

Playa del Fuego, Inc.  
Board of Directors  
First Annual Fall Retreat 2007  
Minutes  
September 21 - 23, 2007  
Friends Wilderness Center, Harpers Ferry, WV

Board of Directors:  
Andy Wing  
Ben Sarsgard  
Brian "Bink" Shaw  
Dave Diller  
Jamie Love  
Karen 'Suz'anne Daniel  
Leah Marcus  
Michele "Ginger" Ravera (did not attend)  
Mark "Booger" Borden  
Mike "Magorn" Galleher

## Summary

Playa del Fuego, Inc.'s Board of Directors met for their first annual retreat from September 21 through September 23, 2007. We scheduled this retreat to delve into many issues and concerns that have risen over than past 4 years since Playa del Fuego was incorporated as a 501(c)3 for the purpose of organizing and holding interactive, participatory events that promote artistic creativity and freedom of expression.

The Board discussed and decided many issues related to the current management of Playa del Fuego, Inc. and future growth and changes of the organization. Being a community focused organization, we decided to increase and formalize community participation in the planning and management of the organization. We've opened the nomination process for new board members to the entire PDF community; all community members will be invited to submit board member nominations annually following the Spring burn. Also, we've defined roles and responsibilities for all board members to increase our visibility in the community and to facilitate improved communication between community members, the Planning Committee, and the Board. These roles include Planning Committee department liaisons and the establishment of an Event Mayor.

In addition to increasing community voice, the Board established formal procedures for the creation and management of formal committees. Given our current goals and needs, we established new three new committees: Communications, Community Outreach, and Finance, in addition to Art Grants and Site Search committees. Charters for each of these committees will be available after November 15, 2007.

The Board outlined short and long term goals for the organization. The two biggest decisions include the agreement to actively pursue the purchase of land for the event within two-to-five years and increasing year-round community activities and outreach, including offering art grants outside of the event.

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## A. Board Structure and Responsibility

### A1. Review of current terms and responsibilities as outlined in the bylaws.

Summary from the Playa del Fuego, Inc. Bylaws:

- *Number of Directors:* Not less than one (1) or more than fifteen (15).
- *Officers of the Board:* The board shall elect: President, Secretary, Treasurer. Other officers may be added by the board.
- *Election of Directors/Officers:* Board members shall elect directors annually or at a special meeting if needed to fill an unexpected vacancy.
- *Term of Directors/Officers:* One year or the remainder of term if filling an unexpected vacancy.
- *Removal of Directors/Officers:* Anyone can be removed, at any time, with or without cause, by an affirmative vote by the majority of the board.
- *Resignation of Directors/Officers:* Board members can resign at anytime in writing.
- *Quorum:* A majority of the entire board is a quorum for the transaction of business. Removal of directors or changes to the bylaws requires a majority vote of all board members.

### A2. Increasing community involvement in board member nominations.

The Board recognizes the importance of community involvement in selecting board members. In 2006, we agreed that the Planning Committee could submit nominations following each burn; however, a lack of follow through and action by the board made this an unsuccessful policy.

We decided to expand solicitation of nominations beyond the Planning Committee to the the entire PDF community. The board will consider community nomination, in conjunction with nominations made from within the board, and make the final selection.

We recognizes that the Playa del Fuego community includes a large geographic area and that, historically, board members have primarily been located within the Baltimore-Washington region. We are committed to including insight and participation from all geographic areas. We discussed reserving board seats for regional representatives but decided that it was not necessary at this time. We will continue to request input and nominations from the entire community and will fairly consider nominations for board members outside of the Baltimore-Washington area.

**Decision:** From this point forward, the Board will solicit nominations from the entire community following the spring burn. Community members will have until the Post-Spring-Burn meeting to submit nominations either online or via email. The nomination shall include: 1) nominees name, 2) contact information, and 3) reason for nomination. Individuals can nominate themselves.

**Action:** The Board will proactively publicize nomination information prior to the spring event to all regional lists and during the event itself.

**Decision:** New members will have a one-year trial and be classified as a *Board Member at Large*. They will retain all rights as an active board member, but will be excused from assuming a formally defined role within the board.

