



the **harvest** foundation

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The Harvest Foundation supports \$1.56 million initiative to catalyze Martinsville/Henry County, Virginia into a healthier community.

The Harvest Foundation and BikeWalk Virginia today announced an innovative three-year initiative designed to improve the quality of life and economic vitality in Martinsville/Henry County Virginia. The \$1.56-million initiative represents the largest investment by a foundation for this type of program, and it will begin to transform this southern Virginia community into a place with 'complete streets' that encourages and supports a livable, healthy, and sustainable community.

Complete Streets, a growing national movement, is the concept of planning, designing and building the necessary infrastructure that provides safer mobility and access to destinations, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. It also begins to address the fundamental challenges of placemaking and how communities might be able to support comprehensive planning and policy development that is aligned with cultivating choices for people to be active. It is expected that this initiative will catalyze the necessary policies, programs, and infrastructure to promote high levels of walking and bicycling, and as a result create a unique national model for how a community improves its economic vitality through transportation investment that emphasize better health outcomes.

"We know from experience that Virginians are yearning for communities where walking and bicycling is safe, inviting, and fun – and that such places are healthier, cleaner, greener, and more attractive to families, businesses, and tourists." says Allen Turnbull, Executive Director of BikeWalk Virginia. "We're excited to be helping Martinsville/Henry County blaze a new path to prosperity through this initiative."

BikeWalk Virginia will partner with several local and national organizations to re-engineer the community into a place where bicycling and walking are deeply valued and integral features of a vibrant and healthy life in the region. **The National Complete Streets Coalition** will cultivate a planning process that ensures future road investments create streets that are safe and inviting for everyone – young to old – and all abilities, whether walking, bicycling or in an automobile. **The Safe Routes to School National Partnership** will assist in

reviving the bygone behavior of the walk to school for thousands of students. **The League of American Bicyclists** will develop a process that teaches children and adults safe bicycling skills, and provides the support they need to ride for fun and fitness. **The University of North Carolina** will be collaborating with **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** on developing a comprehensive evaluation component that will help to inform other communities how to implement the successes and opportunities realized by this program.

"This proposal represents a new direction in philanthropic support - transportation investment. It also emphasizes how foundations begin to support strategies that stimulate community change at multiple levels," says Richard Killingsworth, Executive Director of the Harvest Foundation. "We have an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that our investment helps revitalize our public spaces and creates a uniquely attractive, vibrant and healthy place that speaks to our vision of Martinsville/Henry County becoming a community of choice."

"I know this project will affect the lives of thousands of people in our community – and will help draw visitors who will see something unique in Martinsville. This is another step towards revitalizing our community making it an even better place for people to live, work and play. It is conscientious and thoughtful approach of connecting Martinsville's public spaces while investing in the health of our community's best asset --- it's citizens." says Mayor Kimble Reynolds.

Martinsville and Henry County are making critical investments in a variety of land use, economic development, street design, public space, and transportation programs. Through extensive collaboration and partnering the city and county hope to revitalize this region into a place that addresses the core needs of its residents and people looking to visit or move there soon. This initiative adds to this work by undertaking a challenge of creating a living legacy project that offers solutions that will restore hope and pride to this amazing region.

"This initiative will bring tremendous national resources to our doorstep in pursuit of a far-reaching vision that will help our community thrive." says Henry County Administrator Benny Summerlin.

This funding will significantly leverage how public space is created so that the design of it, such as streets, will over time, transform places into desirable destinations and ultimately have them attract people to Martinsville/Henry County, so they can experience why this place among many others is truly a "community of choice" that values the way it is designed to influence positive health outcomes.

BikeWalk Virginia is a not-for-profit corporation with a mission to create a safer Virginia, where Virginians practice safe biking and walking and enjoy "complete streets;" a cleaner Virginia that is less reliant on motorized transport and where greenspaces are preserved for generations to come; a healthier Virginia with communities designed for active living and increased recreational opportunities, where children are able to walk or bike safely to school; and a wealthier Virginia which benefits from reduced transportation and medical costs as well as enhanced tourism.

The Harvest Foundation supports health, education, and welfare initiatives that serve our vision of cultivating Martinsville and Henry County, Virginia as a "community of choice." The Harvest Foundation was established in 2002 from the sale of Memorial Hospital. For more information visit www.theharvestfoundation.org

For additional information:

- BikeWalk Virginia: www.bikevirginia.org
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