

# Motorsports Mecca

**"NO OTHER STATE IN THE NATION** can lay claim to the long, rich heritage which motorsports has in North Carolina," say the authors of a study prepared for the North Carolina Motorsports Association. For over 80 years, Charlotte has been the heart of motorsports in the South. Long before there was NASCAR, Charlotte racing fans watched open wheel cars race around a "plank" oval track on the southwest side of the city. In 1949, the first officially sanctioned NASCAR race was held at the former Charlotte Speedway located near the current Charlotte airport. Today, Charlotte is not only home to Charlotte Motor Speedway, one of racing's premiere venues, but the city is also the hub of a cluster of motorsports-related companies, NASCAR, NHRA, Formula One and American Le Mans teams, motorsports media, and racing technology education that is unduplicated. Charlotte understands that racing is serious business.

## Racing's Headquarters

The Charlotte area is home to NASCAR's heroes. Approximately 88 percent of the Sprint Cup teams, 72

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percent of Nationwide Series teams and 55 percent of Camping World Truck Series teams call North Carolina home — and most of those are in the Charlotte area. According to the N.C. Motorsports Association, 73 percent of the state's motorsports jobs are located in and around Charlotte. Drivers, pit crews, team owners and many corporate sponsors live and work within a 40 mile radius of Charlotte.

According to a 2007 study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, more than 450 motorsports and automotive related companies are based near Charlotte. This unique industry cluster includes research and development facilities, high tech race shops and engineering labs as well as fabricators, specialty parts suppliers, sports marketing firms and art galleries. The Speed Channel and NASCAR Images, both major production companies dedicated to motorsports, are based in Charlotte. ESPN and SiriusXM Radio also maintain broadcast facilities in Charlotte to support their coverage of the motorsports industry. The weekly series, Inside NASCAR on Showtime, is also filmed in Charlotte at the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

National Speed Sport News and several Sporting News publications covering NASCAR are also based in Charlotte. Racing businesses gravitate to Charlotte because proximity to the teams and to each other reduces the



cost of doing business. Many race-related businesses that move to Charlotte cite the presence of this racing cluster as a major factor.

A 2004 study conducted by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute revealed that the motorsports industry created a total economic impact in North Carolina of over \$5 billion. That includes the direct, indirect and induced impacts of auto, truck, boat and motorcycle racing in the state. According to the study, about \$4 billion of that total amount impacted the Charlotte area alone, creating over 18,000 motorsports-related jobs. The average compensation for direct motorsports generated jobs was over \$70,000 per year.

## Racing's Innovations

Technology is the backbone of today's motorsports industry. Charlotte has steadily invested in racing technology, creating an infrastructure difficult to replicate anywhere else. According to the MIT motorsports study, the clustering of racing technology around Charlotte means that there is an ongoing flow and exchange of ideas through interactions with suppliers, informal meetings at lunch and through the movement of personnel from one organization to the next. This flow fuels the innovation process. As an industry executive put it: "We would not have a path to all the information if we were isolated; that's why we moved here."

# CHARLOTTE



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## MOTORSPORTS CREATES OVER 18,000 JOBS IN THE CHARLOTTE REGION.

NASCAR operates a \$10+ million, 61,000-square-foot research and development center beside the Concord Regional Airport, 16 miles from downtown Charlotte. The facility is home to directors of all three national series, rules officials and accident investigators. It's a combination machine shop, warehouse and laboratory. And it's where the future of stock-car racing is being formulated every day. Manufacturers bring parts and car components to the facility for testing and review and ultimately approval for use in competition.

NASCAR engineers have at their disposal a fabrication shop, machine shop, powertrain lab and engine room, fluid dynamics lab and restrictor-plate room. An engine dynamometer helps NASCAR engineers determine with more accuracy performance throughout the power band of the engine, rather than just peak horsepower. Recent research at the facility involves measuring the performance of seat design under loads. Constant testing and development is concentrated on the safety of the vehicle and the driver compartment. Vehicles that undergo a violet crash are brought back to the facility for analysis. In addition, engineers are busy researching ways to improve SAFER barriers, doing low-speed crash testing and analysis on an energy management. The researchers are always looking for new



and improved ways to increase safety and competition, but within a reasonable cost. The objectives of NASCAR's research and development program are "safety, competition and cost containment."

In downtown Charlotte, NASCAR has a new office tower adjacent to the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Key corporate staff, including marketing and legal departments, is housed in the building. NASCAR Images is also housed in the tower. The Hall of Fame honors the history of the sport with state-of-the-art fan-friendly interactive displays and multi-media presentations.

Several private sector research facilities in the Charlotte area provide additional innovations within the industry. The AeroDyn Wind Tunnel in Mooresville, N.C. was built in 2003, and a second facility, the A2 Wind Tunnel, designed for teams below the Cup series level is also available.

The Windshear, Inc. wind tunnel in Concord, N.C. offers a 180 mph rolling road, making it one of the world's most advanced racing wind tunnels.

Toyota Racing Development operates a 35,000-square-foot facility near Salisbury, N.C. Toyota's NASCAR competition group and chassis engineering operations are based here. These rare, highly specialized facilities also bring corporate customers from around the country.

