburg's view of a third place with eight characteristics:

**1) Neutral ground**

Occupants of third places have little to no obligation to be there. They are not tied down to the area financially, politically, legally, or otherwise and are free to come and go as they please.

**2) Leveler (a leveling place)**

Third places put no importance on an individual's status in a society. Someone's economic or social status does not matter in a third place, allowing for a sense of commonality among its occupants. There are no prerequisites or requirements that would prevent acceptance or participation in the third place.

**3) Conversation is the main activity**

Playful and happy conversation is the main focus of activity in third places, although it is not required to be the only activity. The tone of conversation is usually light-hearted and humorous; wit and good-natured playfulness are highly valued.

**4) Accessibility and accommodation**

Third places must be open and readily accessible to those who occupy them. They must also be accommodating, meaning they provide for the wants of their inhabitants, and all occupants feel their needs have been fulfilled.

**5) The regulars**

Third places harbor a number of regulars that help give the space its tone and help set the mood and characteristics of the area. Regulars to third places also attract newcomers and are there to help someone new to the space feel welcome and accommodated.

**6) A low profile**

Third places are characteristically wholesome. The inside of a third place is without extravagance or grandiosity and has a homely feel. Third places are never snobby or pretentious, and are accepting of all types of individuals, from various different walks of life.

**7) The mood is playful**

The tone of conversation in third places is never marked with tension or hostility. Instead, third places have a playful nature, where witty conversation and frivolous banter are not only common, but highly valued.

**8) A home away from home**

Occupants of third places will often have the same feelings of warmth, possession, and belonging as they would in their own homes. They feel a piece of themselves is rooted in the space and gain spiritual regeneration by spending time there. \*

\*Source: Wikipedia

### 3. The Fairgrounds as a Community's Sacred Place\*\*

Since the beginning of time, humans have a universal need to organize themselves. There is a universal longing for community, belonging, joy, beauty, connection with our past and meaning.

Humankind's greatest creation has always been its cities. Since its early origins, cities have performed three separate, critical functions for its inhabitants and the health of a city is determined by the success of these functions:

- 1) The inclusion of sacred place - *a place or places regarded with great respect and reverence.*
- 2) The ability to provide security and project power.
- 3) The host for a commercial market.

Sacred places in our cities are those treasured places that evoke a sense of memory, connectivity and wisdom. For many cities or collection of cities such as a county or region, the fair or fairgrounds serves as a sacred place, a place regarded with great respect and reverence. Think of your fairgrounds as you read the following description of sacred places.

#### **A Place is considered sacred if it is:**

##### **A Place of Status**

- ✚ A place of importance and significance to the people. It must be a meaningful gathering place.

##### **A Place that is Foundational to the Community**

- ✚ A place upon which a community is built. All elements of meaning to the community can be found at this place:
  - Social well-being
  - Safety and Security
  - Learning and Growth
  - Tradition and Ritual
  - Economic Sharing
  - Equal-Opportunity Interaction

##### **A Place that Provides Identity to the Community**

- ✚ A place that shares and creates stories and vision that shape who we are in the community.

##### **A Place with a Wisdom Tradition**

- ✚ A place where stories and experiences help us answer the questions:
  - What is real?
  - How should we live?

Fairs and fairgrounds serve as sacred places for the community, in very human ways. We are endowed with a stewardship to ensure that they remain treasured and sustain the health and well-being of community life.

\*\*Reference: *The City*, by Joel Kotkin

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMPILED SURVEY RESPONSES**

## 1. Why, as a board member and volunteer, are you involved with the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA?

RV: The Del Mar Fairgrounds is an iconic San Diego landmark offering a diverse array of events, the attendance at which are many of our patrons' (and my) greatest and longest-standing memories and experiences. It is important, to me, that our staff and board remain committed to the rich history and traditions of our events, while having those events and our property remain relevant and vibrant for decades to come. A strong and unified understanding and appreciation of identity, goals and priorities is essential for the Fairground's relevancy and vibrancy going forward. I am involved with the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA because I greatly value the facility, events and traditions of our facility, and also want to assist the organization to remain healthy, relevant and sustainable for decades to come.

LB: Growing up in Los Angeles, many of the highlights of my youth were my summer family vacations in San Diego attending the various activities at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. My husband and I have lived in San Diego for the past 36 years and raised 3 children here. Now the third generation of our family has grown up going to the Del Mar Fairgrounds; it's truly a family kinship. As one of the oldest institutions of its' community, I want to see the Del Mar Fairgrounds thrive and be an integral part of San Diego forever.

JR: To directly serve/give back to the community where I live. Particularly interested in the large, positive impact that the Fairgrounds, with its large footprint, can have on diverse communities locally and beyond. I have attended and held events at many DAA's in California and feel a connection to their missions. I felt my nonprofit board and my corporate experience would allow me to be helpful.

PS: The mission and values of the Fairgrounds resonates with me – specifically the community and learning and aspect. I enjoy giving back to the community by serving on the board.

MG: It's a phenomenal community asset that is underutilized, and I feel that I am qualified to help fulfill the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA's potential. Also, I have a personal desire to provide public service.

FS: The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA is one of the longest existing institutions in San Diego County and its success is vitally important to the needs of millions of people in the county of San Diego.

KM: I believe the Fairgrounds is a central gathering place in our community for family and friends to gather together for entertainment and learning. To manage, imagine, plan, and sustain the Fairgrounds over time, it needs strong leadership, management, and oversight to remain consistently relevant, cost effective, and efficient in its operations. I believe I have the experience required to provide the strategic, tactical, and operational oversight the fairgrounds needs.

