From shaping government policies that advance our region, to transforming Northeast Ohio neighborhoods, to building a talent pipeline that encompasses all individuals and more, the Greater Cleveland Partnership continued to act throughout 2018 as a catalyst in connecting and focusing Greater Cleveland’s private sector resources to build a stronger region. In the pages that follow, you’ll read about just some of the ways the Greater Cleveland Partnership represented the collective voice of more than 11,000 members and worked to create a positive operating environment for the Northeast Ohio business community.
Cuyahoga County Industry Sector Partnership Initiative
GCP supported the passage of legislation that would provide funding for the creation of industry sector partnerships in manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. This legislation is an outgrowth of a public-private collaborative of workforce development funders, including GCP, who have been working for the past two years to develop a strategy for industry sector partnerships in Northeast Ohio. This work is a direct outgrowth of GCP’s strategic plan, ForwardCLE.

RTA Operational Improvement Taskforce
With the support of the GCP Board of Directors and Government Affairs Council, the GCP launched an operational improvement taskforce with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) to explore ways in which the transit system could improve operations, reduce costs, and maximize revenue. Ultimately, this work will support GCRTA in developing a new vision for public transit in Greater Cleveland that is responsive to the needs of current and future riders and major employers.

State Capital Bill
Thirteen of the 15 projects on GCP’s recommended state capital bill list received funding support in the 2017-18 capital bill process. Places with Impact, a key tenant of ForwardCLE, was a major theme for GCP’s recommended projects as the organization continues development efforts to improve access to Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River, downtown development, and transformational neighborhood projects. The lead project that received support was Phase II of Restoring Irishtown Bend, which will provide continued investment to stabilize the bulkheads along the Cuyahoga River.

Opportunity Zones
The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act included a provision that created the Opportunity Zone program. This federal program allows investors to defer capital gains from the sale or exchange of property by investing the proceeds in an Opportunity Fund. The fund would invest these assets in businesses within an Opportunity Zone, which are qualifying census tracts that have, among other criteria, a poverty rate of at least 20%. Given GCP’s expertise and leadership in the New Market Tax Credit program, the organization played a leading role in convening partners, gaining consensus, and recommending Opportunity Zones in Cuyahoga County to the Kasich Administration.

Cybersecurity Safe Harbor
GCP helped craft legislation—the Data Protection Act—that effectively became law in November, providing a legal safe harbor to covered entities that implement a specified cybersecurity program. The purpose is to create an affirmative defense related to a data breach and it would apply to all businesses that include and comply with certain cybersecurity frameworks. GCP strongly supported the opportunity for covered entities that implement a specified cybersecurity program because the legislation provides an incentive to encourage businesses to achieve a higher level of cybersecurity through voluntary action.

National Small Business Association (NSBA)
Celebrating more than 80 years representing America’s small-business owners, the National Small Business Association is a staunchly non-partisan organization with members in every state and every industry in the nation. NSBA is a strong partner of GCP/COSE, among other organizations, on public policy issues that are
important to the business community. The NSBA Board of Trustees met late last year and discussed its intention to name a GCP member NSBA Board Chair in 2019. In addition, several GCP small business leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the NSBA Small Business Congress—an event in which leaders from across the country discuss, debate, and vote on NSBA’s federal policy priorities for the next two years.

**Occupational License Review**

SB 255 now requires the legislature to review occupational licensing boards regarding their sunset and the non-partisan Legislative Service Commission may perform assessments of occupational licensing bills and state regulation of occupations. Licensing in Ohio has resulted in businesspeople spending hundreds, in some cases, thousands of dollars to earn a license to begin their career. This can be damaging—particularly for small businesses—for entry into the market and competition. After careful due diligence and meetings with the bill sponsor and upon presenting this legislation to our members, GCP supported this effort. GCP offered proponent testimony, the bill passed the legislature, and was signed by the Governor.

