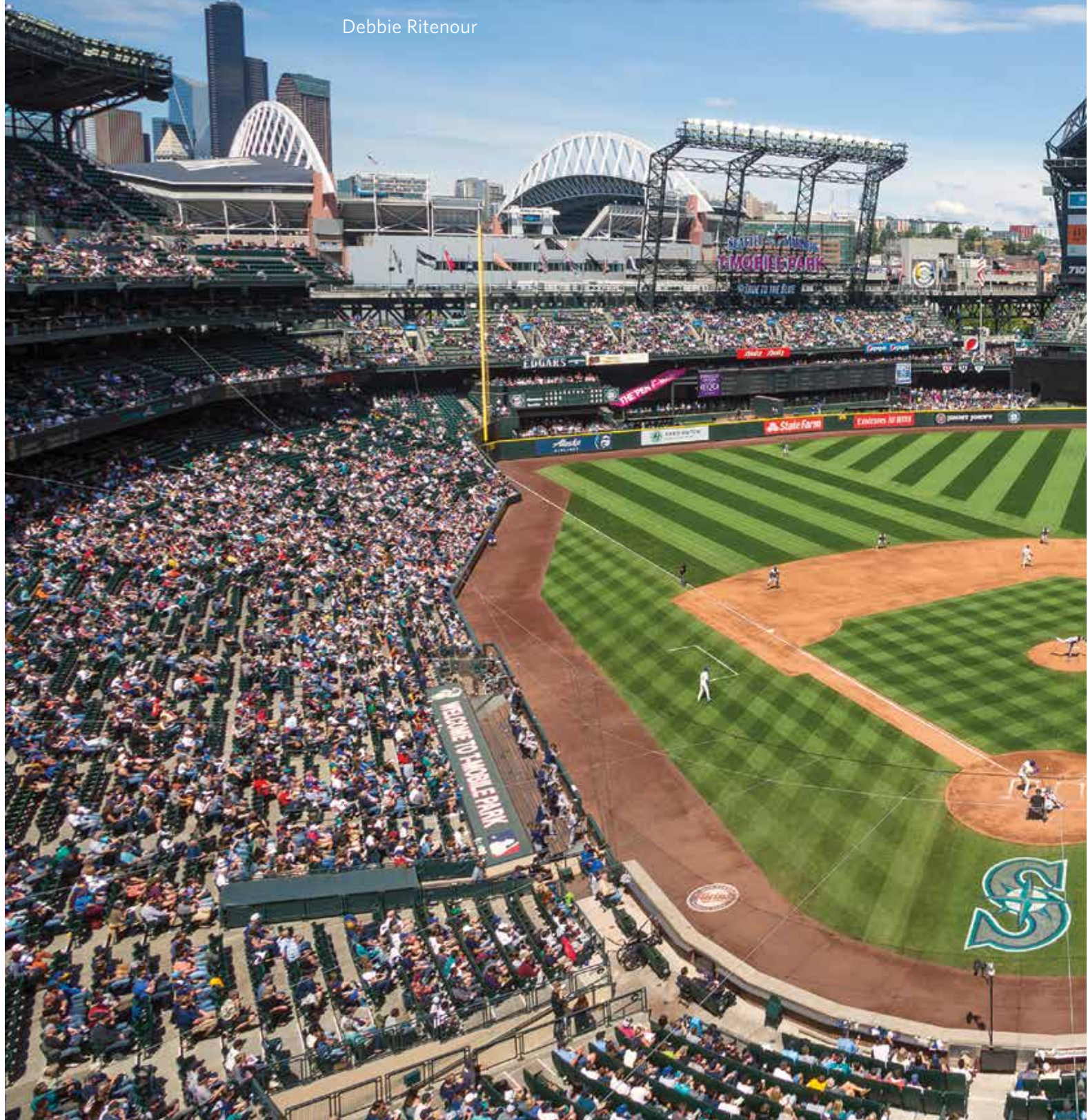