### A3. Board member roles and responsibilities.

In order to increase community visibility and meet event growth needs, the Board decided to add formalized board member responsibilities for shaping the future direction of Playa del Fuego, Inc. We decided to expand the responsibilities of board members to include an assigned or selected role in addition to their standard duties. These roles are not designed to replace or substitute for community volunteers, but are established to facilitate community input and participation.

We defined the following roles, each commitment will last for one year:

- *Event Mayor*: Visible liaison between community/event participants and the Board. This person is responsible for listening to all community input (both positive and negative) during events and bringing that information back to the Board for consideration.
- *Regional Representative*: Representative of the Board of Directors and Playa del Fuego at other regional events and on regional discussion lists. This role is still under development.
- *Planning Committee Departments Liaisons*: Board members will be responsible for touching base with Planning Committee department heads prior to each event. This person is not taking over the role of the department head, simply providing a checks and balances system to ensure that things are getting done. This person is responsible for removing a department head if needed. Planning Committee Departments that will have an assigned liaison: Tickets, DPW and Theme Camps, Fire Team, Gate, Rangers, Volunteers.
- *Nominee Contact*: Individual responsible for doing the initial contact with potential board members based on community supplied nominations.
- *Officers*: Formally defined officer roles, as required by bylaws, include President, Secretary, Treasurer.
- *Board Member at Large*: Newly elected board members excused from assuming a formal responsibilities during their first year of service.

Other board member responsibilities include:

- attending at least two meetings a year, either in person or by conference call
- attending the annual fall retreat, dates will be schedule annually, in advance

### A4. Election of new and current board members and officers.

The Board will hold annual elections during the summer to elect or re-elect new or current board members. Re-elections for current board members and officers will take place prior to the election of new board members.

Newly elected board members will serve their first annual term as *Board Member At Large* and will be encouraged to work with other board members in preparation for assuming additional responsibilities the following year. We feel that this will help new members ease into their role on the

board and establish a comfortable departure point, at the end of the first term, if it is not a successful match between the board and board member.

## **B. Strategic Planning**

### **B1. PDFs stated purpose/intent.**

“The purpose for which the Corporation is formed is to organize and hold interactive, participatory events that promote artistic creativity and freedom of expression.”

### **B2. 2-year, 5-year, and 10-year goals.**

The Board discussed and brainstormed short-term and long-term goals. After a thorough brainstorming session (see appendix), we selected the following goals to focus on in the short term:

- **Community Outreach:** We are committed to increasing community outreach as part of our short-term goals. See Community Outreach for more information.
- **Establish a Permanent Home:** We decided that we want to have a permanent location for our event within five years. See Land Purchase for more information.

## **C. Financial Planning**

### **C1. Board covered expenses.**

The Board agreed that serving on the board should not be a financial hardship for any board member. In order to balance the financial impact serving on the board may have, we will provide reasonable and customary accommodations for board members attending required meetings where conference call participation is not acceptable.

**Decision:** The board will automatically approve travel expenses up to \$100 for each board member, to cover mileage (at current government rate) and tolls, for attending required board meetings. Board members may request additional reimbursement and may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Currently, the annual retreat is the only meeting that qualifies for travel reimbursement.

### **C2. Paying for services.**

The Board discussed the possibility of paying individuals to complete work for PDF. We agreed that we would only consider paying someone if their service seriously impacts their ability to earn income or if there is something beyond our ability to manage. At this time, we do not see a need to pay individuals to complete work for PDF.

### **C3. Develop a financial plan.**

The Board created a Finance Committee to develop a financial plan outlining financial goals for the organization. This plan should include limits on Planning Committee budgets, projections for buying land, and financial investments.

#### C4. Event Budget and Planning Committee authority.

The Board recognizes an overall trend of “budget creep” in the Planning Committee budget for each event and believes that the lack of a formal direction or plan for PDF funds have contributed to this situation. The Finance Committee will determine a fixed amount or percentage of funds available to the Planning Committee to use for each event, starting with the Spring 2008 burn. The Planning Committee will maintain authority to assign those funds, but may need to begin planning ahead if there are large ticket items that need purchased.