**GCP Comprehensive Tax Analysis**

GCP’s Strategic Plan, ForwardCLE, calls for a better understanding of Greater Cleveland’s tax environment and its effect on growth and competitiveness. As a result, GCP conducted a comprehensive tax analysis—comparing our region to similar markets in the Great Lakes region. The initial data retrieved suggests Cleveland’s per capita state and local tax burden exceeds the average burden levied on comparable cities in our region. Feedback from our members will continue to be the key part of our decision-making, as GCP uses the data compiled in the tax study to analyze specific proposals when an institution or campaign is seeking GCP’s endorsement of a specific issue.

**Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition**

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition is a national collective of chambers of commerce across the Great Lakes region that jointly advocate on core policy issues, including water quality, immigration reform, trade, and transportation and infrastructure. GCP is a founding member of this coalition. In 2018, the organization assumed staff leadership of the coalition’s work.

**GCP Political Action Committee (GCP PAC)**

There are many ways our members can ensure their voice and the voice of the business community is heard throughout government. The GCP PAC is a non-partisan, unified voice for businesses of all sizes and industries in our region. The dollars contributed through the GCP PAC are specifically used to provide support for state and local government leaders campaigning for election who share GCP member interests. In 2018, the GCP PAC exceeded its annual fundraising goal for the third year in a row.

**GCP Public Policy Agenda**

After months of development with the organization’s board and staff leadership, GCP unveiled its 2019-2020 public policy agenda. The agenda presented a comprehensive set of public policy priorities on behalf of small, mid-market and large companies in Northeast Ohio.

**Congressional Redistricting**

Last spring, the GCP Board offered formal support for statewide Issue 1, which creates a more bi-partisan, public process for drawing U.S. Congressional districts. Voters overwhelmingly passed the measure. Issue 1 offers rules limiting the extent to which counties, municipal corporations, and townships can be split between districts; the City of Cleveland is to remain whole within its district.

**County Health & Human Services**

GCP supported a two-year renewal of the Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services (HHS) levy, Issue 9, which passed with nearly 73% of the vote. The HHS levies play an important role in ensuring there is a social safety net for children, individuals and families in need. While the passage of Issue 9 did not represent a tax increase, GCP leadership will continue to actively work with Cuyahoga County to determine the structure of HHS levies going forward.
The Business Growth and Development team works with area businesses to help them grow and thrive in our region by connecting them to the resources offered by the GCP and to the larger network of local, regional, and state partners. Four notable projects the Business Growth and Development Team touched in 2018 include:

**Opportunity Corridor**
The Opportunity Corridor—a $330-million transportation and economic development project—entered its final and most comprehensive stage in 2018 as the design and early construction activities commenced on the boulevard’s final phase. Led by prime contractors Kokosing Construction and Michael Baker International, Section 3 of the project will construct the final 1.8 miles of new roadway, four new bridges, two new pedestrian bridges, six signalized intersections, new water mains, new major sanitary and storm sewers, sidewalks and a shared-use path. The 3-mile boulevard is expected to open to traffic by the end of 2021, connecting E. 105th Street in University Circle to the regional Interstate system at E. 55th Street and I-490. More importantly, the Opportunity Corridor will serve as a catalyst for job creation and community investment by providing enhanced access to key employment centers and creating the foundation for the redevelopment of several hundred acres of underutilized land. The GCP was an early advocate for the project and has continued to support the efforts of numerous partners—including the City of Cleveland, Ohio Department of Transportation, and numerous neighborhood community development corporations—in ensuring the project delivers on the desired economic benefits.

**Search Discovery**
Search Discovery’s investment in Northeast Ohio will retain 25 existing jobs with plans to create more than 50 new positions and nearly $7 million in new salary. Ranked as one of the fastest-growing private companies in America by Inc. 5000, Search Discovery is a business intelligence and analytics company that empowers organizations to use data to improve business performance. The GCP and its economic development partners at the City of Cleveland, TeamNEO, and JobsOhio worked with representatives at Search Discovery to support expanded operations and the renovation of the historic Watermark Building located on the east bank of the flats as their first Cleveland office.