DM: My goal was to help build a stronger, more resilient, more relevant organization for the region, and to ensure financial success important to Del Mar.

SN: Growing up in San Diego, the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA played an integral part in my childhood and community. The impact the organization has on greater San Diego in terms of the community, the economy, and other factors is profound and to be a part of that is impactful.

## 2. Does the board have a defined and clearly articulated agreement as to what constitutes effective organizational performance?

RV: No. In my 6 ½ years on the board, we have never had any discussions among the board of defined goals and priorities. I believe that the board, and each of its current members, is committed to effective performance of the organization. However, how we each define “effective performance” has never been articulated, let alone agreed upon. There certainly appears to be commonality among board members to striving for achieving “effective performance”, but there has never been a group-wide discussion or articulated consensus on that subject.

LB: Yes, the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA), Fairs & Expositions Branch, governs the board. The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA conducts its’ business openly through public meetings, which are properly noticed and allow for public comment along with Closed Sessions. The Legal Department of CDFA prepares a Guide to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, which is given to each director and the California Attorney General’s Office assigns a Deputy Attorney General to the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA, who is Josh Caplan for the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA meetings. CDFA conducts training sessions for all Directors and distributes a large notebook outlining the Governance, Management and Responsibilities of the Board and outlines the Development of Policies and Procedures.

JR: There are standards implicit in mission and values that have been created for the DAA and in work processes. In my short tenure, during these extraordinary times with the Fairgrounds very existence at risk, the Board has not explicitly discussed and reached agreement on standards of effective organizational performance.

PS: Yes. However, with a fast-changing environment (COVID-10), this is/needs to be fluid and adaptable.

MG: It has a clear Mission.

FS: Better now than in the past. The changes we have instituted and the goals we are setting will enable the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA to evolve into a far more effective entity.

KM: To some extent. Our mission is very broad and clear. In its breadth, it may be difficult to determine how to deliver on such a comprehensive mandate. It does not provide guidance how to choose. Therefore, that determination is left to Fairgrounds leadership with input from the public.

DM: Getting there, but matching mission statement with effective management has proven challenging.

SN: Not per se.

### 3. If the Del Mar Fairgrounds were to cease to exist, what would the community lose?

RV: It would lose a historical and iconic San Diego County treasure. The San Diego County Fair and the race meet are linked to the facility – having either event in any different location would simply not be the same. The community would lose a gathering place for a myriad of events and celebrations. It would lose a critical emergency evacuation facility. It would lose an enormous agricultural presence in the western portion of the County. The region would lose thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenues.

LB: The Del Mar Fairgrounds is a state institution, which serves as a community-gathering place in San Diego. The San Diego County Fair is ingrained in the fabric and historical tradition of San Diego County, which millions of people have visited, and vendors have sold/exhibited their wares. There are talented artists of every age group performing in varying genres, various contests from cooking to flower arranging and food vendors to tempt every palate. There is the Junior Livestock Auction with our FFA and 4H clubs, scholarships and our commercial exhibits, which include those designed for the fair's theme. The Del Mar Fairgrounds fills many community needs and provides community benefits to the nearby cities like jobs, education, community outreach, entertainment, commerce, entrepreneurship, etc., while enriching and strengthening the communities with partnerships and reinvestment. All this could be lost as well as the utilization of the fairgrounds as an Emergency Evacuation Site with command centers for emergency response teams overseeing fires, earthquakes and domestic terrorism.

JR: We lose an invaluable resource for bringing the community together through diverse types of events, especially those for which a fairgrounds is uniquely suited. We lose critical infrastructure for emergency response. A large “economic engine” for the region would be lost. We lose optionality in meeting future needs.

PS: History would be lost. A community / town center would be lost.

MG: The Del Mar Fair is a unifying event that brings together people from countless backgrounds and interests whose commonality is their living in San Diego.

FS: A landmark institution which provides education, entertainment, community engagement and shelter during times of climate challenges.

KM: It would lose a place that is able to meet the multiple interests and varied entertainment and learning needs of the broad regional community. There are many venues throughout the region but none that can deliver and facilitate delivery of such a wide range of activities and services.

DM: An important regional resource in both recreational and financial terms.

SN: Economic gain, community events for locals, community morale, activities in San Diego.

**4. What is the most important characteristic, area of service, and/or benefit that the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA/Del Mar Fairgrounds should promote or expand on in the future?**

RV: I believe the most important characteristic of the Fairgrounds is that it is a gathering place for our community and visitors. The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA should continue to look to diversify the types of events and gatherings that are held at the Fairgrounds, and services provided, so that the facility continues to attract all segments of our community. The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA should ensure that its facility is state of the art so that we can attract the finest of collaborators and partners and make the community proud of its fairgrounds.

LB: Education in every aspect should be promoted or expanded on in the future. Weaving into job training programs, internships, coordination with hands on learning in the areas of our “Farm To Table” program, healthy living, host classes on Emergency Disaster Readiness, landscaping and into other areas of the Fairgrounds that provide these opportunities for all age groups. Couple this with providing building rentals at a low cost for functions to serve the community in order to meet community needs so the Del Mar Fairgrounds can stay relevant and beneficial to San Diego.

