

# Speed *To Market*

**M**artinsville-Henry County, Va., has undergone a complete work force transformation in the past decade. Once predominantly furniture, textiles and tobacco, this southern Virginia community has reinvented itself and successfully diversified its economy. It is now home to motorsports operations, plastics manufacturers, food processing facilities, logistics and warehousing operations, and more.

One thing has not changed, however. As textile and furniture companies have gone offshore, they have left behind a readily available skilled work force with a strong ingrained work ethic. Simply put, their loss is your gain.

This is also a community built on speed to market. Perhaps best known for its high-energy, heart-racing speedway, Martinsville-Henry County has a small town feel, but is close to metro areas. It offers a low cost of living, abundant utilities and plenty of diverse sites.





VIRGINIA

# Martinsville-Henry County

## How Can A Small Town Have So Much Going On?

By Lea Cole



Uptown Martinsville

**T**he energy in Martinsville-Henry County is out of control. Everywhere you look something is being built.

In Uptown Martinsville sits the shiny new Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH). With almost 90,000 square feet of exhibit space, visitors are awed at every turn whether by a 14 million-year-old whale or exploring the diverse Indian cultures of Virginia. Children get to experience the thrill of discovery as they work in a dig pit or hold snakes. Executive Director Tim Gette says the diverse turnout



Uptown Martinsville features a Saturday morning farmer's market popular for its organic food and acoustic music.

at Reptile Day showed the museum can be a major tourist attraction for Martinsville and Henry County.

If you want to see what it's like to be a paleontologist, the VMNH offers the opportunity to join its staff as they dig for fossil deposits of whales, sharks and crocodiles on the Virginia coastal plain.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Martinsville-Henry County has opened three new canoe access points on the Smith River. With more access points planned, new businesses have opened to offer canoe and kayak rentals.

For faster-paced sports, such as soccer, lacrosse or football, the Harvest Foundation has underwritten an \$8 million,

### Your Wallet's Best Friend

Martinsville-Henry County, Va., is:

- Centrally located on the East Coast
- Within 50 miles of Interstates 40, 77, 81 & 85
- 13 percent below the U.S. average cost of living
- 26 percent below the U.S. average cost of health care
- 28 percent below the U.S. average cost of construction
- Among the lowest in the nation for electric rates
- 3rd lowest in the nation for worker's compensation
- 5 percent sales and use tax
- In a right-to-work state with very little union presence

97-acre sports facility project that will include six athletic fields, some with lighting and some with synthetic turf. The facility will include boat docks and picnic sites. Dennis Toney, executive director of the Southern Virginia Recreation Facilities Authority, describes the vision of the facility as a "gold standard" sports park. "There will be bleachers, scoreboards and amenities that make this a first-class tournament or event location for the east coast," Toney says. By spring 2009, Toney plans to see this complex actively serving the local community.

Toney has his hands full orchestrating another comprehensive facility. Still in the planning stage, this 80,000-square-foot arena will fill an entire city block in Uptown Martinsville, housing a 5,000-seat arena that can host sporting events, graduations, concerts or conferences. Toney foresees that the arena will generate a significant flow of traffic on the Uptown streets and stimulate the growth of restaurants, hotels and shops. His goal is to attract conference business and maximize the potential of the arena.

Projects such as these require dedication. Martinsville-Henry County has adopted a slogan that explains its commitment: "We Love This Place!" You can understand why the local citizenry put so much energy into rebuilding the town about which they care so much.

### Major employers:

- Stanley Furniture
- StarTek
- American of Martinsville
- GSI Commerce
- Bassett Furniture Industries
- Springs Basic Bedding
- CP Films Inc.
- Hanes Brands Inc.
- VF Sportswear
- MasterBrand Cabinets
- West Window Corp.
- Knauss Snack Food Co.
- Nationwide Custom Homes

# Martinsville-Henry County

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## *A Revival, Rebirth, Make-It-Happen Vigor*



**Left: Patriot Centre Industrial Park offers graded sites in a variety of sizes.**

**Above: Pictured here is the Patriot Centre Shell Building, a 79,480 square-foot building that's expandable to 154,480 square-feet and positioned on a 20-acre site. Martinsville-Henry County also offers a virtual shell building that can be constructed in short order. It is 41,360 square feet and will be located in an established industrial park on 12 acres in the city of Martinsville.**

### Headed Toward Victory Lane

Anybody who knows Martinsville Speedway knows that it's the scrappiest, smartest drivers who win this bumper-car thriller. Maybe that's where this gutsy town gets its "can do" attitude. Community leaders have been prolific with high-impact "out of the box" visions for improving quality of life. Great ideas usually come with a price tag. In Martinsville-Henry County, a philanthropic organization known as the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont has supported the enormous energy aimed at the educational, cultural, environmental and physical well-being of the area. Created from the sale of the local hospital in 2002, the Harvest Foundation has more than \$200 million in assets and has granted funds for more than 100 community projects since August 2003.

