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Sports Business

City of Phoenix: World Series to have \$10M per game impact

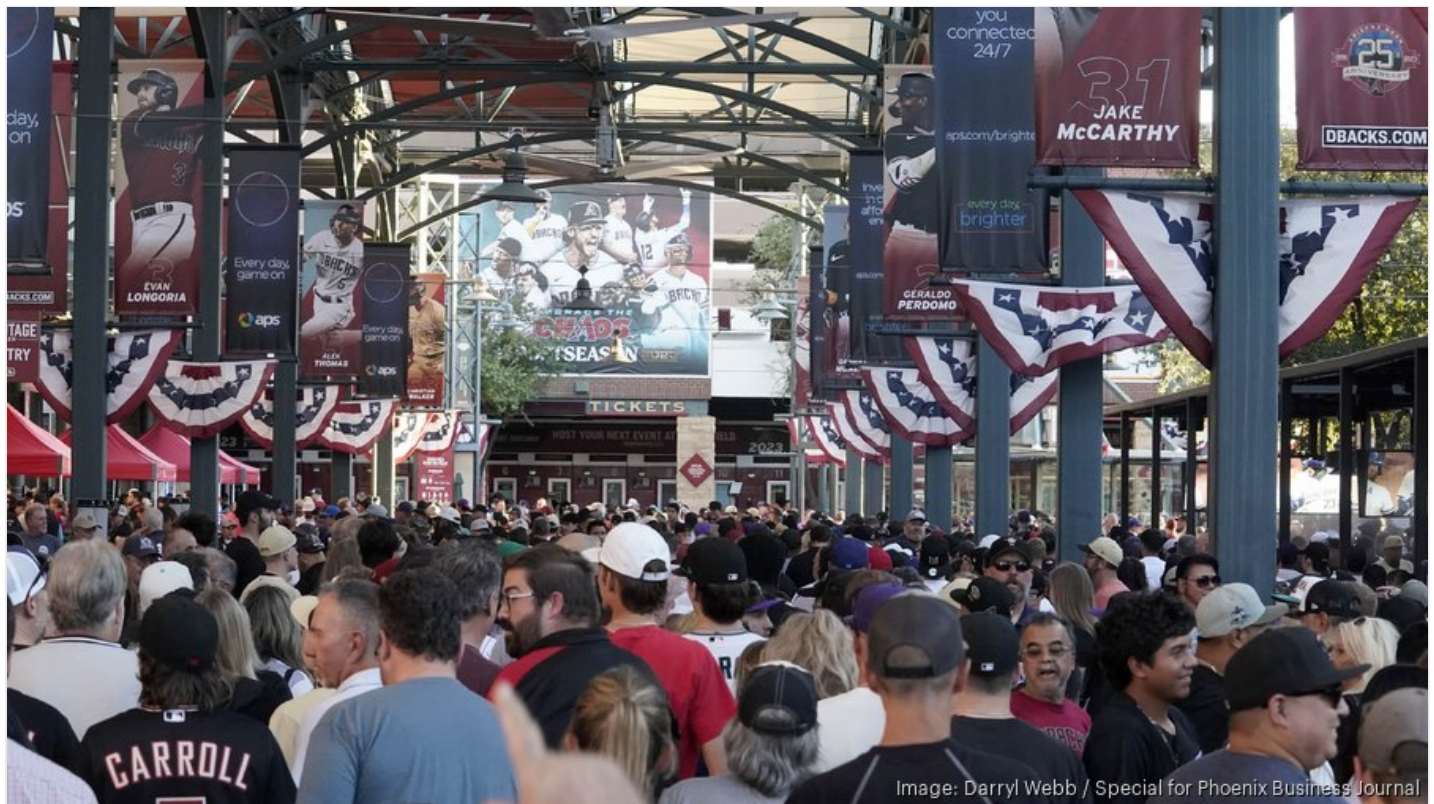


Image: Darryl Webb / Special for Phoenix Business Journal

Arizona Diamondbacks fans make their way into Chase Field as they play the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NLDS Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023 in Phoenix. (Darryl Webb/Special for the Phoenix Business Journal)

DARRYL WEBB



By **Audrey Jensen** – Reporter, Phoenix Business Journal
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City leaders are preparing for an onslaught of visitors in downtown Phoenix next week as the World Series ramps up between the Arizona Diamondbacks and Texas Rangers.

On Halloween, city officials said, downtown Phoenix will host a sold-out game four of the World Series, a sold-out Phoenix Suns game, a major Halloween event and a sold-out concert. In total, they expect to see upwards of 90,000 people downtown that night.

