

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

October 2010

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)
Canceled

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)
October 13, 2010
RPCGB Office
1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPCGB Board of Directors Meeting](#)
Canceled

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)
Canceled

[Public Involvement Meeting](#)
October 20, 2010
RPCGB Office
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)
October 27, 2010
RPCGB Office

Letter from the Executive Director

On September 24th, I had the pleasure of participating in the highly-anticipated unveiling of the regional strategic economic development plan, Blueprint Birmingham. The success of the unveiling was heartwarming. It confirmed my belief that our leaders and residents really do care, and that they are still willing to work together on projects and initiatives that benefit the region. On a more personal level, the unveiling represented the fulfillment of a wish from many years ago.



In the early 1970's, I was a nerdy pre-teen growing up in the shadow of Rickwood Field. And, like most nerds, I read a lot. In addition to maps and standard kids' fare such as *The Weekly Reader* and *Boys Life*, I had a strong interest in books of facts and trivia. For hours, I would pour over the latest *World Almanac* or my family's new set of *1972 World Book Encyclopedias*. With the encyclopedias, I frequently compared the profile of Birmingham to other cities, particularly Atlanta. In the history section of the Atlanta profile, I remember reading about the Forward Atlanta marketing campaigns of 1925 and 1961. I learned that the 1961 campaign alone was credited with bringing hundreds of new companies, thousands of new jobs, and over 300,000 new residents to the region by 1970. I was impressed, and I often wished that someday, Birmingham would have its own version of Forward Atlanta. Well, after nearly forty years, that wish could be fulfilled through Blueprint Birmingham. In fact, we may get an even better deal than I had hoped for.

Forward Atlanta was conceived and implemented by a handful of prominent Atlanta businessmen and elected officials. Blueprint Birmingham was created with the input of several thousand Greater Birmingham residents. And befittingly, Blueprint can only be implemented with the help of many more individuals and entities across the region. Whereas marketing made up the bulk of the Forward Atlanta initiative, it will be just one of a number of components in Blueprint. Blueprint rightfully recognizes that the complex challenges of regional economic development today cannot be solely addressed with slick, one-dimensional marketing brochures.

The four key focus areas for Blueprint are:

10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

October 28, 2010

RPCGB Office

1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

For meeting information, including postings of any meeting notices and cancellations please visit the [RPCGB website](#).

1. Public and Private Leadership
2. Workforce Development
3. Economic Prosperity
4. Community and Regional Stewardship

Blueprint Birmingham provides a guide for moving our region forward. Job creation and retention efforts will capitalize on existing and emerging job cluster. Success will be measured by effort and outcomes.

Anyway, why do we need Blueprint Birmingham, you may ask? First, we need it because our region is facing unprecedented economic challenges. We also need a vehicle to help us get beyond past failures, from our loss of the Delta Airlines hub in the early 1950's, to our leadership meltdown in the early 1960's, to the defeat of MAPS in 1998, to the recent Jefferson County economic woes and political scandals. Take your pick! Our residents, much like Cleveland Indians fans, really need more wins.

The RPCGB is one of the community implementation partners for Blueprint Birmingham, and it is a very natural fit. The RPCGB is already heavily involved in fostering regional cooperation, improving our infrastructure and helping local businesses thrive. Regionally significant projects like the Regional Transportation Plan, In-Town Transit Partnership (ITP) Bus Rapid Transit Project, the Five Mile Creek, Village Creek and Shades Creek Greenways, CommuteSmart, Alabama Partners for Clean Air and Clastran were envisioned, planned and funded through our Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Our annual Building Communities Conference, which focuses on strengthening the ties between land use and transportation, are well-attended by elected officials, city planners, engineers, and architects from across the region. The 2010 conference will take place Oct. 7th and 8th. And the RPCGB continues to work with local communities to secure funding for projects like industrial parks and small business incubators, and with existing small businesses and start-ups to help them grow. So, we look forward to lending this expertise to the Blueprint effort.

The unveiling of Blueprint Birmingham may prove to be a defining moment in our region's history, assuming we successfully follow through with implementation. So, please [check it out](#) yourself.





Vaxin Inc., an emerging vaccine company announced its partnering with Stabilitech Ltd. (London) to act as subcontractor under a recently announced contract with the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The RPCGB has assisted Vaxin with two different loans over the past year for audit funding and working capital. The funding assistance aided Vaxin in several ways, including obtaining a large federal research grant.

Under the agreement with Stabilitech, Vaxin will supply its NasoVAX anthrax vaccine and collaborate with Stabilitech on the formulation, stability and efficacy testing of this stabilized vaccine.

