



HONORING THE LEGACY BUILDING THE FUTURE

a campaign for the National Western Center



Photo Credit Tommy Collier

An Update on the 2021 Stock Show: A Painful, but Necessary, Decision is Made

There are probably 115 ways to dance around the news we are about to deliver, but we're just going to give it to you straight: the 115th-annual National Western Stock Show – the next edition of those 16 best days in January we all so look forward to – will not be happening in 2021.

You already know the reason, but we'll state it anyway, just for the record. The Covid-19 pandemic makes it just too risky to move forward.

Work on vaccines is progressing and looks promising. At least [eight candidates](#) are now in mass clinical trials around the world, and in record time, with more surely to come. Also, treatments to save the lives of those who fall seriously ill with Covid-19 have sharply reduced fatality rates.

But the disease continues to spread where people gather, and the Stock Show gathers over 700,000 people. At this time, there isn't even a process for us to apply for a variance from the City and State for an event as large as ours, and planning for the "Super Bowl of Livestock Shows" would need to start now – actually, about two weeks ago.

The Western Stock Show Association (WSSA) Board and senior leadership did a great deal of work prior to making what we all refer to as the most important and painful decision the Board has ever been forced into. The teams worked to develop scenarios to put on the Stock Show in whole or in part, with spectators or without. To boil it all down, no matter how you slice and dice the options, either the numbers don't work or the risk is too high.

The coronavirus continues to challenge the medical community, particularly with respect to long-term health impacts. It is attacking not only vulnerable, immunocompromised, and elderly populations, but also young, athletic people. We at National Western want us all – young or old, and regardless of underlying health conditions – to be back for the 115th-annual show in January 2022. Let's just call this a gap year.

As you digest that, notice that we haven't used the term "unprecedented." In December 1914, a different virus forced a wrenching decision on the WSSA board. [Foot-and-mouth disease](#) (also called hoof-and-mouth disease) swept into the United States. It was highly contagious to cloven-hoof animals such as deer, sheep, pigs, goats – and, yes, cattle. To save regional livestock, the Stock Show's leadership made the right call to postpone their 10th-annual show scheduled for January 1915.

More than a century of Stock Shows later, the WSSA board has made a similarly wrenching decision on the 2021 event.

It's the right decision, albeit a painful one.

More Reality of Today's Circumstances: Residual Impacts

There will be financial and business consequences in the short term, but the celebration of the West that is the Stock Show will absolutely prevail. National Western is a cultural treasure, an annual pilgrimage, and an economic powerhouse. What this campaign [is building](#) will further reinvigorate National Western and the Stock Show, ensuring its vibrancy until the 2021 gap becomes as obscure of an historical footnote as the 1915 gap is today.

While we're on the topic of financial impacts, there are more updates to share.

Thanks to you, we as a campaign have been incredibly successful, with more than \$75MM of our \$100MM goal in the rearview mirror and our efforts to meet and exceed that goal continuing apace. Construction work made possible in part by this campaign is well along on the new Cille and Ron Williams Yards and on the Stockyards Event Center, which will be named in honor of Buck and Janie Hutchison and family.

The Stock Show's gap year has one small silver lining in that regard. Normally, construction would cease from December into February to make way for the masses and then the cleanup. In 2020-2021, they're going to work straight through the winter, propelling completion of the Yards and the Stockyards Event Center and new roads, rail lines and a myriad of infrastructure projects, all while providing jobs for hundreds of workers. We expect both the Yards and the Stockyards Event Center to be complete by the 2022 Stock Show, and sincerely look forward to a grand opening amid a big, boisterous crowd.

That said, construction on the other three major facilities we're building – the [Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center](#), the [Equestrian Center](#), and the [Legacy Building](#) – will be slowed due almost exclusively to the residual effect of the pandemic and Denver Bond Measure 2C.

As you may recall, Denver voters [overwhelmingly passed](#) Measure 2C in 2015. The measure will provide \$637 million for new buildings, open spaces, the revitalization of the South Platte Riverfront, the expansion of National Western's footprint from 90 acres to 250 acres, and more. Three of our four buildings will be realized in part by Denver voters having extended the 1.75% tax on hotel stays and car rentals that was otherwise set to expire in 2023. You may recall that the Legacy Building will be entirely funded by our campaign.

That tax revenue will fuel a revenue stream that will, in turn, support municipal bonds to cover hundreds of millions of dollars in construction costs. You're familiar enough by now with the impact this pandemic is having on the sort of travel that translates into hotel stays and car rentals. The City and County of Denver, projecting a short-term hit to those 2C tax revenues, has wisely decided to hold off on issuing bonds. That will delay the progress – by a year or so – of the Livestock Center, the Equestrian Center, and even the Legacy Building, because while our campaign is funding all of the Legacy Building, it shares a wall with the Livestock Center, and construction must be closely coordinated.

The Work Continues: Reimagining the National Western Stock Show

But work does continue apace. Design for the Equestrian Center is nearly 90% complete, with the finishing touches to that facility happening as we write this. The Livestock Center is in early stages of design. We worked tirelessly throughout the spring and summer on the Legacy Building and have made terrific progress there, as well.

So that's where we are. Are we disappointed? Sure. Are we discouraged? Not a chance.

A year goes by fast (too fast, as those of us who have been around awhile know all too well), and regardless of 2C-driven construction interruptions, the Yards and its Event Center will soon rise as indelible proof of both our successes to date and the scale of our ambitions for the new National Western Center.

We all know we're going to build it and that the National Western Stock Show will emerge stronger than ever. Holding fast to the ideals at the heart of this campaign – honoring the legacy, building the future – will indeed lead to the transformation of the aging National Western Complex we've all loved like a trusty old horse into a National Western Center capable of carrying this incomparable, 115-year-old institution into a brighter future.

Stay tuned in the coming months about some exciting plans the campaign will be putting in place to help all of us get through those 16 days in January.

As always, we can't thank you enough for supporting our campaign and all it stands for.



2020 Stock Show Video

As you continue to digest this news and the disappointment around it, I invite you to enjoy a [video](#) we did with Bison Superintendent, Bob Dineen, and his affable sidekick, Billy Joe Dilley. Bob and Billy Joe, surrounded by some of the most majestic creatures on earth, will hopefully remind you of the Western spirit we all hold near and dear.

For questions about the campaign or making a gift, please contact

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