

# BOOK REVIEW: *LEARNING TO LEAD: A PRIMER ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES*

by Judson Edwards

*Learning to Lead: A Primer on Economic Development Strategies*  
Maury Foreman & Jim Mooney.

Washington State Community,  
Trade and Economic  
Development

Kendall/Hunt Publishing  
Company, Dubuque, Iowa, 1999.  
166pp. \$25.00 (Paperback)

I am pleased to say that *Learning to Lead: A Primer on Economic Development Strategies* is a book that I thoroughly enjoyed reading. Simply stated, the book was fun and informative. The authors' nice blend of comedy, quick facts, and graphical representations allows the reader to maintain continuous interest throughout the work. By taking a light-hearted approach to presenting strategies of economic development, Foreman and Mooney create a text capable of reaching a broad audience, from the professional economic developer to the interested citizen. Although its comedic qualities allow for easy reading, the information contained in the book is of high quality and useful, no matter your knowledge of economic development.

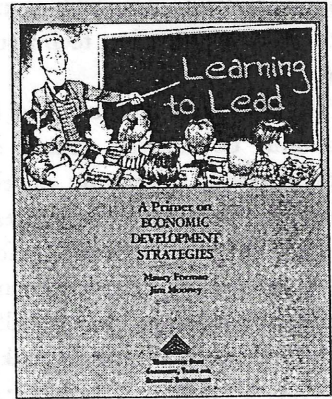
The authors lay the groundwork for *Learning to Lead* by defining economic development, presenting the "five cornerstones of economic development," and explaining how to establish an economic development program. Also in the opening section, the reader begins to follow a hypothetical case study where the imaginary community of Field, a city of less than 10,000, seeks to establish an economic development strategy. The book uses the hypothetical city of Field

to compliment the educational material and guides the reader through the multi-level complexities of establishing a comprehensive economic development strategy.

The next section of the book examines the components of product development. The authors do an excellent job of presenting and explaining complex issues, such as infrastructure development, business parks, speculative buildings, gateway programs and downtown revitalization in a clear, cohesive manner. Although the question and answer technique is followed throughout the text, I found it most useful in this section because it allows the reader to apply these questions to his or her individual community.

The next section, market development, addresses the topics of new resident attraction and the importance of partnerships. The authors present true examples of various strategies used to attract new residents. The most interesting example cited the residential development strategy of Rolfe, Iowa. In order to increase new residential development, the town leaders offered a free lot, \$1,200 up-front cash, a low interest rate residential loan, and a free one-year membership pass for golf and swimming at the local country club.

Section Four examines the concepts comprising comprehensive business development. The chapters deal with the



issues of business retention and expansion, business attraction, start-ups, emerging enterprises, and tourism. Foreman and Mooney note the importance of local competitive and comparative advantage in developing a business attraction strategy.

The concluding chapters address workforce development and the decision tasks of local economic development. In the decision section, the authors offer four scenarios in the response to the question, "What is the vision we hold for our community?" In response to the possible scenarios, fill-in-the-blank tables are presented which guide the reader through the decision making processes, and ultimately offer solutions to reflect one of the four scenarios.

Highlighting the book are the comedic illustrations included in each of the chapters. The illustrations, by Pulitzer Prize Winner David Horsley,



follow the adventures of Ed, the new economic developer of Field. Horsley's cartoons are comedic, yet realistic in describing the encounters Ed faces in his quest to establish an economic development strategy for the city. Beside the comic relief of the cartoons, Forman and Mooney use the illustrations to make complex topics, such as incentives and business attraction techniques, easier to comprehend.

I highly recommend this book to economic developers, county and city administrators, economic development board members, and others interested in getting a better understanding for developing an economic development strategy. Even though the book is full of useful information, its humor makes for a fun read. Overall, the book is successful because the authors present questions addressing the complexities of leading local economic development and then uses solid techniques to present simplistic explanations.

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