The Harvest Foundation is a catalyst for dynamic growth and community improvements. From a \$4 million initiative to improve health and wellness programs to an environmental focus – protecting as well as creating recreational opportunities around local rivers and lakes, the foundation already has had a profound effect on local citizens in a variety of venues.

Perhaps the most powerful step forward was in the education arena. Embracing the creation of a regional four-year college in Martinsville-Henry County, the foundation issued a \$50 million challenge grant in January 2004 to encourage the state to charter and fund the institution. The New College Institute became a reality in Uptown Martinsville in the fall of 2006, offering seven degreed programs in its first year.

Every six months, Martinsville will once again be the destination for 70,000 NASCAR fans cheering their favorite driver on to the checkered flag. Martinsville-Henry County has every intention of being a winner. With a team like they've put together, victory lane is a sure thing.

all it what you will. Martinsville-Henry County is undertaking community development projects in every phase of the economy. It's not by chance. It's a strategic plan. While this may be the perfect place to raise a family, it also has a history as a community astute at building successful business. That's no fluke.

The Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. (EDC) is hard at work ensuring that the environment continues to be ripe for industrial as well as small business development. Existing industry experiences a day-to-day business relationship with the EDC that makes growing here easy and profitable. New business will discover an aggressive program that incorporates customized problem-solving and a responsive, we-can-do-that approach.

Companies that require an abundance of water are drawn to Martinsville-Henry County. Likewise they are aware of the area's history as a hard-working industrial community and low cost of operations. What they like when they get here is the friendly small-town atmosphere and the no-nonsense approach to making business happen.

Three publicly owned parks offer a wide range of real estate opportunities. A pristine Class A park, the Patriot Centre features lots with graded pads ranging from nine to 18 acres. On one 20-acre lot, a newly constructed (and expandable) 79,480-square-foot shell building with 30-foot ceiling height is available and ready to be outfitted. In addition, approximately 1,200 acres are planned to be developed in this park.

Within the city, Clearview Business Park features four graded lots, a new high-end 70,000-square-foot building ready to be occupied and a 41,000-square-foot virtual shell building that can be constructed without delay.

For sizeable projects that utilize rail, there are more than 621 cleared acres on the Virginia/North Carolina state line with easy access to Piedmont Triad International Airport and Interstate 40. In all likelihood, there is a property in Martinsville-Henry County that fits your particular needs. ■

### New Ideas@New College Institute

- Offers 13 programs from eight different Virginia colleges
- Provides master's programs in business and education
- Offers bachelor's degree in high-demand programs
- Criminal justice
- Education
- Nursing
- Business
- Offers bachelor's degree in niche programs
- Motorsports technology
- Industrial technology
- Reinforces affordability & importance of college education for community
- Increases the number area residents who go on to obtain college degrees



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# Martinsville-Henry County

## *The Right Location for Motorsports*

By Trisha Ostrowski



# M

artinsville-Henry County's connection with auto racing runs deep. Since 1948, when the Martinsville Speedway opened, the community has supported and sustained racing facilities at all levels.

Today, Martinsville-Henry County has the resources to support a major motorsports cluster. Already the community has attracted firms such as Arrington Manufacturing, HT Motorsports, Custom Camshaft, and Darrell Cox Racing. It is fast becoming a preferred location for engine builders, component makers, race car teams and other businesses in the fast-growing motorsports world.

### The area's many assets include:

- **Proximity to testing tracks:** The area offers varied racing venues, including the local Martinsville Speedway and regional South Boston Speedway and Virginia International Raceway. Companies can use these tracks to test their cars and equipment.
- **A trained work force:** Patrick Henry Community College Motorsports Techno-



**Pictured here is car number 73, sponsored by the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation. Students from Patrick Henry Community College participate in all parts of maintaining the car.**



**Motorsports companies that located in Martinsville-Henry County have easy access to the Martinsville Speedway to test their cars and components.**

### Martinsville Speedway

Twice a year, the drivers of NASCAR's Nextel Cup Series converge on Martinsville Speedway, the shortest track on the circuit. In 2007, the track celebrates its 60th anniversary making it one of the oldest and perhaps most famous short tracks in existence.