"Vaxin is excited about the opportunity to work with Stabilitech and further develop our NasoVAX anthrax vaccine," commented Bill Enright (above), Vaxin's CEO. "This vaccine has significant advantages over the currently licensed anthrax vaccine and we are currently seeking additional government funding to test Vaxin's anthrax vaccine in people."

Vaxin Inc. is an emerging clinical stage vaccine company developing needle-free, single dose highly safe and effective vaccines. These molecular vaccines are safely administered either in the nose or on the skin. Vaxin is currently housed in Innovation Depot.

RPCGB Assists Incubator With Federal Grant



INNOVATION DEPOT

Innovation Depot is set to receive an \$800,000 federal grant for improvements and expansion of its downtown Birmingham business incubator. The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham assisted Innovation Depot in landing the grant.

The project is expected to create 200 jobs and generate \$200,000 in private investment, based on estimates in the grant proposal. The facility will expand from 60 to 80-85 start-up companies. The grant will allow for continued growth in economic development in the region and will ultimately employ as many as 600 in the facility.

U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study Update



Assessment of Corridor Conditions Underway

An early activity in the U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study is the collection and analysis of transportation, land use and development, and environmental and community data for the 35+ mile study corridor through Jefferson and Shelby Counties. The study corridor begins at I-20/I-59 in Downtown Birmingham and extends to the Shelby/Talladega County Line.

Transportation planners and engineers are working on compiling and mapping the following types of information which will be used to develop concepts improving traffic flow

and mobility in the corridor:

- Data on population, employment, economic development, and housing trends;
- Information on the physical characteristics of the transportation system, including the number of traffic lanes, width of rights-of-way, presence of transit routes and stops, bicycle paths, and sidewalks, and traffic signals and other traffic control devices;
- Identification of important environmental, cultural, and historic assets in the corridor;

- Review of previous and ongoing community and transportation plans, access management studies, and proposals for highway improvements in the corridor; and
- Review and analysis of comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and land development regulations for each of the corridor communities.

The product of this phase of the study is a report that describes the transportation and mobility, land use and development, and other related needs in the U.S. 280 corridor. This information will be used to help the project team and the RPCGB develop alternative transportation and land use concepts that incorporate various types of transit services for consideration to meet the current and future needs in the corridor.

When completed, all of this data and information will be posted on the [U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Project website](#).

Public Involvement Meeting Notice

You Are Invited To

Public Involvement Meeting

Air Quality Conformity Determination for
24-hour Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5) Standard
for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the
Rebalanced FY2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, October 20, 2010, 12:00 Noon - 1:30 p.m.

PLACE: Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue N., Birmingham, AL

PURPOSE: To obtain public comments on the Air Quality Conformity Determination for 24-hour PM2.5 Standard for Jefferson and Shelby Counties and a small portion of Walker County to demonstrate that the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the rebalanced Fiscal Year (FY) 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meet the interim air quality conformity requirements for the 24-hour PM2.5 standard.

SPONSORED BY: Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. Visit www.bhammpo.org, "Upcoming Events" for additional information after September 23, 2010. Anyone requiring special accommodations should contact Cissy Edwards-Crowe at (205) 251-8139 at least one week prior to the meeting.

Employee Profile -- Lindsey Gray, Program Manager, CommuteSmart



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Lindsey Gray, CommuteSmart Program Manager.

Hometown: Birmingham, AL

Education: : Bachelor's Degree in Communication from Troy University in Troy, AL.

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: September 2009

Give a short overview of your job: Program Manager for CommuteSmart Birmingham. I handle the day-to-day operations of the program.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?: Strategic planning to take this program to the "next level."

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I traveled to Etna, CA for 2 weeks where I hiked Mt. Shasta, spent a 24-hour solo in the mountains and rafted down Snake River.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..." still going strong and moving forward in my career, and traveling the world in my free time.

CommuteSmart Spotlight

Two New Partners Join CommuteSmart

During the month of September, CommuteSmart welcomed two new Silver partners to the program, the city of Hoover and Cahaba Cycles. If your company is interested in becoming a partner, visit the [CommuteSmart website](http://www.commutSMART.org) to learn more.

