



JUNE 2025

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL WESTERN CENTER

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**Van Schoales** joined Keystone Policy Center as senior policy director in 2021. He is one of the two founding partners of Education Civil Rights Now and the former president of A+ Colorado, a research and advocacy organization founded by Senator Michael Bennet and Mayor Federico Pena designed to improve public education in Colorado. Schoales has 33 years of experience leading education improvement efforts from the classroom to the statehouse.

## ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

**Common Sense Institute** is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions concerning the future of free enterprise and aims to have an impact on the issues that matter most to Coloradans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed about issues impacting their lives. CSI employs rigorous research techniques and dynamic modeling to evaluate the potential impact of these measures on the economy and individual opportunity.

## TEAMS & FELLOWS STATEMENT

CSI is committed to independent, in-depth research that examines the impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI's commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of our researchers, economists, and fellows. At the core of CSI's mission is a belief in the power of the free enterprise system. Our work explores ideas that protect and promote jobs and the economy, and the CSI team and fellows take part in this pursuit with academic freedom. Our team's work is informed by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect the institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take advocacy positions.

## ABOUT KEYSTONE POLICY CENTER

The Keystone Policy Center was founded in 1975 by Robert W. Craig — a visionary, scholar, and mountaineering legend — to independently facilitate the resolution of national policy conflicts.

Today, the Keystone Policy Center leads the ascent as a trusted guide in surmounting policy obstacles. An independent, not-for-profit organization, we bring together public, private, and civic sector leaders who have diverse perspectives but share a common desire to find lasting solutions to significant policy problems. Keystone does not advocate for any single position; rather, we help groups unearth a line of sight from contention to collective action. In this age of polarized debate on nearly every major topic in public policy, we offer a refreshing yet proven blueprint for progress.

Over the past 40 years, Keystone has built a portfolio of substantive work in energy, environment, education, health, and agriculture. Keystone has accomplished this work with a series of complementary approaches that reflect the diverse strategies utilized in leadership and successful issue resolution.

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# INTRODUCTION

The National Western Center (NWC), is known best for its flexibility in hosting a variety of events throughout the year, including the annual National Western Stock Show held in Denver, CO. This new campus has a slate of offerings beyond its flagship enterprise which will yield economic, educational, and labor-related benefits for the state of Colorado over the next decade and beyond. The Equestrian Center, Livestock Center, Legacy Building, Stockyards Event Center & the Yards, at the National Western Center provide multipurpose community and event space drawing visitors from around the world. The CSU Spur campus offers a variety of educational and community-oriented events that contribute to the local and state economy as well.

The NWC's direct economic impacts alone are substantial, and its secondary and tertiary economic impacts amplify them. Apart from the spending associated with marquis events, the center itself hosts lower and higher schooling opportunities directly in line with the state's workforce development needs in burgeoning fields in which Colorado hopes to lead.

A collaboration between the Common Sense Institute and the Keystone Policy Center has allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the true scope of the NWC and CSU Spur's footprint in Colorado and its future.



## KEY FINDINGS

The total economic impact of the operation and construction of NWC facilities, the annual National Western Stock Show event, and the CSU Spur campus between 2022 – 2027 will generate over \$3 billion in GDP and \$2.18 billion in personal income.

- **Construction investments made into the Equestrian Center and Livestock Center will support**
  - **In Colorado:**
    - > over 8,600 jobs
    - > nearly \$800 million in personal income
    - > over \$1 billion to the state's GDP.
  - **In the Denver metro area:**
    - > over 6,800 jobs
    - > \$535 million in personal income
    - > \$857 million contributed to the state's GDP
- **The CSU Spur campus construction investment will support**
  - **In Colorado:**
    - > Over 3,200 jobs
    - > \$363 million in GDP
    - > \$266 million in personal income
  - **In the Denver metro area:**
    - > Over 2,500 jobs
    - > \$286 million in GDP
    - > \$181 million in personal income

