

A Legacy of Trailblazers:

Pioneering the Next Chapter of the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame

by Tess Howie

The North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame stands as a testament to the rugged determination and pioneering spirit of the American West. Founded with a mission to preserve and celebrate our state's ranching, rodeo, and Native American history, the NDCHF | Center of Western Heritage & Cultures has become an essential institution, honoring the past while educating today's generation. The NDCHF serves as a vibrant cultural landmark, drawing visitors from across the nation who seek to connect with the storied history of the Northern Plains.

The NDCHF was conceived along a stretch of Highway 83 in October 1994 as seasoned western icon Evelyn Neuens, her sister Goldie Nutter, and author/historian and educator, Phil Baird, drove home from the 40th Anniversary of the Y's Men's Rodeo in Minot. The trio realized that the state's rodeo history was scattered to the wind, and faces and facts were fading with each aging generation. They decided to trailblaze an organization to honor North Dakota rodeo competitors. "Let's do it!", said the 83-year-old Evelyn, "I'd rather wear out than rust out!"

With Evelyn Neuens and Phil Baird at the helm, gatherings were held in Dickinson and Mandan in early 1995 to assess public interest. Attendees noted that such an organization needed to include North Dakota ranchers and indigenous Native American people.

The NDCHF was formally established with a board of directors in February 1995 and was officially incorporated as a non-profit entity in March of the same year. Fundraising for a building and an intense site selection process ensued. In May 2005, the barbed wire ribbon was cut and the dream of a facility to recognize and honor North Dakota's western heritage and culture became a reality in the building we treasure today.

As we reflect on the impact of the NDCHF, it is impossible to ignore the need for growth and expansion to accommodate our ever-growing audience and the increasing number of historical artifacts entrusted to our care. The time has come to revitalize our facility, ensuring that we not only preserve more of our state's history but create new, interac-



tive, engaging experiences for visitors of all ages. Through renovation and expansion, we envision a Hall of Fame that continues to stand as a beacon of western heritage, education, and community pride.

Our founding members started with nothing more than a mission. Three decades later, our current board of directors has prioritized discussion about our next 30 years. Due to the tremendous support of NDCHF Trustees and members, the Hall has grown greatly. The need for more space is evident, as we strive to better tell the stories of our people, our way of life, and our impact on the state and nation.

NO ONE CAN TELL OUR STORY BETTER THAN WE CAN

As part of our design development plan, we envisioned more than just an event center—we're creating a space that fosters education and engagement. Our expansion includes a strong commitment to educational programming, featuring seminars, conferences, and classroom-style presentations that highlight North Dakota's significant influence on national agriculture, as well as the rich traditions of ranching and the rodeo lifestyle. By integrating these learning opportunities into our facility, we aim to provide a dynamic environment where visitors, industry professionals, and the next generation of agricultural leaders can connect, share knowledge, and celebrate the region's lasting impact.

NOW IS THE TIME.

After months of productive conversation, our diverse board has determined that now is an appropriate time to significantly move the NDCHF in the future. With the 2026 opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, our local community will be greatly impacted. Tourism attendance and spending are expected to increase exponentially, as coming attractions encourage multi-day stays in Medora. With committed leadership, an invested Board of Directors, a growing Trustee and Donor base, and a heightened local and statewide reputation, the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame | Center of Western Heritage & Cultures currently possesses a measure of stability that warrants serious consideration of an expansion and renovation project.

Since August of 2024, on a commission from the Board of Directors, Rick Thompson (Executive Director), and Tess Howie (Associate Director/Museum Curator), along with a Steering Committee comprised of Dr. Gerald Stokka (Board President), Marv Semrau (Board Treasurer), and board members Steve Tomac and Gene Veeder, worked through Pre-design and Design Development phases with JLG Architects. Beginning with the expressed needs of our organization, ideas were discussed, and concepts developed, resulting in multiple presentations to the full Board, and now - with great excitement - to you.

