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# Bicycle hall here?

## Worcester listed among top sites

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**WORCESTER**— The TVT 92 carbon-fiber bicycle Greg LeMond rode to his third Tour de France win in 1990, a single-speed track bike ridden by Marshall “Major” Taylor at the turn of the century, the national and world championship jerseys of America’s best racers and many more bicycling artifacts could find a home in Worcester.

The U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame is searching for a new location and Worcester has been identified as one of the top five possible communities.

“From our perspective, we’re trying to see if there is a synergy with the city of Worcester,” said Bill Brunner, chairman of the Bicycling Hall of Fame Home Search Committee. “Certainly we need a bike-friendly community and Worcester seems to be one.”

A request-for-proposals has been sent to many communities across the country, and Worcester officials are reviewing the concept. Timothy McGourthy, Worcester economic development director, said he has had discussions with Hall of Fame officials.

“Obviously we’re enthusiastic about the possibility. It’s a large undertaking for anyone to do,” McGourthy said. The U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame was incorporated in 1986. A group of cycling enthusiasts in New Jersey in the 1980s wondered if there was a bicycling hall of fame in the United States and asked Rutgers University to do the research. After learning there was no such site, the hall of fame was initiated.



McGourthy

With a \$150,000 grant from the state of New Jersey, the hall of fame operated out of a back room at the First National Bank of New Jersey in Somerville before moving across the street to a storefront about two years later, according to U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame curator Vincent Menci. The hall inducted its first member, Fred “Pop” Kugler, a former racer and coach, in 1987, and began accumulating more cycling artifacts. The hall of fame moved to three other sites in Somerville over the years then found itself without a home about a year ago. The board of directors decided it would take its search for a new location nationwide.

“We took a step back and said, let’s look for a permanent facility, that is, if you will, the Cooperstown of Cycling,” Brunner said. “It’s opened up a tremendous opportunity. The long-term prospects are very good.” The hall of fame is looking for a facility with at least 15,000 square feet of space, for exhibition and office needs. The community must be bicycle friendly and accessible, with a nearby airport and interstate highways. All requirements that Brunner said Worcester can meet.

What could be the biggest hurdle for any community is funding. The hall of fame is looking for available funds to operate the facility. According to the RFP, the initial move and setup of the hall of fame is projected to cost \$200,000 and the preliminary budget for normal operations is anticipated at \$500,000 per year.

With a limited pool of funds for cultural opportunities, McGourthy said funding is the key since the project will take a “complete ground-up approach.” He said Worcester will have to look for corporate and public entities that could contribute.

“We’re trying to bring together people who might be in a position to make it happen,” McGourthy said. As the former home of Major Taylor, the “Worcester Whirlwind” who won the 1-mile world championship in 1899, Worcester has a bicycling heritage. A statue will be dedicated to Major Taylor at the Worcester Public Library next month. “It seems like a logical place,” Brunner said.

Worcester is among five communities that are top contenders. Another 10 locations have expressed interest. However, Brunner would not identify any of the other communities. The search committee would like to narrow the list of locations and step up firm discussions with a community within six months.

“We’re at the very beginning of the process,” said Brunner, a former racer who competed in several one-day Fitchburg races before the Fitchburg Longsjo Classic became a four-day stage race. “There are a few (locations) that stand out.”

Menci, 80, the 1945 New Jersey state champion who raced across the country in the 1940s, said the hall of fame has so much to show the public. Though some of the artifacts are on display in various exhibits across the country, including the Major Taylor display at the ADT Event Center Velodrome in Carson, Calif., he would like to see it all back together on display in one place.

“Every time I open that door and I see all the stuff we have in storage, it brings a tear to my eye,” Menci said. The hall of fame has the 7-Eleven team jersey of Andy Hampsten, the first American to win the Tour of Italy; three world championship jerseys of Sheila Young; one of the Tour de France jerseys of LeMond, the first American to win the Tour de France; the world championship jersey of track pursuit champ Rebecca Twigg; the steel bike ridden in 1914 by Alf Goulet, who won 15 six-day races, including eight at Madison Square Garden; a refurbished Caminade sprint bike ridden by Frank Kramer, who won the world championship in 1912, won 18 national championships and raced against Major Taylor; the Velo Sport bike of George Mount, who finished sixth on the road in the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, the first time an American finished in the top 10 of the event; and, of course, artifacts from seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, to name just a few.

According to officials, it will take a community effort to bring those and all the artifacts of the hall of fame to Worcester.

“I think it’s an exciting concept,” McGourthy said. “We have to look at how — no pun intended — the rubber hits the road.”