



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



## Member Spotlight

Engaging with key stakeholders is essential for grantmakers to understand where charitable dollars should go and whether or not the outcome of a project will benefit the communities or causes we care about most. Often key stakeholders are not fully considered when pursuing a project, but sometimes stakeholders can drive the change they hope to see. For community foundations in particular, reaching out to residents for input on future developments is practical and quite intuitive. The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham saw the opportunity to advance the community by asking for ideas not only from the residents, but also from others on an international level.

On January 13, 2011, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham opened its online idea challenge, Prize2theFuture. This is the first investment of new Community Catalyst Funds, designed to do big, transformational projects. An underused parking lot next to new Railroad Park, owned by the city of Birmingham, seemed an ideal space to unleash the community's creativity. A simple question spurred the process: "What is your idea for the Prize2theFuture physical site that will transform Birmingham into a cooler, more vibrant city?"

This question caused an avalanche of ideas from all over the world: 1,100 entries from across the United States and 38 foreign countries. The top 10 best ideas were announced in early May, with top prize of \$50,000 to "One Birmingham Place: An Eight-Part Celebration of Community and Social Re-engagement." The project proposes the creation of multi-purpose, communal center including an iLab, theater space and café, among other innovative pieces. This community space provides the "cool" factor, as well as a sustainable plan to serve the beneficiaries within the city.

Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham president Kate Nielsen said, "If we had 200 submissions, this would have been considered a success. Because we had 1,100 entries and so many from the Birmingham area, the contest became a true community workshop." The collective input from the community shows the power of engaging the best resources: the people who are most affected by the result. Taking a creative approach to tapping the communal needs and wishes yielded a great deal of success and a starting point to enriching the city.

To learn more about Prize2theFuture, the ideas submitted and the next steps for the community, visit the prize's [Web site](#).