

URP 584: INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Winter 2025

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This is an introduction to urban & regional economic development and planning. We engage the dynamic (and often conflicting) interaction between place, community and economy. Our goal is to actively understand two related processes: the dynamics of urban growth and decline, and how planners (and other community activists) can intervene and make a difference. We face the contemporary restructuring of local and regional economies, accelerated technological change (and a preoccupation with innovation), growing economic internationalization, the decline of manufacturing employment, the blurring of public and private planning, and conflicts between economic, social and ecological interests. We use case studies to contrast past and future models of local economies, such as high-tech regions, Detroit and other shrinking cities, boom towns, tourist cities, stadium deals, Sunbelt growth, gentrification, the role of anchor institutions, and arts-driven neighborhood development.

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or permission of instructor. As an introductory course (and the only URP course on economic development), the emphasis is on major themes, political debates, urban economic history, the dynamics of local economies, and case studies. Though a basic course in micro-economics (such as URP509) would be useful as background, this course does not focus on quantitative economic methods and has no formal prerequisites.

We welcome students from other disciplines. In past years, students from Public Policy, SEAS, Social Work, Public Health, Architecture, Sports Management, Business and Civil Engineering have taken the course.

Broader Themes of the Course:

causes of growth and decline in cities & regions
what strategies for promoting economic development work and don't work? (e.g., tax subsidies, job training, infrastructure development, marketing, TIFs, BIDs, etc.).
the limits of planning intervention in a mixed capitalist setting
strategies to alleviate urban poverty
sustainable Development: Can one balance the interests of economic growth, environmental protection and social justice?
circular economies & green jobs
Deindustrialization, shrinking cities & restructuring
Is manufacturing still a viable economic base?
the rise of high-tech and the information city
the globalization of production, trade & finance
Should localities encourage/require firms to use locally responsible/loyal practices?

local vs. state vs. national development strategies
public-private partnerships
equitable development
the varied economic foundations of cities (government cities, industrial cities, trade cities, global cities, military cities)
top-down vs. bottom-up strategies to economic development (e.g., neighborhood vs. downtown).
tourism as economic development
economic demography and labor migration (e.g., do jobs follow people or vice versa?)
the product & profit cycles of technological change
community benefits agreements (CBAs)
How does economic development complicate a simple vision of city planners working in the public interest?
Economic developers: intermediaries, advocates, entrepreneurs, planners or barkers?

Course Requirements:

Course assignments include several short assignments, presentations, and a in-depth analysis of a student-selected case study of a local economy and/or local policy challenge.

Course syllabus: <https://websites.umich.edu/~sdcamp/urp584/> (google: sdcamp urp584)