

The Honorable Robert D. Coble has been a key figure in the development and growth of the Central Midlands region for more than twenty years. From his initial election to Richland County Council in 1985, but particularly in his capacity as Mayor of the City of Columbia, "Mayor Bob" has constantly strived to improve the quality of life within our region, focusing not just on local issues, but on issues that have a much broader, regional scope. It is this uncanny and unwavering ability to focus on pertinent regional issues, whilst balancing his community's local and municipal needs that made Mayor Coble a unanimous selection by the award selection committee of Central Midlands Council of Governments as the recipient of the 2007 Regional Leadership Award.

In his position as highest elected official of the largest municipality within our four-county region, where he is currently the city's longest-serving mayor, Mayor Coble is in a unique position to ensure that the City of Columbia and its surrounding areas remain a flagship community for both our region and the State of South Carolina. At the same time, his ability to see "the big picture," coupled with the realization that the success of the Central Midlands region is dependent on a spirit of regional cooperation and collaboration that transcends political and geographic boundaries, is to be lauded.

A thirteen-year veteran of the Board of Directors of Central Midlands Council of Governments, Mayor Coble has played an instrumental role in a number of diverse regional initiatives that can be held up as prime examples of regional cooperation, such as the concept of the River Alliance and its emergence, in collaboration with the Cities of Cayce and West Columbia, into a plan for the Three Rivers Greenway; the formation of the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority and the construction of the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center and its magnificent new Hilton Hotel. Mayor Coble has also made great strides in working with the University of South Carolina and has been a key proponent of the Innovista campus, a public-private partnership, that is in the early stages of transforming the southern portion of Downtown Columbia. This global outreach and vision of the Columbia region as a major education and research center, with a particular emphasis on the nascent hydrogen fuel cell research industry, will have repercussions and a positive impact that will extend far beyond the city limits of Columbia.

Mayor Coble continues to be actively involved in a number of other wide-ranging issues that affect the quality of life in the Central Midlands region from regional economic development and fighting to reduce the crime rate, to affordable housing and historic preservation and tobacco-free initiatives. He also possesses a strong sense of community and, in 1991, introduced the Mayor's Corporate Citizen of the Year Award to recognize businesses that have demonstrated a strong leadership role, a dedication to community service and a commitment to employee volunteerism. He has served as the President of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, and Chairman of the Fighting Back Taskforce for Alcohol and Drug Abuse and was the fundraising chairman for the United Negro College Fund.

He has been involved with a wide variety of associations from the advisory board for the Medical University of South Carolina, the Council on Aging, the South Carolina Special Olympics and the Bethlehem Community Center. He is currently a board member with the River Alliance, Central SC Economic Development Alliance, and EngenuitySC. He chairs the Mayor's Campaign Against Breast Cancer committee, was designated the 2004 Ambassador of the Year by the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, and earlier this year was inducted into Richland School District One's Hall of Fame.

A native of Columbia, Mayor Coble graduated from Dreher High School in 1971. He is a 1975 cum laude graduate of the University of South Carolina and a 1978 cum laude graduate from the University of South Carolina's School of Law. In addition to being Mayor

of the City of Columbia, he is also a partner in the law firm of Nexsen Pruet Adams Kleemeier, LLC. Mayor Coble is married to the former Beth Mcleod. They are the proud parents of six children.

Mayor Coble's visionary approach and forthright attitude coupled with an understanding of the importance of a regional approach to development, has served to elevate the image and public perception of Columbia and the Central Midlands region, and will ensure that the legacy of "Mayor Bob" will live on for many years to come. In grateful recognition of his many and varied contributions to the Central Midlands region, the Board of Central Midlands Council of Governments is deeply honored to bestow the 2007 Regional Leadership Award on the Mayor of the City of Columbia, Robert D. Coble.