

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

May 2011

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Program Budget
Committee Meeting](#)
CANCELED

[Metropolitan Planning
Organization Meeting](#)
May 11, 2011
RPCGB Office
1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf.
Room

[RPCGB Board of Directors
Meeting](#)
CANCELED

[Transportation Citizens
Committee Meeting](#)
TBD

[Transportation Technical
Committee Meeting](#)
TBD

[MPO Subcommittee Meeting](#)
TBD

[RPCGB Finance Committee](#)
June 1, 2011
RPCGB Office
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

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

The Region Loses A Champion



Doris Powell, left, talking with
Doug Brewer, Mayor of Graysville

On April 13, the Birmingham region lost one of its great champions. Doris Powell, Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association president, passed away while meeting with neighbors in a community park. Powell was a tireless champion of neighborhood, city and regional progress. She was a constant presence in the RPCGB offices with her involvement in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Transportation Citizens

Committee, as well as serving on the board of the Birmingham-Jefferson Transit Authority. As the leader of the Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association, Powell gave her all to improving her community, while always recognizing the "bigger picture" for the region as a whole.

RPCGB Executive Director, Charles Ball, recounts his memory of Powell:

I first met Doris at one of our Transportation Citizens Committees (TCC) shortly after I arrived at the RPCGB in 2006. Doris was immediately very friendly. Later, she made a point of introducing me to different leaders in the community. She often told us how much she appreciated my staff working with her on various issues and projects. If you ever did anything nice for her, she thanked you immediately and often. She had a very soft voice that you would never hear over a crowd. In fact, we considered rigging up a microphone for her to use during TCC meetings so she could be heard more easily. However, when you did hear Doris, you definitely understood what she was saying. Doris was tireless, determined, passionate and very giving. She never wanted credit for anything she accomplished. When she did discuss victories, she would talk about them in terms of what the group accomplished, whether it was the TCC or the BJCTA or her neighborhood. She just enjoyed getting things done. What a wonderful legacy!

Bill Foisy, former director of planning at the RPCGB, remembered Powell as well:

My long-time experience at RPCGB dealing with transportation and community planning issues had taught me to be cautious about embracing ideas for improving public transit and redeveloping neighborhoods. Having lived and worked in the city of Birmingham since 1973, I was all too familiar with those who wanted to lay blame for their problems on others, who were only seeking higher office, or who just wanted personal financial gain from public dollars.

When Doris Powell started attending RPCGB public meetings in the 1990s, she instead talked about what we could accomplish by working together and by being transparent. I could feel her passion for being persistent and calling on planners at the RPCGB and officials at the City of Birmingham to think innovatively about how to address the needs of urban neighborhoods.

Doris quickly realized the value of a regional transportation and community plan and how it could help in neighborhood redevelopment efforts. She became an advocate for both regional and local transit by being vice-chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Transportation Citizens Committee for over a decade and by serving on the board of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority. She was an original proponent in the naming and development of the In-Town Transit Partnership (ITP), the City Center transit system with connectors to adjacent neighborhoods including Fountain Heights, that will serve as the backbone of a regional transit system. She championed improvements for door-to-door paratransit services to help people in Fountain Heights who could not get service to Medical Center East.

Working with the RPCGB and City of Birmingham staff, she oversaw the recent completion of the Fountain Heights 16th Street Corridor Plan, and quickly went into implementation mode by having the Alabama School of Fine Arts complete a mural on a retaining wall which she said "celebrates the northside neighborhood's ethnic heritage and citywide unity". She then persuaded the City of Birmingham to sponsor a streetscape project for the 16th Street corridor in the MPO's draft FY 2012-2015 Transportation Improvement Program.

Her past? I think she was from New York and worked at Saturday Night Live with the original cast. But she wouldn't talk about the past, or herself, or want any recognition. Tuesday council meetings, Wednesday RPCGB meetings, Saturday neighborhood meetings, Doris was there, talking up a storm and getting ready to go talk to someone else about transit and neighborhood issues. I miss talking with her.

The RPCGB staff will deeply miss Doris Powell's drive,

dedication and determination to better the lives of everyone in our region. True leaders such as Doris never see their shoes completely filled.

Bike-to-Work Day Cycles into Town



Ever wondered what it would be like to ride your bike to and from work everyday? Now's your chance to feel the wind blowing through your hair on your commute! May is National Bike Month and the League of American Bicyclists is promoting Bike-to-Work Week beginning Monday May 16th through Friday the 20th. The RPCGB and CommuteSmart will host a **Bike-to-Work Day group ride on Friday, May 20, 2011. The event is free and open to anyone with a bike and helmet.**

Cyclists from all over the region will start at Railroad Park at 7:00 a.m. and embark on a 45-minute ride through downtown Birmingham. The route will take cyclists through multiple parts of the city center, allowing riders to experience the convenience of this form of commuting. Cyclists will end their ride back at the park with a photo opportunity and rally, including free healthy snacks, drinks, and event t-shirts. The event has grown in participation every year as more and more commuters see the value of ditching four wheels for the freedom of two!

The Birmingham Bike-to-Work Day ride is sponsored by the RPCGB and CommuteSmart. Promotional and logistical support is provided by the Birmingham Police Department, Railroad Park Foundation, City Action Partnership, Operation New Birmingham, Green Resource Center for Alabama, Birmingham Bicycle Club, Bici Coop, Vulcan Tri-athletes, Alabama Bicycle Coalition, Alabama Partners for Clean Air, Jefferson County Department of Health, the Freshwater Land Trust, YMCA Birmingham, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, United Way of Central Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and area bike shops.

For more information on how you can take part, visit the RPCGB [website](#) and look for the Bike-to-Work promo on the homepage.

Around the Region

- Birmingham's **Innovation Depot** was named the technology Incubator of the Year by the National Incubator Business Association in April. The RPCGB has worked with Innovation Depot to secure grants, as well as provide loans for several of the businesses it houses.
- The Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) at the University of Alabama released the **Q2 2011 Alabama Business Confidence Index** newsletter for the Birmingham-Hoover area in April. Eighty-three business executives participated in a survey that determined the potential for moderate economic expansion in the region. All results of the survey can be found on the CBER [website](#).

- **CommuteSmart** participated in multiple Earth Day events in April. Participants at events at Samford University, State Farm Insurance, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, the Birmingham Zoo and Black Warrior Riverkeeper Earth Fest 2011 were able to learn more about cleaner, cheaper daily commutes. You or your business can learn more at the CommuteSmart [website](#).
- Looking to save on energy costs for your business or community? The RPCGB now offers a **Regional Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund (RELF)** for businesses and municipalities in Bibb, Blount, Chilton, St. Clair and Walker Counties. RELF eligibility includes lighting retrofits, energy management systems, HVAC equipment, renewal energy systems and much more. To learn more, visit the RPCGB [website](#) or call Yvonne Murray at 205-264-8428 or email at ymurray@rpcgb.org.

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Find out more at www.rpcgb.org