- Between 2025-2027, the operation of the CSU Spur campus is projected to generate over \$65 million in GDP and \$49.3 million in personal income in Colorado. These figures are expected to grow as the campus attracts more visitors and continues to expand its programming in future years.
- In 2025, the National Western Stock Show will support \$177,569,360 in economic activity across Colorado.
- CSU Spur currently offers several graduate degree programs and two certificate programs and is slated to support additional undergraduate education offerings in the fall of 2025. This will help support Colorado's need to increase the number of higher education degrees by approximately 10% given an expectation that 73% of jobs in Colorado will require a postsecondary degree by 2031.
- Sixty-four credentials were awarded in FY24.
- Starting in FY25, CSU Spur is launching Spur Start, a program designed for incoming undergraduates to complete their freshman year at the CSU Spur campus, then transfer to the flagship campus in Fort Collins. Eighty students are expected to enroll in the 2025-2026 school year.

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF NATIONAL WESTERN CENTER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The National Western Center operates various facilities in Colorado, providing spaces for events and community engagement while also generating an economic benefit to the state. In addition to the buildings that are already operational, the National Western Center has made significant investments in two new projects through its partners at the City and County of Denver, Western Stock Show Association, and Colorado State University.

The Livestock Center, scheduled to be completed in January 2026, will include a 3,400-seat arena and an exposition hall. The Equestrian Center, expected to start construction later this year will include a 4,500 seat show arena, a hotel, community space and parking garage and is slated to be completed in 2028. While these spaces will not welcome guests until at least next year, the construction investment put toward each project is already generating economic activity for the Denver metro area and the state.

Using REMI, an economic modeling software tool, CSI modeled the economic activity generated by the construction investment made toward each project by increasing construction industry sales in the Denver metro by amounts corresponding to the investments made.

The figures below depict the economic activity generated both in the Denver metro area as well as across Colorado stemming from these investments. In total, the construction investments made into the Equestrian Center and Livestock Center will support more than 8,600 jobs, generate nearly \$800 million in personal income, and contribute more than \$1 billion to the state's GDP. The impacts to the Denver metro area are slightly lower: more than 6,800 jobs supported, \$535 million in personal income generated, and \$857 million contributed to the state's GDP.

The figures below depict economic activity supported by these investments in various scenarios.



FIGURE 1

Economic Impact of Equestrian Center Construction Investment to <b>Colorado</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	4,876
GDP	\$614,000,000
Personal Income	\$446,000,000

FIGURE 2

Economic Impact of Equestrian Center Construction Investment to <b>Metro Denver</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	3,890
GDP	\$485,000,000
Personal Income	\$303,000,000

FIGURE 3

Economic Impact of Livestock Center Construction Investment to <b>Colorado</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	3,740
GDP	\$471,000,000
Personal Income	\$342,000,000

FIGURE 4

Economic Impact of Livestock Center Construction Investment to <b>Metro Denver</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	2,984
GDP	\$372,000,000
Personal Income	\$232,000,000

FIGURE 5

Total Economic Impact of Equestrian Center & Livestock Center Construction Investment to <b>Colorado</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	8,616
GDP	\$1,085,000,000
Personal Income	\$788,000,000

FIGURE 6

Total Economic Impact of Equestrian Center & Livestock Center Construction Investment to <b>Metro Denver</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	6,874
GDP	\$857,000,000
Personal Income	\$535,000,000

These economic impact scenarios are representative of construction investments only and upon completion, the Equestrian Center and Livestock Center will begin hiring workers, welcoming guests and supporting the local and state economy.

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE STOCKYARDS EVENT CENTER AND THE YARDS

The National Western Center's Stockyards Event Center (SYEC) is a multipurpose space that encompasses an arena, an auditorium, and an exposition hall that together total over 48,000 square feet. The space hosts dozens of events throughout the year including live music, seminars, and conventions attracting thousands of attendees. A hardscaped 20-acre space known as the "Yards", serves as an event space with access to power and water throughout the space allowing for a diverse range of events.