JR: In normal times, the grounds support a wide variety of small and large events. The new event center will provide a much-needed modern venue for indoor concerts, large meetings, e-sports, fundraising dinners and events we have not yet imagined. We need good infrastructure and attractive facilities to be a sought-after venue. We need to consider what limits our ability to expand services desired by the community and address those shortcomings. I think we can do even more to be integral to our community. See also question 5. This includes increasing financial stability and diversifying sources of income. We also need to ensure our events and services are affordable and relevant to our mission.

PS: Continue to be a community center with education and entertainment in its focus.

MG: Mass gathering is the core feature of the DAA.

FS: “Agriculture” is our middle name. we need to continue to further promote and educate the community about food and agriculture sustainability. That can be done through various experiences, including during the County Fair.

KM: I believe the Fairgrounds should first remain true to the Mission, Vision, and Values for Fairs and Exhibitions as stated by the CDFA. The broad statements, “To enrich the lives of CA citizens ... and remain viable ...” means that we must keep our fingers on the pulse of the community we serve. Currently, I believe that we have no more relevant purpose than to educate the public about how we can return to a “maker” community, care for our environment, grow our own food, and live healthier lives. We can do this while also ensuring there is entertainment that honors and supports care for our land, ocean, and animal welfare.

DM: Demonstration of resilience in adapting to climate change with emphasis on agriculture, local energy generation, and efficient transportation choices.

SN: The Fair.

## 5. What are needs in the community that are not currently being addressed that are opportunities for the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA?

RV: I think that the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA is very responsive to meeting the needs of our community – from being an emergency evacuation location, a vaccination superstation, a COVID-19 test location, a location where food is distributed to those in need, etc. I believe part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA's identity is being a facility that looks to address all community needs. I think that there could be better collaboration between the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, surrounding cities and even the State of California so that there is consistent dialog as to how the Fairgrounds can better serve the community, with a corresponding commitment from those various entities regarding the financial commitments of the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA.

LB: Horse shows, horse boarding and the water quality issues need to be figured out as this benefits a large portion of our neighbors and businesses. Again, I would stress education and internships and a year-round venue for performing and visual arts and sports.

JR: This feels like a question that is best answered as an “output” of the strategic planning process rather than my input. I would like to hear from the community on this question.

PS: *No response*

MG: Entertainment venues, a sports complex, state of the art exhibit halls, equestrian events, year-round amusements and dining, botanical gardens and agricultural education, wetlands expansion and education, facility-related accommodations, and easier access/egress through a new train stop and improved vehicular parking and routing.

FS: A dynamic and vibrant farmers' market which showcases the various farms and ranches that are found throughout the county.

KM: I believe the Fairgrounds currently meets the needs of a very diverse community. We balance our educational and entertainment mandate very well. We will need to continue to look ahead at future trends like electronic-gaming and training in social media excellence, as well as the evolution of nutrition and exercise.

DM: More year-round recreation choices, demonstration gardens, educational programs for youth.

SN: Increase in activities catering to families in San Diego.

## 6. How will we know if we're successful?

RV: I believe we first need to define "success" before we can determine whether we are "successful". In my opinion, we will know we are successful when our facility is being utilized at the maximum extent possible by the most diverse population possible with a diverse array of events, gatherings and services. We will be successful when we are able to sustain this degree of utilization while being fiscally sound as we comply with all requirements imposed upon the facility.

LB: Attendance, surveys, comments, employee happiness and retention, financial strength and keeping current with emerging trends so the Del Mar Fairgrounds stays relevant to San Diego. The Del Mar Fairgrounds history, legacy, community and its' partners should never be forgotten.

JR: Positive community feedback; financial stability; positive from an environmental and sustainability perspective; robust calendar of events serving diverse demographics of our region. Affordable events and services that speak to distinct groups as well as those with broad cross-sectional appeal.

PS: We need to find a way to measure against our mission statement.

MG: The number of total visitors to the property will increase, and we will be financially solvent.

FS: When we see the response from the community collectively supporting these efforts, both locally and throughout the county.

KM: That's easy ... if the community comes to our activities and events. If the community supports the Fairgrounds by continuing to use our facilities to demonstrate their activities and services.

DM: Positive feedback from event attendees, local communities, and the region.

SN: Increased attendance.

## 7. How might you prioritize different elements and programs?

- RV: We need a robust discussion among the community, our stakeholders, our staff and our board to reach consensus of what programs, services and events should be held/offered at the Fairgrounds. Only then can we prioritize them. In doing so, I think we need to focus on our mission and identity, how the services/programs/events serve that mission/identity and have an appreciation and understanding that while some priorities may not generate tremendous revenues, we also must look at priorities that do generate revenues necessary for the organization to survive and flourish, so that still other services/events/programs can be offered in the future.
- LB: By moving with the trends and continuing to change to adapt to what the masses are needing and reaching the masses in all areas of the County and beyond; look at the appeal factors of what is being offered. Diverse programs that attract diverse groups and activities are important in order to reach the masses. Respect for all people and their opinions on this topic are very important.
- JR: Consistency with mission and community input; inclusive; diverse. Supportive of financial imperatives. Affordable.
- PS: This is specifically at the heart of the strategic planning process. I would like to see a “lens” (or “filter”) developed that we could use as a tool to review programs to ensure that they fit into an overall and synergistic plan.
- MG: We need a new Master Plan that is designed to satisfy the Mission and goals of the DAA and that is financially viable and sustainable, with or without horse racing. We should start with a highest and best use financial study that analyzes all of the potential uses from the standpoint of construction cost, and potential net revenue or loss to the DAA. Then we can and should prioritize the uses.
- FS: Revenue generation and self-sustaining economic activities are key. Education and entertainment can co-exist if we meet the various needs and expectations of our community.
- KM: First, there is a very practical economic component to prioritization. The Fairgrounds is a business that must remain financially viable. Second, community demand. They will tell us what they want. The community votes with their feet and their pocketbooks. We must consistently poll the community about what they like and what they want. Small financial bets can be tested through trial and error; however, big financial bets must be thoroughly vetted to ensure the best use of Fairgrounds resources.
- DM: I would lower the priority for the annual fair and horseracing events, and increase the priority for education and recreation events.
- SN: Invest in elements and programs geared towards the future.

