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**MEIJER SPORTS COMPLEX WRAPS SUCCESSFUL 2022 BASEBALL/SOFTBALL SEASON WITH
SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN DIRECT VISITOR SPENDING OVER 2021 AND 2019**

West Michigan Sports Commission Plans to Expand Complex through \$11 Million Capital Campaign

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Oct. 25, 2022 – The [West Michigan Sports Commission](#) (WMSC) closed a successful 2022 baseball/softball season at the Meijer Sports Complex, wrapping up with 21 tournaments between April and October that attracted 762 teams, 9,906 athletes and 24,765 spectators who booked 5,524 hotel room nights. Most significantly, the complex generated \$8,066,671 in estimated direct visitor spending – up 44 percent from 2021 and 32 percent from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

The sustained annual increase in teams, spectators and related economic impact has spurred the West Michigan Sports Commission to initiate an \$11 million complex expansion through a capital campaign. Fundraising is expected to occur throughout most of 2023, with construction anticipated to begin in 2024.

“The Meijer Sports Complex continues to have a strong rebound from the pandemic since youth/amateur sports was the first sector of the tourism industry to recover – but 2022 economic figures blew both 2021 and 2019 out of the water,” said Mike Guswiler, president of the West Michigan Sports Commission. “We had another blockbuster summer that further justifies expanding our baseball/softball complex to meet the needs of this ever-growing segment of the tourism industry.”

Following are 2022 season highlights:

- **More than 20 tournaments and most weekends full** – The sports complex hosted 21 tournaments in the 2022 season – similar to 2021 and 2019 that each held 22 tournaments. The complex was busy almost nonstop, with sold-out weekends from May through July. National tournament operators Game Day USA hosted 10 of the tournaments, and USSSA hosted five.
- **Teams, athletes and spectators increased from 2021** – The number of teams at the complex increased 11 percent from 2021 at 762 teams – 381 of which were travel teams, an increase of 11 percent in travel teams from 2021 though down 15 percent from 2019. The mix of travel teams to local was 50/50, which remained steady from 2021 though still below pre-pandemic levels of 60 percent travel teams in 2019. Additionally, 9,906 athletes played in 2022 – up 11 percent from 2021 and 2 percent from 2019. Spectators increased at 24,765 – up 11 percent from 2021 and 2 percent from 2019.
- **Visitor spending dramatically increased versus 2021 and 2019** – With more travel teams, athletes and spectators, direct visitor spending was estimated at \$8,066,671 – up 44 percent from 2021 and 32 percent from pre-pandemic levels in 2019. And while the 5,524 hotel room nights was a drop from 2021 (down by 8 percent) and 2019 (down by 14 percent), hotel occupancy rates were up in 2022 with higher room rates, contributing to the increase in spending along with the additional teams and visitors.

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- **Diversity of events hosted** – The Meijer Sports Complex hosted a few new events in addition to being the home baseball field for Aquinas College Men’s Baseball another season – it hosted Race #5 of the D&D Bicycles MiSCA (Michigan Scholastic Cycling Association) Race Series on the adjacent Merrell Trail earlier this month, as well as served as a competition venue with local host Western Little League District 9 for team qualifier and championship games in the 2022 Little League State Tournament in July.

Complex Expansion and Capital Campaign

Owned and operated by the WMSC, the Meijer Sports Complex opened in 2015 with eight baseball and softball fields, including a championship baseball field with covered grandstands; Nate Hurwitz Miracle League Field; warm-up areas, restrooms, concessions and maintenance building; and parking for 400 vehicles. Costing \$7.5 million and funded through private donations, the complex has cumulatively attracted 148 travel events, 7,500 teams and 243,750 visitors, for a total economic impact for Kent County of \$52 million in direct visitor spending.

Using remaining acreage to the south of the complex, the WMSC is embarking on an \$11 million complex expansion to fill the growing need for infrastructure to host more youth and amateur sports tournaments in West Michigan. The WMSC estimates that the expanded complex will accommodate 200 more teams annually and bring in an additional \$1 million in annual visitor spending.

Funded through a “Winning Streak” capital campaign that will raise both public and private funds, the complex expansion is slated to include:

- A new championship softball field for youth, amateur and collegiate softball – featuring synthetic turf, grandstands, lighting, covered dugouts and a press box
- Three flexible-use diamond fields for youth and amateur baseball and softball as well as collegiate softball, with covered dugouts and bleachers
- 20 pickleball courts, including a championship court
- Resurfacing of the Miracle Field
- New concession building, new restroom facility, and expanded storage facility
- New playground area
- Canopies over all bleacher seating
- Synthetic turf installed on the existing Championship baseball field
- 450 additional parking spaces

“Our vision from the beginning was always to expand the complex to grow with the needs of the youth and amateur sports industry, and today we are ready to take that next step,” said Guswiler. “This expansion will deliver much-needed gender parity by adding new diamond fields for softball, as well as address the explosive growth of the sport of pickleball. We’re excited to take the Meijer Sports Complex to the next level in delivering a championship-caliber experience for tournament directors from around the country.”

Co-chaired by Aquinas College VP for Intercollegiate Athletics Nick Davidson and WMSC Board Member Deb Kay with support from Lance Parrish of the Detroit Tigers as the campaign’s Ambassador of Baseball, the Winning Streak capital campaign kicked off this fall. More information can be found at westmisports.com/winningstreak (information will be added as the campaign ramps up). Fundraising is slated to continue throughout 2023 with the intention of reaching the fundraising goal to begin construction in 2024. Progressive AE is providing architectural design services.

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About the Meijer Sports Complex

A flagship project of the West Michigan Sports Commission, the [Meijer Sports Complex](#) is a championship-caliber baseball/softball complex near Rockford featuring eight baseball and softball fields, including the 385-foot fenced Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation Championship Field with covered grandstands to seat 1,000 spectators; Nate Hurwitz Miracle League Field for children with disabilities; warm-up areas, restrooms, concessions and maintenance building; and parking for more than 400 vehicles. Visit [meijersportscomplex.com](#).

About the West Michigan Sports Commission

The non-profit [West Michigan Sports Commission](#) (WMSC) identifies, secures and hosts youth and amateur sporting events to positively impact the economy and quality of life in the region. Since its inception in 2007, the WMSC has booked 1,085 events attracting more than 1.9 million athletes and visitors, generating over \$554 million in direct visitor spending. Visit [westmisports.com](#), [Facebook.com/WestMichiganSportsCommission](#) and @westmisports on Twitter and Instagram.

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