

Charlotte Business Journal - January 25, 2007

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## CHARLOTTE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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# NASCAR Hall of Fame ready to roll

Charlotte Business Journal - January 25, 2007

by [Erik Spanberg](#)

Senior Staff Writer

Political and business leaders joined NASCAR stars past and present to break ground Thursday on the \$154.5 million NASCAR Hall of Fame.

"What a day for Charlotte and the Carolinas," Mayor Pat McCrory told an audience filled with media, local boosters and a few dozen NASCAR fans scattered at the back of a tent erected for the ceremony. "It is just unbelievable. It is something we should all be proud of."

The groundbreaking ceremony included NASCAR luminaries Richard Petty, Junior Johnson, Buddy Baker and Ned Jarrett, among others. It was staged on a sunny, blustery afternoon at the site of the museum uptown, adjacent to the Charlotte Convention Center. The hall of fame is scheduled to open in late-2009 or early-2010.

A 100,000-square-foot convention center expansion and a 19-story, 390,000-square-foot office tower developed by Lauth Property Group are also part of the project.

The hall of fame will feature 40,000 square feet of exhibit space, a retail store and restaurant, TV and radio studios and an area honoring NASCAR drivers and other major contributors to stock-car racing.

McCrory and others who supported the publicly funded development touted the hall as a crucial ingredient for jump-starting the region's tourism industry.

A study commissioned by supporters estimates the hall of fame's annual economic impact at \$62 million.

The city will own the hall of fame, with the publicly funded tourism authority operating the venue. Pei, Cobb & Freed is the lead architect, with Ralph Appelbaum Associates serving as lead exhibit designer. BE&K Building Group is the construction manager and Turner Thompson Davis the lead contractor.

Members of City Council, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority and representatives from Wachovia Corp. and Bank of America Corp. joined the mayor on the main stage for the ceremonies. They were flanked by a Richard Petty No. 43 STP racecar on one side and Dale

**Earnhardt's iconic black No. 3 Chevrolet on the other. Petty and Earnhardt each won a record seven NASCAR season championship titles.**

**Drivers and team owners believe the construction of the sport's first NASCAR-recognized hall of fame marks yet another step in NASCAR's march toward mainstream acceptance beyond its rural Southern roots.**

**"It's just cool to see our sport on par with the NFL and NBA and baseball," said Kyle Petty, a current driver and team operator who attended Thursday's groundbreaking. "Our sport has aspired to be on that level."**

**Longtime NASCAR radio broadcaster Winston Kelley, hired last summer to serve as the hall of fame's executive director, recalled the joy of landing an autograph from Richard Petty as a 9-year-old attending a NASCAR race. Forty years later, Kelley still has that autographed photo and keeps it displayed in his office.**

**"It's about the fan," Kelley said. "It's about the customer. We'll never forget that."**

*Contact media and sports business reporter Erik Spanberg at [espanberg@bizjournals.com](mailto:espanberg@bizjournals.com) or (704) 973-1116.*

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