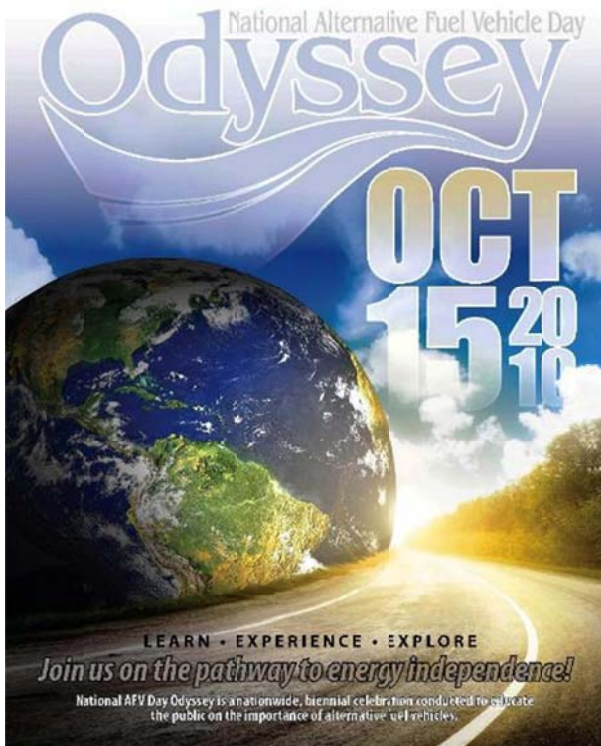


CommuteSmart Launches Newsletter

At the beginning of October, CommuteSmart launched a new, quarterly newsletter. **The Route** will provide the latest news and updates from the CommuteSmart team. Highlights of the newsletter include a focus on companies and individuals participating in the programs as well as information on available spots in vanpools around town. *If you are interested in receiving **The Route**, email the CommuteSmart team at commutesmart@rpcgb.org.*



APCA Partner Participates in Nationwide Event



National Odyssey Day is a nationwide, biennial event with the mission of educating the public about alternative fuel and advanced technology vehicles and the important role these vehicles play in providing solutions to our nation's growing energy security and environmental issues. The Alabama Partners for Clean Air partner, Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, is a coordinator of this event.

This year more than 125 sites will join together on October 15th to further this cause. Where better to celebrate Odyssey Day than at Lawson State, a member of the National Alternative Fuel Training Consortium! Please Join Us at Lawson State Community College (Bessemer Campus) October 15th, from 9 to 3, for this FREE Event!

Come join us for a full day dedicated to providing clear, concise information about alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles. Enjoy viewing and driving many of the alternative fuel vehicles that will be on display.

To help us plan food and materials please register by clicking [here](#) to go to our registration page. When you register you will receive directions and other important information to help you make the most of this Odyssey!



2010 Census Update

There are many people, demographers and planners as well as researchers and academics, who are awaiting the release of the 2010 Census. Data will be released, beginning in December and going through 2014 will provide data from over 130 million households for a whole host of analyses projects. There are, however, some other Census Bureau data releases coming up regarding the American Community Survey (ACS). While the decennial census is a snapshot of one day each decade and provides data at a variety of geographic levels, the ACS is a continuous sample survey (meant to replace the Census Long Form data) and while it does not count everyone, it does provide estimated data from a sample of a given population. Below is a listing of planned release dates for particular selected Census data products. For further information please visit the [Census Bureau website](#) or contact Brett Isom at bisom@rpcgb.org or call 264-8433.

<u>Planned Release Date</u>	<u>Data Product</u>	<u>Lowest level of Geography</u>
September	2009 ACS (1 year)	Population greater than 65,000
December	2005-2009 ACS (5 Year)	Population greater than 65,000
December	2010 Population estimates	States (1st 2010 Census data release)
Feb - March 2011	2010 PL 94-171	Blocks

May 2011	2010 Demographic profiles	Places and Functioning Minor Civil Divisions
June - Aug 2011	Summary File 1	Blocks
Dec 2011 - Apr 2012	Summary File 2	Census Tracts
October 2012	Urban/Rural update	Blocks
July - Aug 2013	Refined CBSA updates	Principal cities
April 2013 - Sep 2013	2010 P & H Unit Reports	Places

Halloween Fast Facts from the Census Bureau!



Halloween - October 31st

The observance of Halloween, which dates back to Celtic rituals thousands of years ago, has long been associated with images of witches, ghosts and vampires. Over the years, Halloween customs and rituals have changed dramatically. Today, Halloween is celebrated many different ways, including wearing costumes, children trick or treating, carving pumpkins, and going to haunted houses and parties.

Trick or Treat!

36 million

The estimated number of potential trick-or-treaters in 2009 - children 5 to 13 - across the United States. This number is up about 190,000 from a year earlier. Of course, many other children - older than 13, and younger than 5 - also go trick-or-treating.

111.3 million

Number of occupied housing units across the nation in 2009 - all potential stops for trick-or-treaters.