#### C5. Keep the community informed of organization finances.

As the Board prepares to purchase land and establish more formal financial procedures for budget planning, we will provide information to the community to illustrate how their ticket purchase support PDF. We will produce charts and display them online and at each burn showing participants a percentage breakdown of what their ticket pays for.

**Action:** Ben and Brian will work on the statistics and present this information.

### D. Land Purchase

#### D1. Decision to buy land.

While the idea of buying land has been mentioned on and off over the past few years, until now, the Board did not have a unified opinion on the matter. At this point, we will retire the efforts to find a new rental location for PDF in exchange for focusing efforts on purchasing land.

**Decision:** We will take steps necessary to purchase land for the PDF event within two-to-five years.

#### D2. Actions and parameters to prepare for buying land.

The Board developed the following list of actions and steps to prepare for buying land within two years:

- Get finances in order: have at least one years worth of mortgage payments, event expenses, and down payment in savings.
- Have one full year of organization activity to demonstrate commitment to these future goals: board members must attend meetings, respond to issues on the email list, and fulfill their roles.
- Begin researching resources available to us in terms of grants for funding the event or for land purchase.
- Ensure community buy-in through improved communication efforts.
- Conduct mortgage research to get an understanding of what we need, as an organization and financially, to be prepared to assume a mortgage and get real number projections to work with. *Deadline: March 31, 2007*
- Site Search committee must assign actions to individuals and develop a timeline, in conjunction the the Finance committee, for buying land.
- Develop a business plan and get all professional and financial documentation in order. *Deadline: March 31, 2007*

### D3. Necessary land features or qualities.

The Board is looking at the following qualities or issues in a potential property:

- at least 40-50 acres of usable land
- road access/site access - within 1 mile of paved roads
- water access is not essential and needs careful considerations
- social environment: distance from neighbors , local policies, codes, zoning, ordinances, socio-political environment
- weather
- driving distance
- access to services such as port-a-pots
- fences or perimeter control

## E. Community Opinion and Involvement

### E1. Censorship within the community.

In response to an issue brought to the Board prior to the retreat, we discussed the Board's responsibility to monitor or control community statements about the event. Within a community forum, a participant posted information about personal activities that took place at PDF, and the forum moderator was concerned that their statement might bring negative attention to our event. For that instance, we agreed that we were not interested in censoring anyone as an organization but encourage the concerned participant/moderator to take action on his own if he wanted.

**Decision:** We are firmly against censorship of community voices and will only consider acting against malicious statements or actions designed to hurt participants or the event. We distinguish between malicious intent and personal commentary. For the latter, we feel that community pressure, not official mandates, are an acceptable response to personal commentary that could draw negative attention to the event.

### E2. Making board activities transparent and accessible.

The Board discussed the following strategies to help improve participation within the community and raise awareness of organizational activities:

- Consistently post minutes from all meetings, including board and committee meetings, in a timely manner. These minutes need to be posted online (use the wiki) and to regional lists as appropriate. For board and committee meetings, we should write an overall summary to distribute widely with a link to the full meeting minutes.
- Increase board accessibility with clearly defined roles within the community.
- When privately addressing issues with individuals, keep each other informed so that we're providing consistent information.
- Select a Mayor for each event to serve as a community ear, or lightning pole, for complaints, concerns, and praises.



## F. Formal Committees

### F1. Procedures for establishing and managing formal committees.

For all committees, the Board will develop a charter to guide operation and management. The charter will define the scope of the committee, establish committee reporting guidelines and timeline, and outline the scope of authority available to each committee. Committee may be open or closed and individuals must agree to a one-year commitment.

**Decision:** Formal committees must have a charter outlining 1.) committee scope, 2.) clarification of authority, 3) reporting requirements. The charter will define the scope of the committee, establish committee reporting guidelines and timeline, and outline the scope of authority available to each committee.

**Decision:** Each formal committee must contain at least one board member. The board member need not control the function of the committee, but must be actively involved in committee activities.

**Decision:** The board will approve individuals to each committee and will consider community volunteers and nominations. The Planning Committee is exempt from this decision.

### F2. Planning Committee details.

Historically, the Planning Committee has functioned with a open, fluid membership/participant base and everyone is welcome to participate in the planning of the event. The Board continues to support this because we feel that it keeps the planning of PDF open, inviting and accessible to new and current volunteers.