The construction investment put forth by the project's equity partners, the City and County of Denver, Colorado State University, and the Western Stock Show Association to build both the SYEC and the Yards supported more than 1,400 jobs in Colorado's construction industry and other related businesses. It also generated more than \$167 million in GDP and \$122 million in personal income.

In 2025 the venue will welcome over 100,000 visitors through dozens of events. Using gross event revenue estimates, CSI modeled the SYEC's economic contribution between 2022 and 2024 to Colorado. The event center supports dozens of jobs and produced more than \$11 million in GDP and over \$9 million in personal income.

CSI modeled the one-year economic impact of the estimated event revenue generated in 2025 to project the Yards and the SYEC's economic impact to the state. The 2025 impact was proportionally larger than 2022-24 impact by year since the SYEC and Yards have become more established and are welcoming larger numbers of visitors.

**FIGURE 7**

Economic Impact of the SYEC & Yards Construction to Colorado	
Metric	
Jobs	1,439
GDP	\$167,192,000
Personal Income	\$122,402,000

**FIGURE 8**

SYEC + The Yards 2022-2024 Event Revenue Impact to Colorado	
Metric	
GDP	\$11,346,000
Personal Income	\$9,356,000

**FIGURE 9**

SYEC + The Yards 2025 One-Year Event Revenue Impact to Colorado	
Metric	
GDP	\$5,226,000
Personal Income	\$4,323,000

# FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE NWC

Using estimates of 2026 and 2027 event revenue projections, CSI modeled the combined economic impact to Colorado from the operation of the SYEC, the Yards, the Riverfront, and the Livestock Center over these two years.

While the Livestock Center and Equestrian Center have yet to open, the spaces are projected to welcome thousands of guests in addition to the already operating SYEC and the Yards.

FIGURE 10

Economic Impact to Colorado from Projected 2026+2027 Event Revenue	
Metric	
GDP	\$36,895,000
Personal Income	\$30,492,000

\*Event revenue is derived from the operations of the SYEC, the Yards, the Riverfront, and the Livestock Center

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE CSU SPUR CAMPUS

Constructed between 2020 and 2023, the CSU Spur campus includes three buildings, Vida, Hydro, and Terra, and offers a range of educational exhibits, classes, and camps available to the public. The campus represented a sizable investment which CSI modeled in the figure below.

During its construction, the CSU Spur campus supported an estimated 3,200 jobs, and the construction investment generated \$363 million in GDP and \$266 million in personal income. The supported jobs are reflective of both the direct construction workforce required to build the campus, as well as other jobs within industries supported by the investment.

In the Denver metro region, the campus' construction supported more than 2,500 jobs, generated \$286 million in GDP and over \$180 million in personal income.

In 2025, the CSU Spur campus employed an estimated 106 full-time staff to support its wide range of educational and community programs with plans to employ a similar number in future years. To better understand the campus's economic contribution, CSI modeled its 2025-2027 impact using campus-wide employment figures and modeling the relevant impact of employment in industries such as education and support services which CSU supports.

Between 2025-2027, CSU Spur is projected to generate over \$65 million in GDP and \$49.3 million in personal income in Colorado. These figures are expected to grow as the campus attracts more visitors and continues to expand its programming in future years.

In addition to the 106 full-time staff working at the CSU Spur campus, there are dozens of other part time employees working at the facilities generating economic activity. Due to modeling limitations, the economic impact of these part time individuals was unable to be captured meaning that the above totals are certainly an undercount of the total economic impact generated by the campus.

**FIGURE 11**

Economic Impact of CSU Spur Campus Construction to <b>Colorado</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	3,205
GDP	\$363,000,000
Personal Income	\$266,000,000

**FIGURE 12**

Economic Impact of CSU Spur Campus Construction to <b>Metro Denver</b>	
Metric	
Jobs	2,548
GDP	\$286,000,000
Personal Income	\$181,000,000

**FIGURE 13**

Economic Impact of CSU Spur 2025-2027 Operation to <b>Colorado</b>	
Metric	
GDP	\$65,086,000
Personal Income	\$49,301,000

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW

The National Western Stock Show (NWSS) is held annually in Denver over 16 days each January and is known as the Super Bowl of livestock shows welcoming more than 700,000 attendees in 2023.<sup>i</sup> First held in 1906, the NWSS has become one of the most prestigious and well-regarded stock shows in the world and attracts exhibitors and customers from around the globe.

