

ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ATLANTA PEGGED AT \$1 BILLION OVER DECADE

By [WALTER WOODS](#)

A NASCAR hall of fame in Atlanta not only would crowd downtown streets with racing fans, it also could mean worn-out bells at hotel desks, "help wanted" signs in local store windows and fat tips left on restaurant tables.

Landing NASCAR's version of Cooperstown might yield up to 1,200 new jobs and an economic impact of \$1 billion for the metro area during its first decade, according to a Deloitte Consulting study passed among state officials and obtained under Georgia's open records law.

If Deloitte's numbers are borne out, that would be the equivalent of a large employer coming to town and would be "a significant pop to the economy," said Roger Tutterow, an economist at Kennesaw State University.

Atlanta is competing with four cities — Richmond; Charlotte; Daytona Beach, Fla.; and Kansas City, Kan. — for the hall of fame. The cities delivered their bid packages to NASCAR Tuesday.

Racing's decision-makers expect to tour Atlanta in August and to decide where the hall will go by December.

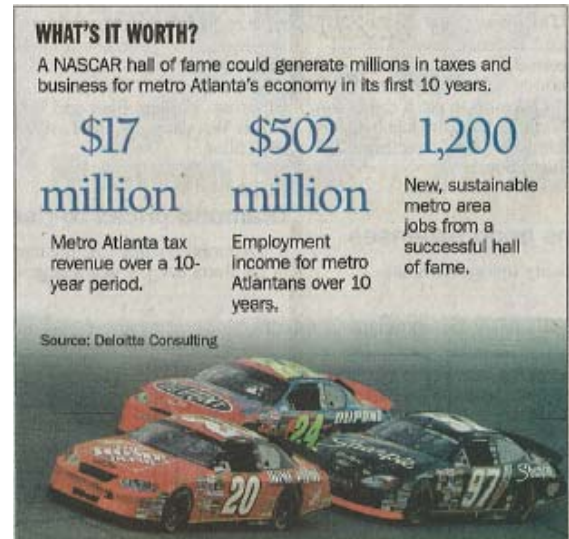
Winning NASCAR's hall of fame would yield bragging rights and, more important, tourism dollars, economic impact and jobs.

"One billion dollars for the city is extremely — well, you put an adjective in there — it's a very significant event," said Greg Giornelli, head of the Atlanta Development Authority.

The NASCAR shrine might attract a million people in 2008, its opening year, and after a 5 percent dip in honeymoon attendance, consistently draw about 987,000 annually through 2012, according to Deloitte.

About 65 percent of its visitors would be from out of town, Deloitte guessed, meaning 90 percent of the hall's visitors would spend money at a restaurant and 80 percent would rent a room at a local hotel.

"It's a no-brainer" what that would mean for local restaurants, said Ron Wolf, executive director of the Georgia Restaurant Association. Combined with the new Georgia Aquarium and the World of Coca-Cola, NASCAR's attraction could mean a 2 percent jump in sales for restaurants across the metro area.



"It's a huge boon for the downtown restaurants, and not just downtown. There will be residual impact ... some of those people will check out Atlanta and the suburbs," Wolf said.

For local hotels, which have taken longer to recover from the most recent economic slowdown, the hall of fame not only could check in more tourists, but also attract more large corporate meetings and conventions, a hotel's bread and butter.

"The more that's available for meeting participants and their spouses, the more attractive the destination," said Mark Woodworth of PKF Consulting, a hotel industry research group. Ultimately that means more jobs, he said.

For every 14 rooms rented, a hotel needs to hire a maid and for every 200 check-ins, the hotel needs to hire a desk clerk, Woodworth said.

Many of the jobs associated with the hall of fame would be in the hospitality service industry, and that sector is among the metro area's largest employers and critical to its economy, said Peter Aman, a consultant at Bain & Co., which has advised Atlanta officials about city finances.

"There's a limited number of major additions to the economy that a city can expect," Aman said. "Service industry jobs are not a bad thing."