

Reading Tips and Study Questions

CLASS 18

Required reading

1. Chapter 1 in Fitzgerald and Leigh, *Economic Revitalization: Cases and Strategies for City and Suburb*. (Sage, 2002).
2. Chapters 1 and 2 in Blakely and Leigh, *Planning Local Economic Development*, 4th edition (Sage, 2009).

Session overview

In this session, we'll introduce the field of **local economic development planning and practice**, largely by looking at how and why it evolved to current form. We will take a critical look at the concerns that have traditionally motivated the field, what some of the toughest policy and practice problems have been, and—in a preliminary way—the state of practice today.

Subsequent sessions will dig deeper into key subtopics, such as small business development, workforce development and "job upgrading," community wealth creation, and development of regional economic clusters as a source of competitive advantage, income growth and jobs.

Discussion questions

1. What key trends shaped the history of economic development, according to **Fitzgerald and Leigh**, and what long-standing gaps do they identify? What conflicts and other challenges confronted "equity planning"? And how do the authors suggest the field address sustainable development (an antidote to sprawl) and equity going forward?
2. Thinking about **Blakely and Leigh's** first chapter, why is their need for any "enduring argument" about planning and developing local economies? Or put differently, what are the major reasons to be skeptical about doing so? Note: skim over sections of this chapter that review major social and economic trends we discussed earlier in the course, such as immigration and increased earnings inequality in America. Focus on the ideas specific to planning local economic development.
3. In their second chapter, how confident are the authors that local action can significantly influence economic outcomes, given the forces of Federal and state policy, as well as the global strategies of firms (especially big firms)?

4. What connections are outlined or implied, by the readings, between local economic development and the topics we discussed recently—affordable housing and the politics and institutions of community development? Try to identify at least 2-3 links that seem worthy of attention in practice.

For example, community-based developers can certainly be thought of as part of the “delivery system” for economic revitalization strategies, but other, more out-of-the-box links are possible too.

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11.401 Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Fall 2015

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