In 2019, Enterprise Southeast’s ongoing engagement with the Georgia General Assembly yielded powerful results. Enterprise prioritized meetings with key legislative leaders on affordable housing and community development on both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate, including House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee Chair, Rep. Jimmy Pruett (R-Eastman) and Fulton County Delegation Chair Rep. David Dreyer (Atlanta-D). Enterprise Vice President and Market Leader Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic and Enterprise Community Partners Director of Capital Solutions Will Lambe were invited to present to the Working Families Legislative Caucus on Federal Tax Advantages for Opportunity Zone Community Development Investments for Rural and Low Income Census Tracts, and shared information on Opportunity 360, with a complementary presentation by their legislative consultant updating Caucus members on pending affordable housing legislation.

Enterprise was proud to co-sponsor the annual Housing Day at the Capitol, with advocates coming from across Georgia to be briefed on key issues, hear from legislative and lay leaders on what is happening at the capitol, and engage with legislators on their top priorities. Building on the work of the Piecing it Together messaging work, Enterprise presented an advocacy training webinar prior to the lobby day led by Tiffany Manuel, formerly of Enterprise, and Elizabeth Appley, Enterprise’s local legislative consultant to insure that advocates could be most empowered and prepared for their lobby day engagements.

Healthy Housing Victory: HB 346
Focusing on Enterprise’s commitment to healthy housing, Enterprise Southeast joined the Healthy Housing Georgia Coalition in 2018 in order to spearhead legislation to provide Georgia renters with protections against retaliatory evictions in response to health and safety complaints, including mold, rats, insect infestations, and other dangerous conditions. HB 346 passed the legislature in the final days of the session. It seeks to end the practice of retaliatory eviction in instances of unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions. Currently, once the tenant is evicted, code enforcement closes the complaint, so no repairs are made and the home is rented to a new tenant in the same condition. With the protections provided in HB 346, landlords would be barred from retaliating against tenants, tenants would have a defense to a retaliatory eviction or other adverse action, and could recover a civil penalty, attorney’s fees, and declaratory relief. Georgia remains the only state in the country without a warranty of habitability for renters, so if it becomes law HB 346 will provide important protections that will improve housing conditions and allow tenants to invoke code enforcement to secure needed repairs without fear of losing their homes. The bill is currently on the Governor’s desk where he will determine whether to sign or veto the measure by mid-May.

Another measure that would benefit low income tenants also passed. HB 492 provides that applications for an execution of a writ of possession would expire within 30 days unless an application for a good cause extensions is made, and requiring application for a new writ after expiration.

Other Affordable Housing Bills
City of Atlanta local legislation (HB 635) passed on the final night of the session, allowing for a $30,000 homestead exemption for ad valorem taxes for persons owning property through a community land trust.
Another City of Atlanta priority to allow for increased options to waive development impact fees for affordable housing without replenishing those funds from other sources (HB 388) did not move forward this year.

A constitutional amendment to allow for a streamlined process for dedication of revenue for a particular purpose (such as housing trust funds for affordable housing) (HR 164) was amended in the Senate to limit its purposes to an existing tire disposal fund and disposal of other environmental hazard waste, but did not pass this year.

HB 344 passed, subject to a referendum in November 2020, granting a property tax exemption for non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity for property held for redevelopment as single family homes and financed with no-interest loans, prior to the point of redevelopment.