



## **The Role of Local Elected Officials in Economic Development**

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What constitutes success in economic development vary from state to state, town to town. The specific strategies used to accomplish any success will also vary between communities. However, one fundamental factor that can help determine the success of any community's economic development endeavor is the community's leadership.

Dedicated leadership is needed to raise awareness, develop and communicate a common vision, and motivate stakeholders to take action. Although leadership can come from a multitude of locations and organizations, local elected officials are particularly well-positioned to take on this role.

The National League of Cities Center for Research and Innovation (NLC) and the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) recently partnered up to create a "top 10 list" of things elected officials should know about economic development in order to be effective leaders for their community.

Number one: Know your local economic strengths and weaknesses. It is important for an elected official to have a clear understanding of their community's economic profile. This will help the community create a realistic vision and strategies for economic development.

Number two: Understand your community's place in the broader regional economy. Once an elected official can grasp how their community fits into the broader region, they can be better prepared to work with other jurisdictions.

Number three: Participate in your community's economic development vision and goals. Once an elected official understands what the economic development goals are, they can play a key role in building consensus and ensuring that those goals are implemented successfully.

Number four: Understand your community's strategy to attain its goals. A strategic plan is necessary to ensure goals are implemented correctly and successfully. If an elected official understands these goals and what the strategic plan entails, they can help with allocating a budget and staff to perform these activities and to evaluate performance based on measurable outcomes.

Number five: Make connections between economic development and other city policies. When crafting economic development policies, it is essential to consider how other city policies (such as transportation or housing) affect certain economic development goals.

Number six: Control your regulatory environment. It is imperative that a community's regulatory process allow for timely, reliable and transparent resolution of issues facing businesses, while still remaining true to the long-term economic development vision.



Number seven: Support your local economic development stakeholders and partners. Elected officials should think strategically on a project-by-project basis about who needs to be involved, the resources they can bring to the table, and what it will take to get them engaged.

Number eight: Acknowledge the needs of your local business community. As the community's representative, an elected official can help create an environment that supports the growth and expansion of local businesses, primarily by opening lines of communications.

Number nine: Embrace the community's economic development message. It is important for an elected official to broadcast a clear, accurate and compelling message that reflects the community's vision and that helps ensure broad support for economic development projects undertaken by the city and its partners.

Number ten: Support the economic development staff. Local elected officials will be more effective in leading economic development activities to the extent that they forge strong relationships with staff members who work on these issues on a daily basis.

This "top 10 list" describes what the role of elected officials should be within a community in regards to developing and implementing effective economic development strategies.

- This list was created by a partnership between the National League of Cities Center for Research and Innovation and the International Economic Development Council.