

Searching for the Right Spot

Mustang Museum, Inc.'s Quest for the Perfect Location

by Bob Vickery
photos by VTC & Co.

January 30-31, 1998, found the Mustang Museum Inc., Board of Directors in Atlanta, Georgia, for their January meeting. Combined with this meeting were tours by the Site Selection Committee of six potential sites in and around the Atlanta area.

The Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism brought together private interests, state representatives, and county managers for an impressive and enthusiastic presentation to the Board of Directors. Bill Dobbs, Senior Project Manager for the Department, along with Ginger Taylor, Director, Tourism Business Development, spearheaded Georgia's bid to bring the Mustang Experience to the state.

Friday morning, four helicopters took the Site Selection Committee members on a three-hour tour of the six potential sites and a general tour of Atlanta and many of the attractions that bring throngs of visitors to the area. The tour concluded at Road

Atlanta Motor Sports Center where 30 Mustangs were waiting to welcome the visitors.

After a short welcome and inspection of the various

ponies on display, the Board gathered for lunch and meetings. During this time the Mustang owners were taken on a track tour, tour of the Panoz Automotive

Factory which produces the very special Panoz automobile, and enjoyed dinner at Chateau Elan Resort and Winery where members of MMI were staying for the weekend. Bill Dobbs had contacted MCA clubs in the Atlanta area and surrounding states and made the clubs and their representatives an integral part of the state's bid.

After lunch, James Kanely, president and CEO of Road Atlanta, presented a bid to build the Mustang Experience on Road Atlanta property (an approximate 40-acre tract). A notebook presented to each Board member by the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism was filled with an abundance of facts and figures. It began with a southeastern United States map indicating the location of MCA regional

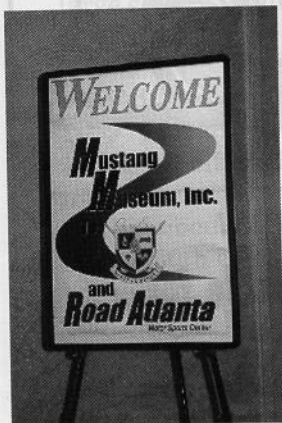
Four helicopters were used to take MMI officials on a tour of the six proposed Museum sites in Georgia.



groups. It also included a map and pictures of the six proposed sites, demographics on the state of Georgia and each of the counties where the sites are located, sections on automotive manufacturers, attractions, state parks which included tourism in general, and education.

Mr. Kanely and Mr. Dobbs also brought in officers from Hall County, Gwinnett County, Jackson EMC, Lanier Raceway, Thunder Road USA, and Chateau Elan Resorts to speak and answer

Meetings, meetings, and more meetings were attended by Mustang Museum, Inc., officers and directors January 30-31, 1998.





MMI officials take time to look over one of the impressive creations of Don Panoz.

questions. Taxes, building permits, utilities, roads, other attractions, impact fees, motels, advertising, race track access, and a host of other topics were discussed during the afternoon meeting.

After the meeting and inspection of the Road Atlanta site, the Board was returned to Chateau Elan where Mustangs from around the South were gathering for an early morning trek from North Georgia into Atlanta for a show at another proposed site.

Before dinner, a meeting was held with Don Panoz, owner of the 3,100-acre Chateau Elan Resort and Winery as well as Road Atlanta. Also on hand were 10 MCA regional group presidents to show their support and enthusiasm for the project.

Early Saturday morning a line of approximately 150 Mustangs greeted MMI officials for a 25-mile caravan into Atlanta to Lakewood Fairgrounds (a proposed site) for a show and luncheon provided by the state. A Georgia State Patrol Mustang escorted the multi-mile long caravan into Atlanta where another 150 or so Mustangs were already in place.

An estimated 300-plus Mustangs from seven surrounding states along with 22 Mustang clubs were present. Atlanta television news reporters along with a reporter from the city's major newspaper were on hand to cover the impressive event.

Lunch time brought everyone in from the cool Atlanta weather to

enjoy a wonderful barbecue meal. This was followed by a presentation by the City of Atlanta. State Representatives, City Council members and additional representatives from the tourism, economics, and commerce departments spoke to the Board concerning the benefits of locating the museum at Lakewood which is just south of downtown Atlanta. A

seven-minute video touting the positive aspects of Atlanta and Fulton County was shown as well as a short video which highlighted the Lakewood Center Complex.



Approximately 150 Mustangs joined the caravan traveling from Chateau Elan in northern Georgia to Lakewood Fairgrounds just south of Atlanta.

After a short break, the Board met with Lakewood representatives to hear their proposal. By late afternoon MMI officials had yet to hold their regular Board meeting.

During December the Site Selection Committee visited Indianapolis to inspect available building sites in Indiana. Then in February

300-plus Mustangs, 7 states, and 22 clubs were on hand at Lakewood Fairgrounds to show support for the Mustang museum project.

they were off to Detroit, Michigan. The last of the "final four" cities to visit was sunny Orlando, Florida. The individuals who comprise Mustang Museum, Inc., and give of their time and efforts to make this museum a reality are to be congratulated.

Finding just the right spot to build a complex honoring the Ford Mustang is no easy task. As you can see from the coverage of the Atlanta trip, MMI officials have a great deal of information to consider. And as we have seen here, this is serious business to the states, cities, and counties that may acquire a multi-million dollar project in their area. Take all the facts, figures, and enthusiasm shown in Georgia and multiply it by four and, well, it can become a bit overwhelming!

Mustang Club of America members and regional groups have been very supportive of this venture from the very beginning by purchasing "I Support Mustang Museum" decals and through generous donations. MCA is proud to be a supporter of the project. (Once again we must point out that MCA has no connection with any MMI Board policies or decisions.)

As of this writing (early March and before the Orlando visit), no decisions have been made concerning location or funds. The official announcement will take place sometime during April.

Looks like this is going to be an interesting month.

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