



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: New Resource on the Role of Local Elected Officials in Economic Development

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The National League of Cities (NLC) recently released a guide to help local elected leaders better understand economic development and their role in the process. Produced in partnership with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), *What You Should Know 2.0: Elected Leaders and Economic Development*, updates an earlier guide that is titled *The Role of Local Elected Officials in Economic Development: 10 Things You Should Know*.

So, what is new and noteworthy in the latest NLC guide for local elected officials? For one, the new guide underscores the value of strategic planning and outlines the core economic development strategies to include: business retention and expansion, marketing and attraction, entrepreneurial and small business development, workforce development, real estate development and reuse, and neighborhood redevelopment. Annapolis, MD, Glendale, CA, and New Braunfels, TX are profiled in order to illustrate the types of goals and strategies communities are prioritizing in their economic development efforts. The guide also notes the importance of working to build **economic resiliency**, which “means the local economy is diverse, sustainable, and can weather the impacts of an economic crisis or a natural disaster ” (p. 5). Brian Dabson discusses the concept of economic resilience in a previous post on this Blog.

Reflecting a broader trend in economic development, the new guide incorporates a section on **equity** and suggests some ways to expand economic opportunity for all residents and communities, particularly those most in need. Portland’s efforts to promote inclusive economic development with respect to boosting minority entrepreneurship and increasing diversity in the local technology sector are included as an example. For additional discussion of equity and economic development, see a previous post I wrote on the topic.

A section on the various **funding sources** available to support local economic development activities is an additional feature of the new guide. It mentions local, state, and federal funding sources along with public-private partnerships. The Massachusetts Economic Development Fund, Ohio Enterprise Zone Program, and Wisconsin Fast Forward are included in this section as examples. Proponents of accountability in economic development will be pleased to see the section on **performance management**. This section emphasizes the need to measure program impacts and collect and assess appropriate metrics. It also references the 2015 GASB guidelines for disclosure of tax abatement agreements that governments are expected to follow.

The NLC guide concludes with a delineation of several possible roles for local elected officials in the process of economic development:

- Student
- Convener
- Listener
- Policymaker
- Salesperson
- Ambassador