LEGACY PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Before any conversations about design and construction could commence, the Steering Committee defined a solid set of guidelines for the project. Every decision made has been, and will continue to be, made in alignment with these objectives in mind:

This ambitious project is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about breathing new life into the stories that define our region. Imagine larger exhibit spaces, cutting-edge multimedia presentations, and expanded event/learning facilities that will allow us to host a full schedule of educational programs, community gatherings, and celebrations of western heritage. With these enhancements, we can better serve our members, visitors, and future generations who wish to experience the rich culture of North Dakota's cowboy legacy.

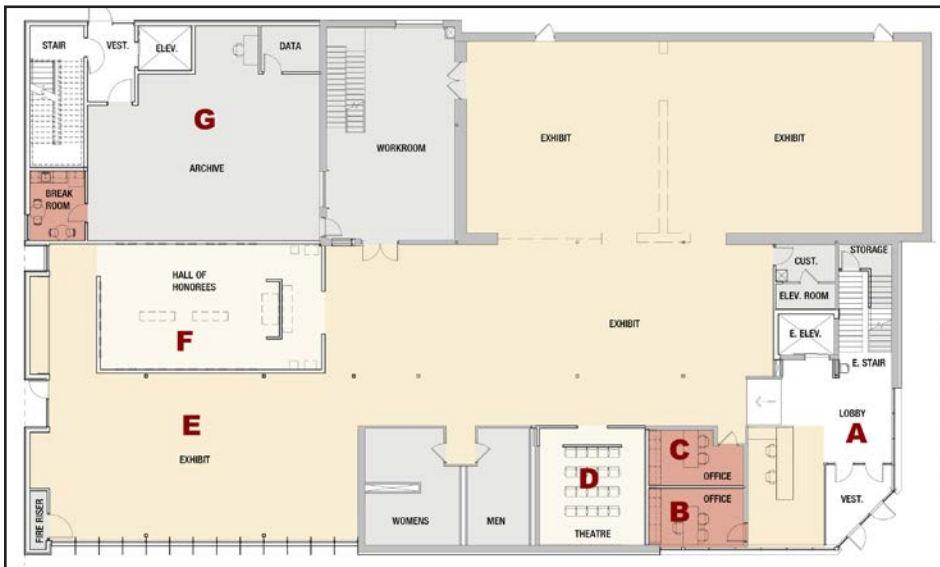
- *Honor our past; remain true to our history and vision while being forward-thinking.*
- *Maintain respect for the rural community.*
- *Attract and delight new visitors to educate and share the history of our western culture.*
- *Create spaces to increase our artifact collection with efficiency to properly house them.*
- *Develop educational programming, with focused presentations that highlight North Dakota's significant influence in agriculture, rodeo history, and Native American culture.*
- *Provide flexible, year-round, all-weather event space to accommodate our own events and as an asset to the community, open to the public.*
- *Provide technology to enhance exhibits and accommodate all kinds of event types.*

THE VISION

On these pages, we present floor plan concepts for both levels of our building, along with preliminary renderings that provide an idea of what our improved facilities might look like. Corresponding narratives provide a brief look at preliminary concepts for each area including, but not limited to, guest experiences, increased and upgraded event, conference and educational space for our own use and for facility rental income opportunities, archive space for more thoughtful and intentional curation of art and artifacts, and reconfiguration of staff workspaces for improved workflow and efficiency.



Hall of Honorees. JLG Architects.



FIRST FLOOR - MUSEUM LEVEL. JLG Architects.

FIRST FLOOR - MUSEUM LEVEL

A. LOBBY

Redesign the Museum Shop to immediately establish a more welcoming, museum/cultural center atmosphere. Focus on Admissions, with a moderate number of ND-CHF branded garments and souvenirs. A larger elevator transports guests more quickly between floors. Staircase access would be opened for better accessibility.

B. EVENTS & TOURISM DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Placing the Events & Tourism Director directly off the Lobby allows for greeting bus and tour groups, educators and students on field trips, and Facility Rental clients as they enter. From this vantage point, the Director is also well-positioned to assist Volunteers and museum guests, when needed.

