



© ADOBE STOCK

Shop Local

Local Benefits

You probably already know that buying local boosts the economy in your community.

However, there are lesser-known facts you should consider when planning a shopping trip. There are many reasons that shopping locally is in your best interest.

If you tend to avoid local markets because the price tags are higher than big-box retailers, it's important to understand why this is the case.

Large companies often receive better pricing when ordering in bulk from product suppliers. Local businesses typically buy their goods from others in their community and at a higher price than major retailers. The result is noticed in cost, but also in quality, as local craftsmen, farmers and other providers can earn a living and enhance their craft.

Here are some facts you may not have considered about shopping local.

IT'S HEALTHIER

Buying locally grown food from small-scale farms ensures your family is receiving important nutrients from fruits, vegetables and grass-fed meats. Most national



© ADOBE STOCK

retailers buy goods from whoever offers it at the best price. This means you have no way of knowing which country it came from, the methods used to raise it or how it was treated during transportation.

Local providers are quick to discuss the difference between their products and the competition. Inquire with the company to get a better

idea about exactly what you're providing for your family.

LOCAL EATING

It's likely your community is littered with fast-food chains and nationally recognized restaurants. While they may offer a quality meal, many Americans find their favorite comfort food from a unique eatery managed by someone

from their community.

These local diners give your neighborhood a unique flavor and make it different from any other city in the world. Don't forget to invite your out-of-town friends to try a meal at the "place down the street."

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Have you ever played phone tag with a representa-

tive at a major company? How many times are you transferred to another agent, or forced to discuss the reason for your call with a robot before finally reaching the intended party?

Buying from local markets means you have instant access to alleviate your problems as the owner is usually a large part of the daily operation.

Help the Environment

You may not realize the incredible relief shopping locally has on the environment. From cutting down transportation miles to benefiting local farming operations, keeping your dollars at home benefits nearly every aspect of your community.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, industrial pollution is responsible for almost 50 percent of the pollution present in the United States. Here are a few startling statistics from the agency regarding how big business is impacting the environment.

- The U.S. transports and ships \$2.2 trillion worth of products from over 150 countries every year.

- Transportation burns 1.1 billion gallons of fuel per year and creates one billion metric tons of CO₂.

- Annually, U.S. factories cause over 15 million acres of land loss, release 3 million tons of toxic chemicals into our air, land and water; and dispose of over 275 million metric tons of hazardous waste.

Learn more about how shopping local can enhance the environment as suggested by the organization Go Green.



© ADOBE STOCK

PROTECTS LAND AND WILDLIFE

Supporting local farmers and producers ensures the land in your community is owned by your neighbors and not sold to developers. Depending on their vision for the area, local wildlife could be devastated if their habitats are compromised by plans for development.

Selling local land to a major

farming chain also may introduce methods that are not ecofriendly and are inhumane to livestock.

EASY ACCESS

Shopping in your local community is often more convenient than traveling to vendors who are out of town. Many times, big-box retailers are required to remain in a more

centralized region to accommodate high-population areas. This leads to shoppers causing pollution and fuel consumption by driving long distances.

If you are near a local shop, help protect the environment by walking or riding a bicycle to the facility.

REDUCE FOOD MILES

When shopping at large gro-

cery stores, Go Green states that it's common for food to have traveled over 1,500 miles before it reaches your home. Local food doesn't require long-haul trucks or airplanes as most of it is grown or raised in your own backyard. Help cut down on the number of miles required to transport food to the shelves of retailers by shopping locally.



Where Local Dollars Go

When you spend \$100 at a locally owned business, \$68 stays in the community, according to the Independent We Stand organization.

To understand the importance of shopping local, know where these dollars go.

Small and local businesses are different from national chains, as they rely on the community to stay afloat, both by selling and buying goods. Owners also are shown to donate to local causes at more than twice the rate of chains.

Learn more about the people and factors you support by shopping locally.

NEW JOBS

As businesses grow, the need for more local employees arises. The influx in workers also benefits the community by attracting more residents and garnering tax dollars for your area.

Emergency services such as ambulances, fire departments and police stations also will grow with the population. Ultimately, shopping local can actually cause your community to be a safer place to live.

SUPPORTING OTHER BUSINESSES

Owners of local grocers offer support to farmers in the area. By purchasing their produce and meat products locally, farmland will continue to thrive.

Construction companies and craftsmen can keep the money they earn local by redistributing it to small-business lumberyards. The expertise of an owner has a direct relationship with the quality of products they use to build.

MORE BUSINESSES

Once a business owner sees their company thriving in the community, they are more apt to open a second shop. This will lead to more local jobs and give the town more diversity and uniqueness.

TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition to employees paying their share of income taxes to the local government, local businesses also contribute a higher tax responsibility.

Thriving companies that generate high values of revenue are placed in higher tax brackets and are held responsible for increasing property taxes. These dollars are distributed to benefit local schools, emergency services and local government.

Their dollars may also be contributed to special taxation districts which focus on projects like community lighting and improving historic locations in town.

Shopping Local on the Go

You can support local businesses while traveling. Finding favorite destinations from the locals can show you what makes the area unique. Don't be surprised if you find a new favorite place along the way.

It's easy to find out what a local area is known for. Read the local newspapers for ads and reviews. Take advantage of online review sites online to discover great places to eat and shop. It's also important to research the average cost of items they offer to plan a budget.

Create a strategy to determine places to visit during your stay and boost the local economy while you're there.

WHERE TO EAT?