## 8. Why should the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA continue to exist?

- RV: The Fairgrounds should continue to exist because it is iconic to San Diego County. It is a gathering place for thousands and thousands of people annually. It offers programs, events and services that can't be found anywhere else in the County. It provides thousands of jobs to the region and millions of dollars. The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA should exist because the Fairgrounds must have a governing entity that is truly committed to the best interests of the Fairgrounds with its only agenda being the vibrancy, survival and future of the Fairgrounds.
- LB: Being the largest Fair in California and the only one with a racetrack, the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA deals with a broad agenda. There are significant issues before us, health, safety, emergency preparedness, financial survival that are weaved with what we provide, which is a "multi-use public assembly facility with an emphasis on agriculture, education, entertainment and recreation...for the benefit of all." With over 1.6 million people through the gates alone during the Fair, the Del Mar Fairgrounds hosts millions of people and has touched the lives of so many. The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA has the capacity to be the leader and be a model for all fair boards to follow not only in CA but also throughout the country. The Fair Boards in CA should all work together to promote CA and to be "the lifeblood of their communities and the engine of progress".
- JR: Question 3 address what the community loses if the Fairgrounds no longer exists. "We lose an invaluable resource for bringing the community together through diverse types of events, especially those for which a fairgrounds is uniquely suited. We lose critical infrastructure for emergency response. A large "economic engine" for the region would be lost. We lose optionality in meeting future needs." There is a separate question about what the governance structure should or could be in the future (continue as a DAA or other nonprofit structure). That can be explored in parallel with strategic planning.
- PS: Because community centers are vital elements of a strong community.
- MG: It's part of human nature to come together in sacred places to learn, share, interact and recreate. Commercial ventures' profit orientation can prevent the kind of opportunities that the DAA can provide.
- FS: It has thrived since the 1930's and should continue to evolve while meeting the needs and expectations of those who come on to the property every year.
- KM: One reason is its rich history. The Fairgrounds has provided entertainment and learning for nearly a century. Generations of families have shared the joy of learning together and being entertained at the Fairgrounds. Another is that the Fairgrounds operates and facilitates programming ... an excellent partnership model for community. The Fairgrounds is by and for the community. There is no other venue that gives the community the ability to deliver small and large scale access to programs.
- DM: To grow and serve the needs of the region and expand beyond the CDFA focus on county fairs.
- SN: Board oversight provides critical input to staff that otherwise would not exist.

## 9. What do you believe is the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA's higher purpose\*?

RV: There are certain locations that simply by their presence give you a sense of “home” – of memories, celebration, comfort, safety and even refuge. To me, the Fairgrounds is such a place. Having been born and raised in San Diego, I remember attending the San Diego County Fair as a small child, a teen, as a father of small children, and as an adult. There is always a nostalgic, familiar and warm feeling when I enter the Fair, as well as a sense that there will always be something new to add to the memories. As a college student, I began attending the Races and have throughout my life. Again, the location allows me to recollect on times spent with wonderful friends and family. Even though I am at the Fairgrounds very often due to board business, I try to take a moment and simply look at and truly appreciate the wonder of the facility with its familiar structures and the ocean just beyond it. For me, the facility is a treasure that must be maintained. That is the higher purpose I have for the facility – instilling in our patrons, surrounding communities, our entire County and generations to come, the importance of the “place” and all of its history, magic and possibilities. With that mindset, it is always easier for me to think about what is best for the facility and how to help govern the organization.

LB: Our lives have purpose and meaning, both as individuals and as contributing members of the organizations where we work or volunteer. We spend a significant amount of time and give a portion of our life to these organizations to see them thrive through a shared commitment and a shared destiny to see that we have left this organization in a better place for all to enjoy and treasure forever.

JR: I prefer to listen first and not fix my perspective on the higher purpose of the DAA going into the planning meeting.

PS: I believe that if we accomplish our mission, the Fairgrounds will become a “safe-space,” where the community turns to for comfort.

MG: The most spiritual thing we can do here on this planet is to protect the planet itself, and lift up our fellow humans. The DAA is in a unique position to accomplish this. I want the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA to be for San Diego what Tivoli Gardens is for Copenhagen; a multigenerational mass-gathering place that is the cultural and social center of the region.

FS: Serving the ever expanding make up of our community. Our goal is to serve the people who live in San Diego who enjoy being entertained and educated by the tremendous events showcased at the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA.

KM: The Fairgrounds is about community and how we choose to share relevant experiences together. I believe the best way that can be done is to recognize that the community is made up of a variety of demographics. Some Fairgrounds activities and events may not appeal to segments of the population. Others may be wildly popular. Our higher purpose is to find ways to reach as much of the population as possible. To ensure everyone feels, at one time or another, welcome and a part of the Fairgrounds community.