We continue to urge all board members to be active members of the Planning Committee and attend planning meetings. We also need at least one board member present at each meeting, not to run or oversee the meeting, but to ensure a consistent link between the Planning Committee and the Board.

One issue that Planning Committee participants have brought to us is the potential to abuse the open nature of this committee. Because decisions are made based on a majority vote, people have expressed concern over people being able to “stack the vote” by bringing a handful of friends with them. One solution that was suggested is to remove the voting ability from first-time attendees (i.e. you must attend more than one meeting to vote). At this time, we don’t feel this is necessary, but we are open to considering it in the future.

The Board reserves the authority to cancel or veto any decision made by the Planning Committee, especially if it impacts the legal or financial status of our organization, but feel that the Planning Committee has shown that it can (and has) exercised this power over itself as needed.

To institute a system of checks and balances and offer additional support to Planning Committee volunteers, we’ve established liaison roles for Planning Committee departments. This person is not taking over the role of the department head, simply ensuring that things are getting done and is responsible for removing a department head if needed.

The liaison roles are as follows:

- Tickets: Leah Marcus
- DPW and Theme Camps: Brian 'Bink' Shaw
- Fire Team: Mark 'Booger' Borden
- Gate: Ben Sarsgard
- Rangers: Dave Diller
- Volunteers: Suz Daniel

### F3. Site Search committee details.

The Site Search committee is responsible for preparing for the purchase of land. Board members are the only people with authority to act as a representative of the organization when discussing land purchase considerations. See appendix for more details.

**Action:** Booger will supply a charter for the Site Search committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Action:** Suz will send out an announcement stating that we are going to buy land.

**Action:** Booger will send out information soliciting volunteers to serve on the Site Search committee.

### F4. Art Grants committee details.

Andy is going to head up the reconfiguration of the Art Grants committee.

**Action:** Andy will provide a charter for the Art Grants committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Action:** The Art Grants committee will provide grant procedures to the board by October 31, 2007. The Board will approve them by November 15, 2007.

**Action:** The Art Grants committee will complete final selection of committee members by November 22, 2007.

### F5. Community Outreach committee details.

The Community Outreach committee will encompass multiple actions and activities to expand Playa del Fuego beyond the event. This includes outreach in terms of increasing the number of year-round community activities, volunteering as an group, supporting community artists, and providing grants for art outside of the event. We recognize that while increasing year-round community energy is vital to the continued success and viability of our event, it will take time and, most likely, very few people will show up in the beginning. Some ideas that we discussed (see appendix for more details):

- volunteer work: invite the community to participate in volunteer activities.
- sponsor/support year-round events: host more public community events like thrift store shopping before burns, burner swap meets, parties, anything.

- support local art activities: support burners in the community and events held by local art groups like creative alliance or fluid movement through participation or spectatorship.
- establish PDF community space: rent a space, either office or warehouse, for hosting event meetings, work parties, and/or artist work spaces.

The most pressing concern is establishing procedures for providing grants for art outside of the event.

**Action:** Magorn will provide a charter for Community Outreach committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

## F6. Finance committee details.

The Finance committee is formed in conjunction with the items listed above under Finances.

**Action:** Jamie will provide a charter for Finance committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

## F7. Communications committee details.

The Board agreed that Playa del Fuego needs to focus on improved communications, public relations, and community outreach. We've established a committee to work with the board and all committees to help spread information to the community.

**Action:** Suz will provide a charter for Communications committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Action:** Leah volunteered to review restructuring needs for the website by January 1, 2008.

## G. Event Specific Details

### G1. Board involvement in volatile Planning Committee issues (ie. comp tickets).

The Board discussed how we can help address complicated issues that get trampled in the planning committee by passionate voices, comp tickets was a convenient example. Overall, we suggested the issue stems more from a lack of information and communication within the planning community than a response to a single issue. We need to see more information provided to new volunteers either through pushing more data on the wiki and providing an orientation page for new members.

**Action:** Communication committee will work on getting information pushed into the wiki and developing a good starting point for new volunteers on past topics.

