

Funds needed to complete statue, museum by 1996

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The proposed development to expand the Jesse Owens Memorial Park in Oakville can be a tourist attraction when the 1996 Summer Olympics come to Atlanta, but officials say more money is needed to complete the project.

The Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board recently received a \$75,000 grant from Gov. Jim Folsom to complete the construction of a 10-foot statue.

But, more money will be needed to complete the park, which has an estimated cost of \$550,000.

Board member James Pinion said development plans are structured to complete the statue, a gold medalion court, museum and replica of Owens' birth place before the '96 Olympics.

Other park facilities include a softball field, basketball and tennis courts, picnic pavilions, a track, walking trails and playgrounds.

When board members met with

Donations are tax deductible

Donations to help with the projected \$550,000 cost to construct the Jesse Owens Memorial Park are tax deductible.

Officials with the Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board said the names of all contributors will be posted in the park's museum.

Anyone interested in making contributions may mail them to Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board, Alabama Highway 157, Suite 6, Moulton, AL 35650.

Gov. Folsom, Pinion said he supported the proposed project.

"He told us he could see the benefit of the park when we talked to him," Pinion said. "Gov. Folsom said he wanted to see the project



completed before the 1996 Olympics."

Owens wife, Mrs. Ruth Owens, said she supports the proposed project. The park was also endorsed by the Jesse Owens Foundation, which is based in Chicago.

The statue, which shows Owens running through the Olympic symbol, is being built by Branko Medenica Sculptor in Birmingham. The statue will rest on a solid four-foot granite base.

The Alabama Council of The Arts also granted \$4,200 to help pay for the \$80,000 statue. Pinion said several other people have made donations.

He said contributions to help complete the park are tax deductible.

In 1992, Oakville residents, led by Therman White and Marvin Fitzgerald, got the ball rolling when they purchased 17.5 acres of property adjacent to the Jesse Owens Park.

Dr. Tom Chestnut, an Auburn University tourism specialist, designed the park's development plan.

The museum will have four galleries. The gold medalion court will also be divided into four sections.

Pinion said the galleries and sections will represent the four gold medals Owens won in the

1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany.

Owens, who was the tenth and last child of poor Southern sharecroppers, won gold medals in the broad jump, 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash and 400-meter relay.

His performance, which was the first in Olympic history, delivered a blow to the belly of Adolf Hitler's theory of Aryan supremacy.

Pinion said an economic-impact study is needed to determine how much of a benefit the park will be to Lawrence County.

"We feel like the park will help Lawrence County," he said.

"However, we need some figures to show when we're applying for grants."

Owens was born in the tiny hamlet of Oakville in 1913. In 1950, he was voted the greatest track man of the century.

Owens was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1970. He was part of the first class to enter the Lawrence Hall of Fame.

After a bout with cancer, Owens died in 1980. In 1990, former President George Bush bestowed a fifth gold medal on Owens.

His wife, Ruth, was presented with the "Congressional Medal of Honor" for his humanitarian contributions in the race of life.