Less than a year after Phoenix stood center stage during Super Bowl LVII, the region once again enters the spotlight as the Diamondbacks fight to win the World Series for the second time since 2001.

The city estimates the overall economic impact of the World Series at roughly \$10 million per game – which would total \$30 million locally if there isn't a sweep. Businesses are **likely to see a jump in activity from the World Series** being played in Phoenix.

"We're glad to have Phoenix once again on the world stage," said Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego on Oct. 27. "We'll tell the story about all we have to offer in Phoenix and hope to maximize the economic development impact for our residents."



Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego speaks about the anticipated benefits of the World Series on Oct. 27, 2023 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

AUDREY JENSEN

This time around, however, city leaders will tout the vast changes that have been made in downtown Phoenix and the surrounding areas since the Diamondbacks last won the World Series.

In downtown Phoenix, more than 12,000 high-density residential units have been added, the population has more than tripled and the number of restaurants and bars has jumped from less than 100 to 230, according to Christine Mackay, community and economic development director for the city of Phoenix.

"People thought of Arizona, metro Phoenix really differently in 2001, so to be able to showcase Phoenix on the national stage in 2001 and have the Diamondbacks win just starts the trajectory of all of these things," Mackay told the Business Journal.

Major attractions, institutions and amenities – including light rail, a bioscience core, an expanded convention center, hotels and higher education campuses – also did not exist in 2001. Back then, Mackay said downtown had less than 60 technology companies, but now that number has jumped to 450.

The Diamondbacks also continue to contribute to downtown Phoenix by playing 80 games during the summer and bringing visitors to the area during the Suns' off-season.

"The pride of having your own baseball team and having it right here in the heart of downtown is huge for economic impact," Mackay said.



Christine Mackay, community and economic development director for City of Phoenix, pictured above, said on Oct. 27 that the World Series will bring thousands of people to downtown Phoenix in 2023.

AUDREY JENSEN

In addition to the major expansion downtown has seen in the past two decades, even more projects are expected to give downtown Phoenix another life in the coming years. These include the [\\$100 million Phoenix Mercury training facility](#) and a host of new residential towers and retail options.

The city has also expanded downtown's border and is currently looking for a consultant to help establish a new entertainment district in the area.

'We know we're going to win:' How leaders will pitch Phoenix during World Series

Economic development officials are also gearing up to welcome a number of executives and site selectors that will be pouring in to watch the World Series in Phoenix.

Mackay said her team will be coordinating with the Arizona Commerce Authority and Greater Phoenix Economic Council to meet with companies during the World Series that could invest in the Valley.

Because of the shorter notice, Mackay said they won't be hosting a familiarization tour like they normally would for the Super Bowl or Final Four, but are hopeful the World Series can bring more business to Arizona.

In 2017, she said the NCAA Final Four resulted in 12 companies that attended a familiarization tour expanding or investing in Phoenix. They've also secured four companies from this year's Super Bowl, Mackay added.

After more than 20 years of substantial growth and major change to Phoenix's economy, Mackay said their pitch to companies is a lot stronger than what it was during the last World Series in Phoenix.

In the years leading up to the Great Recession, Phoenix's economy was built on growth and hospitality after it had previously relied on defense, semiconductors and technology.

Phoenix bounced back from the dot-com recession, Mackay said, but the city wasn't able to recover for years after the Great Recession, or until about 2014. It was hit harder than other major markets.

"In the Great Recession, the economic developers said, 'We've been telling you for decades we can't be an economy built on growth,'" Mackay said. "We were focused more on low-end call center jobs ... and golf course and resorts and retirement and building houses. It was not the Phoenix of today."

Today, Phoenix's economy is focused on building up manufacturing as well as on biosciences, health care, aerospace and defense, semiconductors, cyber, sustainability, electric and autonomous vehicles and circular economy, Mackay said.

"We are well positioned, we are diverse, we are resilient. I will make a bold statement: we will never again be hit the way we were hit in the Great Recession – ever," she said.

In 2001, when Mackay was working in economic development with the city of Chandler, the pitch for Phoenix was more focused on what Arizona didn't have.

"You tried to get in front of the 'But you don't have this, you don't have that,' so you'd work that into your pitch. It's almost like our pitches were apologetic in 2001," she said. "Our pitches today are bold because we know we're going to win. We know that we compete on the global stage now, we know we have a competitive environment."

In the past five years, Mackay said Phoenix has gotten looks from companies that would have never considered the region in 2001. "We wouldn't have even made the long list," she said.