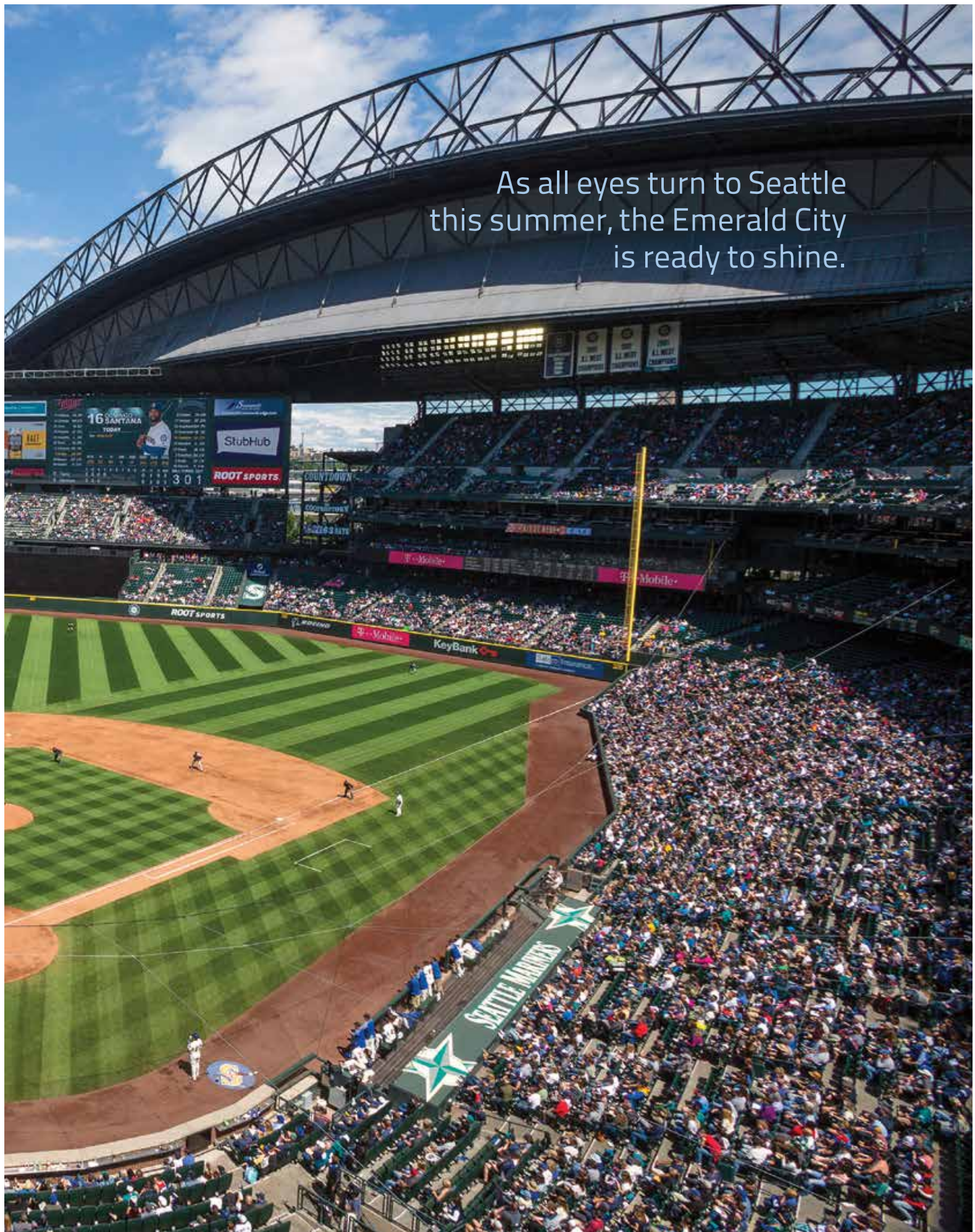


