

## Editorial

### Owens Park has potential

The Jesse Owens Museum and Park has tremendous untapped potential.

Those who visit it from out-of-town often come away with an appreciation few in the county seem to share.

It is surprising to us that what could be a regional draw gets such apathy from local residents.

The museum and park were established to tell the story of one of the most significant athletes in American history.

Built within a rock's throw of the site of the house where Jesse Owens was born, the museum houses an interesting collection of artifacts on Owens, his life and his legacy.

The museum is professionally done, with interactive displays and impressive graphics.

Coupled with the adjoining bronze statue of the track great and the replica of the home where he was born, the museum rarely fails to impress those who take the time to visit it.

Within the boundaries of the park are also baseball fields that host community sports leagues.

While that mixed use is commendable because it brings people to the park, it somewhat confuses the issue.

Sometimes support for the unique museum and the role it could play far beyond our county's boundaries is confused with support for the other park facilities, which compete for recreation funds with other parks in the county.

We doubt if the museum could ever be self-sustaining without an endowment of some sort.

But the story it tells is an important one. For the museum to draw visitors from far distances, it should be open seven days a week, ten hours per day.

It must also be properly marketed. But how do you market it if it is not open hours that are convenient for visitors.

What travelers will leave I-65 for a 30-mile detour if they aren't confident an attraction will be open?

About \$2 million has been spent on developing the park and museum. Much of it came from foundations and grants. It was not easy to come by.

But the only way we see for the museum to reach its potential is to raise another \$3 million or so as an endowment to fund its operation.

Hampton Inns has shown that national corporations are willing to invest in the Jesse Owens Museum. How many other companies and foundations are there out there that could step forward?