



NATIONAL 4-H
COUNCIL

National 4-H Conference Center Frequently Asked Questions

Recent Background on the National 4-H Conference Center (2018-2021)

For nearly 18 months in 2018 and 2019, National 4-H Council's Board of Trustees embarked on a process to determine the highest and best use of the National 4-H Conference Center to support Cooperative Extension's 4-H program. In addition to a comprehensive market review and business analysis by the consulting firm of BDO, Council's CEO and Chief Strategy Officer hosted listening sessions at regional meetings of Extension Directors and State Program Leaders focused on determining the highest and best use of the National 4-H Conference Center.

Extension leaders emphasized the importance of Council's primary roles in fundraising and marketing—and were supportive of Council's intentional approach to maximize Center's contribution to those national efforts. With this Extension feedback, the Board decided in September 2018 that the National 4-H Conference Center's primary value was to provide financial resources that advance Council's mission to support Extension's 4-H program.

In 2019, Council developed a strategic plan for multi-year investment in the Center. As part of that plan, Council entered into a new management arrangement with Aramark Leisure Services in February 2020 to help the property reach its full potential. The pandemic-driven closure of the National 4-H Conference Center, however, made plans for long-term growth unrealistic.

What is the National 4-H Conference Center?

The youth-focused National 4-H Conference Center is located on 12 acres in the upscale neighborhood of Chevy Chase, Maryland, 10 miles from downtown Washington, D.C.

Pre-COVID, the National 4-H Conference Center was a destination for numerous youth-serving groups and organizations – representing 80% of the guests. The remaining 20% were National 4-H Council hosted meetings and events attended by 2,500 4-H youth each year.

Why is the National 4-H Conference Center for sale?

National 4-H Council is selling the National 4-H Conference Center to continue our mission of expanding opportunity for all of America's youth through increased investment and participation in 4-H positive youth development programs. The pandemic has driven National 4-H Council to evaluate the economic viability and future of the National 4-H Conference Center. It will not be able to operate in the same capacity it did before the pandemic. National 4-H Council, however, will be in the D.C. metro area to support Cooperative Extension's 4-H program.

Why announce this now? Are you selling because of COVID-19?

Yes, we are selling the Center because of COVID-19. The National 4-H Conference Center closed to guests on March 22, 2020, due to the pandemic. It remains closed as of March 2021 and is not expected to re-open to youth groups and guests in 2021 due to local government restrictions on group gatherings and youth group travel restrictions.

After a long and thorough process of weighing all possible options, National 4-H Council's Board of Trustees decided to sell the property. National 4-H Council will focus its efforts on expanding opportunities for America's youth through increased investment and participation in 4-H positive youth development programs – including youth-focused convenings in the nation's capital.

Did National 4-H Council do everything it could to save the National 4-H Conference Center before making this decision to sell?

Yes. We understand that the National 4-H Conference Center has been an important part of so many 4-H experiences. We share that passion and did everything we could to keep it. In 2019, Council developed a strategic plan for multi-year investment in the Center. In February 2020, it entered a new management arrangement with Aramark to help the property reach its full potential. The pandemic-driven closure of the Center, however, made plans for long-term growth unrealistic.

Also, in 2019, we commissioned a feasibility study regarding a fundraising campaign for the future of the Center. Council's donors overwhelmingly prioritized youth programming impact over investing in a specific property or building.

Like many spaces that host events, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the finances associated with the Center. After reviewing all options and looking at the long-term needs of Cooperative Extension's 4-H program, it was simply not feasible or responsible to continue ownership. Even with fundraising efforts to support the National 4-H Conference Center, the long-term economic viability of the Center would still be a challenge due to changing event and consumer needs over the years, compounded by the impact of COVID.

Was Cooperative Extension consulted on the decision to sell the National 4-H Conference Center?

Yes. In 2019, National 4-H Council's board completed an 18-month process to determine the highest and best use of the National 4-H Conference Center to support Council's role with Extension's 4-H program: convening, telling the 4-H story, and building public-private partnerships.

The process included a comprehensive market review and business analysis by the consulting firm BDO and a series of listening sessions conducted by Council's CEO and Chief Strategy Officer. The listening sessions occurred in 2018 at regional meetings of Extension Directors and State Program Leaders. They focused on determining the highest and best use of the Center.

Extension leaders emphasized the importance of Council's primary roles in fundraising and marketing—and were supportive of Council's intentional approach to maximize Center's contribution to those national efforts.

