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'World-class' sports complex on deck for Anderson, investors say

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Private investors are planning to develop a \$6 million baseball and softball complex on about 70 acres off Interstate 69 in Anderson, officials are set to announce Tuesday afternoon.

Dubbed "The Farm," the project will feature a 100,000-square-foot indoor training facility—complete with two artificial-turf fields—and 10 outdoor diamonds with all the amenities.

Plans for the "world-class" complex have been in the works for a couple years, said investor Brad Benbow, who owns Joseph David Advertising in Muncie.

"There are various facilities scattered around the country," he said, "but we think there is a void here in the Midwest. It's hard to find a place this big."

Another potential draw is the participation of Anderson resident Mike Shirley, a professional scout who Benbow called one of the top baseball instructors in the country. He already operates a small training facility in nearby Pendleton.

Benbow expects The Farm to attract about 30,000 visitors a year—both spectators and players ages 8 to 18.

City leaders hope the project gives a boost to nearby restaurants, hotels and attractions like Hoosier Park Racing & Casino, spokeswoman Tammy Bowman said, and ideally it also will spur additional development.

An independent study commissioned by investors estimate the potential economic impact at \$500 million over 20 years, Benbow said.

A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for April 1, at which point the entire investor group will be introduced, Benbow said. The indoor facility is expected to open in October, and the outdoor field in spring 2012.

Anderson's City Council is set to vote on economic development incentives for the project on March 10. Details of the incentive proposal were not immediately available.

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