

# National Western Reimagined

Change is on the horizon for the century-old stock show grounds.

by Jena McReil, digital editor



The news spread fast across the convention floor as reports came in that Denver voters approved a tourism tax including funding for a reimagined National Western Stock Show (NWSS) complex.

It was Tuesday, Nov. 3, and crowds of Angus breeders and commercial cattlemen were gathered in Overland Park, Kan., for the 2015 Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show. Once funding was secured, thoughts turned toward the future of the 110-year-old livestock tradition in Denver, Colo.

The \$1-billion plan is expected to span the next 10 years, and include construction and expansion in all areas of the NWSS grounds — from the pens down in the Yards to the livestock arena up on the Hill. When it's all said and done, the National Western will see about a 30% growth, says NWSS President and CEO Paul Andrews.

"We have a strong relationship currently with the Angus Association, and many of the other associations," Andrews said. "We're trying to develop that even deeper and give them a more pleasurable experience when their association comes here to both the National Western Stock Show, and then other times of the year. We plan on expanding that relationship in the coming years."

So as to not disturb the NWSS annual events, the plan is to not tear down buildings until the replacements are built. Construction

will be done in phases, in and around the stock show, so that participants and exhibitors can continue to enjoy their January at the National Western.

Phase 1 is focused on the Yards. The historic area will be completely rebuilt, including new pens and an Event Pavilion that will be home to the carload and pen shows. The Livestock Exchange Building, which was built in 1910, will be preserved as an important part of stock-show history.

"The National Western Stock Show was built on the Yards, and the Yards will continue to be the centerpiece for the next 100 years," Andrews said. "The Yards will expand to 20 acres, which is a significant expansion, so we'll be able to show and market even more head of livestock there."

The National Western anticipates the new stockyards to be completed by 2021.

Phase 2 involves a new 230,000-square-foot (sq. ft.) livestock center for exhibiting livestock up on the Hill. Competitions currently take place in the century-old Stadium Arena, a space that will be kept intact as a cherished space on the NWSS grounds. A new 2,500-seat livestock center is

planned to provide added space for exhibitors and include access to brand new barns and state-of-the-art sale facilities. Expanded access to water and electricity will be an improvement for livestock exhibitors over what's currently available.

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The final phase of the project is centered on a Trade Show/Exhibition Hall and Rodeo Arena. With a growing interest from trade show exhibitors, the space is planned to grow to 450,000 sq. ft. and allow for 200 additional vendors. A favorite for cattle

enthusiasts and city residents alike, the all-new Rodeo Arena will seat 10,000 and host 40 high-rise box seats.

Along with the expansion comes the need to construct new roads and bridges, as well as make improvements to current transportation infrastructure. The 16-day event welcomed more than 685,000 visitors in 2016, and with activities expected to expand year-around, managing crowd transportation will be a critical initiative.

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One change that participants will notice soon is the light-rail construction, which will link downtown Denver to the NWSS grounds. Construction is currently under way, and by 2017, visitors will be able to ride the train from the Denver International Airport to their downtown hotel, and then from downtown to the National Western. Denver's Union Station, a historic train depot, will be an important connection point during travels along the light rail.

While changes will be ongoing over the next several years at the National Western, attendees and exhibitors are sure to continue to enjoy the community it creates between consumers and livestock enthusiasts worldwide.

► Phase 1 of construction at the NWSS will be in the Yards, which will expand to 20 acres and continue to be the stock show's central meeting place.



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