Its 60 years have seen amazing growth. The Speedway has emerged from its early years as a dirt track to become a state-of-the-art facility. Race weekends attract 70,000 fans and contribute millions to the local economy.

With its popularity and staying power, it's hard to measure what the Speedway means to the Martinsville-Henry County community. Clearly, it creates jobs, increases tourism, and brings international attention, but, because of the corporate citizenship of its owners, the presence of the Speedway also adds to the quality of life in Martinsville-Henry County. The Speedway is the venue for the community's annual July 4th celebration and several other events. In addition, the Speedway Children's Foundation works to improve the lives of children in Martinsville-Henry County.

logies Program (PHCC Motorsports) prepares students to work in all areas of motorsports technology, including engine construction. In partnership with local companies, Arrington Manufacturing, which builds race engines and conducts R&D for the Dodge motorsports program, and HT Motorsports, which operates Toyota trucks in the Craftsman Truck Series, students of PHCC Motorsports design and build vehicles that run on race day. Meanwhile, the New College Institute in Martinsville offers a bachelor's degree in motorsports technology.

- **Virginia Motorsports Technology Center (VMTC):** This 50,000-square-foot facility houses the HT Motorsports race team as well as state-of-the-art work stations and equipment. Students enrolled in PHCC Motorsports program develop and maintain their race and show cars in this facility.

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Race day at Martinsville Speedway



## The Grease Monkey is History

Just a few minutes of watching an ESPN broadcast of a Sunday afternoon Nextel Cup race and you know that there are some serious electronics involved and engineering to the giga-degree.

Lou LaRosa, whose engine expertise helped Dale Earnhardt win four NASCAR championships, now serves as the mentor for Martinsville-Henry County's Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) motorsports students in the engine program. LaRosa points out that the industry has evolved substantially and that it takes a new kind of graduate to get a high-paying motorsports job. "An entry-level job in the engine room might pay \$35,000 to \$40,000 and you move up to \$80,000," explains LaRosa. "However, there's more emphasis on the engineering side of the sport now and you have to be really good to get a job."

The PHCC students certainly have landed some great jobs. Kroyer Racing in Las Vegas has employed several PHCC graduates. Dropping a few other well-known names, Roush Fenway Racing and Kevin Harvick Racing both hired from the PHCC motorsports program.

LaRosa is excited about the addition of the motorsports engineering bachelor's degree program at New College Institute (NCI). "Now the program has moved beyond vocational training and offers a complete package to a high-tech industry," he explains. Less than one hour away, students can go on to get their master's degrees through Old Dominion University at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research.

With 63 graduates and 140 currently enrolled, Jeff Fields, dean of applied science and engineering at PHCC, says one reason enrollment was climbing in the community college program was the bachelor degree opportunity now available through NCI. "Parents like it," he says. "We're also offering dual enrollment at the high school level so interest builds earlier." Fields elaborated about the unique experience the PHCC student can expect: "When a student graduates from our program, he or she can anticipate over 200 hours of hands-on work, which doesn't even include the time spent in our new pit crew class. They will have the opportunity to build and race a car as well as intern in a high-performance engine shop or on a variety of race teams. I'm not aware of any other program where this type of experience is available."



## High-tech Seafood

### Martinsville-Henry County Attracts Innovative Aquaculture Facility

Blue Ridge Aquaculture has been on the cutting edge in the agriculture/food industry since its inception in 1993. The largest sustainable indoor fishery in the world, it is also one of the largest tilapia producers in the U.S. The tilapia are bred, born and grown in controlled environments. This is an organic product, eliminating the use of growth hormones, pesticides, antibiotics or synthetic chemicals.

Currently, 75,000 pounds of tilapia are shipped live each week from Martinsville-Henry County to markets in the Northeast. The goal is to expand tilapia production to 40 million pounds per year, making fresh fish available locally year-round.

As an outgrowth of the tilapia business, Blue Ridge Aquaculture has built a 30,000-square-foot building dedicated to indoor shrimp production. Researchers from Virginia Tech will undertake a USDA-funded study to evaluate technology, management practices and distribution channels for shrimp. They will also determine the space needed to increase production to 35 million pounds of shrimp per year.