In addition to providing great entertainment for Coloradans and visitors alike, the Western Stock Show Association (WSSA) supports economic activity for the state. Using a previous CSI report, it is estimated that in 2025, the National Western Stock Show will support \$177,569,360 in economic activity across Colorado and create roughly \$124,298,552 in personal income.<sup>ii</sup> This economic activity is driven by the hundreds of thousands of event attendees, exhibitors and other retailers.

- **Construction** – WSSA spends an estimated \$700,000 annually on construction related activity across the National Western Center to support the production of the event. This spending does not include additional construction spending by the City of Denver, Colorado State University or WSSA that goes towards the development of new facilities in alignment with the center master plan.
- **Operations** – Several organizations facilitate the operations of the annual National Western Stock Show event including the Western Stock Show Association, SSA Group (concessions), Denver Arts and Venues and Aramark.
- **Employees (off-site)** – Approximately 90% of the WSSA employees reside in the Denver metro region. Their spending, from earnings generated by working at the stock show, produces economic benefits for their local communities.
- **Visitor Spending** – The general public who attend the annual National Western Stock Show produce the bulk of the economic benefits. Visitor spending includes dollars spent while at the stock show on concessions and shows, as well as off-site restaurants, hotels and other retail outlets associated with their visit. Using reported data from the 2010 survey of visitors the average attendee was estimated to have spent \$131. To estimate the impacts of the 2025 Stock Show, the categories of consumer spending estimated in 2010, were adjusted for inflation to arrive at a proportional dollar amount in 2025 (\$188). The spending by commercial and livestock exhibitors was scaled by inflation.

- **Public Costs** – Public costs associated with roads, police protection, and other government services are also captured. The 2010 estimated cost was \$691,300 based on an average public expense per employee and resident. The 2025 values were scaled based on inflation and attendance levels.

It is important to note that some portion of this economic activity figure comes in the form of displaced spending, meaning it includes dollars that would've otherwise been spent on goods and services within Colorado and doesn't represent a new infusion of economic activity.

In addition to the yearly stock show, the WSSA is nearing completion of the Legacy Building, a new headquarters for the Western Stock Show Association and Stock Show staff projected to be completed later this year. The facility will feature exhibit space, an art gallery, outdoor community space, and a National Western Club that will seat up to 700.<sup>iii</sup>

FIGURE 14

NWSS Legacy Building Construction Benefit in Colorado	
Metric	
Jobs	1,937
GDP	\$234,933,000
Personal Income	\$170,964,000

FIGURE 15

NWSS Legacy Building Construction Benefit in Metro Denver	
Metric	
Jobs	1,541
GDP	\$185,302,000
Personal Income	\$115,940,000



## TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic impact of the above facilities and events highlights the diverse offerings of the NWC, WSSA, and CSU Spur to local and national visitors alike. Figure 16 depicts CSI's estimation of the entire economic impact generated by the organizations and events compiled in this report and reflects the construction investments made for the Equestrian Center, Livestock Center, SYEC, Yards, Legacy Building, and the CSU Spur Campus. Additionally, it includes the projected 2025-2027 economic impact of the CSU Spur Campus' operation, the SYEC and the Yards, and the estimated 2022-2027 National Western Stock Show economic activity.