C. CURATOR'S OFFICE

An office for the Curator is directly connected to the archive space and steps from the museum floor.

D. THEATER

Redesign with seating for 24. The number of individuals in the theater at any given time throughout the summer season is typically less than ten. Film presentations for larger groups could be hosted in the Event Center on the second floor. School groups could be rotated through the theater or gathered upstairs.

E. NEW EXHIBIT SPACE

Rotating and traveling exhibits would be displayed with intent to draw large numbers of new guests each season. Examples include curated works by nationally

recognized western artists, western film costume and prop collections, exhibitions focused on personalities such as Tom Mix, and Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show. By changing the presentation each year, we encourage repeat visits.

Street-side windows would draw the attention of passers-by, better establishing that we are a museum and piquing interest that may lead them to come inside. Additionally, the entire museum would now be on one level, allowing us to devote the second floor to a multi-use, Event and Learning Center.

F. HALL OF HONOREES

By moving the Hall of Honorees to the first floor, we can immediately entice visitors to explore our most important space. An eye-catching entrance would invite guests to see what lies beyond.

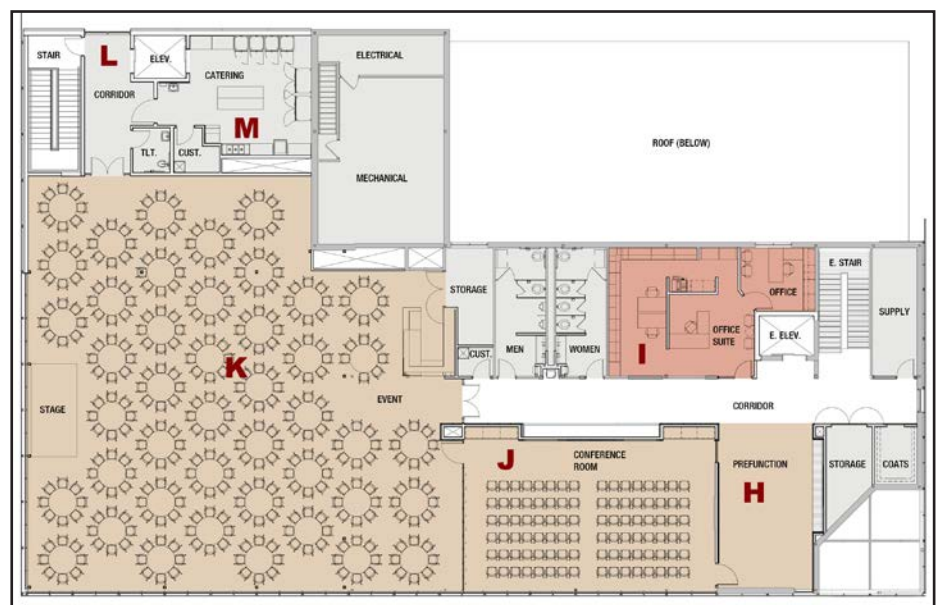
G. ARTIFACT/ARCHIVE STORAGE

A primary catalyst for this project, much needed archive space would allow for proper artifact cleaning, care and storage, expansion of our collections, and room for technology for digitization of photos and documents.

SECOND FLOOR - EVENT/LEARNING CENTER LEVEL

H. PREFUNCTION SPACE

This welcoming space can be used for event registration and pre-event socializing. Featuring a Donor Wall, this attractive, high-traffic area allows us to proudly show appreciation for our NDCHF benefactors to many visitors.



SECOND FLOOR - EVENT/LEARNING CENTER LEVEL. JLG Architects.



PREFUNCTION SPACE. JLG Architects.

I. OFFICE SUITE

The redesigned office suite provides more privacy for the Executive Director, when needed. The Executive Assistant would be first to greet those entering the Administration area. A movable partition behind the E.A. creates a copy and supply room. The current office of the Executive Director would be partitioned to create two workspaces. Existing storage cabinets and drawers in this room would remain.

