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Vorys Hosts 2020 Economic Development Incentives Conference

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AUTHORED ARTICLE | Winter 2020

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We welcomed in February more than 300 guests at Vorys' fifth annual Economic Development Incentives Conference – again making it the nation's largest conference focused solely on economic development incentives. Scott Ziance, head of the Vorys economic development incentives practice, opened the conference by welcoming guests and highlighting some of the day's programming, which included a variety of key issues impacting economic development incentives.

The first presentation, titled "Getting Beyond the Sound Bites – Elected Officials Roundtable," featured Megan Kilgore, auditor for the City of Columbus; Shammass Malik, councilmember for the City of Akron and a Vorys attorney; Ohio Senator Kirk Schuring; and Ohio State Representative Bill Seitz. The roundtable was moderated by Vorys Partner Jill Tangeman and focused on hot topics in the economic development incentives world. The next presentation focused on the trends leaders in the industry are seeing in the economic development industry and how those trends are impacting projects. It featured Tom Brinkley, a shareholder at Maynard Cooper & Gale in its Birmingham, Alabama office; Christopher Chung, the CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina; Quinten Harris, the deputy director of jobs and economic development for the City of Columbus; and Chris Knezevic of Vorys. The speakers shared viewpoints from the city, state and corporate perspective.

Five breakout sessions covered a variety of topics, including:

- "Reducing Your Tax Burden: Abatements and Exemptions," headlined by speakers Hilary Houston and Jon Stock, both of Vorys.
- "Waking the Sleeping Giant: The Redevelopment of Dayton's Historic Arcade," with speakers Dave Williams from Cross Street Partners, John Gower from CityWide and Ted Smith of Vorys.
- "How Teaming Up and Creative Use of Incentives Can Make Your Matching Funds Appear **It's financing, not magic**," with speakers

Mike Hampton of Springfield Township, Mike Pniewski of Lucas County, Gary Sommer of Heban, Murphee & Lewandowski and Aaron Berke of Vorys.

- “Opportunity Zones: How Did We Get Here, How Are We Doing, and Where Do We Go Now?” with speakers Matt Peters of Ohio Development Services Agency and Joseph Mann and Sean Byrne, both of Vorys.
- “There’s No Place Like Home (Some Strings Attached),” with speakers Rob Albert and Russ Meyer of White Castle, Diana Rife of JobsOhio and Aaron Berke of Vorys.

The keynote session, titled “Ohio’s Economic Development Strategy,” featured Jon Husted, Ohio’s lieutenant governor; Lydia Mihalik, the director of the Ohio Development Services Agency; and Terrence Slaybaugh, the managing director, infrastructure at JobsOhio. The speakers discussed Ohio’s current economic development strategy, including how economic development incentives can be used to help improve the state’s economy and residents’ well-being.

We look forward to hosting the conference again next year.