### G2. Rule Enforcement

The lack of rule enforcement at events continues to be a major problem. The Board recognizes that the only "punishment" measures in place is eviction and that there are several instances that need enforcement but not to that degree. Individual board members admit that they are not always a good candidate for rule enforcement or "being mean" about an issue, especially when the person in question is part of their social group. We discussed a few strategies and realize that we may need to come up with more solutions to this before we change locations. Possible solutions:

- **Public Shaming:** We consider calling people out in the community and pointing out their transgressions publicly. This idea lacks full board support but some like it.
- **Scripted Scenarios:** Booger suggested that we script and act out sample scenarios/object lessons at different locations during the event to bring attention to certain rules.
- **Get Support:** Brian, Magorn and Jamie are willing to help back up more timid/unconfrontational board members on issues that need enforcement.
- **Get Scary:** It was suggested that we need to actually get scary to get some of that fear-induced respect. Again, this didn't necessarily get full support from the board but some liked it.
- **Make a list of offenders:** We need to get names and note when we've had issues with certain participants. At a post-event meeting we can compare lists and consider further action (probation?) to reduce future conflict.

**Action:** Booger will write up or plan some scripts for acting out object lessons at a burn.

**Action:** During the event, board members need to record the name and details of a situation and share this information at a post burn meeting.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: At a Glance: Decisions Made

**Community Board Member Nominations:** From this point forward, the Board will solicit nominations from the entire community following the spring burn. Community members will have until the Post-Spring-Burn meeting to submit nominations either online or via email. The nomination shall include: 1) nominees name, 2) contact information, and 3) reason for nomination. Someone can nominate themselves for this position.

**Newly Elected Board Members:** New members will have a one-year trial and be classified as a *Board Member at Large*. They will retain all rights as an active board member, but will be excused from assuming a formally defined role within the board.

**Travel Expenses:** The board will automatically approve travel expenses up to \$100 for each board member, to cover mileage (at current government rate) and tolls, for attending required board meetings. Board members may request additional reimbursement and may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Currently, the annual retreat is the only meeting that qualifies for travel reimbursement.

**Buying Land:** We will take steps necessary to purchase land for the PDF event within two-to-five years.

**Censorship:** We are firmly against censorship of community voices and will only consider acting against malicious statements or actions designed to hurt participants or the event. We distinguish between malicious intent and personal commentary. For the latter, we feel that community pressure, not official mandates, are an acceptable response to personal commentary that could draw negative attention to the event.

**Developing Formal Committees:** Formal committees must have a charter outlining 1.) committee scope, 2.) clarification of authority, 3) reporting requirements. The charter will define the scope of the committee, establish committee reporting guidelines and timeline, and outline the scope of authority available to each committee.

**Board Member Involvement in Formal Committees:** Each formal committee must contain at least one board member. The board member need not control the function of the committee, but must be actively involved in committee activities.

**Membership in Formal Committees:** The board will approve individuals to each committee and will consider community both volunteers and nominations. The Planning Committee is exempt from this decision.

## Appendix B: At a Glance: Actions Needed

**Art Grants:** Andy will provide a charter for the Art Grants committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Art Grants:** The Art Grants committee will provide grant procedures to the board by October 31, 2007. The Board will approve them by November 15, 2007.

**Art Grants:** The Art Grants committee will complete final selection of committee members by November 22, 2007.

**Communications:** The Board will proactively publicize nomination information prior to the spring event to all regional lists and during the event itself.

**Communications:** The Board will proactively publicize nomination information prior to the spring event to all regional lists and during the event itself.

**Communications:** Suz will send out an announcement stating that we are going to buy land.

**Communications:** Communication committee will work on getting information pushed into the wiki and developing a good starting point for new volunteers on past topics.

**Communications:** Leah volunteered to review restructuring needs for the website by January 1, 2008.

**Community Outreach:** Magorn will provide a charter for Community Outreach committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Finance:** Ben and Brian will work on the statistics and present this information.

**Finance:** Jamie will provide a charter for Finance committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Rule Enforcement:** Booger will write up or plan some scripts for acting out object lessons at a burn.

**Rule Enforcement:** During the event, board members need to record the name and details of a situation and share this information at a post burn meeting.

**Site Search:** Booger will supply a charter for the Site Search committee by October 31, 2007 to be approved by the board by November 15, 2007.