Over 400 suppliers of products and services to the motorsports industry are located in the Charlotte region. From long time players in the industry such as Holman Moody, BSR, CV Products and Simpson Race Products to newer companies such as Stock Car Steel, Brembo North America, Joe Gibbs Driven, PBI Performance Products and EGR Performance Brakes, virtually every component can be sourced locally.

## Motorsports Education

A highly skilled workforce is required to meet racing's high tech needs. Charlotte delivers that expertise through numerous local engineering, technical and management programs especially developed to support and extend the motorsports industry.

The NASCAR Technical Institute in Mooresville trains 1,900 students on its 19-acre, 146,000-square-foot, \$12 million campus. NTI is America's first technical training school to combine a complete automotive and NASCAR-specific motorsports

technology program NTI was developed as a cooperative effort by NASCAR and Universal Technical Institutes (UTI), the largest education company of its kind in the United States. The goal is to address the ongoing shortage of professional automotive technicians. Some of the graduates of NTI will find positions in the motorsports industry in the Charlotte area.

UNC Charlotte's motorsports and automotive engineering program has over 100 students. The school has a dedicated 5,000-square-foot facility at the state-of-the-art Charlotte Research Institute where students have access to the major tools of the motorsports industry. A larger 15,000-square-foot facility is planned adjacent to the current facility. Architectural design is underway with construction slated to begin in 2012. One of the newest additions to the program is a water tunnel for aerodynamics and fluid dynamics testing. It is the fifth largest water tunnel in the U.S. In addition, the College of Engineering also has access to the labs and equipment of a number of the top tier race shops around Charlotte.

Belmont Abbey College, located just minutes from downtown Charlotte in Belmont, N.C., offers a MotorSports Management degree program. The Abbey is committed to developing students as future leaders who can further develop the future of motorsports by earning a bachelor's degree in Business Management with a concentration in Motorsports Management. The four-year degree, designed with a specific focus on the business and management side of the racing industry, is the first of its kind in the country.

Central Piedmont Community College offers a certificate program in motorsports technology that focuses on the production side of the industry. Students in the program will receive hands-on training in the areas of fabrication, welding,

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assembling, painting and decaling. The program is taught at the North Campus of the College in Huntersville giving it close access to the majority of the area's race teams.

## Paradise for Race Fans

Motorsports businesses and racing fans have something in common — they feel welcome in Charlotte. Racing fans help to keep the area's hospitality and tourism industry out in front. Ninety percent of the conventions that come to Charlotte choose racing for their theme.

When Charlotte Motor Speedway is full of fans, it becomes the fifth largest city in the state. Charlotte Motor Speedway attracts approximately 1.25 million visitors each year. The track has seating for 167,000 guests, including 113 luxury suites and holds an additional 40,000 fans in the infield area. It is the largest sports facility in the Southeast. The NASCAR Sprint All-Star Race, the Coca Cola 600, the Bank of America 500, the Charlotte 300, the Dollar General 300 and N.C. Education Lottery 200 are major events at the speedway showcasing the Cup, Nationwide and Truck series teams. In addition, a full schedule of Bandoleros, Thunder Roadsters and Legends cars (all made in the Charlotte area by 600 Racing Inc.) are the providing ground for racing's next generation of heroes. Sprint cars, late models and monster trucks sling mud at The Dirt Track at Charlotte Motor Speedway with the premiere event being the Advance Auto Parts World of Outlaws competition.

The ZMax Dragway at Charlotte Motor Speedway hosts the NHRA 4-Wide Nationals and the O'Reilly Auto Parts NHRA Nationals. The Dragway, opened in 2008, is the world's premiere drag racing facility seating 30,000 fans with room to expand to 60,000 seats. The



34,000-square-foot starting-line tower includes 11 luxury suites and an additional 17 on top of the John Force Grandstands.

Race fans come to Charlotte for its unique combination of race team density, live racing events and in-person opportunities like the Richard Petty Driving Experience, NASCAR Racing Experience, Dale Jarrett Racing Adventure, Buck Baker Driving School, Mario Andretti Racing Experience, Legends Car Driving School, Endurance Karting School and Andy Hillenburg's Fast Track High Performance Driving School. Charlotte has race shop tours, museums, "shrines," shops plus art galleries, whole-family attractions like the NASCAR Speedpark and race-themed restaurants and night spots such as Dale Earnhardt Jr's Whiskey River, that operate continuously and promise a whole vacation's worth of activity packed into one place.

Several race-themed events are hosted in the area including KartFest, GT Machine Grand Nationals and other Charlotte based World Karting Association events. During race week in May, the 600 Festival presents the Food Lion Speed Street event in downtown Charlotte that attracts over 400,000 visitors. The Food Lion Auto Fair held in the spring and fall at Charlotte Motor Speedway are two of the nation's largest car shows and bring in thousands of car enthusiasts. New in 2010, Carolina Christmas, a 2.5 mile drive-through Christmas light park and village located on the track and infield of the superspeedway adds an additional dimension to the track. With over one million lights, skating rink, Bethlehem Village and Festival of Trees the event is one of the largest holiday attractions in the country.



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