What is Economic Development?

Listed below are various definitions for economic development and community economic development. Also included are concepts around economic development that relate to various roles for government, organizations, businesses, networks, groups of people, individuals and other community structures.

Definitions and Broad Concepts with Implications for Roles

Definitions

Economic Development:

Definition: “Work to align human and natural resources of their community to match both global and regional markets, and they can strive to create new jobs that fit both the people and the place.” (Blakely and Bradshaw, p. 24)

Definition: “Use current human, social, institutional, and physical resources to build a self-sustaining economic system.” (Ibid. p. 53)

Definition: “Local economic development is a process meant to deliver a product.” (Ibid. p. 75)

Definition: “Economic development is sustained, progressive change to attain individual and group interests (related to the economy).” (Shaffer, Deller, Marcouiller, p. 4)

Definition: “Economic development can also be defined as those activities that lead to greater resource productivity, a wider range of real choice for consumers and producers, and broader clientele participation in policy formulation (related to the economy).” (Ibid. p. 4)

Definition: “Economic development is goal-oriented change, not change for the sake of change (related to the economy).” (Ibid. p.4)

Definition: “At a minimum, local economic development planning continues to be important because it offers a strategy for improving the necessary interaction between business and government, for perfecting the markets through better communication, and for effectively competing for economic resources in a highly competitive environment.” (Lyons and Hamlin)

Definition: “...the creation and implementation of strategies to promote the economic well-being of the community.” (Shaffer in Deller PowerPoint)

Definition: “...the process of identifying and analyzing economic issues and the creation and implementation of a set of specific policies aimed at enhancing the economic opportunities of community residents.” (Deller PowerPoint)

Definition: “Economic Development: building economic opportunity, enhancing economic well-being and building a resilient economy.” (Deller PowerPoint)
Definition: “Economic development means creating economic opportunity.” (Deller PowerPoint)

Community Economic Development:

Definition: (of community economic development). “Actions taken by an organization to improve the economic situation of local residents (income and assets) and local businesses (profitability and growth); and enhance the community’s quality of life as a whole (appearance, safety, gathering places, and sense of positive momentum.” (Temali, p. 3)

Definition: (of community economic development). “…determining economic development needs and opportunities, deciding what can and should be done to improve the economic condition in that community, and then moving to achieve agreed-upon economic goals and objectives.” (as adapted, Shaffer, Deller, Marcouiller, p. 5)

Definition: (of community economic development). “Is a comprehensive concept for changing the economic situation within the community.” (Ibid. p. 5)

Definition: “Community economic development is about how economic forces and theory explain community change and how policies and actions can affect that change.” (Ibid. p. 317)

Definition: “Community economic development is sustained progressive change to attain individual and group interests through expanding, intensifying, and adjusting the use of resources; identifying new or expanding markets, altering rules of economic activities to facilitated adjustments to changing conditions or altering the distribution of rewards; and improving insights into the choices available.” (Ibid. p.317)

Definition: “Community economic development decision-making capacity is the ability of a community to initiate and sustain activities that promote local economic and social welfare.” (Ibid. p. 317)

Definition: “Community economic development is dynamic; it is concerned with movement and change, with overcoming obstacles and capturing opportunities.” (Ibid. p. 317)

Definition: “Community economic development is about producing wealth, opening economic opportunities, and facilitating adjustment (monetized and nonmonetized wealth).” (Ibid. p. 318)

Definition: “Most practitioners think of community [economic] development as an outcome – physical, social, and economic improvement in a community – while most academicians think of community [economic] development as a process – the ability of communities to act collectively and enhancing the ability to do so.” (Phillips and Pittman in Deller PowerPoint)

Concepts for local economic development and roles

Concept for local economic development and roles: “The central thesis is that locally based economic development and employment generation is more likely to be successful if initiated at the community and local level than elsewhere.” (Blakely and Bradshaw, p. 25)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “Community leaders can assess their community’s situation and place it in a larger context. Similarly, they can assess affected groups to determine how
these will respond to different courses of action. In this way, local solutions can be found for national
problems. “(Blakely and Bradshaw, p. 26)

Concept for local economic development and roles: Regarding a wide variety of organizations and community structures, these local “organizations have the potential, through partnerships, to identify their assets and use them to build a better local economy.” (Ibid. pp. 53,55)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “Local economic development has one primary goal: to increase the number and variety of job opportunities available to local people. To perform these activities, local governments and community groups need to assume an initiating rather than a passive role.” (Ibid. p. 55)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “The goal of (economic development) capacity-building involves a complex, multitasked process featuring many actors.” (Ibid. p. 75)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “The (economic development) process affects the entire environment of the community---physical, regulatory, and attitudinal---and determine the nature and quality of economic products.” (Ibid. p. 75)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “Local economic development requires the ability to facilitate interaction, to mobilize stakeholders, and to reconcile different goals and values among key development actors.” (Ibid p. 318)

Concept for local economic development and roles: “Asset building (e.g., skills and capacities of individuals, associations and institutions within a locality) lays the foundation upon which economic development is built.” (Deller PowerPoint)

References


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