

Aug 5, 2013

## Atlanta Keeps Getting Better

by Holly Woolard

Give Atlanta credit for refusing to rest on its laurels as host of the 1996 Olympics. As any Atlanta spokesperson will tell you, the jewel of the South continues to reinvent itself every chance it gets. Next year is shaping up to be huge for Atlanta with the completion of three key downtown projects that are ideally suited to meeting attendees.

On Saturday, in conjunction with the opening of the 2013 ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition, the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau gave Smart Meetings a preview of what to expect next year.



For starters, the city will unveil 2.7 miles of streetcar track throughout downtown next spring. The return of streetcars for the first time since 1949 will provide visitors with "transportainment"—a cross of easily accessible transportation and the fun factor involved in moving about via the new, sleek streetcars.

Opening in the fall of 2014 will be the new College Football Hall of Fame. It's near the Georgia World Congress Center and Georgia Dome, giving the city three venues that create a meetings cluster. The Hall of Fame will feature a football field that can serve as event space and a 150-seat theater. Capacity will accommodate groups of up to 4,000. The nearby Omni Hotel at CNN Center will be the exclusive caterer.

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights, which will display many original documents produced by Atlanta native Martin Luther King Jr., will open next May. The center will be located near the Georgia Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola, offering another meetings cluster for planners to take advantage of.

The new streetcars will accent King's legacy since the tracks will transport riders from Centennial Olympic Park to the King Historic District.

And if your group is meeting in Atlanta this year, there's something new already in place: a 20-story Ferris wheel that opened two months ago. The Ferris wheel features 42 gondolas that can hold six people each. It offers sweeping views of Atlanta, showing off a city that is forever changing.

For more on Atlanta and the state of Georgia, look for the upcoming feature in the September issue of Smart Meetings magazine.

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