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**EXPERIENCE GRAND RAPIDS AWARDED CVB STAR OF THE YEAR BY THE
MICHIGAN RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION**

EXGR successfully reaches pre-pandemic meeting and convention attendance numbers

Grand Rapids, Mich. – Experience Grand Rapids, the area’s official destination marketing organization, celebrates receiving the *CVB Star of the Year* award at the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association’s Stars of the Industry Awards in Plymouth on Wednesday. The *CVB Star of the Year* award recognizes an outstanding convention and visitor bureau (CVB) within the state of Michigan. EXGR is being honored for its success in restarting its meeting and convention businesses coming out of the pandemic and nearly reaching pre-pandemic attendance numbers.

“We are honored to be recognized for the tremendous impact we’ve had on the Grand Rapids economy,” said EXGR President & CEO, Doug Small. “As we continue the momentum in tourism growth and establish Grand Rapids as a leading travel destination, we are proud to have hosted many successful events, conferences and conventions for leisure and business. Meetings and conventions are back and will clearly be a vital part of Michigan’s post-pandemic recovery.”

The data reveals that, in 2022, the number of attendees for meetings, sports tournaments and group tours reached 95% of 2019 levels. Similarly, EXGR has restored 88% of the number of groups convening in Grand Rapids in 2022 when compared to 2019.

The recovery in hotel room bookings is even stronger thanks to the combined efforts of leisure and convention business. Through September 2022, Kent County saw 6% more demand for hotel rooms compared to 2019, and 25% more demand than in 2021.

This is thanks, in part, to some large national meetings. This past summer, for instance, EXGR successfully hosted the U.S. Travel Association’s Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations, a leading national travel industry convention where 900 destination marketing professionals from state, regional and local organizations gathered in Grand Rapids to glean critical information to help them better market and grow their destinations.

“The fact that we were selected to host one of the largest travel industry conferences in the country is a testament to EXGR’s and Grand Rapids’ reputation among travel professionals,” said Small.

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EXGR is awaiting final year-end numbers, but confidently projects a total of 470 individual meetings, sporting events and group tours will draw 415,769 attendees in 2022.

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About Experience Grand Rapids

Established in 1927, Experience Grand Rapids (EXGR) leads the marketing of Grand Rapids/Kent County as a premier convention & visitor destination providing a significant positive impact to the West Michigan economy. Previously named the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau, EXGR represents the second largest city in Michigan with over one million residents.