

# ROUNDUP RETREAT

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April 21 - 22, 2014

Stanley Hotel Lodge • Estes Park, Colorado







## **Summary and Report: National Western Center Roundup Retreat**

Estes Park, Colorado  
April 21-22, 2014

### **Background**

The city of Denver possesses strong equity as the "center of the west," a commercial hub not only for established forms of agriculture and industry, but also as a crossroads for top educators, innovators, and influencers in the evolving economy. The landscape of Denver reflects both its past and its future—with running railways, historic neighborhoods, diverse architecture, vibrant arts complexes, a thriving downtown, resilient river arteries, majestic government buildings, and state-of-the-art sports venues. The area occupied by and surrounding the National Western Stock Show represents a significant opportunity for Denver's growing capacity and reputation as a global gathering place in the American West, while also knitting together and serving the surrounding neighborhoods. Several key partners – Colorado State University, History Colorado, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea Neighborhoods, the National Western Stock Show, and the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (an initiative of the Mayor's Office) – have formed an alliance to explore redevelopment prospects that could serve and augment the work of all of these organizations, while simultaneously building Denver's global standing as a world-class hub for the Western way of life.

Representatives of the neighborhoods and partners convened in April 2014 to brainstorm potential offerings and programs, explore collaborative opportunities, and reach a common language to reflect the underpinning spirit of the National Western Center.

### **Key Outcomes**

Some specific ideas and outcomes from the retreat are captured below and in the graphic recordings at the end of this document.

### **Partner Strategic Alignment**

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In order to help identify common goals and natural strategic alignment, each MOU partner and a representative of the neighborhood planning processes described the strategic direction of their respective organizations, including internal and external forces shaping that direction. The conversation highlighted that every pairing of each organization/neighborhood could bear fruitful activity, and emphasized that the whole of the MOU partners and neighborhoods working together is significantly greater than the sum of the parts. One participant noted that the goal should be to for visitors to not be able to tell whose "part" of the National Western site they are on because the facility has almost completely integrated uses.



## NWC Programming and Design Themes

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While many ideas and principles were suggested, key themes emerged that will drive content, collaborations, and master planning of the NWC site:

- **Engage the River and Nature**  
*Participants recognized the historic, ecological, and future value of the site's proximity to the South Platte River and envisioned engagement with the river as a key component of the site experience. Experiences could include kayaking, fishing, and river-education, as well as rich, inviting green spaces that connect neighborhoods and invite outdoor activity along the river. Similarly, there was broad consensus about the need to celebrate and respect the natural world as an underpinning of the site.*
- **Celebrate Western Heritage and Carry It Forward**  
*All participants felt that it was critical that the site reflect, respect and celebrate the meaning of the Western way of life and its unique influence on culture and commerce. They felt that the site should celebrate the West's pioneering past, while at the same time pointing visitors toward future examples of how life in the West is evolving.*
- **Inspire Health and Wellness**  
*The region's equity in agriculture, food production, ranching, environmental awareness, and outdoor exploration inspired participants to envision the site as one that supports a healthy way of life. Recreational opportunities and access to healthy food were seen as ways to directly impact the health of surrounding neighborhoods and Denver as a whole.*
- **Build Cultural Crossroads**  
*The multiple arteries running through the site – rail, river and roadway – inspired participants to envision the crossing of cultures, be they local, regional, national or global. They envisioned a major gathering place where ideas and cultures could be exchanged in this “hub” of the West.*
- **Be Pioneering: Break Trail and Foster Innovation**  
*Much was said about the west as a place and a populace that embraces innovation, independence and ingenuity, a place where breaking trail is in our founding character and forward-looking spirit.*
- **Create Experiences/Fun/Entertainment**  
*Participants emphasized the need for the site to be interactive and engaging for visitors, for it to offer memorable and enjoyable experiences for those who come, in part to encourage them to return again.*
- **Grow Regional Intelligence**  
*Participants also saw the site as a place to stimulate, educate and cultivate continued learning around issues such as agriculture, land and livestock management, veterinary medicine, ecology, and engineering. The spirit of engaged learning and investing in regional intelligence—while linking this to a global knowledge base—was therefore considered critical to the success of the site.*

## Telling the Story and Creating Common Language

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### **NWC Story Arch**

Participants were asked to follow a basic story-telling template to capture the essence of the NWC initiative. What follows is an attempt at coalescing these stories into a single, shared narrative.

***Once upon a time**, beside the rail yard and abutting the river, there was a vibrant cultural and commercial gathering place for pioneers and ranchers, a bedrock group for the Western way of life. **Every year** they gathered, conducted business, entertained the community, and shared ideas. **Then one day** they no longer had the resources they needed to keep celebrating the promise of the West. **Because of that** they reached out and formed an inclusive, collaborative alliance of stakeholders and key partners from the Denver region. **Because of that**, the partners joined forces and envisioned new potential for the site that celebrated their pioneering past and carried western ingenuity into the future. **And in the end** they had a new beginning, a shared vision for a redeveloped National Western Center that was once again a vibrant gathering place for all who wish to celebrate and share in the trail-blazing, land-loving, invigorating spirit of the west.*

### **NWC Shared Language**

Participants were also asked to create a four-word statement that summarizes the National Western Center as envisioned. What follows is the resulting final language created by six sub-groups, as well as a “word cloud” that illustrates the weighting of these words:



- NWC Celebrates Western Innovation
- A Global District for Western L.I.F.E. (Local, Innovation, Food, Experiential Learning)
- NWC Celebrates Western Life and Culture
- Promise of the West
- NWC Celebrates Pioneering
- Pioneering Western Heritage with Innovation

### ***Proposed National Western Center Vision Statement***

From the exercises conducted, the following is a proposed revised vision statement:

*“The National Western Center will celebrate the spirit and promise of the West through year-round experiential learning, entertainment, and commerce.”*

### ***Proposed National Western Center Goals:***

Use education, entertainment and economic development to:

- Engage the River and Nature
- Celebrate Western Heritage
- Inspire Health and Wellness
- Build Cultural Crossroads
- Be Pioneering and Foster Innovation
- Create Experiences and Provide Entertainment
- Grow Regional Intelligence

## **Next Steps**

The outcomes highlighted above will be used to help shape the Master Planning process, led by Parsons Brinkerhoff. In addition, in order to begin to build additional partnerships, work with existing projects in the neighborhoods, increase the project’s visibility, take advantage of short-term research opportunities, and continue to leverage Roundup Retreat participants’ expertise and energy, projects that can be pursued immediately are being launched as soon as possible.

### ***Immediate Projects***

Projects identified by the group will be launched in late spring and continue throughout the summer and beyond, as appropriate. Each project has a small team to manage it. The projects that were suggested:

- Pop-Up Learning
- River Now (education and parks)
- Children’s Advisory Council (STEAM)
- Neighborhood Talent and Events
- Hosting TEDx-style Conversations
- International Lessons and Best Practices

### ***Integration into the Master Planning Process***

The program plan for the Master Plan will need to reflect the outcomes of the Roundup Retreat. One of the primary outcomes of the retreat was a clear vision and shared language that should guide a highly integrated program plan. It is hoped that this report will also serve as a touch-point and reference, allowing participants in the Master Planning process to continually ensure that the Plan reflects the shared vision of the MOU partners and neighborhoods.

The Master Planning process began the week following the Roundup Retreat, and will continue through the year, with a draft plan presented to Denver City Council by the end of 2014.

# Appendix A: Strategic Illustrations by Wittmann Studios

















Colorado State University