**Inogen II**
This fiscal 2018 second expansion project adds 260 new jobs to Inogen’s Brooklyn Ohio facility, more than doubling the company’s original commitment in fiscal 2017. The project at Inogen—a medical technology company that develops, manufactures and markets portable oxygen units—will result in 500 new jobs at the former American Greetings facility by year-end 2020. The GCP business growth and development team worked in partnership with the City of Brooklyn, Bio-Enterprise, TeamNEO and JobsOhio on the expansion.

**Irishtown Bend**
Through its advocacy efforts and Civic Connection program activity, the GCP and its partners at the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, NEORSD, Port of Cleveland and RTA are working together with local community partners to mitigate the potential collapse of Irishtown Bend on the city’s near west side. Without proper intervention, the hillside property could slide into the Cuyahoga River shipping channel and disrupt—or close—ship traffic vital to key Cleveland industries, including Arcelor Mittal. The estimated $30- $45-million stabilization effort will shore up the slope and replace 1,400 feet of bulkheads along the river while providing the foundation for the transformation of the hillside into a 23-acre riverfront park that will serve as both a neighborhood and regional asset.

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ACCELERATING MIDDLE MARKET PROGRESS

Accelerating Middle Market Progress (AMMP) represents the GCP’s commitment to initiating connections and providing resources to help Northeast Ohio’s middle market businesses grow and succeed. With the support of the AMMP Steering Committee, the GCP accomplished these goals through a variety of in-person events as well as a robust digital knowledge center.

Sparking Connections
The GCP has built and grown its middle-market initiative to encompass a wide range of programming, content and information specifically designed with the needs and interests of middle market companies in mind. For instance, during 2018 the GCP’s quarterly Middle Market Forum series offered in-depth discussions on topics such as how Opportunity Zones are redefining Cleveland; how Cleveland could become a Blockchain leader and what it means for business interests here; a presentation by the Commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission; as well as deep dives into other need-to-know topics for middle market leaders including workforce and insights into the current tax environment.

Resource Hub
The GCP’s Middle Market Knowledge Center unites middle-market leadership with national trends and the regional economic development agenda and serves as a starting point for company officials to learn more about the products and services that support this dynamic segment of the economy. Information and content on the state of the middle market comes directly from The National Center for the Middle Market (NCMM), a partnership of The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business, SunTrust Banks, Inc., Grant Thornton LLP and Cisco Systems. The NCMM provides knowledge, leadership, and innovative research on the U.S. middle market. It is fully committed to funding and distributing the most credible open-sourced research, dynamically creating new knowledge, providing programs that drive value for middle market companies, and offering a well-informed outlook on the health and future of the middle market via the Middle Market Indicator.
For almost a half century, the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE) has been side-by-side with small businesses across Northeast Ohio, providing the resources, connections and support entrepreneurs need to grow their businesses. That mission continued in 2018 as COSE focused on delivering value through programs, products and services specifically tailored to the needs and interests of small businesses.

**Delivering Business Efficiency**
The Greater Cleveland Partnership teamed up with telecommunications broker connecTel to offer its members a full complement of communications services. The partnership will help members to consolidate and streamline their communications services, creating greater efficiency and more time to focus on what matters most—their businesses.

COSE also launched a new benefits solution in 2018. From ERISA documents to benefit notices, there are dozens of federal requirements that entrepreneurs need to stay on top of to stay compliant. To make this process easier, COSE Compliance Solutions partnered with Benefit Innovations Group to support compliance obligations and avoid the costly penalties that come with noncompliance.