92%

Percentage of households with residents who consider their neighborhood safe. In addition, 78 percent said there was no place within a mile of their homes where they would be afraid to walk alone at night.

Jack-o'-Lanterns and Pumpkin Pies

931 million pounds

Total production of pumpkins by major pumpkin-producing states in 2009. Illinois led the country by producing 429 million pounds of the vined orange gourd. California and Ohio were also major pumpkin-producing states: each produced at least 100 million pounds.

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

Where to Spend Halloween?

Some places around the country that may put you in the Halloween mood are:

- Transylvania County, N.C. (30,203 residents)
- Tombstone, Ariz. (population 1,562)
- Pumpkin Center, N.C. (population 2,228); and Pumpkin Bend, Ark. (population 307)
- Cape Fear in New Hanover County, N.C. (population 15,711); and Cape Fear in Chatham County, N.C. (population 1,170).
- Skull Creek, Neb. (population 274)

Candy and Costumes

1,317

Number of U.S. manufacturing establishments that produced chocolate and cocoa products in 2008, employing 38,369 people. California led the nation in the number of chocolate and cocoa manufacturing establishments, with 146, followed by Pennsylvania, with 115.

422

Number of U.S. establishments that manufactured nonchocolate confectionary products in 2008. These establishments employed 16,860 people. California led the nation in this category, with 47 establishments.

24.3 pounds

Per capita consumption of candy by Americans in 2009.

1,814

Number of costume rental and formal wear establishments across the nation in 2008.

Building Communities Program Update

RPCGB Involved in Two New Building Communities Projects

Projects addressing the feasibility of the **I-20/59 Lowering Project** in city center Birmingham and **development regulations in support of the Montevallo Comprehensive Plan** are the two newest Building Communities projects being conducted by the RPCGB.

An agreement has been completed with the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Operation New Birmingham to conduct next steps in determining the concept feasibility for lowering I-20/59 from the north part of downtown Birmingham between 31st Street and the Elton B. Stephens Expressway to the I-65 interchange. This is in support of the recommendations of the 2004 Birmingham City Center Master Plan that cites connectivity benefits between the expanded Civic Center district and downtown Birmingham with a lowered roadway.

An agreement has also been completed with the Shelby County Department of Development Services for development of regulations in support of the City of Montevallo Comprehensive Plan, specifically zoning and subdivision regulations in support of scenic transportation corridors and the downtown core.

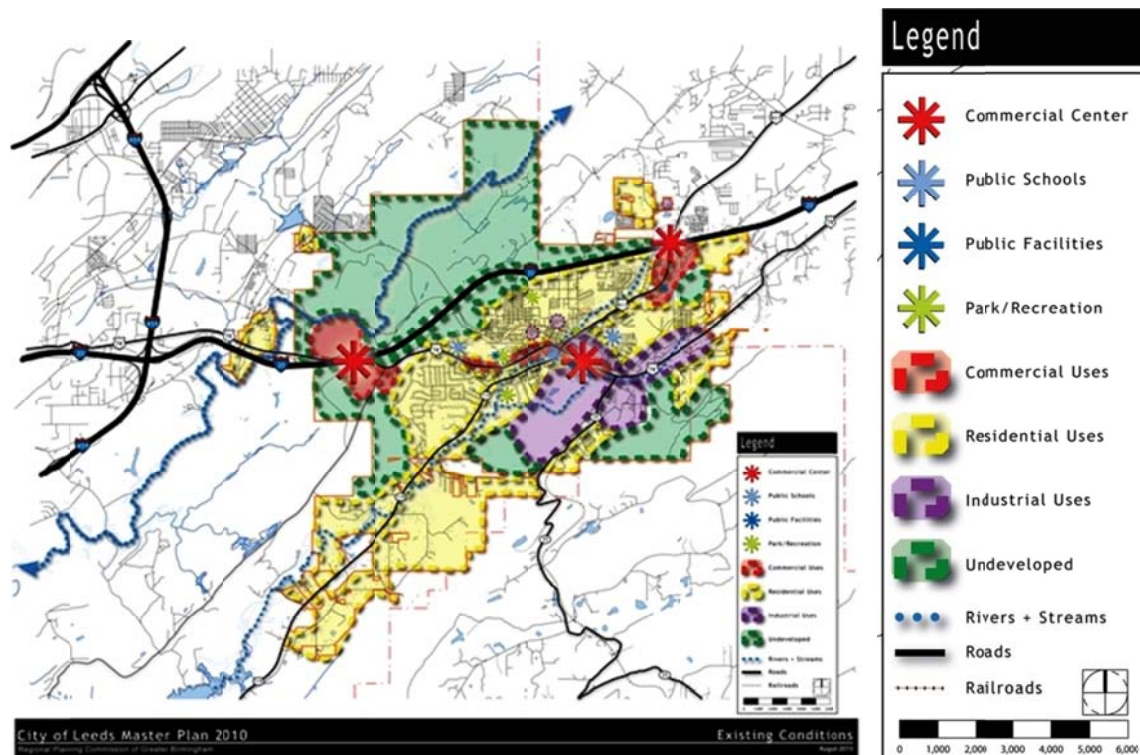
The RPCGB Building Communities Program is designed to provide grants for projects that support

