

# NASCAR'S TOP BRASS WILL VISIT TODAY

## PUBLIC RALLY SET FOR OLYMPIC PARK

**FIVE BIDS FOR NASCAR'S HALL OF FAME**

The bids are in, and NASCAR executives now are mulling proposals from the five cities competing for racing's official hall of fame. The bigwigs will get a pitch from Atlanta's bid team today, followed by site visits in Charlotte, Kansas City, Kan., and Richmond in the next week. Daytona Beach, Fla., revved its engines during a site visit last week. Here's an idea of what they're hearing along the way:

1. Atlanta	2. Charlotte	3. Daytona Beach	4. Kansas City	5. Richmond
<p><b>The concept:</b> The \$52 million showcase of racing would be an site owned currently by Ted Turner across from Centennial Olympic Park. With the Georgia Aquarium and a new World of Coca-Cola nearby, an Atlanta hall could draw larger crowds than a hall in the other cities.</p> <p><b>The money:</b> As much as \$25 million would come from the state, \$5 million from the city in tax breaks, \$30 million from corporate donors and the rest from bank loans, according to state documents.</p> <p><b>The fans:</b> Atlanta's bid team believes the attraction could draw 1 million visitors a year. Two Nextel Cup weekends at Atlanta Motor Speedway have a \$425 million impact on the area economy, according to one study. Atlanta consistently ranks high in TV viewers for NASCAR events.</p>	<p><b>The concept:</b> Charlotte — the hub of NASCAR racing, with approximately 50 percent of racing teams headquartered there — has picked a downtown site near the convention center and hired a renowned architectural firm (J.M. Fox) for its \$175 million attraction. "Racing was built here. Racing belongs here" is the city's new slogan.</p> <p><b>The money:</b> The state Legislature agreed to raise the hotel motel tax and channel the money to the hall. The federal government is allowing the state to raise \$20 million by selling signage near the hall site.</p> <p><b>The fans:</b> Three race weekends at Lowe's Motor Speedway, headlined by two Nextel Cup points races and NASCAR's all-star event, draw more than 150,000 fans per race. But there are empty seats, which track officials blame on a slumping textile industry in the Carolinas.</p>	<p><b>The concept:</b> The hall of fame, which would cost at least \$70 million, would include a proposed six-story museum that would give visitors the sense of going around a track at 180 mph and the "Tower of Champions Theater," an amphitheater with a display of famous race cars. The attraction would be built next to Daytona International Speedway.</p> <p><b>The money:</b> The Florida Legislature refused a \$30 million tax break, but no matter. Organizers say private funds would pay for the hall, which would be a nonprofit entity.</p> <p><b>The fans:</b> More than 200,000 fans come to the "Birthplace of Speed" twice a year for NASCAR races, including the Daytona 500. City leaders expect a NASCAR hall of fame would draw at least 400,000 annually. This metro area is home to 473,000 people.</p>	<p><b>The concept:</b> Kansas City has a high-traffic site picked out near to Kansas Speedway and the 400-acre Village West retail and entertainment development. Kansas City-based HOK Sport + Venue + Event would design the 130,000-square-foot, \$100 million project.</p> <p><b>The money:</b> The tentative plan is to finance construction largely with state-backed bonds that would be paid off with sales tax revenues from the hall of fame. Village West was similarly financed.</p> <p><b>The fans:</b> Kansas Speedway opened in 2003 and sold out races in its first four seasons, igniting massive economic activity in the surrounding area. Nearly 52,000 season tickets have been sold this year.</p>	<p><b>The concept:</b> The two-building hall of fame, totaling 129,000 square feet, would sit on a 20-acre complex that would include a racing-themed hotel, retail shops and restaurants. A nonprofit group called Virginia Racing for the Hall of Fame planned to offer NASCAR two locations for the hall, including one near Richmond International Raceway. The other site is undisclosed.</p> <p><b>The money:</b> The financing for the \$300 million hall probably would be from a mix of private and public sources.</p> <p><b>The fans:</b> The 107,037-seat track has sold out 27 consecutive Nextel Cup races. When NASCAR announced race schedules, "What is your favorite track?" 25 percent named Richmond, more than any other. The Virginia group projects a hall of fame in Richmond would draw 700,000 visitors per year.</p>

MICHAEL BARROW / STAFF

Atlanta is competing with four other communities for the racing shrine. NASCAR executives saw Daytona Beach, Fla.'s pitch last week. Wednesday they'll be in Charlotte, then Kansas City, Kan., on Thursday and Richmond next Tuesday.

NASCAR officials probably will pare the list to two or three cities this fall and decide on a home for the hall by December.

Today is Atlanta's chance to show NASCAR some Olympic-sized spirit.

A public rally for the bid is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. at the Fountain of Rings at Centennial Olympic Park — across the street from the hall's would-be home.

Winning the national NASCAR attraction is critical to the state, city and downtown, said A.J. Robinson, head of Central Atlanta Progress, a downtown business group that's leading Atlanta's racing hall of fame effort.

"It's worth \$1 billion to the community. Whether you like fast cars or not, that's a lot of money," Robinson told a group of business leaders Monday. With the Georgia Aquarium and the new World of Coca-Cola, a NASCAR shrine "will establish Atlanta as a place where people want to come and stay," Robinson said.

The touring NASCAR executives will start their visit at the Governor's Mansion in Buckhead, where they'll hear the bid team's presentation through the morning and stay for lunch.

Then they'll brave the August heat to tour the hall's potential site, which is owned by Ted

By [WALTER WOODS](#)

Atlanta, the town that's hosted everything from monster trucks to the Olympic Games, will put out its lucky, well-worn welcome mat today, this time for the apostles of stock car racing.

About 15 NASCAR executives will fly here this morning to mingle with local VIPs and hear why NASCAR's hall of fame should come to a stop in downtown Atlanta.

Turner and could be either leased or sold for the attraction.

Robinson's NASCAR bid team, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin and others will hold a 3:30 p.m. news conference about Atlanta's bid, and afterward Franklin will have a reception for the racing visitors at a downtown hotel.

The local effort would build a \$92 million racing shrine with \$25 million from the state and \$5 million in city tax breaks, as well as bank loans and corporate support.



**A.J. Robinson** of Central Atlanta Progress says the NASCAR shrine, the Georgia Aquarium and the new World of Cola-Cola "will establish Atlanta as a place where people want to come and stay." W.A. BRIDGES JR. / Staff