**Creating Connections**
Connecting business owners to one another has always been a key piece of COSE’s DNA. Through the Business Bootcamp Series, COSE connected members to experts who offered small businesses the coaching they need to grow their businesses. Member MeetUps were hosted across the GCP’s eight county footprint to bring members together in their own neighborhoods. And COSE continued to be a key partner in the Business Growth Collaborative—a network of 11 entrepreneurial support organizations focused on helping business owners access the opportunities and solutions that will help their businesses flourish.
Convening Leadership
With a goal of fostering private-sector growth, OHTec launched its CIO Forum in 2018. The forum provides a voice for the tech community and an opportunity for leaders to gather regularly to share best practices. These forums are a way for Northeast Ohio to further brand itself as a tech hub and highlight career opportunities in the industry.

Celebrating Tech
In partnership with a number of other technology advocacy and support groups in Northeast Ohio, OHTec again was the lead in Tech Week 2018. Tech Week is the region’s annual initiative to engage the local tech community through a week-long series of networking and educational events. As always, the week was highlighted by OHTec’s 2018 Best of Tech Awards, which annually recognizes professionals and companies for their outstanding contributions to the local tech community.
Through audits, innovative financing packages, implementation of conservation projects and more, Northeast Ohio’s energy landscape was brightened through several initiatives undertaken during 2018.

**Energy Audits**
The Energy Team conducted 90 energy audits encompassing more than 5.2 million square feet.

**Rebates Captured**
For the businesses that completed these efficiency projects, the Energy Team helped secure more than $1 million in cash rebates to help offset project costs. The Team also became the rebate administrator for the Ohio Schools Council.

**Significant Savings**
GCP members taking advantage of the Team’s Electric Choice program saw savings of approximately $1.6 million.

**A Financing First**
MAN Holdings’ Shaker West Professional Building represented the first C-PACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy) financing project the Energy Team participated in, the first of its kind involving a commercial office building and the first with Energy Team partner Greenworks Lending. C-PACE financing makes energy upgrades more accessible and affordable and make repayments via an assessment on their property tax bill. The Energy Team helped secure almost $16,000 in rebates and resources for the project to reduce energy consumption 42%.
REI’s Groundwater Training
As a follow-up to the keynote address given by Tim Ryan, PricewaterhouseCoopers’ U.S. chair, during the Commission on Economic Inclusion’s CEO Forum in March, the GCP hosted the Racial Equity Institute’s (REI’s) Groundwater Training to provide attending CEOs a deeper dive into diversity and inclusion issues. This invitation-only event featured a dialogue on racial bias and its effects on businesses.

160-plus Minority Businesses Served
The Business Growth Collaborative finished its year with more than 160 minority-owned businesses served in Cleveland and the surrounding neighborhoods. Resources deployed include waived certification fees, free onsite technical consulting, industry-based training programs, access to capital coaching, business plan development and more. The work was recognized with an Award of Excellence for Innovation in Diversity & Inclusion by the Profiles in Diversity Journal.

Convening of National Economic Development Leaders
In March, the Commission hosted 14 elite economic development practitioners from across the U.S. who work on securing an equitable future for America’s cities. At this two-day Toward Racial Equity event, attendees shared local and national best practices, developed cross-regional relationships and ignited necessary conversations toward securing a bright economic future for all cities.

Construction Diversity & Inclusion Initiative
The 2017 strategic process for CDI helped frame the efforts in 2018 to specifically focus on expanding construction sector partnerships to connect minorities to job and business opportunities. In December, more than 20 construction sector partners assembled and validated CDI’s strategic shift. Construction and Development owners and senior administrators, professional service firms, and workforce entities gathered as part of the Work & Jobs Strategy Group, formerly known as the Owners Outreach Group. Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s Eric Gordon joined Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District’s Constance Haqq as co-chair, succeeding Higley Construction’s Gareth Vaughan, who will continue his involvement as member of both CDI and the Commission.
Cleveland Development Advisors (CDA) has invested over $445 million in more than 135 projects across Greater Cleveland in its 30-year history, generating $3.8 billion of total development. In 2018, CDA participated in 10 transformative projects across the region. Read on for a list of just some of the highlights and visit clevelanddevelopmentadvisors.com to learn more.

