CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE: THEIR ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What do you think of when you hear the term “economic development?”
DEFINITIONS

Economic development is the development of economic wealth of countries or regions for the material well-being of their inhabitants.

The economic development process supposes that legal and institutional adjustments are made to give incentives for innovation and for investments so as to develop an efficient production and distribution system for goods and service.


The process of improving the quality of human life through increasing per capita income, reducing poverty, and enhancing individual economic opportunities. It is also sometimes defined to include better education, improved health and nutrition, conservation of natural resources, a cleaner environment, and a richer cultural life.

www.agtrade.org/defs.cfm
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Purpose
▪ What are the current circumstances in your community?
▪ What should/could change? What shouldn’t?
▪ Is the tax base growing?

Place
▪ Will economic development hurt or enhance a sense of place in your community?
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

People

- How will economic development (or the lack of it) affect the people of your community?
  - Attract or retain young people
  - Attract or retain jobs
  - Create housing or commercial areas
  - Displace people or communities
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CHAMBERS

Differing roles of:
  Chambers
  IDAs
  Planning Departments
  Departments of Economic Development
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Chambers are membership organizations.

- They need to support their members.
- They need to encourage entrepreneurs.
  - Most work especially on small business development:
    - Retail, Service, local business-to-business, some agriculture

Chambers cover a variety of areas:

- County, city, boroughs, ethnic groups, communities
CHAMBERS WORK WITH LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS AND AGENCIES

Public – private partnerships
- City of Ithaca: Cayuga Waterfront Trail
- Tompkins County: Air service, tourism

Grants – On-the-Job training through NYSDOL
Tompkins Connect: young professionals with United Way
Other agencies: Small Business Development Center
HOW CAN YOUR MUNICIPALITY UTILIZE THE CHAMBER?

Excellent reach into the business community including not-for-profits

- RFPs, surveys, information (two-way), finding leaders to serve on committees, etc.

Good relationships can provide officials with a “read” on public opinion.

Use Chambers to build support for economic development projects.
CHAMBER FOUNDATIONS

Most Chambers have a 501(c)3 Foundation to raise money for community projects.

- Cayuga Waterfront Trail
  - Raised more than $2.5 million in federal, state and local funds. Over $800,000 through the foundation.
WHAT’S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LOCAL CHAMBER?
GOOD, BAD, INDIFFERENT

If it’s good, strengthen it through stewardship.

If it’s bad, correct it through honesty.

If it’s indifferent, begin to build a relationship through meeting, working together, sharing information.
USE YOUR CONNECTIONS TO BUILD A COALITION FOR SUCCESS!
THANK YOU!