

NASL summit a “turning point” for league and San Francisco Deltas

By [Douglas Zimmerman](#) on October 7, 2016 at 11:14 AM



The San Francisco Deltas will play in the NASL in 2017.

Recent media reports speculating about the potential demise of the 7-year old North American Soccer League have left local soccer fans wondering what lies ahead for the San Francisco Deltas and professional soccer in the city.

Up to five clubs could leave the 12-team second division soccer league next season. Minnesota United announced that it is **moving up to the MLS**. The **Ft. Lauderdale Strikers** and **Rayo OKC are facing financial difficulties**. There have also been rumors that the **Tampa Bay Rowdies** and **Ottawa Fury** are considering a move to the third division USL, although **Ottawa has not yet petitioned the Canadian Soccer Association** for the move.

With the prospects of the league in question, the Deltas front office joined a summit near Atlanta last week with many of the club owners and league officials to plot the NASL's future.

The summit was planned last June, before the latest contraction rumors surfaced, at the league's Board of Governors meeting said Deltas CEO Brian Andrés Helmick in an interview with SFGATE.

The intent of the meeting was not to produce concrete proposals but to plot a mutual course for the clubs and the league. "This wasn't a meeting to make decisions that are tactical," Helmick explained. "It was a meeting to make sure that we came together."

In the month leading up to the summit consultants, who have worked with Silicon Valley companies including Apple, Facebook, and Google, conducted interviews with the league's clubs to discover shared priorities and goals. They then led brainstorming sessions and discussions at the 2 and 1/2 day summit which identified a series of priorities for the league and the clubs to work on for the next year.

"There was this level of transparency, dialogue, humility, and collaboration that I had not seen before," Helmick remarked.

"We're in a period of change and change is hard. Not everyone can deal with that change. However, we have a strong core group of owners, and there is a ton of potential. Expect to see differences in how we're going to be operating in the future."

The core group of owners is believed to include the New York Cosmos, Carolina Railhawks, Miami FC and Indy Eleven. An Indy Eleven team official **told the Indianapolis Star on Thursday** that the club "is already planning for our participation in the North American Soccer League in 2017. We look forward to knowing more details about the season following league meetings in the coming days."

Helmick confirmed one of the moves the league has already made is to build a more positive relationship with the US Soccer Federation. Earlier this year NASL dropped **filing a lawsuit against US Soccer** asking to be recognized as a division one league on the level with Major League Soccer. "I'm especially excited to have our league work collaboratively with the USSF, MLS, and USL to grow the sport we all love," he added.

Amid potential contraction, there have also been reports that NASL is still planning to expand. The **Midfield Press said** a group of investors is considering an NASL team in Los Angeles to start in 2017. Ownership groups in **San Diego** and **Chicago** are also exploring joining the league in 2018.

"I hope that someday when people are studying the history of the NASL," Helmick stated, "they will look back at this period as a turning point."