**Euclid Grand**
One of the final pieces of the Euclid Corridor puzzle downtown, CDA provided a $4-million loan from Advance Cleveland Development Fund (ACDF) for the mixed-use project covering five facades between E 9th Street and Playhouse Square.

**Glenville Circle North**
CDA provided $10 million NMTC allocation to the first of Mayor Jackson’s Neighborhood Transformation Initiative projects combining mixed-income housing with entrepreneurship.

**Cleveland Bagel**
A $250,000 CDA Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF) loan enabled The Cleveland Bagel Co. to open its second location at 7501 Carnegie Ave. The new space provides space for an expanded wholesale program and adds a much-needed amenity to the MidTown neighborhood.

**Astrup Building**
The predevelopment loan from CRF will support the emerging arts and culture hub expected to be the West Side home of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

**Akron’s Bowery**
CDA’s first investment outside of Cuyahoga County is a catalytic development for downtown Akron. The $40-million Bowery Project will bring 92 new apartments to downtown in addition to commercial, civic and retail space. CDA committed a $6-million NMTC allocation to the project.

**Ohio City Galley**
The CRF loan for tenant improvements supports the “first in Cleveland” food hall concept that combines four incubator kitchens with a full-service bar.

**The Beauty Shoppe**
Furthering the commitment to small business financing, CDA provided a loan from CRF for Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) for the coworking facility and café.

**Transformative Impact**
More than 685,000 square feet of real estate was developed/rehabilitated by CDA investments in 2018, comprising seven neighborhoods and 393 units of housing developed/rehabbed.
And in 2018, we got even bigger.
The GCP had its most impressive year in membership history in 2018, with the Membership Team securing more than 3,000 new members—an almost 50% increase from 2017. In December alone, the GCP registered more than 800 new members—a new high for any single month.

We are proud to provide our thousands of members with valuable programs, products, services and the engagement business leaders need to grow their own companies. We are thankful to all our members for their support of the GCP’s mission and investment in our region.

New Membership on the Rise:

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With more than 11,000 members—ranging from global Fortune 1000 corporations to middle-market companies to entrepreneurs across Greater Cleveland—the GCP is the biggest metropolitan chamber of commerce in the country.
The GCP is committed to working with our public and private partners to ensure Northeast Ohio creates, attracts and retains a 21st century workforce. Below are five of the ways the GCP accomplished this mission in 2018:

**New Resource Hub**
The new GCP Internship Central website, www.gcpintern.com, launched in 2018, provides valuable access to internship resources such as how to start and grow internship programs, connections to community internship resources, information about in-demand industries, content from past Cleveland Internship Summits, and more.

**Resume Ready**
A partnership with the Academies of Cleveland—five career and technical education high schools within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District—created a three-part Resume Workshop and Mock Interview Learning Series designed to connect 11th grade students with local business professionals to help the students design impactful resumes. The series culminated with students participating in mock interviews with business professionals and presenting their newly created resumes.

**Mentoring Cleveland’s Future**
The True2U Program, a career awareness and personal development mentoring program for 8th graders in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, saw 100% participation from all 66 K-8 schools in the district during the 2017-2018 school year. Participation during the year included all of the approximately 2,500 8th grade students in the district as well as 400 business and community mentors supporting the program.

**Creating Connections**
The Education and Workforce Team participated in the creation, funding, and launch of Workforce Connect, an important building block in Cuyahoga County’s overall workforce development ecosystem. The program will support employers’ search for talent over the next three years by creating business-led sector intermediaries in manufacturing, healthcare and IT. Additionally, the GCP and MAGNET were selected as co-intermediaries for the Workforce Connect Manufacturing Sector Partnership.

**Prioritizing Education**
Feedback and input from businesses provided by the GCP was an important element in the planning and launch of a Say Yes To Education chapter in Northeast Ohio. Say Yes To Education is a community initiative that aims to make education a priority for Cleveland residents; boost and retain the city’s population; improve college access for middle- and low-income families in Cleveland; and spur economic growth and expansion in the region.