

## MEMORANDUM – NATIONAL WESTERN CENTER AUTHORITY BOARD

<b>TO:</b>	<b>Mayor Mike Johnston</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>Outreach</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10/17/2025</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<b>Reappointments for National Western Center Authority Board</b>
<b>PROCESS:</b>	<b>Mayor's Approval (then City Council Confirmation)</b>

### Purpose:

The National Western Center Authority Board will provide oversight of the buildout, operations and programming of the year-round National Western Center campus for agricultural education, innovation and entertainment. The Authority will be incorporated by the City and County of Denver as a Colorado nonprofit corporation to program, operate and maintain the campus.

### Appointment Process:

- 13 members: 11 voting & 2 non-voting.
  - Mayor appoints 8 total, 2 of which have to reside in GES. CFO is a non-voting member.
    - 1 voting director shall serve as the Chairperson of the Authority Board ("Chairperson"). Until completion of the Initial Campus Development, the Mayor shall designate the Chairperson. Thereafter, the Chairperson shall be selected by the Board. (iv)
    - CSU appoints 2 voting directors.
    - WSSA appoints 2 voting directors.
    - The Mayor appoints 2 voting directors who must reside in the Globeville, Elyria, or Swansea neighborhoods, the appointment of whom shall be subject to confirmation by the City Council.

### Reappointment Candidates

**Term:** 9/1/2025-8/30/2028 or until a successor is duly appointed



**ERNEST HOUSE**  
 (He/him) (Male, Indigenous)

Ernest House Jr. is an enrolled member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in Towaoc, Colorado, and a leader in Native American affairs. He served as Executive Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA) for 12 years, fostering communication between Colorado's tribes and state agencies, while maintaining government-to-government relations with Governors Owens, Ritter, and Hickenlooper. Currently, as Senior Policy Director and Director for the Center for Tribal and Indigenous Engagement at the Keystone Policy Center, he focuses on tribal consultation, energy, conservation, healthcare, and cultural resource management. Ernest is a Gates Family Foundation and German Marshall Memorial Fellow, and serves on various boards, including The Gates Family Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and Inter-basin Water Compact Committee. He is the son of the late Ernest House, Sr., a long-time tribal leader, and great-grandson of Chief Jack House, the last hereditary chief of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

**RECOMMENDATION NOTES:** Ernest House Jr. has long been a respected voice for inclusivity, cultural preservation, and thoughtful collaboration. His leadership continues to elevate conversations around equity and representation, particularly for Indigenous communities, and we are honored to benefit from his insight and integrity.


**KELLY LEID**

(he/him) (Male, White)

*Executive Vice President for  
Operations, Oakwood  
Homes*

With over 34 years of broad-based operations and project management experience, including 25-plus years in senior leadership positions, Kelly has worked across a range of highly visible public, private and nonprofit organizations, collectively overseeing highly complex project development initiatives. In January 2021, Kelly joined Oakwood's new active adult group as the founding Director of Lifestyle Operations. In his role as Director of Lifestyle Operations, Kelly oversees Oakwood's active adult lifestyle experience efforts across three active adult communities in Aurora, Colorado Springs, and South Jordan, Utah. Prior to his current role, Kelly served as Oakwood's Executive Vice President for Community Operations (2017-2020), overseeing Reunion, a 2,500-acre master planned community, including community engagement, public affairs, the development of an initial 3rd party builder program.

In January 2016, Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock appointed Kelly to serve as the Executive Director for the Mayor's Office of the National Western Center (NWCO). Kelly started the new office, which included managing the planning, strategic partnership coordination, and implementation of the initial \$1.1 billion investment in the creation of the National Western Center, a dynamic 250-acre global destination for agricultural heritage and innovation. Prior to taking the helm of NWCO, Kelly served as the Mayor's Executive Director of the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (NDCC) from 2013-16, founding the new multi-agency team, charged with the strategic alignment, planning and implementation of six major projects impacting over 3,000 acres located just north of downtown Denver. From 2011-2013, Kelly served as the Mayor's Director of Development Services.

Before joining the City and County of Denver and his work with Denver Public Schools (2008-11), Kelly had the opportunity to play a leading role in the establishment and operations of the Metropolitan Football Stadium District, which oversaw the design and construction of Denver Bronco's new stadium (1998-2001).

Kelly graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in general business and a Masters in Public Administration. He also holds an MBA from the University of Denver. In 2022, Kelly was honored by Governor Polis with the Colorado Citizens Award for growth and innovation as a co-founder of the STEAD School, a next generation agriculturally-focus high school. He has also been honored by the Denver Business Journal's "Forty under 40" in 1999 as one of the up-and-coming business leaders. Kelly is a 3rd generation Coloradoan, growing up in Arvada.

**RECOMMENDATION NOTES:** Kelly Leid brings a strong record of strategic vision and dedication to building sustainable, inclusive communities. His ability to connect policy with meaningful action has been a driving force in our progress and ability to achieve our long-term goals.

## CURRENT BOARD



Boards and Commissions > National Western Center Authority Board

### Board Members

15 items • Sorted by Appointment Status • Updated 3 minutes ago

	<input type="checkbox"/> Board Member: Board M... ▾	Current Term ▾	Current Term E... ▾	Gender ▾	Race/Ethnicity ▾	Hispanic o... ▾
1	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Steven McCarthy</a>	2 (mayoral)	12/31/2026	Male	Caucasian	
2	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Robb Brown</a>	2 (mayoral)	12/31/2025	Male	African American	
3	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">John Ikard</a>	2 (mayoral)	12/31/2027	Male	Caucasian	
4	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Kelly Leid</a>	(mayoral)	12/31/2024	Male	Caucasian	
5	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Ernest House, Jr.</a>	(mayoral)	12/31/2024	Male	Native American	
6	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Diedra Garcia</a>	1 (mayoral)	12/31/2027	Female	Hispanic	Yes
7	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Sandra Ruiz-Parrilla</a>	1 (mayoral - GES)	12/31/2026	Female	Hispanic	Yes
8	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Caroline Acha</a>	1 (mayoral - GES)	12/31/2028	Female	Two or more races	Yes

### CURRENT BOARD DEMOGRAPHICS: 8/8 Total Mayoral Appointees

GENDER	
Male	5
Female	3
Non-Binary	0

HISPANIC ORIGIN
3

RACE/ETHNICITY	
Black/African American	1
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, pacific Islander	0
Latino/ Hispanic	2
Native American	1
Two or more	1
White	3
Other	