DM: To evolve to serve the educational and recreational needs of the region with a dedicated staff and board; innovation is key.

SN: Oversight, input from a diverse set of individuals to enhance what the Fairgrounds is.

*\*When thinking about the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA's higher purpose, consider this school of thought within today's business world:*

- *A **higher organizational purpose** is something more than a mission – it taps into peoples' desire for meaning and permeates every behavior and thought in the organization.<sup>1</sup>*
- *A **higher purpose** is not about economic exchanges. It reflects something more aspirational. It explains how the people involved with an organization are making a difference, gives them a sense of meaning, and draws their support.<sup>2</sup>*
- ***Purpose** plays a major role in creating the foundation for a positive and sustainable company culture...is a bit different than a mission or vision in that it is aspirational and can be boiled down to a simple statement that defines the company's purpose to the world.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Zach Mercurio - <https://www.zachmercurio.com/2015/10/what-is-your-higher-organizational-purpose/#:~:text=A%20higher%20organizational%20purpose%20is,visions%20and%20inspires%20self%2Dtranscendence>.

<sup>2</sup>Harvard Business Review - <https://hbr.org/2018/07/creating-a-purpose-driven-organization>

<sup>3</sup>Delivering Happiness – <https://blog.deliveringhappiness.com/how-to-create-a-higher-purpose-mission-for-your-company-culture>

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES

### Richard Valdez

Appointed to the board in 2014. Served over five years prior to the “shut down” of the pandemic. The board has not been physically together in over a year. This has proved challenging.

#### Current Conditions

- The challenges brought by the pandemic have been significant but in the midst of crisis we have found opportunity. The organization has been through a stress test but has an opportunity for rebirth. As a board member, I am optimistic.
- The individual board members are experienced and talented and bring to the organization a treasure of expertise that we have put to good use, especially during the pandemic crisis.
- It is a cohesive board with a great combination of board skills and expertise. They have appreciated the direction set for the organization and the information that is provided so that responsible decisions can be made.

#### Strategic Planning Expectations

- The strategic planning process can help further consensus building with the board, developing a united front and team approach. We need to build consensus on the purpose and the identity of the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA.
- Leadership and staff of the organization have been impacted tremendously by the effects of the pandemic. Strategic planning can help the board define roles of the board and staff and determine how best to facilitate staff’s implementation of policy and programs.
- Looking to the future, it is important through the strategic planning process for the board to have an understanding of the finances of the organization, to participate in the development of an effective business plan and to set priorities and direction that supports the staff implementing the business plan.
- I would love to see a process by which we can evaluate all the elements and business units of the organization for their effectiveness, their contributions to the success of the organization and their value to the community. We know when we are performing in our peak, we are a tremendous economic engine and provider of significant community value in recreation, entertainment and education. How do we persevere and fulfill our traditional role as a provider in our community as a self-sustaining operation?
- Including in the strategic planning process will be an opportunity to include community input. The input is needed plus this process allows for the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA to increase awareness and understanding of what value the fairgrounds brings to the community. Often the fairgrounds is an after thought when it comes to civic planning whether by cities, the county or the state. We are a valuable community asset and can serve as a strategic partner for our local and state governments.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Lisa Barkett**

Has served on the board since 2002. Has vast experience serving on nonprofit, hospital, the fair board and university boards. Leads in service to the greater good.

#### **Purpose & Value of the Fairgrounds**

- The fairgrounds is part of the history of the region. Personally, she has participated in fairgrounds activities, since childhood.
- She values the impact the work of the organization has on the community. It is a place that provides for the social well-being of the public, addresses health issues, serves as an economic engine and does all of this as a self-funding public entity.

#### **Current Conditions**

- She is most proud of the development of the facilities, grounds and programs that have taken place over the past decades. The annual fair hosts 1.6+ million attendees annually from all parts of San Diego and the world. The San Diego County Fairgrounds is the diamond in the California Network of Fairs. It reflects the loving, kind, committed community of San Diego and is very connected to the people.
- Current circumstances have found the organization in survival mode. It has led to changes in leadership, changes on the board and an acute disruption of business. Now it is time to take another leap, planning even though we are still learning how we will reopen.
- Feel positive about the staff who have remained and current leadership in light of the tremendous emotional strain on board and staff leadership.

#### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- Strategic planning offers a meeting of the minds, building consensus and blending individual views in service of the greater good.
- Value including the whole community, building for success and looking for enriching, positive impacts that last beyond the immediate experience. In order to thrive as an organization, need to connect with the people and meet community needs and interests.
- Exploring governance reform is a front burner topic. We need to think outside the box.

#### **View of the Future**

- She wants the annual fair and horse racing to be preserved in a relevant form for the future.
- We need to be a trendsetter, look at what is trending for the future and empower and encourage the organization to create opportunities. We need to look outside the box in how we plan, operate and serve.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES

### Joyce Rowland

Appointed to the board in 2020. Her first board meeting was the one in which it was determined to postpone the 2020 San Diego County Fair.

#### Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds

- Has personal experience with fairgrounds throughout the state involved with dog shows. She is pleased to serve on the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA's board of directors because she recognizes the large local impact of a fairgrounds and its relationship with agriculture.
- Believe that building **relevant** relationships and points of connection give meaning to the fairgrounds. The relationship with the fairgrounds becomes personal. "It means something to me."