Most towns have an eatery that is popular in the local community. Research the area before you leave to find the niche restaurant where you can spend your dollars.

You can look for food bloggers in your destination to discover a critical review of what you should expect.

It's also easy to find reviews from average foodies, too. Try to utilize websites that allow people to leave their feedback regarding their experience.



© ADOBE STOCK

Look for locals who brag about the best meals to try and the atmosphere so you can adhere to a dress code if there is one in place.

WHERE TO SHOP

You can always find a local flea market or specialty store. Consider what you are in the

market for, if only to window shop. You may discover items that aren't typically available in your hometown community.

If you can, spend your money to support local businesses before you commit to making a purchase online.

When researching a distant shopping experience, search

for vendors who offer a stress-free venture without pressuring you into making a sale.

WHERE TO STAY

Sure, it's easy to book a hotel room for the duration of your stay, but the real experience comes from booking a local bed and breakfast. The manag-

er's expertise of their area can point you in the right direction for exciting adventures you may not have considered.

Plus, reputable places to stay can offer a more welcome place to stay in a beautiful setting, rather than a hotel which is usually located in the middle of a busy metro area.



© ADOBE STOCK

Help Spread the Word

Shopping at a locally owned store offers a more intimate experience as you get to know the owner and their employees. You can help support local business and your community's economy by sharing positive experiences.

Don't be afraid to brag about the atmosphere of your favorite shop or place to eat.

Word of mouth is an effective marketing tool many companies use. Free advertising from their clientele is an awesome benefit they receive from treating people fairly and offering a memorable experience. Here's how you can help spread the word and help local business owners gain more recognition.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media websites are an influential tool many people use to make decisions about where to shop or eat. By sharing stories about a wholesome visit, exemplary customer service and the things a local business offers, you can have a direct contribution to and increase their popularity.

When you're creating a post to be shared about your favorite local busi-

ness, try to use an example of a time they went above and beyond to meet your needs. For instance, if you were pleased with a special order or a custom design they created, express your satisfaction.

Make sure to leave a comment about your experience on the company's website if they offer a place for feedback. This will help reach more people who are considering their services.

REVIEW SITES

With modern technology, everyone has a chance to express their input about different businesses. Try to find a site where the company already has an online presence and boast about their efforts to help their community and its

public.

According to a Local Consumer Review Survey by Bright Local, 97 percent of consumers read online reviews for local businesses and 85 percent of consumers trust them as much as personal recommendations.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

You have probably heard a loved one express their interest in acquiring a good or service. If your favorite local business has what they need, make sure to inform them of your experiences and why they should visit.

It's common for business owners to take care of their regulars, so your recommendation may score your referral a great deal.

Navigating your New City

If you have recently made a move, exploring a new city is an exciting experience.

Discovering new local businesses to support can paint a picture of what makes the community unique.

Whether you choose to do your research online or take a stroll through the town, be prepared to discover some awesome people and venues.

Settling in a new area can be stressful. Here are some ways you can find the most popular local businesses in the area and the hidden gems that locals love.

ONLINE RESEARCH

The easiest way to navigate the vast area of a new city is by performing simple online searches.

You can find instant results of where locals prefer to eat, shop and hang out. Visiting these popular venues is a great way to make friends in a town with which you may be unfamiliar.

Check for shops that meet the necessities you require such as a locally owned convenience store or a coveted farmer's market. In time, you can find your favorite places to add to your routine.

TALK TO THE LOCALS

To add a social element, ask the locals about their favorite places in town. A good place to start is with your work peers, who can invite you to get to know your new team better at a thriving establishment.

Don't be shy to ask around when visiting busy places like the gym or



© ADOBE STOCK

local park. Meeting new people can be intimidating, but talking about local business is a great ice breaker which can lead to positive interactions.

RECRUIT FRIENDS FROM HOME

If you would feel more comfortable

exploring a new city with someone you're familiar with, invite a friend from back home with whom to enjoy the experience.

Make sure you both have time in your schedule to make an event out of getting to know the area.

Depending on the size of your new location, it could take more than one day.

With your pocketbook intact, hit the streets or sidewalks and discover your new favorite business to support.



© ADOBE STOCK

Small Business: By the Numbers

The local companies who rely on your support likely fall into the small business category. According to the Small Business Association, these groups employ about 58.9 million people nationwide. Their contribution to local economies should be celebrated. You can show your appreciation by spending your hard-earned dollars within their walls.

Here are some eye-opening statistics regarding their impact on the country's economy in recent years, according to the SBA's 2016 Small Business Profile.

- There were nearly 290,000 small business exporters.
- 8 million businesses were owned by minority races.
- Firms with fewer than 100 employees had the largest share of small business employment.

- Small businesses created 1.9 million net jobs in 2015; firms employing fewer than 20 employees experienced the most increases.

- In the third quarter of 2016, 240,000 establishments began, generating 872,000 new jobs in the United States.
- Private-sector employment increased 1.8 percent during the 12-month period ending in February;

that was up 1 percent from the previous year.

- The median income for individuals self-employed at their own incorporated businesses was \$50,347 in 2016.
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing and hunting industries made up 85.1 percent of the small business employment share.
- Small businesses made up 99.9 percent of United States' businesses

with 30.2 million.

- In 2016, 5.7 million loans under \$100,000 were issued by United States lending institutions reporting under the Community Reinvestment Act.
- The number of proprietors increased in 2016 by 2.3 percent relative to the previous year.
- Small business employees made up 47.5 percent of the United States workforce, with 58.9 million.