The Big-Time Impact of MLB All-Star Week

Debbie Ritenour



As all eyes turn to Seattle
this summer, the Emerald City
is ready to shine.



MLB's 2023 All-Star Week is coming to Seattle July 7-11, bringing with it dozens of players, thousands of fans and millions of dollars in economic impact.

The Mariners are having a moment.

Last October, the team made it to the postseason for the first time since 2001, ending the longest active playoff drought in any of the four major professional sports. Tickets for opening day of the 2023 regular season sold out in February, more than a month in advance of the March 30 game. And outfielder Julio Rodriguez, better known as J-Rod and the 2022 American League Rookie of the Year, graced the cover of Sports Illustrated's MLB preview issue in April.

In case that's not enough excitement, the Midsummer Classic is returning to the Emerald City in July. Seattle will be home to the 2023 MLB All-Star Week, which is expected to draw more than 100,000 people to the area for the All-Star Game, Home Run Derby and other accompanying events.

The players and fans aren't the only ones who are excited. Local businesses, from hotels and restaurants to shops and attractions, are eager to welcome the crowds.

"This is the first big opportunity we've had in the last three years to really roll out the red carpet for visitors," said Beth Knox, president and CEO of the Seattle Sports Commission. "We've seen an increase in visitor traffic over the past year and a half to two years, and it feels like this summer is a chance to throw those doors wide open."

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—BETH KNOX, PRESIDENT AND
CEO OF THE SEATTLE SPORTS
COMMISSION

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

Although the timing might seem uncannily perfect, 2023 MLB All-Star Week planning actually began back in 2019, long before the Mariners were playoff contenders. The Mariners first approached the MLB about hosting the event in 2024 or 2025, but after the pandemic forced the league to shuffle dates and locations around, 2023 emerged as a possibility. Visit Seattle, the official destination marketing organization for Seattle and King County, worked closely with

the Mariners and the Seattle Sports Commission to develop the winning bid.

"The Mariners, of course, have been extraordinarily instrumental in the process. They are providing the information on the logistics of the ballpark and their capacity and contributions, which are immense," said Kelly Saling, senior vice president and chief sales officer at Visit Seattle, who noted that the Seattle Sports Commission was part of Visit Seattle when the bidding process began. "We are taking the lead on hotel accommodations, airlift to the region and venues outside of the ballpark."

This will be the third time Seattle has hosted the All-Star Game. In 1979, the National League beat the American League at the Kingdome, and in 2001, the American League won at what was then called Safeco Field.

Over the last two decades, the event has expanded far beyond the namesake game and popular Home Run Derby. The final schedule for the 2023 All-Star Week is jam-packed with activities. Festivities will kick off on July 7 with the inaugural HBCU Swingman Classic, which will provide an opportunity for student-athletes from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to showcase their talent. On July 8, T-Mobile Park will be home to the All-Star Celebrity Softball Game and the SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game. The MLB Draft will begin on July 9 and run for three days, and the Home Run Derby will take place on July 10. The event will close with the Red Carpet Show and All-Star Game on July 11.

Between events, fans can visit Capital One Play Ball Park at Lumen Field and the Lumen Field Events Center. The fan festival will offer a variety of ways for attendees to immerse themselves in the sport, including batting cages, meet and greets, virtual reality experiences, a silent auction and gaming stations.

"What I most love about hosting these kinds of events is the chance for our local community to be a part of them. Not everyone can afford a ticket to the Home Run Derby or the All-Star Game itself, but they can participate in some of the free or really affordable events that will be taking place in and around the

At A Glance

Seattle is hosting the 2023 All-Star Week July 7-11.

The five-day event is expected to bring more than 100,000 fans to the area and generate at least \$50 million in economic impact.

The economic benefits are expected to extend beyond Seattle to the surrounding region as visitors explore nearby communities.

Seattle will be hosting many other high-profile sporting events in the coming years, including the 2024 NHL Winter Classic and the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

www.mlb.com/mariners/fans/all-star-game



Beth Knox of the Seattle Sports Commission speaks at a September 2021 press conference announcing that Seattle will be hosting All-Star Week. (Photo: Jose A. Moreno/JMoreno PR)

marquee events,” Knox said. “Sports equal community in my book. They are the great unifier.”

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND BENEFITS

Indeed, organizers have been intentional about designing an experience that will bring the community together. The goal is to engage both visitors and locals and create an event that is welcoming and accessible for everyone.

“The Mariners have a vision to host the most inclusive MLB All-Star event ever, so we’re really working on community integration. In particular, our team is working to establish a walking corridor called the Green Path from T-Mobile Park, along the waterfront and through downtown to Seventh Avenue and Pine Street,” Saling said. “It’s an opportunity for us to really activate the community and help visitors get a taste and experience of Seattle. A huge part of that is patronizing local businesses.”

Visit Seattle estimates that All-Star Week will bring in at least \$50 million to the local economy. That number takes into consideration a variety of factors, including anticipated ticket sales, tax rates, people per hotel room and length of stay. The estimated

2023 MLB ALL-STAR WEEK BY THE NUMBERS





economic impact is more than double that of the last MLB All-Star Game held in Seattle back in 2001.