#### Current Conditions

- These are unprecedented times. The impact and change brought on due to the pandemic is significant. The board finds itself "steering the boat while rebuilding the boat."
- Impressed with the level of resiliency and determination to move the organization forward in face of the complete shock to the system caused by the pandemic and restrictions of mass gatherings.
- The organization has suffered through a tortured process of having to lay off so many full time staff. It was quite unexpected and unprecedented.
- The board is effective in dealing with what was being presented and doing what was needed to survive. They have operated with dignity and respect.
- In the face of crisis the board has been willing to stay true to its mission.

#### Strategic Planning Expectations

- The strategic planning process can further the common understanding of the mission and purpose of the organization. Why does the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA exist? Have open, honest conversation about direction and purpose. This helps build trusting relationships on the board, with staff and with the public.
- Personal approach is for a rational, common sense approach to determining direction and purpose. It is important to use all tools available to understand where we are as an organization, build consensus on direction and speak with one voice. Believe that a paced approach helps solidify the common understanding of organizational direction and purpose.
- For the board to be in agreement regarding the organization's purpose and values helps purposeful, responsible decision making. This common direction provides a center of gravity for the board and is helpful when challenges and opportunities occur.

- The fairgrounds board and staff have a true spirit of community service. There is high energy, generosity of spirit and pride associated with the organization's community engagement and service. There is a willingness to have meaningful relationships with the public, with stakeholders, with vendors, with guests and with fairgrounds users.
- In strategic planning we need to consider both short term planning as well as long term. We need to get on solid financial grounds, building a business plan that supports the organization fulfilling its mission. In addition the State has asked us to explore the question of governance. Are we organized optimally? Could other models support the organization being even more effective? Always we need to assess any change, improvement, program shift to its capacity to move the organization forward in fulfilling its mission.

### **View of the Future**

- The fairgrounds is a space in relationship with the community. It is a unique haven that is not over built. It exists for community purposes and facilitates meaningful coming together of the public. It is a place for specific interests to be enjoyed. It supports shared experiences that help individuals feel the bond of common interests, educational and recreational activities. It is also a safe haven for exploring the new and different interests.
- To preserve this unique quality of the fairgrounds, it is hoped that "community" continues to be broadly defined and that through proactive outreach new participation and community connections can be made.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Pierre Sleiman**

Served 6 continuous years on the board. Has come to understand that the values of the fairgrounds align with his personal values.

#### **Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds**

- Appreciate the value of the being a forum for introducing innovation, specifically to children and youth. The fairgrounds provides educational opportunities on a grand scale. It is where the community gets to be personally engaged in learning, especially in the realm of agriculture. Appreciate the fairground's focus on sustainability.

#### **Current Conditions**

- The board is an evolving entity, a good mix of experience and business perspectives. Believe that the organization needs to remain adaptable and balanced, taking a pragmatic approach to planning and addressing opportunities and challenges.
- The current circumstances caused by the pandemic have had a significant impact on the board and staff. Serving on the Finance Committee I witnessed first hand the real life situation and impact on staff. As an organization we have been tested by limited resources.

#### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- See a need for a greater understanding of the complexity of the organization. There are many layers and components. The finances, the data and understanding of the data is needed to make the best decisions for the future. And in understanding the highest and best uses of the land and facilities, we need to value a synergistic, balanced view.
- Strategic planning allows us to develop a lens by which we can streamline our decision making. It is a chance for the board and staff to articulate the common purpose which then helps form this lens.
- View strategic planning as an opportunity to find consensus on purpose and value of the organization.

#### **View of the Future**

- It is the role of the fairgrounds to provide a balanced approach to serving all aspects of the community. If the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA were to cease to exist, the community would lose a part of its history and tradition. The fairgrounds is a prestigious venue and is a forum for the community's culture to be experienced and embraced. For so many people, their connection to the fairgrounds is expressed as "I love this place" reflecting a very personal connection. In our planning and operation we need to preserve these qualities.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Michael Gelfand**

Joined the board in 2020 just as the pandemic and shut down began. Serves on the Strategic Planning and Horsepark committees of the board.

#### **Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds**

- The purpose of the fairgrounds is to provide and preserve sacred places for the community. Sacred places provide space for meaningful experiences to occur and for users to find connection and rejuvenation.
- The community demonstrates a great deal of ownership for the property and this needs to be regarded seriously. The fairgrounds has a “meaning” component and connection to people. It is in a floodplain, exposed to the ocean and tides, and potential sea level rise. It abuts sensitive wetlands. There are natural elements to be considered and incorporated into the “sacred place” concept of the fairgrounds. Egress and ingress issues are important to address. We want to make it easier for people to access the property.

#### **Current Conditions**

- The organization has gone through profound change since coming on the board. Proud of the efforts of executive leadership and the board to keep their eye on the ball and move forward with dignity, focusing on survival in the midst of this crisis. It is important to understand the complexity of the organization, understanding the layers of the business, and doing what was needed to survive.
- Staff efforts operationally are trusted by the board. So much so that perhaps the board or some members of the board may hold back when they might be able to be more effective. The stress of the crisis engaged ALL to focus and be committed to saving the organization.
- The business of the organization relies on “big bump” revenue sources, i.e. the revenue generated in the one month of the annual fair, and the revenue generated by horse racing. See the need, in the future, to expand the sources of revenue and not be reliant on these intermittent revenue sources. What can be done on the property to maximize revenue generation, throughout the year, in alignment with the mission and purpose of the organization.

#### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- Professional background provides experience in conducting business on public land. Familiar with productive public processes, receiving public input and responding accordingly. Past experience in dealing with planning groups, navigating and managing controversy and be true to group and public process.
- See the need for a new, mission-driven master plan for the property, one that provides analysis of highest and best use of the property and sets the organization on a path of fulfilling its purpose with various land uses, facilities and open space that ensure that

the organization can be self-sustaining financially and true to its mission of serving the community.

- Strategic planning is the confirmation and affirmation of core beliefs about the fairgrounds. With this understanding of purpose, the board can set direction that not only deals with the immediate need to rebuild the finances of the organization but also ensure that in the long term the fairgrounds continues as a meaningful, sacred place for the community.

### **View of the Future**

- The fairgrounds is a wide open space in the midst of density. We can accommodate masses and can facilitate the meaningful, higher causes of the community. We can do this while respecting and highlighting the phenomenal natural environment within which we are located.
- People come to the fairgrounds to meet and connect with other people. The fairgrounds is a modern version of Zocalo or town square. We need to plan architecturally and in land use to encourage and support the social, recreational and educational gathering of people.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Frederick Schenk**

Appointed to the board in 2003 and served through 2006. Reappointed to the board in 2011 and is currently fulfilling this term.

#### **Purpose & Value of the Fairgrounds**

- He personally feels a deep commitment to the community of the San Diego region and serving on the fair board is an opportunity to give back to this community.
- The annual fair is the greatest gift to the community. It provides a safe environment where children and people of all ages can come together for fun, learning and social interaction.
- At the fair all senses are touched. It is a magnificent collaboration of all types of experiences, activities, and fun. He believes that every fair guest should have an opportunity for fun, joy and awe from the moment they arrive until their leave. This encapsulates the purpose of the annual fair.
- The fairgrounds has a profound legacy and connection to the community and region. It serves as an anchor for the community and if ever the fairgrounds was to cease to exist it would be devastating to millions of San Diegans.
- In a one-month period, the annual San Diego County Fair (SDCF) hosts close to 1.6 million guests. The social, cultural and economic impact of this one month is tremendous. Nothing equals the experience of the SDCF.
- There is an emotional impact on fair guests and participants. The annual fair is a valuable part of the guests' lives and individual histories.
- No child is to be hungry. This is a personal passion of mine and I believe the SDCF can help address the issue and play a role in guaranteeing that no child is hungry in the future.

#### **Current Conditions**

- He has professional and community-based organizational experience and talents that provide skill sets and expertise that are helpful to the work of the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA.
- The Don Diego Foundation is another resource in supporting scholarships for young people entering the field and science of agriculture.
- Hosting a farmers' market on the fairgrounds is another idea for addressing access to healthy food.
- The fairgrounds is open 365 days a year and offers a wide breadth of activities and entertainment choices. It is a multi-purpose event center; a fairgrounds; a horse racing track; an agricultural center; and an emergency response site.

- The 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA provides all of this as a self-supporting organization. We must generate enough revenue to support these uses as well as invest back into our facilities and grounds. We are a public-owned property however we cannot raise revenue through taxation.
- The pandemic has impacted significantly our business plan. We need to address the short-term financial needs and be prepared as events and mass gatherings are once again allowed. Important to create a “rainy day” fund to protect the organization from future crisis which impact the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA’s business the way the pandemic did.

### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- Priority 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA Programs:
  1. The annual SDC Fair. It is the rain that fertilizes a lot of fields.
  2. Horse Racing. It’s history and legacy are important. Need to be ready to adapt to the changes that are occurring in this sport.
  3. Events held on the fairgrounds. It is important for the fairgrounds to serve as a venue where personal interests can be pursued and enjoyed, celebrating personal events, family celebrations, and a place where services for those in need can be administered. We should be welcoming to all groups, in accordance to the law, and support the varied interests and activities of the community.
  4. Surfside Race Place. Repurposing the satellite wagering facilities to become a concert and entertainment venue is important. Provides space for multi-purpose entertainment offerings.

### **View of the Future**

- If the decision was ever made to close the San Diego County Fairgrounds, it would be regrettable, and I believe the public would react the decision fiercely.
- A role that the fairgrounds can play in the future is to continue as a forum and place of learning and social action for healthy living, nutrition, and sustainable food sources.
- Food scarcity and lack of nutrition for children is a real problem. The SDCF can help teach and promote addressing food scarcity, nutritional eating, healthy, sustainable farming.
- Sustainability is critical. The existing Plant-Grow-Eat education program offered by the SDCF to elementary schools is an example of how the SDCF can play a role in healthy nutrition and food scarcity.
- My commitment to the success and reach of the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA is a thread that will continue to weave itself through my life. It is very important to me.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Kathlyn Mead**

Served six years on the board. Personal experience serving San Diego on various boards, as an influencer and in important decision making.

#### **Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds**

- Have come to understand the broad role of the fairgrounds in the community. It is a community center, a place that provides education opportunity. It serves public health components. Nonprofits find a place at the fairgrounds. The fairgrounds has a key role in supporting agriculture and providing educational and personal connections with agriculture and how it supports our daily lives.

#### **Current Conditions**

- Found that often the greater community and other key community entities do not totally understand the complexity of what happens at the fairgrounds and about the recent challenges.
- The challenges of the pandemic on the organization have been significant. As a board and staff we have dealt with going from abundance to survival mode and have collectively done all we can to keep the organization alive.
- Now is the time to move from crisis mode and address how the organization will deal with the continued challenges facing “reopening” and rebuilding.
- The board has been impacted by pandemic restrictions. It is important that the board have an opportunity to interact in person with one another, build camaraderie and trust and engage in deeper thinking, looking to the future and long-term health.

#### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- The fairgrounds has a broad purpose of community support and engagement and thus needs to have a view of what is appealing to a multi-generational audiences. We strive to preserve what is representative of the community as well as look to the future and what young people find relevant.
- Board is a great mix of talent and experience. The strategic planning process will allow us to look at the “whole” of the organization; how the puzzle pieces of the San Diego County Fair come together to serve the community. Our time together in strategic planning is not the same as a board meeting. The formality will not be there as we will have the opportunity to “think out loud” and find common ground. It gives us the space to share our perspectives, hear differences of opinion and move forward for the greater good.
- Suggest focusing on a strategic vision of 1 – 3 years. How to rebuild and get back on track. How to bring back staff needed to implement our rebuilding. In our current circumstances there remains much that we do not control. We need to understand the impacts of “reopening” and plan various scenarios. Need to stay flexible and ready to react.

- The board can be most effective when provided with the information needed to make responsible, effective decisions. Staff's role is to research and present trends, and to provide information for decision making. Change can be initiated or can be organic. Collectively we can manage change for the long-term health of the organizing and in service to the community.

### **View of the Future**

- Envision the fairgrounds as a place to come and learn new things throughout the year. In addition, we need to continually strive to have a broad reach into the community, lowering barriers for participation and connection.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Donald Mosier**

Appointed to the fair board October 2018. Previously had served on the Del Mar City Council and in that role served as a liaison to the fair board. There were concerted efforts to improve relationships between the local cities and the fairgrounds. This also gave him insight into the finances and economic impact of the fairgrounds.

### **Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds**

- A personal value is addressing climate adaptation. The fairgrounds has a huge opportunity to impact climate change and educate the public on sustainability.
- Appreciates the efforts made of the organization towards creating a solar farm and battery storage.
- The fairgrounds has so much opportunity to support education, recreation and agriculture programs. We need to look carefully at our event program and look to bringing programs of innovation, recreation, sports, and education to the fairgrounds.

### **Current Conditions**

- The board has responded well to the challenges of the pandemic conditions. It has been a huge stress test on the organization and we will emerge stronger because of this test. Appreciate the leadership of the board and organization.
- The fairgrounds has served as an effective emergency response center, currently as a vaccination super center. There is a need to build a more collaborative partnership in responding to emergencies. Currently we can build on the relationship forged with the County Health Department, and Scripps Health.
- Believe that the 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA is undervalued by the public and other community organizations. We are a significant economic engine, there is a great deal of effort and resources needed to keep the fairgrounds running and there is complexity to our operations. There is not a general understanding or appreciation of what the fairgrounds contributes to the community.
- What would be missed if the fairgrounds ceased to exist are legacy and history, economic impact, emergency response support, open space managed by environmental stewards. There would be a great angst from the public if the fairgrounds closed. We are a public asset.

### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- As a retired scientist, I value advanced planning, data-based decision making and incorporating adaptability into our plans.
- The board is focused on moving the fairgrounds forward. It is essential that we balance tradition with innovation and engage young people in relevant meaningful ways.

- Through strategic planning I hope for consensus on the long-term business plan – looking 5 – 10 years in the future. I envision a great opportunity for growth and planning helps us discern the best route forward. We need to remain self-sustaining and relevant. We need revenue to address our debt obligations as well as support a resourceful and relevant long-term plan.

### **View of the Future**

- The reach into the community has been inclusive. We try to serve the whole county, though it is challenging. Agriculture and recreation offerings are a way we can expand our reach into the county.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEW NOTES**

### **Sam Nejabat**

As a native to San Diego, I grew up going to the fair. It was a beloved family ritual. Served on the board for 2 years.

#### **Purpose and Value of the Fairgrounds**

- My personal profession in the real estate field is one that addresses land use issues and creating optimal family space. I believe spaces can enrich lives through community.
- The fairgrounds has a significant role in supporting local small businesses and serves as a local economic engine.

#### **Current Conditions**

- Have come to understand and appreciate from a new perspective the amount of work and effort that takes place behind the scenes in operating the fairgrounds and producing events. The staff is professional and passionate. So many have long term connections with the organization.
- The fair board works to insure cohesive work of the team – board and staff. The quality of the people involved is great. The board members represent a diversity of experience and talent.
- Proud of the efforts made by the board during the pandemic. They took up the cause of saving the fairgrounds and through crucial decision making and advocacy have preserved the fairgrounds for the future.

#### **Strategic Planning Expectations**

- The fairgrounds has a unique location and offerings to the community. It is an organization that works to communicate and engage stakeholders as well as the public. See the board as working to build collaboration, hearing the various opinions and perspectives and making decisions based on the input.
- The annual fair has consistently performed well. Looking forward, there is no downside trajectory. We need to explore opportunities but build on what works.
- In strategic planning we need to think ahead and move away from reactive and seasonal planning. What is the 5 – 10 year view? We do need to address immediate challenges caused by pandemic shut down but balance it with longer term planning as well.
- I desire to serve the community by making the fairgrounds the best it can be.

#### **View of the Future**

- People from all areas of San Diego come and visit the fair. We need to increase our reach into all segments of San Diego county, improve accessibility and treat all equitably. This is YOUR county fair.