**FIGURE 16**

Total Economic Impact of NWCA, NWSS, and CSU Spur Construction and Operation 2022 - 2027		
Economic Driver	GDP	Personal Income
Total Economic Impact of Equestrian Center & Livestock Center Construction Investment to Colorado	\$1,085,000,000	\$788,000,000
Economic Impact of the SYEC & Yards Construction to Colorado	\$167,192,000	\$122,402,000
SYEC + The Yards 2022-2024 Event Revenue Impact to Colorado	\$11,346,000	\$9,356,000
SYEC + The Yards 2025 One-Year Event Revenue Impact to Colorado	\$5,226,000	\$4,323,000
Economic Impact to Colorado from Projected 2026+2027 Event Revenue	\$36,895,000	\$30,492,000
Economic Impact of CSU Spur Campus Construction to Colorado	\$363,000,000	\$266,000,000
Economic Impact of CSU Spur 2025-2027 Operation to Colorado	\$65,086,000	\$49,301,000
National Western Stock Show 2022-2027	\$1,065,416,160	\$745,791,312
NWSS Legacy Building Construction Benefit in Colorado	\$234,933,000	\$170,964,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,034,094,160</b>	<b>\$2,186,629,312</b>

Between 2022 and 2027, these organizations will produce over \$3 billion in GDP and \$2.18 billion in personal income within Colorado. Due to data limitations this count is almost certainly understating the total impact. Much of these totals stem from large construction investments made during this time, however the economic impact of the operation of the various facilities will grow as projects currently under construction are completed and facilities welcome more guests.

CSI was unable to include job totals due to construction investment time frames, but together the NWCA, WSSA, and CSU Spur directly employ hundreds of Coloradans and help support a similar number of jobs across the state and country in related industries.

## National Western Center and CSU Spur Education and Community Impacts

The National Western Center's impact extends beyond the immediate economic boost provided by events and lodging spending, merchandise sales, and capital construction projects.

The NWC Campus itself serves as an education hub at a critical time in Colorado's educational and workforce development journey. Apart from the human benefits of education, Colorado's future economy depends on a workforce with high-value skillsets, degrees, and degree attainment. The National Western Center Campus is instrumental in furthering the state's goals.

## OVERVIEW

CSU Spur and the NWCA together are providing several educational and job training opportunities for the Denver metro.

Example industries include: agriculture, arts, science, technology, engineering, math, and veterinary medicine.

The combined campus of the National Western Center and CSU Spur provides dozens of educational programs and has significant educational potential given the range of informal programming across pre-K through 12th grade, combined with formal programs at the high school and postsecondary levels. The campus provides a unique set of educational opportunities given its unique features, multidisciplinary approach, and specific programs offered.

As Colorado and the nation continue to go through demographic and economic changes, Georgetown University's Center for Education and Workforce predicts that 85% of "good" jobs will require postsecondary training, certificates or degrees.<sup>iv</sup> In Colorado, only 67% of the state's adult population born in Colorado has completed at least some postsecondary education, leaving a substantial gap to address, with significant economic implications.<sup>v</sup> CSU and CSU Spur are ideally situated to help meet this need. This report provides a roadmap and review of the educational programs at the CSU Spur and the National Western Center campus and their impacts.

# PREK-12 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND IMPACT

CSU Spur provides a variety of educational programming throughout the school year, including summer camps for the arts, aviation, business, cybersecurity, engineering, fashion, music and sports, which are also subsidized. In FY 2024, 659 children and adolescents attended summer programming. A 2019 meta-analysis found that effective summer programs can have numerous benefits for academic learning, employment and career, and social and emotional well-being.<sup>iv</sup>

For pre-K through 12th grade, FY 2024 educational programming was provided by CSU Spur to 8,620 students across a variety of districts and schools. These schools varied not only in geography, but in district size. Thirty-two districts participated statewide from North Conejos to Steamboat Springs and from Center Consolidated to Idalia. These districts represented 105 schools serving pre-K through 12th-grade students. The size of districts ranged significantly in the number of children served, from Idalia with 164 students to Denver Public Schools, with 90,452. Elementary, middle, and high schools from the 80216 zip code participated in educational programming. Numerous studies demonstrate that experiential learning can increase students' interest, knowledge, and motivation, but depends considerably on the teacher's role in planning and implementation. This was noted for science knowledge generally and on a standardized achievement exam.<sup>vii viii</sup>

