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Crane Watch: See what's coming next for the National Western Center



The new National Western Center will include more than 2.2 million square feet of indoor and outdoor space for year-round events.

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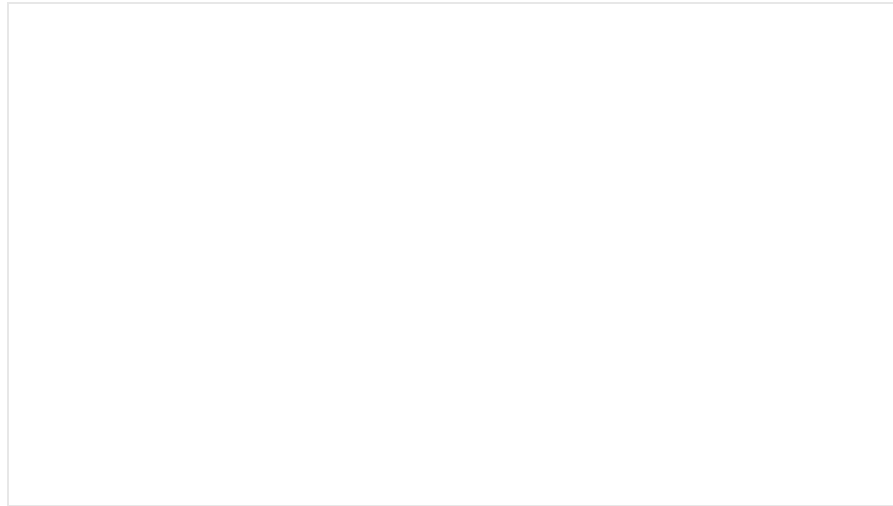


In Denver, the hope of enhancing agriculture, frontier traditions and local communities is alive and well, thanks to the efforts of the National Western Center Authority and the National Western Stock Show.

Currently under construction is the massive Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center, with an expected delivery date of late 2025. The National Western Stock Show will use the venue for 16 days every January, but the livestock center will be put to good use the remaining 11 months of the year as well, with concerts and sporting events taking place

there. The livestock center boasts a 5,500-seat arena and a 185,000-square-foot expo hall that will function as the cow barn during the Stock Show every year.

“It’s – pardon the pun – a workhorse for us in terms of events,” National Western Center Authority CEO Brad Buchanan said.



The Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center is under construction at the National Western Center.

CHRIS ROURKE

The National Western Center Authority will operate the building on behalf of the city, which owns it.

Next at the campus is the National Western Stock Show Association Legacy Building, breaking ground at the beginning of next month. The building will function as headquarters for the Stock Show, and have a conference center, a fourth-floor club space that looks into the livestock center’s arena and a dining facility. The building will also have an art gallery and museum component to showcase the Stock Show’s archive of historical artifacts.

“It has a huge outdoor space as well with views of the mountains and downtown. It’s going to be a really special piece of architecture in Denver,” Buchanan said.

The legacy building will be finished around the same time as the livestock center in late 2025, Buchanan said, and open for the 2026 Stock Show.

Meanwhile, the effort to build the new equestrian center, hotel and parking garage on 17 acres of city-owned land is still ongoing. Two groups – one led by Fengate Capital Management, Ltd. and one led by Saunders Construction – have made the cutoff after the National Western Center sent out requests for proposals in 2023. Once the two groups submit their two proposals by Feb. 20, Buchanan said the group will move into a project development agreement phase, which will last about a year.

The firm that submits the winning proposal is in charge of designing and building a 400,000-square-foot equestrian center, an approximately 200-key hotel and parking garage for at least 600 cars. In addition, the developer group would be in charge of operating the hotel and helping to bring more events to the campus.

“We did some analysis and we’re confident there is a market for a hotel, both for this part of Denver, but also in support of a lot of the activation happening on the campus,” Buchanan said.

He added that every weekend in July, August and September this year is booked for

events already at the campus, six of which are outdoor festivals and concerts that will bring more than 10,000 people.

“Our phone is ringing on booking the livestock center – both the arena space and the expo hall space – in ‘26 already and for many years into the future... We’re really optimistic with what we’re seeing in terms of event interest now,” Buchanan said.

Reciprocally, the hotel is a key aspect of infusing daily activity to the campus, by bringing guests there seven days a week, according to Buchanan.

“Everything we’re adding here on campus is about activating the 240 acres of the National Western Center on a year-round basis,” Buchanan said.

All these projects are part of phases one and two at the National Western Center, but there is still more development to come on the horizon. One component of that will be the adaptive reuse of the 1909 Stadium Arena into a public food market. And Buchanan is not ruling out bringing housing to the campus either.

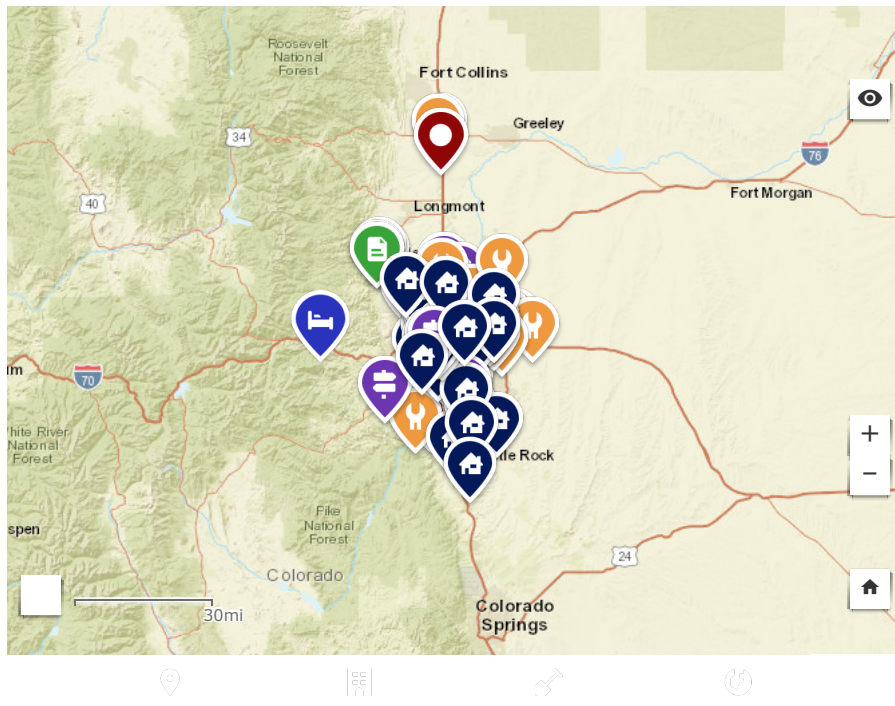
“I think lots of folks are open to and have hopes that there will be housing components in that future phase, but we have a lot of work to do on that, and right now we’re really focusing on phases one to two,” Buchanan said.

On the west side of the train tracks just north of the central utility plant, the National Western Center will be putting out a request for proposal soon for the development of a parcel that will include required structured parking; the site has flexible zoning that goes up to 140 feet in height.

“We’ll see what the private sector has in terms of ideas for the use of that site,” Buchanan said.

The National Western Center is still waiting to hear back regarding a federal grant for the development of a pedestrian bridge construction project.

Buchanan also highlighted the fact that in 2023, 69% of the money spent on the National Western campus “went to a local, small, disadvantaged minority and woman-owned business enterprise within the Globeville/Elyria-Swansea zip code which is 80216. So we’re starting to have the community impact that this campus was designed to do.”



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