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22nd DAA Board Adopts Guiding Principles for Master Site Planning Process

The Fairgrounds 2050 process is beginning with community outreach efforts

DEL MAR, Calif. (Sept. 17, 2024) — The 22nd District Agricultural Association's Board of Directors recently unanimously passed a resolution adopting a set of 16 guiding principles to shape a master-site planning process for the future of its Del Mar Fairgrounds, Surf & Turf Recreation Center, and Del Mar Horsepark properties.

The principles are grouped in five categories to highlight the District's priorities:

- Community Focus
- Purposeful Planning
- Accessibility
- Environmental Stewardship
- Economic Impact & Financial Responsibility

The District, which was first recognized by law as a state institution in 1891, produces the annual San Diego County Fair and hosts beloved events and activities for the people of the state's second-largest county. The District generates its own revenue through its events and activities and is not funded by taxpayer dollars.

The District initially purchased the Del Mar Fairgrounds property — a former coastal golf course — in the 1930s, and it opened in 1936. The Fairgrounds has served since then as a major events venue and as an emergency resource center, such as during World War II, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outreach efforts for a new master site plan began during the 2024 San Diego County Fair with a "Vision Wall" booth that encouraged Fair guests to provide their ideas for District property. Further outreach efforts will begin in the months ahead following the passage of the guiding principles.

"As we plan for the future of this storied organization, we remain fully committed to serving our community by producing amazing events and activities and helping to create cherished memories for generations of San Diegans," said Carlene Moore, the District's CEO. "Through these guiding principles, we will embark on a master site planning process that prioritizes community input, responsible and sustainable stewardship, and economic vitality."

The Board's vote came at its September Board meeting. The full text of the resolution and guiding principles are below and can also be found at delmarfairgrounds.com/2050.

WHEREAS, the 22nd District Agricultural Association (the District) was formed and recognized under State of California law in 1891 and purchased the land to open the Fairgrounds in Del Mar in the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, the District now also owns the 65-acre Del Mar Horsepark and the Surf & Turf Recreation Center; and

WHEREAS, the District exists to produce the annual San Diego County Fair, and its properties host numerous events and activities; and

WHEREAS, the District is an economic engine for San Diego County. In 2019 and 2020, economic impact studies showed the District had a \$682 million annual economic impact. This economic activity also generates millions of dollars in sales tax revenues for critical services in the City of Del Mar, San Diego County, and the State of California; and

WHEREAS, the District has also served as a vital emergency resiliency center in times of need for San Diego County, including as a wildfire evacuation point; and

WHEREAS, the District's most recent master plan was released in 2008. In the nearly two decades since then, the world has experienced tremendous economic, social, financial, cultural, technological, and environmental changes — all of which coincided and caused significant changes to the District's operations. This necessitates a fresh look at the District's properties; and

WHEREAS, the District began a strategic planning process in 2021 to restate its purpose, mission, vision, and values and create stronger bonds to San Diego County residents, cities, civic institutions, and community thought leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors has previously supported evaluating opportunities for enhanced development of the various District properties in congruence with District's mission of offering agricultural, educational, recreational and entertainment opportunities to San Diego County residents; and

WHEREAS, the District is as a regional asset that welcomes millions of guests every year and serves all of San Diego County and its visitors; and

WHEREAS, the District's Board of Directors is committed to developing a pragmatic, fiscally responsible land-use plan, including appropriate upgrades and improvements to existing facilities and grounds and the addition of new facilities to support current and new program opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors adopted a resolution regarding support of a robust community input process and related actions to guide the master site plan initiative on May 14, 2024.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the District's Board of Directors adopts the following guiding principles for its "Fairgrounds 2050" master site planning process:

Community Focus

1. The District will remain committed to serving the San Diego County community, and therefore a broad countywide community outreach and input process will be foundational to the master site planning process. In addition, previous relevant community input will also be considered.
2. In addition to outreach to civic leaders and the public, the District will solicit the views of thought leaders, experts, and top minds in the fields related to the master site planning process.
3. As part of the master site planning process, the District must continue to serve as a community gathering place that includes open space for recreation.
4. The District shall provide updates on the master site planning process through a website and other communications channels.

Purposeful Planning

5. The master site planning process will analyze the opportunities for success of prospective land uses within the context of the District's previously adopted Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values, and Objectives.
6. A new master site plan must enable the annual San Diego County Fair to continue to thrive for generations to come.
7. Under a new master site plan, the Fairgrounds main campus — and potentially other District properties — must be able to continue to serve as an emergency resiliency center for San Diego County.
8. The master site planning process shall consider the current conditions of existing structures and the costs, benefits, and economics of repurposing buildings and/or financing replacements, repairs, renovations, or demolition.

Accessibility

9. The master site plan should seek to maximize access and minimize impacts to surrounding communities in the Cities of San Diego, Solana Beach, and Del Mar. This includes providing adequate event parking, practical ingress and egress routes, traffic management and alternative transportation accessibility to the Fairgrounds and other District properties.
10. The District should work closely with governmental and regulatory bodies to support or enhance existing and potential transportation, accessibility, safety, and environmental goals.
11. A new master site plan should not infringe upon — and should seek to increase — safe access to the Coast and to local beaches.
12. A new master site plan should include low-cost visitor-serving uses within the coastal zone.

Environmental Stewardship

13. A new master site plan must consider potential sea-level rise, flooding, climate change, liquefaction, impacts to the water quality of nearby beaches and lagoons, and other environmental issues.
14. The District should seek to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency.

Economic Impact and Financial Responsibility

15. A new master site plan must continue to allow District properties to serve as an economic engine for the region and should seek to maximize the District's economic benefit for San Diego County — while remaining a community-focused asset.
16. A new master site plan — and any funding plans that provide for its implementation — must enable the District to remain financially viable into the future.

About the 22nd District Agricultural Association

The 22nd District Agricultural Association owns and operates the Del Mar Fairgrounds on behalf of the State of California and is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the governor. Fairgrounds operations are primarily funded by revenues generated by hosting events, the largest being the annual San Diego County Fair. For more information, visit delmarfairgrounds.com.

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