CSU Spur provides a variety of experiential educational programs throughout the school year. Numerous studies demonstrate that experiential learning can increase students' interest, knowledge, and motivation, but depends considerably on the teacher's role in planning and implementation. This was noted for science knowledge generally<sup>ix</sup> and also on a standardized achievement exam.<sup>x</sup>

In 2019, the WSSA started its Denver Scholarship Program, awarding 18 scholarships and five annually, to graduating seniors in the City and County of Denver who pursue undergraduate degrees and career paths that are connected to the field of agriculture. Similarly, the CSU Spur offers scholarships to students specifically from the 80216 zip code, who have applied and been accepted to a CSU System school. Twenty-eight scholarships have been awarded since inception in 2022. Research on postsecondary financial assistance has demonstrated positive impacts on persistence and college completion.<sup>xi</sup>

CSU Spur subsidizes and houses College Track, providing classroom, office, and meeting space. Part of a nationwide effort starting with ninth graders and providing support through the first-year of their professional career. College Track focuses exclusively on first generation students from low-income families. The CSU Spur location for College Track is the first in the country to be housed at a university campus and the first partnership involving the entire university system. For the 2024-2025 school year, 94 scholars currently participate on a weekly basis. Lastly, CSU Spur engages with Bruce Randolph high school students to provide an indoor agricultural space and horticulture 101 class, counting as dual enrollment credit.

# POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND IMPACT

Recent research from the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Georgetown University suggests that Colorado will need to increase the number of higher education degrees by approximately 10% given an expectation that 73% of jobs in Colorado will require a postsecondary degree by 2031.<sup>xii</sup> The CSU Spur campus is uniquely situated to address this gap, especially in the high-demand fields of agriculture and STEM.

Orienting students toward degrees and jobs with livable wages can have a profound economic impact. A recent study by Keystone Policy Center and the Common Sense Institute, of the Denver School of Science and Technology found a net increase in annual earnings of the 2016 Denver Public Schools graduating class reaching DSST achievement rates, including 1,109 new postsecondary attainers, would be \$38,000,000, or \$1.5 billion in net lifetime earnings.<sup>xiii</sup> The average difference in lifetime earnings for a student who does not graduate high school, compared to a student that receives a 4-year degree is \$1.34 million.

In postsecondary, CSU Spur currently offers a variety of courses and educational programs spanning undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as certificates.<sup>xiv</sup> Additional programming and degrees are currently in development including Professional Science Master's in Biomanufacturing and in Systems Engineering.

Sixty-four credentials were awarded in FY 2024, including: certificates in construction management and entrepreneurship and innovation, master's degrees in agribusiness and food innovation management and social work, and doctoral degrees in organizational learning, performance and change. Starting in FY 2025, CSU Spur is launching Spur Start, a program designed for incoming undergraduates to complete their freshman year at the CSU Spur campus, then transfer to the flagship campus in Fort Collins. Eighty students are expected to enroll in the 2025-2026 school year.



## INFORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND IMPACT

Every second Saturday from 10 am – 2 pm, CSU Spur hosts free family-friendly programming, open to the public, which began in 2022.<sup>xv</sup> Each month follows a unique theme, from arts and science to health and wellness. Ongoing activities include cooking, watching veterinarians at work, observing equine therapy, engaging with scientists, a mock kitchen, vet clinic and lab, a stream table, virtual reality, a rooftop greenhouse and more. CSU Spur accepts applications from local organizations to participate in the events, providing a variety of activities for visitors. In FY24, 5,575 people attended Second Saturday events.

The National Western Stock Show provides school visits during its annual event each January. The Teacher's Guide is an in-depth resource providing general information on the stock show, history, and facts, as well as lesson plans when on site. Activities on site include the National Western Nursery, a youth art exhibit, petting farm, stockyards, CSU "Ag Adventure", dairy discovery zone, and much more. In FY24, 1,513 students attended the Stock Show, along with 342 teachers and chaperones. Outside of the Stock Show dates, 5,707 students and 1,060 teachers and chaperones were provided field trips.