J. CONFERENCE ROOM/CLASSROOM

With several possible seating configurations and state of the art technology, this space will be perfect for conferences, seminars, training sessions, and classes. A folding partition can be opened to the main event space, creating room for additional dining tables, buffet lines, silent auction tables and more.

K. EVENT/LEARNING CENTER

Expansion of the lower level establishes the foundation for a 350 seat Event Center on the upper floor. This new, fully enclosed space supports year-round event planning, regardless of weather. Amazing views to the west and south remain a feature of our facility. Two large screens and high-quality sound system provide state-of-the-art audio/visual support for presentations. Beautiful lighting and classy finishes provide a striking setting for all types of events. The new Event Center meets the needs of NDCHF hosted gatherings, while also meeting a venue need in the community.

L. ELEVATOR/STAIRCASE

A new elevator serves to transport catering carts to the catering kitchen, keeping all event service back of house. Can also be used by staff and is large enough for paramedics and

a gurney in the event of emergency. A new staircase at the west end of the facility allows another option for quick egress.

M. CATERING KITCHEN

Amenities would accommodate catered meals, prepared primarily offsite. Stainless steel working surfaces, a commercial refrigerator, warming oven and rolling racks would be present.

With the aid of global social media trends, we are seeing renewed interest in cowboy culture and the western lifestyle. The NDCHF Center of Western Heritage & Cultures has witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of guests

visiting from outside the United States. Societal norms, rooted in the use of fast-growing, ever-changing technology, create a need to regularly evaluate organizations such as ours, as we look to the future.

By modernizing certain elements of our facility, we better ensure our ability to best serve and adapt to the needs of contemporary audiences. At the same time, maintaining the rustic, authentic, old west atmosphere is imperative. It is, indeed, the immersion in cowboy culture and the history of the early American West, that brings guests through our doors, and honors the individuals whose legacies we display.

In the all-new, reimagined Hall of Honorees, the use of technology allows us to in essence return all of our Inductees to the walls. Thirteen large, high-definition, vertical display monitors - one for each induction category - would be installed. Each inductee would appear on the display for several seconds, in their category, in a slow loop. Timing for the change in each display would be offset, creating gentle, pleasing motion around the room. Displays would



EVENT/LEARNING CENTER. JLG Architects.

be interactive, allowing guests to stop the loop and select a specific inductee. This image would remain on the display for several minutes before reverting to the loop sequence.

The kiosk and custom cabinet in the current Hall of Honorees would be moved to the new space on the lower level. Work to add more information, photos and videos for each inductee would continue in this digital resource.



Credit: JLG Architects

HONORING LEGENDS; BUILDING LEGACY.

Honoring the past is at the heart of everything we do at the NDCHF. Our inductees—rodeo champions, ranching pioneers, Native American leaders, and western influencers—deserve a space that reflects the significance of their contributions. By expanding and modernizing our facility, we ensure that their legacies remain alive and accessible to all who walk through our doors. Their stories are timeless, and it is our duty to preserve and share them in the most impactful way possible.

As we move forward with this project, we are planning for the future. The NDCHF is not just a repository of history; it is a living, evolving institution that must continue to inspire new generations. Our vision includes educational programs that engage young people in cowboy culture, western history, and agricultural heritage. By expanding our reach and resources, we can empower future leaders to carry the traditions and values of the West forward.

A project of this magnitude requires collaboration, passion, and unwavering commitment. We are calling upon all those who cherish our cowboy heritage to join us in making this vision a reality. Together, we can build a stronger, more dynamic Hall of Fame—one that will not only honor the legends of yesterday but also cultivate the heroes of tomorrow.

The time to act is now. With your support, we can take the NDCHF to new heights, ensuring that our treasured history is preserved and celebrated for generations to come. This is more than a renovation; it is a reimagining of what the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame can be. Let's ride together into a future as bold and inspiring as the stories we tell.

We invite you to be part of this exciting chapter in our history. Whether you contribute as a donor, a volunteer, a member, or simply an enthusiastic supporter, your involvement makes all the difference. Join us in preserving the past, enriching the present, and forging an even brighter future for the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame.