**Site Search:** Booger will send out information soliciting volunteers to serve on the Site Search committee.

## Appendix C: At a Glance: Board Roles and Formal Committees

### **Planning Committee Department Liaisons:**

- DPW and Theme Camps: Brian 'Bink' Shaw
- Fire Team: Mark 'Booger' Borden
- Gate: Ben Sarsgard
- Rangers: Dave Diller
- Tickets: Leah Marcus
- Volunteers: Suz Daniel

### **Formal Committees:**

- Art Grants: Andy Wing
- Communications: Karen 'Suz' Daniel
- Community Outreach: Mike "Magorn" Galleher
- Finance: Jamie Love
- Site Search: Mark "Booger" Borden

## Appendix D: Site Search/Land Purchase Brainstorming

### Concerns and considerations for owning land:

- rent to outside groups
- location: how far west? what is too far?
- maintaining infrastructure on the land
- permits needed
- have one year mortgage in the bank
- have a year of event expenses in the bank
- be able to pay for needed improvements
- need caretaker
- nearby neighbors
- development plans for the area
- laws and ordinances
- increasing BOD responsibilities
- local authorities
- proactively work with the local community
- possible initial attendance drop - financial impact
- what are grant resources available if any
- what out buildings or structures would we need: showers, toilets, buildings, etc
- must have everything in order
- concerns about rave act
- lack of protection (similar to what we have from the vets)

### Purchase readiness:

- money: we need down payment, one year mortgage, one year expenses
- one year of community action and board action
- need to increase savings and consider grants
- get community buy-in
- research and plan by feb
- assign roles to deal with specifics

### Criteria for the site:

- site access, within one mile of paved road
- 50+ acres of usable land, mostly level and clear
- social environment
- cost: under \$500K
- weather in spring/fall
- proximity to major cities
- trash and port-a-pot vendors
- permitter and gate control
- local zoning and codes (fire)
- long term development
- pre-existing encumbrances
- wells and septic concerns



## Appendix E: Community Outreach Brainstorming

### Community Outreach Ideas:

- Have space to store tools or work in - explore possibility and bring back information for availability and cost
- serving far-flung burner communities
- grants for art for PDF artists at outside events
- publicizing PDF through participation in art events, sponsorships, networking
- finding PDF artists outside of the event, attract new artists
- community service and volunteer hours
- thrift shop rampage and donate
- swap meets
- burner yard sales
- burncycle
- posting how-to throw burner events

### Concerns related to grants for art outside of PDF:

- type of events, art?
- must be compatible with our vision
- must be participatory, interactive, accessible
- location of the art
- legal concerns and distancing ourselves
- contribute to the community
- community art
- who owns the art?
- permanent display vs. temporary
- what happens after it is funded
- don't fund it if it will be sold
- public relations - we don't want to shy away from controversial but also don't ignore the organizational impact it could have
- how to get the information out there
- alternative art - stuff that normally isn't funded
- funding "our" artists, not just anyone
- create art of build community
- taking art to other regional events?
- art in "our" community
- policy to approve, is it by board or committee
- art contests for award - but what about who owns the art
- participate in public art events - kinetic sculpture race, fluid movement, etc.

## Appendix F: Strategic Planning and Short-Long-Term Goals

### 1-to-2-year goals:

- community out reach (non-party)
- community service: clean-up
- education and art outreach in the community
- apply for grants to support programs
- get rental workspace/warehouse office
- **establish grant process for art grants outside of PDF**
- LNT outreach
- ranger/volunteer sharing with other regionals
- sharing resources with other regionals
- MD nonprofit membership
- consider comp tickets
- sustainable infrastructures
- board energy increased
- paid security for events
- increase community ownership: improve self-policing of event
- photo policy
- multimedia campaign: burner radio, year-round media
- **get tax exempt certificate**
- more organization with event purchases
- **establish defensive legal maneuvers to protect event name**

### 5-year goals:

- have a permanent home for PDF
- studio space, sponsorship
- office staff
- grow event in terms of space, people, time
- environmental awareness and responsibility
- sustainable event

### 10-to-15 year goals:

- franchises or event spin offs
- private island
- old burner house
- be able to absorb community if Burning Man backs out