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In Honor of Edward deLuca (1910-1985)

By Jim deLuca

Edward deLuca is credited as one of the true leaders in the field of urban economic development. He was one of the founding members of the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED), a predecessor of IEDC, and served as its first chair. He served as the director of economic development for the cities of Baltimore and Pittsburgh. IEDC's Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Economic Development is presented every year in honor of Edward deLuca.

Advertisement

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EDWARD DELUCA (1910-1985)

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2016 marks the 106th anniversary of Edward D. deLuca's birth in Montclair, New Jersey. The International Economic Development Council would like to honor his memory with a special tribute to him, his work, and his influence on the creation of economic development as a profession. It is with great pride that I, his son, Jim deLuca, provide this overview of his contributions to the field of economic development – and a challenge that Ed would be presenting himself if he were still alive today.

Edward deLuca began his career as an industrial engineering professor and worked as a consultant with the State Department under the Marshall Plan and later with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). In 1964, under the Johnson Administration's "Great Society" with the creation of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), deLuca applied his expertise in business within the growing field of urban policy to create the standard of professionalism for the field of urban economic development. From 1964 until

1977, he was the director of economic development for the city of Baltimore, where he is best known for his leadership of the city's Inner Harbor project. He later was the director of economic development for the city of Pittsburgh (1977-1983), where he was responsible for the city's first comprehensive economic development strategic plan.

On February 10, 1966, through the Helping Urban Business (HUB) Council, a group he was instrumental in founding, Ed deLuca invited 20 mayors and their development chiefs to share information at a meeting in Baltimore. Reacting to the declining economy of the "Snowbelt Cities," these trailblazers started organizing economic development policies and practices to bolster the condition of older Eastern cities and draw them out of decay. The HUB Council changed its name to the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED) in December 1971 and became national in scope. The offices were moved from Baltimore to Washington, DC and in 1972, Ed deLuca became the first chair of the organization and was a director until 1980. With continued funding from EDA, CUED (one of the two forerunners of IEDC) worked diligently with the agency and expanded the scope of acceptable practices in economic development.

Ed deLuca's achievements have had a profound impact on the field of economic development. It is largely through the groundwork laid by Ed deLuca that President Obama named Pittsburgh America's City of the Future. The strategy he wrote in 1977 is still being used today and foresaw most of the major development opportunities in Pittsburgh for the next 40 years.

IEDC confers its Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence every year in his honor. The city of Pittsburgh, the state of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County, and the US Congress have all passed resolutions acknowledging the past and current achievements of Ed deLuca and his protégées.



Ed deLuca, first Chair of the Helping Urban Business (HUB) Council (1966-1970) – Predecessor to the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED) – and CUED's first Chair

EDWARD DELUCA (1910-1985)

- BS in engineering, University of Alabama; MBA, New York University
- 1940-1948, assistant professor of industrial engineering, University of Florida
- 1948-1952, associate professor of administrative engineering, Pratt Institute
- 1952-1959, vice president & CEO, Gardner Manufacturing Company, Pittsburgh
- 1959-1964, management consultant primarily for USAID
- 1964-1977, director of economic development, City of Baltimore
- 1977-1983, director of economic development, City of Pittsburgh

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Ed deLuca and company (1970).

Ed deLuca became preeminent as an economic developer because of his knowledge and pursuit of the data which were central to cost efficient corporate manufacturing management: site selection, labor force needs and dynamics, marketing and production trends, machinery and equipment, and technology. His education in mathematics, engineering, and business made his personal knowledge and skills the same as the knowledge and skills necessary to create, build, and run a manufacturing facility or a manufacturing based economy such as the United States was in the fifties and mid-sixties.

Ed deLuca extrapolated these skills for a broader array of economic development opportunities. His favorite project, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, completely changed that section of the city and breathed new life, new jobs, new tourists, and new restaurants into what had been an area of decay, high crime, unemployment, and a drain on the city's tax base.

The Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) legislation, now known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), was also written almost single handedly by Ed deLuca. His opinion was that large tracts of land in pockets of poverty near major roads and central business districts could be revitalized by implementing the right project: a training center, a multi-plex entertainment center, various other multi-use projects, or businesses that might be attracted to low income areas (because of the tax breaks of LERTA/TIF legislation), access to infrastructure, and the available labor pool. Many of these principles are now integral parts of Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Transit-Oriented Development. This was long before Michael Porter's famous cluster theory.

For Edward deLuca, practicing economic development was a knowledge-based action drama. Both represented uncharted territories where the players, the terrain, the money, the real estate, and the expected outcomes are in a constant state of flux. In economic development these conditions become more complex every year. The contemporary global economy gets larger, more sophisticated, and more interconnected. New global markets,

new partnerships, new workforce training methods, new legislation, and new technologies are the norm, not the exception. Scientific knowledge doubles in volume more quickly than ever before; new information and data are being created, for better or worse, in unprecedented quantities. Tomorrow's technological innovations render today's methods obsolete at an astonishing rate. In short, contemporary economic development is an action drama in which the players at center stage are either smart, quick, and innovative – or dead.

He knew that the allure of new partnerships, new technologies, and new terminologies often make "doing the deal," more important than achieving the traditional goals of economic development. This short-term focus has been exacerbated by ever-present political pressure and media scrutiny.

My father knew that the classic parameters of economic development – the ideas, markets, venture capital availability, workforce training laws, public/private funding and partnerships, and trends in corporate mergers change constantly. The field becomes more data-driven, more publicly scrutinized, and more sophisticated every year. It still lacks a complete and comprehensive written history, which makes the training of new practitioners a challenge, because many of the "lessons learned" must be passed on through an oral history. Much of the field's wisdom is geocentric and self-sealed. Many in the field define economic development as "what economic developers do," – while others even see it as an art form – not a science.

Ed deLuca saw that economic development is a special kind of profession. It is an instrument of public policy and public trust. It is a creature of the public sector that employs public funds for public purposes. This means that economic development is much more than simply "doing the deal." A major facet of the deal must be its broader socio-economic component. Activity is less important than impact and accomplishment. Ed deLuca saw economic development as all about making a difference.

And so with all this in mind, and as we celebrate the past 90 years of economic development history that brings us to the IEDC of today, let us join together in a renewed commitment to use our business of economic development as a significant tool in making a difference for the billions of people who inhabit our earth. 🌐



Winner of the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award in honor of Edward deLuca, Joseph Marinucci, FM, HLM, president & CEO of the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, pictured here at the Westin Cleveland Downtown alongside IEDC Chair Barry Matherly, CEcD, FM (left) and Dennis Coleman, CEcD, FM, HLM, who received the award in 2015.