Legacy Project Schedule

(Subject To Change)

Pre-Design Phase	<i>Complete</i>
Design Development Phase	<i>Complete</i>
Construction Documents	<i>April – June 2025</i>
Bid Process	<i>June – July 2025</i>
Construction Begins	<i>August 2025</i>
Grand Re-opening	<i>September 2026</i>



Dear Trustees, Members and Friends of the NDCHF:

In the preceding pages, you've seen the proposed plan for a facility that will take our organization boldly into our next 30 years. We hope you've caught the vision and are as excited as we are to see these plans become reality.

The estimated costs to complete the project as presented is \$12.8 million. **Our Board of Directors is deeply committed to carrying out this important project without incurring any debt, ensuring that we remain responsible stewards of your gifts, prioritizing financial stability with respect to our organization's current and future needs.** To achieve this, we are asking for the generous support of our members. Your contributions, no matter the size, will have a direct and meaningful impact, allowing us to move forward with confidence and integrity. By coming together as a community, we can fully fund this initiative while upholding our values of stewardship and sustainability.

On the following pages, you'll see two ways to participate in this fundraising effort. Page 7 provides the opportunity to send your gift today. Page 8 is a Pledge Agreement, whereby you might opt to designate an amount that is paid at a future date or broken into smaller amounts paid according to a schedule of your choosing. Either form can be sent to our office with your gift or pledge in the envelope provided.

I would love to discuss your participation in this legacy project and answer any questions you may have. Whether you'd like to know more about what we're doing and why, or perhaps to discuss opportunities to have your name - or the name of someone you love - displayed on one of our new galleries or spaces, I'm available to visit.

In closing, on behalf of the NDCHF Board of Directors, I invite you to be part of this exciting journey by making a financial contribution today. Every dollar given is a step closer to completing this project debt-free, demonstrating our collective dedication and faith in its success. Your support will not only help bring this vision to life but will also serve as a lasting testament to what we can accomplish when we work together. Thank you for investing in this mission and ensuring a strong foundation for the future.

Sincerely,

Rick Thompson
Executive Director



NDCHF LEGACY PROJECT
Designated Gift

No one tells North Dakota's story better than the members of the NDCHF. Our community is made up of those who have lived, breathed, and carried forward the traditions of the West, making us the most authentic and passionate stewards of our state's history. Through their stories, experiences, and dedication, we ensure that the spirit of our pioneers, ranchers, rodeo stars, and Native American leaders is kept alive for generations to come.

Now, as we embark on this exciting new chapter, we call on you to help us continue our mission. Your financial support will not only help us expand and enhance our facilities but also ensure that the stories of our trailblazers remain an enduring part of North Dakota's legacy. Join us in preserving our history and building a future that generations to come will celebrate.

YES! I/WE WANT TO BE PART OF THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE LEGACY PROJECT, AND HAVE ENCLOSED A CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO THE NDCHF AT THE FOLLOWING DESIGNATED GIVING LEVEL:

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$5,000 ☐ \$10,000 ☐ \$50,000 ☐ Other \$ _____

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

DONOR AGREES TO PUBLICITY REGARDING THIS GIFT ☐ YES ☐ NO

SIGNATURE _____ Date _____

For more information or to discuss, please contact Rick Thompson - (701) 290-6839.

The North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame, organized as a North Dakota nonprofit corporation, is exempted from federal income tax liability by internal Revenue Code Section 501(c) (3), and qualifies as a public charity under Internal Revenue Code Section 509.

NORTH DAKOTA COWBOY HALL OF FAME - PO BOX 137 - MEDORA, ND 58645



NDCHF LEGACY PROJECT
Scheduled Gift Pledge Agreement

WE PLEDGE TO THE NORTH DAKOTA COWBOY HALL OF FAME A GIFT OF \$_____

Name Date

Address City ST Zip

Phone Email

TERMS OF PLEDGE:

GIFT DESIGNATION COMMENTS:

DONOR AGREES TO PUBLICITY REGARDING THIS GIFT ☐ YES ☐ NO

SIGNATURE Date

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