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Vorys Hosts 2019 Economic Development Incentives Conference

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Through Vorys' fourth annual Economic Development Incentives Conference – hosted in February – we welcomed more than 270 guests from three countries and seven states. Scott Ziance, head of the Vorys firm's economic development incentives practice, and Michael Martz, the Vorys firm's managing partner, 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 "Federal Qualified Opportunity Zone Transactions," featured Avi Fechter, managing director of EquityPlus LLC; and Kelly Bissinger and Joseph Mann, both from Vorys, who discussed federal qualified opportunity zone transaction requirements, including recent Treasury guidance, and the economics of qualified opportunity zone transactions. The next presentation focused on sunshine law best practices and featured Sean Byrne, chief legal counsel of the Ohio Development Services Agency; Jen House, of Vorys' strategic communications team; and Elizabeth Smith, litigation partner at Vorys. The panel discussed public records and open meetings laws and provided insight into best practices from their unique perspectives.

Four breakout sessions covered a variety of topics, including:

- "Winning Big Projects in a Medium-Sized Community," headlined by speakers Jennifer Chrysler from the City of New Albany, Dan Evers from Clinton County Port Authority and Greg Myers from Wapakoneta Area Economic Development Council. This session was moderated by Aaron Berke, Vorys partner.
- "Top 10 TIF Misconceptions," with speakers Chris Knezevic and Scott Ziance, both of Vorys.
- "Corporate Headquarters Site Selection and Incentives," with speakers Megan Vahey Casiere from the Board of Lucas County Commissioners and Dan Dembowski from The Andersons, Inc. This

session was moderated by Scott Ziance.

- “The Lay of the Land – Economic Development Incentives and Real Estate,” with speakers Jacinto Núñez, Ted Smith and Jill Tangeman, all from Vorys.

The keynote panel, titled “Development Agency Counsel Roundtable,” featured Justin Heather, general counsel & ethics officer for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; Sandi McNinch, general counsel for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership; and Sean Byrne, chief legal counsel of the Ohio Development Services Agency. Jon Stock, of counsel at Vorys and former chief legal counsel at the Ohio Development Services Agency, moderated the roundtable. The speakers shared their perspectives and strategies on negotiating incentives agreements.

The final session of the day, titled “Changing Perspectives from Incentives Career Changes,” featured Hetal Bhakta, corporate insurance and regulatory compliance manager for James Hardie Building Products Inc.; Christopher Chung, chief executive officer of Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina; and Rita Williams, director of economic development of The Kroger Co. The session was moderated by Vorys’ Chris Knezevic. The speakers discussed how changing careers, employers, or both, has provided them with insights that make them better economic development professionals.

We look forward to hosting the conference again next year, on February 28, 2020.