In addition to the informal education received by visitors to the National Western Stock Show and CSU Spur, every January, a Vet 101 Program is provided to 40 high school students.<sup>xvi</sup> This program provides students the opportunity to spend an afternoon with veterinarians doing hands-on work, focusing on small and large animals, feeding, equine and rodeo, and embryology. Donated tools and supplies are provided to each student, including a stethoscope, animal first-aid kit, certificate of completion, and other items. At the conclusion of the program, students are provided complimentary tickets to the MLK Jr. African-American Heritage Rodeo.

# COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS, PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPACT

The 80216 zip code is the immediate radius surrounding the National Western Center and CSU Spur. It encompasses the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea (GES) neighborhoods. This community has been historically marginalized in the larger Denver metro by a variety of factors—including redlining, interstate development and segregated schools, to name a few.

These impacts manifest in contemporary marginalization as well, based on the most recent demographic census data.<sup>xvii</sup> For example, the 80216 zip code has a lower rate of home ownership than the state (28% to 66%), a lower employment rate (65% to 70%), lower educational attainment (38% to 46%), a higher poverty rate (19% to 9%) and a lower health care coverage rate (15% without, compared to 7%). The intersectionality of these impacts is beyond evident and in need of amelioration. This begins with recognizing and leveraging the assets that exist throughout the 80216 zip code. CSU Spur and National Western Center have devoted a significant amount of attention and resources to engaging with the 80216 community and building upon these assets.

From conversations with community engagement leaders at both the CSU Spur and National Western Center, local residents have rarely felt a sense of belonging and ownership of what happens in their community, despite billions of dollars in investment in the local infrastructure. This may be changing for the better in recent years, with these institutions leveraging their economic, educational, and social capital.

## CSU SPUR

In FY24 (July 2023 - June 2024), CSU Spur received 127,133 visitors and provided 3,663 tours of the campus. Spur employs 40 staff members, with a FY 2024 personnel budget of roughly \$3.3 million, and 34 volunteers, who donated 1,760 hours of their time. Frequent industry and government partnerships take place as well.

In FY 2024, CSU Spur partnered with 27 organizations from the GES neighborhoods. This included \$10,700 in direct investment, such as event sponsorships and local catering. The total value of these partnerships was estimated at over \$350,000 for FY 2024. CSU Spur also provided \$65,000 in grant funding for community-based programs and provided space for 31 events hosted by community organizations bringing in nearly 3,200 attendees. Frequent partners include: Birdseed Collective, Focus Points Family Resource Center, GES Coalition, and GrowHaus.

CSU Spur has welcomed thousands of people from 80216 since fully opening in January 2022. Activities include family programming and education, movie nights, cooking classes, gardening and food production, in addition to providing access to healthy food and addressing pollution. CSU leads a community air quality research group, and has a community forestry hub, working with local groups to plant and care for trees in GES.

CSU Spur also offers free and low-cost services, including 430 free equine assisted therapy sessions in FY 2024, and over 71,000 pet care services through Human Colorado (an onsite Spur partner). Of those served by Humane Colorado from 2022-2024, 811 households were in GES. The total estimated value of services provided and direct local support was about \$129,000 in FY24.

Yet, work remains to be done, including providing ongoing cultural competence training for staff, and an ongoing pathway for communication about the GES community's core needs from CSU Spur and the NWC, including a more effective and clearer articulation of the pathway to higher education and/or jobs.

## NATIONAL WESTERN CENTER

The National Western Center and its partners pride themselves on their community engagement; creating jobs, advocating for community interests, partnering with community organizations, innovating for the health and sustainability of the community and much more. In 2024, examples included:

- Awarded the federal Reconnecting Communities Grant by the USDOT.
- Collaboration with the Denver Mayor's Office on homelessness and Denver Police Department on ongoing safety concerns.
- Partnership with the Denver Office of Community and Business Engagement on current and planned GES construction projects and their day-to-day impacts on community.
- Donating over 700 tickets to GES families for public events on campus.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) convened in 2013 and is the connective tissue between the National Western Center and the surrounding community.<sup>xviii</sup> This group meets monthly to engage in updates, discussion and planning, and consists of community business owners, community groups and GES residents, as well as representatives from CSU Spur, the Western Stock Show Association, and the National Western Center Authority. Recent discussions have focused on the planning and development of an equestrian center, hotel and parking garage. Part of the final product will include a 4,000 square foot building dedicated to community events and gatherings.

The GES Community Investment Fund supports projects, programs and other community benefits in GES.<sup>xix</sup> The CIF is a self-governed, independent entity overseen by a board of GES residents charged with defining the CIF's systems, structure and functions moving forward. Current funded projects include housing repairs and support, food growing and pantries, community meeting space and much more. The CIF supports projects, programs and other community benefits in GES, including a "round up" donation option on on-campus retail purchases, a technical assistance grant in partnership with the City and County of Denver, in addition to many other grants.

### Timeline of National Western Center Authority contributions from CIF to community:

- May 2023:** \$400,000 for technical assistance
- July 2023:** \$86,000 for unrestricted grants
- July 2024:** \$90,000 for unrestricted grants
- July 2025:** \$150,000 projected for unrestricted grants

## BOTTOM LINE

Together, CSU Spur and the National Western Center have been and will continue to be pillars of education and community engagement in the Denver metro area. From their support of pre-K students all the way through doctoral students, the educational and innovative impacts can be felt not only in the Front Range but all of Colorado and beyond. Significant work remains to continue strengthening the bonds between the GES neighborhood and the campus, but it is clear that the structures and investment are in place to work towards this goal.

Between the direct economic impacts of the NWC's events and construction projects and its educational and community offerings, the campus is an economic multiplier. Direct spending and employment diffuse into surrounding areas and businesses, future students have greater access to high-value degree offerings in lucrative fields necessary to the state's workforce development goals, and various cultural and community programs act as a cultural binding agent.

Besides millions in economic activity, the NWC's programs and offerings would prompt users to stay in Colorado and work in Colorado. In an era in which interstate migration to Colorado has fallen, it is as crucial to develop and retain domestic talent as it is to encourage commercial growth.

# APPENDIX

## By the Numbers: Recent Community and Education Impacts

### COMMUNITY

- CSU Spur (FY 2024, unless otherwise noted)
  - 58,841 visitors, with 3,663 tours provided
  - 34 volunteers who donated 1,760 hours of their time
  - Partnered with 27 organizations from GES neighborhood, providing a value of \$350,000
  - Provided \$65,000 in grant funding for community-based programs
  - Provided space for 31 events hosted by community organizations that brought in nearly 3,200 attendees
- National Western Center Authority (FY 2024, unless otherwise noted)
  - Donated 731 tickets to GES families for public events on campus
  - Planning new development of a 4,000 square-foot building dedicated to community events and gatherings
  - Convened the Community Advisory Council since 2013, including residents, community groups and businesses located in the GES neighborhood

### EDUCATION

- CSU Spur (FY 2024, unless otherwise noted)
  - Summer Camps: 659 children and adolescents
  - Field Trips for PreK – 12th grade: 8,620 students
  - Scholarship awardees (since 2022): 28
  - College Track program scholars: 94
  - Postsecondary credentials awarded: 64
  - Spur Start program participants (expected for SY2025 – 2026): 80
  - Second Saturday attendees: 5,575
- National Western Center Authority (FY24, unless otherwise noted)
  - Scholarship awardees (since 2019): 18
  - National Western Stock Show field trips: 1,513 students and 342 teachers and chaperones
  - Field trips (outside of Stock Show dates): 5,707 students and 1,060 teachers and chaperones
  - Vet 101 program attendees: 40 high school students



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