

## Preface

This book offers a rigorous but nontechnical treatment of major topics in urban economics. The book is directed toward several potential audiences. It could be used as a main textbook, or possibly a supplementary book, in an undergraduate or master's-level urban economics course. It could be used as background reading in a PhD-level course in which students would also read technical journal articles. It could also be read by economists or researchers in other fields seeking to learn what urban economics is about.

To make the book accessible to a broad group of readers, the analysis is mostly diagrammatic. A few chapters make use of some simple formulas and a bit of algebra, but calculus is almost absent. Even though the treatment is nontechnical, the analysis of urban topics attempts to rely on rigorous economic reasoning. The orientation is conceptual, with each chapter presenting and analyzing economic models that are relevant to the issue at hand. In contrast to the cursory theoretical development often found in undergraduate textbooks, the various chapters offer thorough and exhaustive treatments of the relevant models, with the goal of exposing the logic of economic reasoning and teaching urban economics at the same time. Because of its conceptual orientation, the book contains very little purely descriptive or factual material of the kind usually found in textbooks. Instructors wishing to expose students to such material could supplement the book with other readings. Some topics not associated with sharply defined models, such as urban poverty, receive no coverage.

Exercises are presented at the back of the book, for possible use when it is employed as an undergraduate text. They develop numerical examples based on the models presented in the chapters. Footnotes throughout the chapters point to exercises that are relevant to the current discussion.

In view of the nature of the book, the list of references is not particularly extensive. No attempt is made to provide exhaustive citations of the literature on each topic. Instead, one or two representative citations might be given as part of the discussion of standard material that is well accepted among urban economists. However, when a specific idea advanced by a particular author is discussed, the appropriate citation is included. Although the citations are not exhaustive, readers seeking more exposure to a topic can always find references to the literature in the works that are cited.

Since the book has grown out of my own research on a variety of topics in urban economics, the references include an unavoidably large number of my own papers. Other researchers should recognize that this pattern does not reflect an opinion about relative contributions to the field. Again reflecting my own interests within urban economics, the book contains less material on the New Economic Geography, an area of active research in the field since the early 1990s, than would a book written by an NEG researcher. The material relevant to NEG is confined to chapter 1.

The book's suitability as a text for an undergraduate course in urban economics, or for a series of such courses, would depend on the length of the course(s). All the chapters can be covered in the undergraduate urban sequence at UC Irvine, which runs for two quarters of 10 weeks each. In a semester-length course of 15 weeks, some of the chapters would have to be dropped, and only about half of the book could be covered in single-quarter course.

This book has grown out of 30 years of teaching urban economics to undergraduates and PhD students, and I'm grateful to all my students for the opportunity to refine my views on the subject. As for assistance with the book itself, I'm indebted to Nilopa Shah, one of my PhD students at UC Irvine, for her expert work in preparing the figures. I also thank various reviewers for helpful suggestions that improved the book in many places.