

Building a Greater Ohio



Greater Ohio Policy Center
2020-2021
Public Policy Agenda
Revised—Summer 2020

Building a Greater Ohio

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2020 has been a period of unprecedented challenges for Ohio and the nation. Each month has seemingly presented a new crisis. But out of those challenges are opportunities—opportunities for reform and growth to build a Greater Ohio.

Through advocacy, research, outreach, and education, Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) strives to create a policy and political climate that allows communities to stabilize and thrive for statewide economic growth. It is imperative that state policymakers be well informed about the issues and opportunities facing Ohio.

Today, Ohio and the nation teeter on the edge of a recession, and our small businesses and residents are likely to absorb the brunt of the pandemic's economic fallout. **GOPC's mission** "to improve the communities of Ohio through smart growth strategies and research," is more important than ever. Our policy recommendations for Ohio's leaders and policymakers will create the conditions for resilient, sustainable communities. We are committed to our vision of a revitalized Ohio.

GOPC's 2020-2021 public policy agenda is based on objective data, not politics. It builds upon what exists, sees what could be, and creates solutions to enable sustainable growth; encourages pride in place; and fosters collaboration by "Building a Greater Ohio."



Investing in Brownfields

Ohio once was a leader in redeveloping blighted industrial and commercial properties, known as brownfields. Found in every county and community, and unusable in their current condition, brownfields discourage investment and create barriers to economic advancement. Ohio has made great progress in the past year with the enactment of a **bona fide prospective purchase defense law**. Now, as efforts are underway to reshore companies and people are considering moving out of the country's largest cities, it is imperative to enhance opportunities for job growth and strengthen quality of life throughout Ohio by investing in brownfield redevelopment.

To Build a Greater Ohio:

Fund the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund: Dedicating the revenue Ohio receives in liquor profits each year would provide over \$40 million per year in funding that is flexible, sustainable, and complementary to existing environmental remediation programs.



Innovate Infrastructure & Transportation

The pandemic has illustrated the importance of a diversified transportation network to move people, goods, and services. The pandemic has also highlighted a known challenge that puts us at a competitive disadvantage—uneven broadband access across the state. Moving forward, we will need innovative strategies and funding to provide the infrastructure Ohioans need in the 21st century.

To Build a Greater Ohio:

Preservation, Not Expansion: Ohio took important steps forward in 2019 by increasing the motor fuel tax and increasing public transit funding. Unfortunately, now, gas tax revenues may be lower than projected, and transportation patterns have changed almost overnight. Ohio must prioritize "taking care of what we have" for existing infrastructure. Ohio must also maintain a strong commitment to public transit with both general revenue funding and FHWA flex-funding, while making strategic investments to promote **complete streets policies** statewide.

Invest in Broadband: The coronavirus pandemic has brought to the forefront the serious deficiencies in access to broadband and high-speed internet, not only in rural Ohio but in marginalized neighborhoods in our urban areas as well. A commitment to ensuring all Ohioans have access to broadband is imperative for Ohio's future.

Regionalism & Shared Services: Regionalization and shared services in public transportation, especially transit, is a proven strategy to better connect workers to jobs or job training, and residents to health care and essential services. To preserve scarce resources, now is the time to promote true regional transit systems across Ohio.



Empowering Ohio's Legacy Cities

We are living through unprecedented times which create many challenges—and opportunities—for Ohio's legacy communities. Legacy communities in Ohio were the engines of our country's prosperity for decades. Despite population loss and economic shifts, today these older industrial communities remain the home of millions of people and continue to be important contributors of new economic activity.

Assisting Ohio's legacy communities transition to be prepared for new economic realities must be a partnership between local and state leaders, with local leaders making and executing revitalization plans that guide state investment and support.

To Build a Greater Ohio:

Preserve Long-Term City Investments: Now is not the time to change how income taxes are collected in Ohio. Ohio's income tax structure has been in place for over six decades and municipal governments have built their entire approach to investing in businesses and residents around this model. Maintaining a suspension of the '20-day Rule' is vital for cities and helps to ensure all Ohioans are able to safely limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Protect Ohio Families Through Housing: Stable homes help create stable neighborhoods and communities. While eviction and foreclosure moratoriums delayed displacement, thousands of Ohioans are at risk of losing their homes. Rental assistance programs for low-and-medium income households and providing access to low-rate, patient, risk-tolerant capital are important steps Ohio must take to not only protect families and neighborhoods, but help restart and maintain our economy.

Stabilize Our Downtowns & Commercial Centers: Our downtowns are the hearts of our communities. Our neighborhood commercial areas are the main arteries of our residential neighborhoods. It is imperative to preserve our small businesses and ensure the buildings they reside do not fall into disrepair. Rent relief programs, providing access to risk-tolerant capital and investing in workers and their safety will ensure stability and faster recovery.

Prevent New Cycles of Blight and Disinvestment in Residential Neighborhoods: Ohio's legacy cities were overwhelmed by blighted residential properties as a result of the 2008-09 housing crisis. While most communities have become demolition experts, the best way to stabilize residential neighborhoods is to prevent blight in the first place. Tracking property tax delinquency and code violation complaints in real time, offering amnesty programs and sensible repayment programs, and updating Ohio's outdated land installment contract law are just a few ways Ohio can ensure we don't undo the progress we have made in the last decade.

Strategic Investment in Communities & Neighborhoods: Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets and potential to create public spaces that promote health, happiness, and well-being. Placemaking programs that make communities attractive to talent and businesses through physical investments like façade improvements, streetscaping, public art, mixed-use buildings, and transit-oriented development are key to revitalizing Ohio's legacy cities.

Ensure Capacity Building is Part of All State Programs: Capacity building is the process by which organizations obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, and tools needed to do their jobs competently. The state needs to assist legacy cities become vibrant, prosperous and connected places—making them poised to compete in the global marketplace.



Public Engagement

GOPC will continue to advocate for policies and initiatives with the Ohio General Assembly and the DeWine-Husted Administration—related to [capital investment](#), [budget and taxation](#), [housing](#), [brownfields](#), [transportation](#), and other areas that are central to GOPC's mission of improving Ohio's communities through smart growth strategies and research and fulfill the vision of a revitalized Ohio.

Our Values

Non-partisan Voice, Bi-Partisan Work

Our policy platforms are based on objective data, not politics, and we work with both sides of the aisle to achieve our goals.

Connecting Ohio

Collaboration and cooperation are fundamental to how we plan our work.

Pride in Place

The vitality of Ohio, and its cities and towns, matter to us and motivate our actions.

Recognize Potential

We build upon what exists, see what could be, and create solutions to enable sustainable growth.

Informed Leadership

Our research and analysis are designed to impact strategic decisions and investment.



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