What is the intended use of funds generated by the sale of the property?

Funds realized from the National 4-H Conference Center sale will be used to continue National 4-H Council's support of Cooperative Extension's 4-H program in three important ways: convening, telling the 4-H story, and building public-private partnerships.

This means continued investment in meaningful and accessible national convenings for our young people and building partnerships that will support important hands-on programming across the Cooperative Extension system -- in agriculture, STEM, civic engagement, healthy living and more.

What is the future of National 4-H events that have been held at the National 4-H Conference Center?

National 4-H events hosted by National 4-H Council will be held virtually in 2021. National 4-H Council announced this plan for virtual convenings in January 2021 after consultation with Extension leaders and considering the information available at the time regarding travel restrictions.

National 4-H Council plans to host our 2022 events in-person in the Washington, D.C. metro area.

2021 - virtual

Healthy Living Summit: February 12-15

Agri-Science Summit: March 5-7

National 4-H Conference: April 10-14

Citizenship Washington Focus: June 20 – July 19 (once per week program)

STEM Summit: September 16-19

2022 – in person (Washington, D.C.)

Healthy Living Summit: February 10-13

Agri-Science Summit: March 10-13

Citizenship Washington Focus: June 5-July 16 (week-long programs)

Leadership Washington Focus: July 18-22

STEM Summit: September 15-18

Will 4-H continue leadership and civic engagement training when you sell the Center?

Yes. National 4-H Council will continue to host its D.C.-based civic engagement training and other youth convenings without owning the Conference Center, as is standard with other national youth development organizations.

Our goal is to increase access and opportunity for more youth to attend national 4-H events from now on.

National 4-H events hosted by National 4-H Council will be held virtually in 2021. Plans are in place for 2022 events to be in-person in Washington, D.C.

Will costs for programs like National Youth Summits and Citizenship Washington Focus increase without the National 4-H Conference Center?

These youth convenings are integral to 4-H's positive youth development experience and will continue to be held in D.C. National 4-H Council has an unwavering commitment to provide and expand access to impactful and meaningful 4-H learning opportunities.

Creating access means ensuring costs are manageable for 4-H'ers to participate in future programs and this will remain a priority for Council as we organize events.

The National 4-H Conference Center has meant so much to us over the years and has been an important part of our 4-H experience. Will we have an opportunity to celebrate the National 4-H Conference Center?

The National 4-H Conference Center means so much to all of us at National 4-H Council and to so many in our 4-H community who have convened there over the years. We intend to celebrate and honor the history of the National 4-H Conference Center in the coming months. Please sign up for updates at 4-H.org/Center.

How will National 4-H Council handle the preservation and distribution of national historical artifacts, documents, and memorabilia?

National 4-H Council is committed to celebrating 4-H's rich history. It will work in partnership with the 4-H History Preservation Committee and Cooperative Extension to advance this goal. National 4-H Council will maintain some artwork and historical artifacts to display in our new office location in the Washington, D.C. metro area.

- The historic art collection will be donated to the USDA's National Agriculture Library. Since 2019, National 4-H Council has been working with the History Preservation Committee's dedicated volunteers to donate the art collection to the National Agriculture Library, where it will be preserved and made available on loan to groups upon request.
- In the coming weeks, Council will create ways for donors to preserve National 4-H Conference Center memories. We know how important this is for alumni, donors, and friends of 4-H.

How will National 4-H Council handle the preservation and distribution of state and local historical artifacts and memorabilia?

National 4-H Council will work individually with State 4-H Program Leaders to determine the appropriate course of action for state items currently on display at the Center. States with historical artifacts and memorabilia at the Center will hear from Dr. Bo Ryles, former Georgia 4-H State Leader and Senior Director, National 4-H Council, to discuss next steps.

What does this mean for the future of 4-H?

Cooperative Extension's 4-H program remains the country's largest youth development organization, serving six million youth across the U.S. every year—we are here to stay and will continue to invest in our young people to build a better future.

4-H continues to thrive and will keep providing young people with the support, resources and caring mentors they need to succeed, no matter where they are.

This decision was about the future sustainability of the Center as a convening space. As the national non-profit partner to 4-H, National 4-H Council remains committed to increasing access and opportunities for young people to participate in positive youth development programs nationwide.

Is it possible to receive updates about the National 4-H Conference Center sale?

Yes, please visit 4-H.org/Center to sign up and receive updates and submit questions. Our team at National 4-H Council will respond as quickly as possible.