the integration of land use and transportation. For more information on projects completed under this program, see the [RPCGB website](#).

Community Updates

City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB continues to move forward on the development of the City of Leeds Master Plan. The RPCGB and the City of Leeds will be conducting a public involvement meeting on Tuesday, October 19th at 6pm at the Leeds High School Auditorium. It is important for the citizens of Leeds to attend this meeting to help guide the future growth and development of their city. The City of Leeds has requested assistance from the RPCGB through the Building Communities Program to complete the master plan for the city. For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org



City of Graysville Master Plan Update

The RPCGB is updating the City of Graysville's 2005 Comprehensive Policy Plan. The City of Graysville is participating in the Alabama Communities of Excellence program and seeks to update their master plan in accordance with the Alabama Communities of Excellence program. The RPCGB is currently developing the Community Assessment section of the City of Graysville's Master Plan which includes an overview of the community, the environmental analysis, existing development, public infrastructure, and demographic and socioeconomic conditions. The City of Graysville has requested assistance from the RPCGB to complete the update to their city's master plan. For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org

Trees and Development Workshop

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, the Alabama Urban Forestry Association and CAWACO RC+D will be offering a Trees and Development Workshop on Tuesday, January 11, 2011. James Urban, FASLA will be the keynote speaker and several other state experts will be sharing their knowledge of trees and development. This multi-agency supported workshop is responding to the growing need to address the importance and techniques for preserving trees during planning and development. Please register online at [here](#). For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org

To see a complete list of community planning projects completed over the last year, visit the Community Planning section of the [RPCGB website](#).

SmartCode Corner

SmartCode has multiple modules. Modules are additions to the base SmartCode and they are always calibrated for the circumstances. Modules are useful tools for the surrounding area and are capable of fulfilling the needs of almost any municipal vision. An interesting module with the SmartCode is the [Sprawl Repair Module](#). This module has some interesting applications for the repair and reuse of greyfields.

In our region, several municipalities have opportunities known as greyfields. Greyfield is a term used to describe economically obsolescent, outdated, failing, or underutilized real estate assets or land. The term was coined in the early 2000s as a way to describe the sea of empty asphalt that often accompanies these sites. The situation often presents an opportunity for redevelopment but the underlying zoning handicaps the solutions, SmartCode can allow a creative solution to evolve.

SmartCode now identifies a G-5 Sprawl Repair Sector, which is assigned to areas that are currently single-use, disconnected conventional development patterns but that have the potential to be completed or redeveloped in a more walkable pattern. This module has been created as a special "plug-in" to the SmartCode, which, when added to the base code, activates the tools and techniques for repair in areas designated G-5 on a Sector Plan or local regulating plan. Sprawl Repair is a planning technique that restructures and connects the auto-centric patterns into complete communities based upon a neighborhood unit that is currently missing. It is a method of re-urbanization and diversification. The module used in conjunction with SmartCode allows the transformation of single use, auto-oriented patterns into balanced, mixed-use, walkable places, accommodating a diversity of building types, modes of transportation, and civic spaces.

SPRAWL REPAIR TOOLKIT: STRIP CENTER ADDITIONS



A useful resource on the subject of sprawl repair is the recently published work "Sprawl Repair Manual," Tachieva, Galina (2010), Washington DC, Island Press. The figure shown is an example of the possible conversion of an existing strip mall. It can happen, if you enable your code for the possibility.

If you have a greyfield that needs attention let's talk. We can help you realize the possibilities!

If you have SmartCode questions, please contact Steve Ostaseski, Richard Amore or Philip Amthor at the RPCGB. Steve may be reached by phone at 205.264.8422 or by email at smo@rpcgb.org. Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447 or by email at ramore@rpcgb.org. Philip may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at pamthor@rpcgb.org

CONNECTIONS is brought to you by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
Find out more at www.rpcgb.org