We could produce more seafood right here in Martinsville and Henry County than everywhere else in the US combined," said Bill Martin, president of Blue Ridge Aquaculture. Martin estimates that currently 50 percent of the seafood consumed in the US is from China, which could pose a health risk.

An estimated 98 percent of shrimp are now caught by dragging the ocean floor, a practice that has recently been criticized by the Bush Administration. The indoor recirculated aqua plant is "100 percent the future," Martin said of the protected environment.



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# Martinsville-Henry County

## Martinsville-Henry County's Recipe for Success in Food Processing and Manufacturing

- Low cost of doing business and skilled work force
- Excess water and sewer capacity with 7 million gallons per day of available water and 3 million gallons per day of available sewer
- A multitude of available sites
- Reduced cost of product transportation due to its central location

### A Success Story

Knauss Snack Food, a subsidiary of American Foods Group, is the world's largest producer of naturally cured dried beef. The company was originally headquartered in Quakertown, Pa. and the community had overburdened water and sewer utilities. The Quakertown area has had overburdened water and sewer utilities. When Knauss applied for a variance to expand its existing location, the local township turned it down and the company was forced to find a new home. In 2002, the company chose Martinsville-Henry County, Va.

Knauss built a new 100,000-square-foot plant at the Patriot Centre, a 1,000-acre industrial park. The local and state authorities took steps to sweeten the deal, including a discount on land and grants to help with startup costs. The company also took advantage of additional tax credits for locating in an enterprise zone. The new site helped the company experience about a 13 percent reduction in distribution and freight cost compared to Pennsylvania. And the quality of life, that was a bonus.

• **Virginia Institute for Performance Engineering and Research (VIPER):** VIPER unites the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research with Virginia Tech's Advanced Vehicle Dynamics Laboratory. Located only 30 minutes from Martinsville-Henry County, VIPER offers classes producing highly skilled individuals sought after by the motorsports industry. It provides an invaluable resource for automakers, manufacturers and motorsports teams as a site for testing, simulation and research. At the center of its research testing capabilities is the state-of-the-art

seven post vehicle dynamics rig providing race track analysis in a controlled laboratory environment.

• **Virginia's Motorsports Alley:** This regional effort is leveraging motorsports assets in a regional package, maximizing national and international exposure and making the Alley a destination for motor-sports industry. Please visit [www.motorsportsalley.com](http://www.motorsportsalley.com). ■

### Google Heaven

Ask Jay Edelen why his company was bursting at the seams for a new building and he would say "Google!" Well, there's more to it than that, but the fact is that Jay has an excellent marketing team and a commitment to providing a "fresh" product. So what does he sell?

**Knobs.** Every kind imaginable. Jay's family has been in the cabinet hardware business since 1923, but when the furniture industry took a nosedive, Jay decided he would experiment with the internet. [Coolknobsandpulls.com](http://Coolknobsandpulls.com) has exceeded all his expectations and grown into one of the top online cabinet hardware specialists in the US.

Edelen recently moved into a new 29,000-square-foot building and is delighted with his increase in productivity. "If you're on the East Coast, you'll get your order within two days," he said. "In addition to our central location for shipping, Martinsville provides low operating costs giving me a competitive advantage over other internet distributors."

Edelen has also launched a website called [coolcasters.com](http://coolcasters.com) which offers a multitude of colorful skate wheels for chair casters. Edelen says that he

believes he is "in the right place at the right time for that product."

Edelen has already determined he can quadruple the size of his building. In fact, he's counting on it.

### Get It There Fast

For logistics and warehousing companies, Martinsville-Henry County provides outstanding location and infrastructure advantages:

- Nearly 60 percent of the U.S. population and manufacturing base are within 650 miles
- Close to major metro areas of Greensboro, NC and Roanoke, VA
- Two major airports within 50 miles and a regional, executive airport located in Henry County
- Interstates 40, 77, 81, and 85 are within 50 miles (accessible by four-lane connectors) and proposed Interstate 73 would be directly accessible from Martinsville-Henry County



# Martinsville-Henry County

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## A First-Hand Look at Martinsville-Henry County

By Trisha Ostrowski

**A**s a southerner, I have a rather embarrassing confession—I am a NASCAR novice. I know very little about the sport, and worse than that, I don't like to drive more than about 60 mph on the interstate.