“We’ll be at capacity at T-Mobile Park, with more than 47,000 fans at both the All-Star Game and the Home Run Derby,” Saling said. “We also expect over 100,000 people to attend the other events throughout the week, including Play Ball Park. These are people staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants and shopping in our stores.”

The economic benefits will extend beyond Seattle to the surrounding region. Many visitors will stay in neighboring cities, and others will take the opportunity to explore close attractions like Mount Rainier or the San Juan Islands.

“All-Star Week will absolutely impact the regional economy. It’s the ‘rising tide floats all boats’ concept, and when downtown is as full as it will be, nearby communities will be dramatically affected,” said Saling.

THE REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN

Rachel Smith, president and CEO of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, was part of a delegation that traveled to Los Angeles for the 2022 All-Star Week. The members of the group, which also included representatives from the Mariners, Visit Seattle and the Seattle Sports Commission as well as civic leaders such as the mayor, police chief and fire chief, wanted to get a firsthand look at what to expect so they could apply what they learned as they planned for 2023.

“A couple of things stood out to me. One, unlike LA, our stadiums are right in the heart of our downtown. That creates a huge amount of opportunity,” Smith said. “Two, it is critical that we have a clean

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—KELLY SALING, VISIT SEATTLE

and shiny city as we prepare to welcome so many people. I can’t underscore the importance of that enough.”

Like many downtowns across the country, downtown Seattle was hit hard by the pandemic. Many restaurants and stores shuttered as offices closed and employees began working from home, and the area saw a rise in homelessness and crime. Things are turning around, however. More than 130 new businesses opened downtown in 2022, and violent crime decreased by 18% between 2019 and 2022.

“We had a near-record visitor season last summer, and we have the highest number of residents living downtown than we’ve ever had, even prior to the pandemic,” said Jon Scholes, president and CEO of the Downtown Seattle Association. “We continue to make progress in addressing safety, security and the crisis of homelessness. We’re in a better position today than we were a year ago, and we’ll be in an even better position in July than we are today.”

“Seattle stands to gain great benefits because of how we’ve developed downtown as a place with arts, culture and music in addition to great restaurants and retail.”

—JON SCHOLES, DOWNTOWN SEATTLE ASSOCIATION

Scholes notes that a significant amount of public and private investment has occurred in or near downtown over the last decade. These investments include the Seattle Convention Center Summit building, which opened in January; the demolition of the viaduct along the waterfront; and ongoing light rail extensions, including three new stations that opened in 2021.

“We have a very walkable downtown, which is one of the reasons MLB wanted to bring the game here,” Scholes said. “But people will do more than just go to the game once they get here. Seattle stands to gain great benefits because of how we’ve developed downtown as a place with arts, culture and music in addition to great restaurants and retail.”

JUST THE BEGINNING

All-Star Week is just one of many high-profile sporting events Seattle will be hosting in the coming years. The Kraken will take on the Vegas Golden Knights at T-Mobile Park during the NHL Winter Classic in January 2024. Climate Pledge Arena, which saw record crowds at the NCAA Division I women’s basketball tournament regional in March, will host first- and second-round games of the NCAA Division I men’s basketball tournament in March 2025. And in 2026, Seattle will take its turn on the global stage as a host city for the FIFA World Cup.

“When you look at all the exciting things happening in the next seven to 10 years, it really feels on the order of the World’s Fair,” Smith said.

Knox notes that MLB All-Star Week is helping set the stage for future opportunities. By hosting a successful event this year, Seattle will have an edge when bidding on other events.

“We consider each hosting opportunity a building block for the next premier event,” said Knox. “Our goal is to provide the fans an All-Star experience this summer and then raise the bar on future sporting events that position Seattle as a world-class destination for athletes and sports fans alike.”

Luckily, Seattle is up for the challenge.

“We’re so much better positioned now, as a city and a downtown, to host significant events. We’ve got more hotel capacity than ever. We have a gleaming new convention center facility. The stadiums continue to make investments in elevating the fan experience, and we have a lot more transportation options,” Scholes said. “Seattle’s always been a great place to bring events to, but I think we’re on a new level now. We’re truly a big events town.” ☰



Seattle hosted its first All-Star Game in 1979 in the then-new Kingdome. (Photo: King County Archives)

