The Education Advisory Committee determined that public school finance should be its top priority. Due to the design of the formula funding system, the state's share of public education funding has consistently decreased over the past ten years to 38 percent of the total cost. In 2018, the committee launched a process to identify solutions for a system that provides adequate and effective funding for our children and for the creation of a skilled workforce. Members learned from experts in the field of public school finance and leaders who drive the political landscape surrounding the issue. Speakers included Jimmie Don Aycock, David Thompson, Sheryl Pace and Todd Williams. Leading up to the Texas Legislative Session, the goal of the committee is to identify key principles to school finance reform and establish the Houston business community as a leading voice in enacting solutions in school finance. The Partnership recognizes that school finance reform is a significant undertaking that will require active engagement by the business community for years to come.

The Energy Advisory Committee is dedicated to strengthening Houston’s position as the Energy Capital of the World. The committee’s priority in 2018 was to highlight and speak out against trade positions and potential legislation that would harm the industry. The committee engaged the University of Houston’s Hobby School of Public Affairs to determine the economic impact of tariffs on the Houston region. The committee also hosted experts to educate members and discuss potential courses of action regarding the proposed and enacted tariffs. Speakers included representatives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Petroleum Institute, Rice University’s Baker Institute and several Houston-based energy companies.

In 2019, the committee will be renamed the “Sustainability Advisory Committee” and continue its work related to air quality while pursuing a new endeavor around Smart City initiatives. The committee will work with stakeholders across the region to catalog existing efforts and support the development of a cohesive Smart Cities plan for the Houston region.

The Health Care Advisory Committee discussed a number of issues, including 1) the rising cost of health care; 2) the need to grow the region’s health care talent pipeline; 3) the role of technology and its adoption in evolving patient care; and 4) how to build resiliency around the provision of health care to Houstonians during and immediately after a disaster. The committee identified opportunities and sought solutions to better address non-hospital needs (e.g., dialysis treatment and filling prescriptions) and improve the communication of available resources during times of crisis. In 2019, the committee will refine its positioning on key policy issues that are likely to be addressed during the Texas Legislative Session, primarily amending and extending the Federal 1115 Waiver.
The objective of the Higher Education Advisory Committee is to identify solutions for increasing the quantity and improving the quality of Baccalaureate degrees awarded by Houston region institutions. Houston’s higher education ecosystem has grown tremendously over the past twenty years, but it remains under-degreed and under-funded. The committee, supported by the Boston Consulting Group, analyzed Houston’s higher education ecosystem in comparison to other major metro areas and convened leaders from the region’s higher education institutions to discuss potential solutions in three areas: 1) growing regional institutions; 2) strengthening the coordination between institutions and industry on workforce needs; and 3) improving the quality and reputation of Houston’s institutions.

The Infrastructure and Resiliency Advisory Committee addresses the long-term infrastructure and resiliency needs of the greater Houston region and plays a prominent role in informing and coordinating advocacy efforts related to securing local, state and federal funds for flood mitigation purposes. Most notably, the committee supported two local measures: 1) the authorization of $2.5 billion in bonds for flood mitigation projects to be administered by the Harris County Flood Control District and 2) the passage of ReBuild Houston, the City of Houston’s dedicated street and drainage fund. During the upcoming Texas Legislative Session, the committee will identify and advocate for long-term funding solutions for flood mitigation.

The Quality of Place Advisory Committee reconvened in the summer of 2018 with a focus on evaluating potential opportunities for green space projects related to the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP). The NHHIP is a $7 billion, 24-mile, TxDOT project to rebuild IH-45 from Beltway 8 through downtown. Working closely with Central Houston, the Quality of Place committee is evaluating potential funding sources for public and private development resulting from the highway project that can produce new quality of place elements that will transform the way Houston looks and Houstonians live.

The Transportation Advisory Committee identified and prioritized the infrastructure and mobility issues of the region, focusing on port infrastructure development, methods for congestion alleviation, and critical funding needs. The committee convened regional stakeholders to inform and position the Partnership on key issues, such as ReBuild Houston, regional transportation planning needs, public transit, freight movement and long-term transportation funding solutions. The committee will advocate for the state’s and region’s short- and long-term transportation funding needs during the 2019 Texas Legislative Session, as it continues its work on developing sustainable solutions for the transportation needs of the region.
Greater Houston Partnership’s Policy Advisory Committees convene business and community leaders to discuss issues critical to the growth and vitality of the Houston region and identify potential solutions. The work of the committees guides the positions of the Partnership and determines when advocacy is needed to encourage action regarding local, state or federal policy.

Special thanks to our 2018 committee chairs:

Business Issues: Earl Hesterberg, President and CEO, Group 1 Automotive, Inc.

Education: Andy Waite, Co-President, SCF Partners

Energy: Greg Bopp, Managing Partner, Bracewell LLP

Environment: Laura Edrington, Managing Partner, Locke Lord

Health Care: Dr. Bob Morrow, President, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas

Higher Education: Thad Hill, President and CEO, Calpine Corporation

Infrastructure and Resiliency: Steve Clarke, Division Vice President, Jacobs Engineering

Quality of Place: Ric Campo, Chairman and CEO, Camden Property Trust

Executive Leadership

Bob Harvey, President and CEO, Greater Houston Partnership
Marc Watts, President, The Friedkin Group Inc. and 2018 Chair of the Greater Houston Partnership

Partnership Public Policy Division

Taylor Landin, Senior Vice President

Jenny Philip, Vice President

Ted Geer, Director

Lindsay Munoz, Director

Chase Kronzer, Manager

Ben Melson, Manager

Kaitlyn Murphy, Manager

Steven Will, Manager

Sophia Guevara, Analyst

Jessica Ruland, Coordinator

Linda Garcia, Executive Assistant