No doubt, racing is hot in Martinsville-Henry County. After all, Martinsville Speedway has been largely responsible for putting this community on the map, but I am living proof that you don't have to be a NASCAR fan to be thoroughly impressed by Martinsville-Henry County.

To research this section, an SB&D colleague and I spent two days on a whirlwind tour. The team at the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. (the EDC) packed our schedules and showed us the "best of Martinsville."

I have worked extensively with the EDC over the past several years, and time and again have watched this organization

excel when it comes to delivering information. The EDC is serious about service not only for new companies, but also for existing ones and small businesses, too.

What I observed firsthand is that Martinsville-Henry County is so much more than you would expect from a community its size (population around 73,000).

Sure, it's still a place of small-town values and a slower pace. The sense of community that's so elusive in today's world is alive and well there. People pass on the street and greet each other by name. There's never a traffic jam and you can get anywhere you want to go in 10 minutes. The beautiful, classic homes there are about a third of the price of many metro areas. It's the kind of place where you would want to raise a family.

It also has big-city events and opportunities, such as first-rate schools, quality health care, abundant recreational and cultural amenities, and a thriving Uptown (Martinsville's own version of a "down-



Southern Business & Development's Shelly Jo Jacobs and Trisha Ostrowski pose with the pace car after doing a few high-speed laps around the track at the Martinsville Speedway.

town"). Situated in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and with abundant green spaces, Martinsville-Henry County is a beautiful place to live and go to work.

In building its economy, Martinsville-Henry County is one of the South's great comeback stories. A decade or so ago, the area lost thousands of jobs to global outsourcing. Today, with a new spirit and a positive attitude, Martinsville-Henry County leaders are focused on rebuilding and creating quality jobs. What's happening there is a team effort. It's not being driven by one or two people, but rather is a community-wide approach. All of this adds up to a pro-active economic development program with tons of sites and very aggressive incentives. ■

## More to the Story By Shelly Jacobs

**A**s a new hire at Southern Business & Development magazine, I was sent to Martinsville-Henry County, Va. I was met there by a long-time SB & D reporter and we were taken over the next two and a half days to sites of interest by Crystal France, marketing director for the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation.

Somewhere into the second day of our tour, I asked Crystal whether there was land available to buy and if so, for how much? You see, for years I have had a dream of owning 25 to 30 acres of partially wooded, partially cleared land with some kind of water on the property. I have dragged friends and family to parcels in various states over the years. For many different reasons, the dream has remained unfulfilled, but my hopes have again risen after seeing what I saw in Martinsville-Henry County.

The area has beautiful topography with good variations of hills and flats, woods, streams, lakes, quaint older neighborhoods, parks, golf courses, winding country roads and super highways. You can tell that it was once a grander place than it is now, but to

me, that is part of the charm and the allure. It is a community on the path of new greatness and it has already made major steps in that direction.

It has the big-box stores that we have come to rely on for our basic needs of home goods, food and clothing, as well as small local retailers that add charm and variety. So it meets the most basic needs of daily living, but to me it goes well beyond that.

