Making Sense of Incentives

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“With this book, Tim Bartik has solidified his rank as the leading, trusted expert on economic development incentives and economic development broadly. The role of firm-based incentives has triggered passionate debate, and Bartik responds with rigor, reason, and realism. I hope readers heed the call for needed reforms recommended in this timely book.”

—Amy Liu, vice president and director, Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program

“Economic development incentives are one of the biggest boondoggles of our time, draining away tens of billions of dollars of precious taxpayer dollars, with some states and cities offering as much as $7 billion to lure Amazon’s much-ballyhooed HQ2. No one understands the intricacies of economic development incentives—what works and what does not—and the broader field of economic development policy and strategy better than Tim Bartik. This book is an absolute must read for mayors, governors, economic developers, city-building CEOs and business executives, community activists, and all those concerned about the future of our cities and communities.”

—Richard Florida, author of The Rise of the Creative Class, and university professor at the University of Toronto

“This book needed to be written and Tim Bartik needed to write it. Using clear, simple language and solid, empirical evidence he’s collected over decades of close observation, Bartik explains how state and local policymakers can make smart decisions about business incentives, bringing real benefits to their communities and avoiding the next Foxconn.”

—Jared Bernstein served as chief economist to former Vice President Joe Biden, and is a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

“For just shy of three decades, Tim Bartik has been the country’s leading expert on the economics of state and local economic development strategies and programs. In language that is completely accessible to elected officials—not an equation in sight!—he rigorously explains here how to think about the benefits and costs of economic development incentives, optimize their structure, and evaluate their effectiveness. Every governor and state legislator should carve out three hours and read this book and then take its teachings to heart.”

—Michael Mazerov, senior fellow, State Policy Project, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities