

## Book Review

# *Understanding Local Economic Development*

*Understanding Local Economic Development*

By **Emil E. Malizia**  
and **Edward J. Feser**

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*Understanding Local Economic Development* is a successful attempt to couple a wide range of theoretical concepts with the applications sought by economic development professionals. In accomplishing this synthesis, the authors also have produced a coherent and relevant text for economics, planning, geography, and other students engaged in studying the economic development process. *Understanding Local Economic Development* can serve as the core reading material, supplemented by focused journal articles, around which an economic development course can be built. In this dual role, the book makes an important contribution to the economic development literature.

Malizia and Feser, professors of planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, open the book with an excellent discussion of four fundamental concepts—power, theory,

interests, and mediation—as they pertain to economic development practice. These concepts provide the means for relating theory to practice. This groundwork is particularly important for practitioners who may otherwise find the discussions of theory to lack relevance.

The main body of the book is devoted to a review of theories related to economic development. The breadth of theories covered, from neoclassical to flexible production, provides a range of perspectives on the economic development process that should engender discussion by practitioners and students alike. This review covers theories that provide an historical perspective on economic development thought, as well as those that assume greater importance in our current global economy. In addition, the authors use two tools quite effectively in their discussion of alternative theories. First, following a summary of each theory's tenets, the authors present applications of the theory, e.g., growth pole theory applied to the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area. While these applications are of interest to both students and practitioners, they are particularly useful to practitioners. The applications explore what each theory implies for the role of economic development and the strategies each theory suggests. Second, more in-depth (and frequently more quantitative) discussions of each theory are included in an appendix, rather than in the text. This technique makes the chapter more accessible to economic development professionals while providing students with the greater level of detail that they require. The result is a text that flows smoothly for both audiences.

The book concludes with a discussion of the distinctions between economic growth and

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economic development. This chapter provides a conceptual framework to help practitioners relate theory to a more complete understanding of the competitiveness of a local economy. The authors effectively demonstrate how "a good understanding of theory will enhance the economic developer's creativity and ability to design more effective solutions to economic problems" (p. 257).

With this book, Malizia and Feser have created a tool for both economic development professionals and students to use in understanding the theory and practice of local economic development. While students will find this text readily accessible, the test of its effectiveness will be acceptance and use by economic development practitioners. **CP**