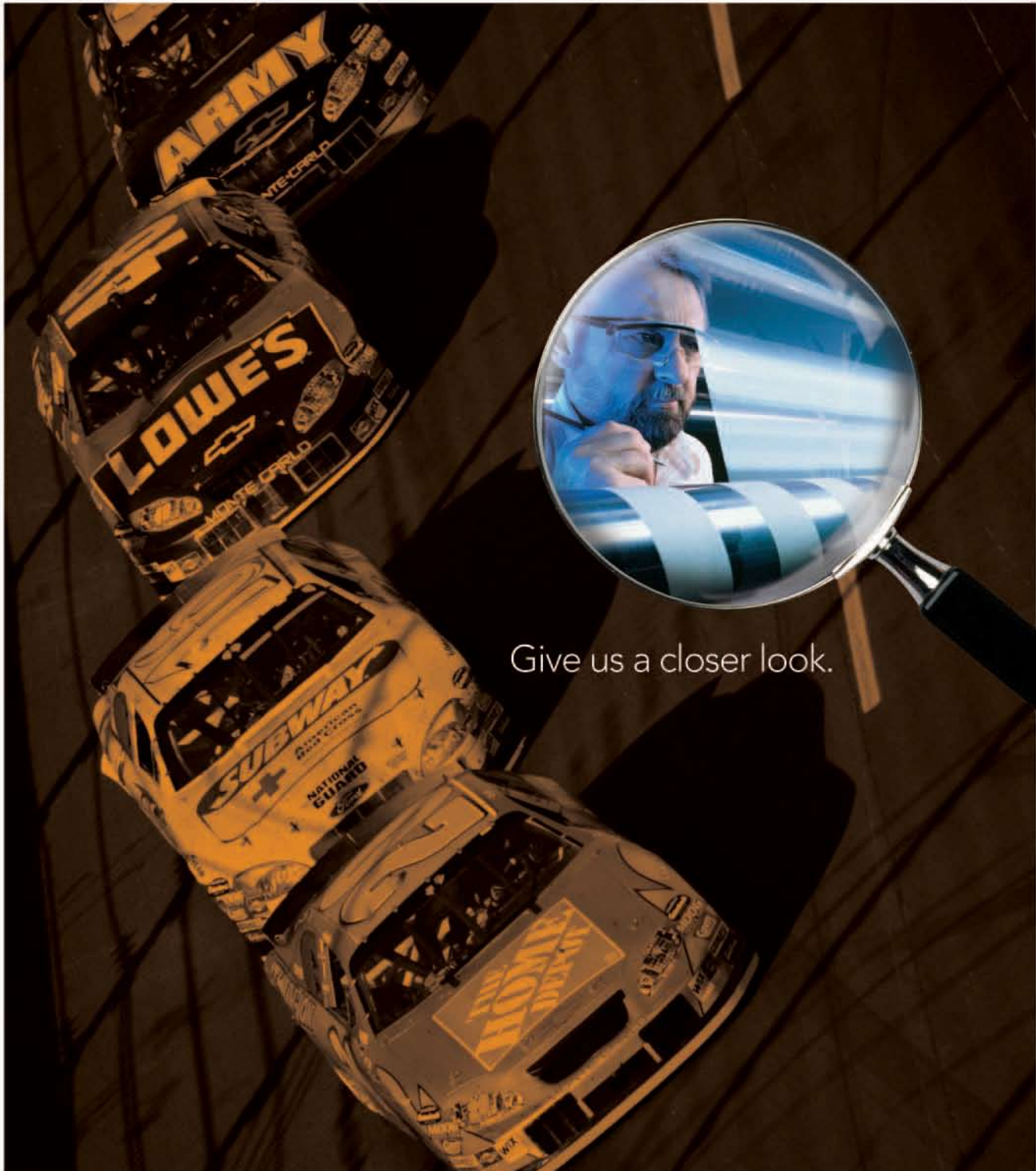
As a creative person, I was impressed with the programs that are in place to foster the arts and culture. That is a major requirement in my land search. A strong cultural class adds a lot to a community. From what I saw of Martinsville-Henry County, they have one and that means plays, concerts, art-classes for adults and children, and all the good stuff that makes leisure time more enjoyable.

You can't talk about the area without mention of the speedway, too. It is a huge draw to the area for outsiders at certain times of the year. It provides a stream of revenue that runs wide and deep into the community, bringing the obvious financial benefits. Yet it also goes beyond that. When it's

not in use for high-speed races drawing fans from all over the world, it is a venue for all sorts of other local community events, such as a July 4th celebration.

That is another requirement in my book: people coming together in the community. Not just for simple camaraderie, such as in attending the races, fireworks, local farmers market, baseball games and the like, but also in coming together to perform good works for the area. A good example besides the free fireworks show is the program set up by a local doctor who has taken an interest in the fish population in the Smith River. He is funding a program that is being carried out in the schools to foster fish for restocking the river. There seems to be a good level of that kind of thing there—people who care about making Martinsville-Henry County a better place, which always makes for nicer living.

So, between the cultural programs and facilities, the natural beauty of the area, the possibilities for hiking, fossil hunts, lake or river trips and the general buzz in the air that change is happening, Martinsville-Henry County might just be the place where my dream of owning land finally becomes reality.



Give us a closer look.

You know us for our NASCAR track. Did you know we're also home to industry, technology, and furniture? Our low cost of doing business, skilled workforce, and close proximity to nearly 60% of the U.S.'s population make us an attractive location for your business. No matter what industry that you're in, look at Martinsville-Henry County Virginia. Call us today at 276.403.5940 or visit us at [www.YesMartinsville.com](http://www.YesMartinsville.com) for more information.

  
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HENRY COUNTY VIRGINIA  
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