

Mauldin eyes benefit of nearby ICAR development

Baja car competition to bring hundreds to area

By Nathaniel Cary • Tribune-Times Writer • February 24, 2010

Just a few miles north of Mauldin sits an investment that could change the future of the city.

As Clemson's International Center for Automotive Research continues to develop, it's become a hotbed not just for cutting-edge businesses but for events that could spread financial glee to areas surrounding the research and technology park.

Now ICAR has been chosen as host site for an international automotive competition that will pit 100 teams from universities in Canada, Mexico, Brazil and the U.S. on off-road tracks with 10-horsepower open-wheel cars built from scratch in university workshops across the hemisphere.

It's the latest of a number of conferences and events that can infuse the area with tourism dollars while broadcasting ICAR and the Greenville area as an automotive and technology magnet.

Mauldin plans to ride ICAR's wave to further its own development.

Mauldin Mayor Don Godbey said Mauldin would be a "good neighbor" to ICAR which provides "international exposure" to ICAR, Mauldin and the Upstate.

"It's an opportunity to showcase some of the more positive aspects of living in the Upstate," Godbey said.

Baja SAE Carolina will be held April 8-11 at ICAR and will feature events to test each vehicle's power, acceleration, maneuverability and design followed by a four-hour endurance race that will pit all teams on a suspension-busting 1.5-mile course.

It's another chance for Greenville to showcase itself to the automotive world as an up-and-coming technology research center after Proterra, an electric bus maker, announced it would build a plant at CU-ICAR to employ 1,300 workers over the next seven years.

And more events could be on tap as ICAR's presence expands in the automotive industry.

"We will continue to focus more and more effort on bringing these kinds of events here," said Suzanne Dickerson, ICAR's manager for business development and marketing. "It's very valuable to the companies and the CU-ICAR partner network to have significant industry events taking place out here that they can just drive 15 minutes down the road to get to."
