



Shop
Local

Show your Support

The recent COVID-19 outbreak has left both small businesses and major corporations uncertain about their plans going forward.

After multiple states urged nonessential companies to shut their doors temporarily, a comeback must be handled carefully and with safety in mind. As the country slowly reopens, your local shops need support.

The virus wreaked havoc throughout the world before the United States became an epicenter of the pandemic. Governors acted quickly to save as many lives as possible by shutting down mass gatherings and, virtually, the economy.

Many business owners have had to make the difficult decision to close forever. Show your appreciation for those that withstood the national emergency by rewarding them with your loyalty as a dedicated consumer.

SAYING THANK YOU

While many companies completely halted their operations, those in essential services likely altered their businesses to ensure the supplies you required were available.

Things like curbside pick-up, home delivery or investing in safety equipment like sneeze guards allowed owners to remain open for you. As life slowly returns to a sense of normalcy, express

your gratitude to the workers who kept the business afloat.

A simple gesture you can make that only takes a few minutes is to leave a review on a company's social media page, website or popular ratings site. Leave a comment that praises the team for their bravery to remain open so your family could acquire the things you need. If possible, talk about the experience in detail and give thanks by naming employees who stood out to make your visit memorable.

ORGANIZE A FUNDRAISER

Work with community organizers to host an event to raise money for the small businesses that have not been able to operate or lost a significant portion of revenue. One idea is to talk to local musicians and ask them to volunteer by playing a benefit concert. Or, meet with notable speakers in your area to recruit their words of inspiration and discuss plans to get through tough times.

You can raise money by holding raffles, inviting donations from companies who were more fortunate and asking for help from peers in the neighborhood.



Buy from a Local Dealership

According to the Harvard Business Review, the average United States car buyer spends about 11 hours online during their car search. While the internet is a great tool to find the right vehicle, completing the transaction in person provides more benefits than an e-commerce sale.

Numerous companies are attempting to change the traditional way you choose and pay for vehicles. Car-buying sites allow a consumer to complete the entire process from their computer or smartphone. Once the financials are in place, users can request that their new wheels are delivered or obtain it from state-of-the-art vending machines. While the online convenience may be tempting to some, purchasing from a local dealership boosts your community's economy and protects your investment.

USING THE INTERNET

The primary benefit of using the internet in your car search is that you can take a virtual tour of a dealership's lot without any pressure. From the comfort of home, you are free to check out the inventory, compare pricing between other dealers for similar cars and research the VIN of used vehicles to find potential issues.

Some local dealerships may offer an online sales portal where you can buy your vehicle directly off the lot with little person-to-person communication.

AVOID OUT-OF-STATE PURCHASES

Some car buyers are enticed by vehicles in neighboring states due to a cheaper price tag or lower tax rates. Unfortunately, the tax collectors require that the fee be paid based on the location where the car is registered, not purchased. In addition to confusing policies, purchasing a vehicle out of state can cause problems if there is a mechanical issue.

Keep in mind that when buying an extended warranty for a used automobile, the dealer may have strict guidelines about where a repair must be made to qualify for financial assistance.

TAKE A TEST DRIVE

A significant part of the car-buying experience is test driving the vehicle to ensure it fits with your daily life. When buying solely online or through a distant dealership, testing its performance within your regular commute is impossible. Buying local provides the opportunity to test the wheels on roads you are familiar with, allowing for the most efficient test drive.



Bank Locally

Shopping locally isn't the only way to enhance a community's economy. Keeping your money within smaller banks or credit unions is also beneficial.

Consumers are treated to more personalized customer care when compared to mega-banks and can find more attractive benefits.

According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), small financial institutes are more prone to turn deposits and loans into productive investments. On the contrary, corporate banks tend to devote a sizable amount of their resources toward speculative trading that benefits their operation. Find out other advantages of banking locally, as suggested by the ILSR.

IMPACTS LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

Ensuring that community banking institutions are profitable keeps personalized care for your lending needs and those of peers. Decision-makers at smaller banks typically live within the neighborhood, have face-to-face relationships with customers and have a firm understanding of local needs.

The close-knit community banking experience tends to be



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more lenient with loans to local businesses and other loans that corporate institutions typically reject.

GROW YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Most small businesses in your area rely heavily on financial backing from their local banks. Did you know that while small and midsize institutions control less than one-quarter

of all bank assets, they account for more than half of all small business lending? Your commitment to banking with local institutes means that the community's economy can continue to grow with the opening of unique companies.

BETTER DEALS

You can find many of the same services at smaller-level banks as their bigger counter-

parts. Convenience factors like online bill pay, debit or credit cards and checks are often offered at much more affordable prices from local groups. You should also expect more competitive perks on savings accounts and lower interest rates regarding credit card fees.

SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local banks are also known

for putting their dollars back into the communities they serve. From donations for charity events to sponsoring youth sports, these institutions typically showcase heavy community involvement. When you commit to entrusting them with your hard-earned dollars, you can ensure that you're having a positive impact on the community you call home.

Buy Local, Save Money

You already know that buying locally helps bring money into your regional economy, but are you aware that you can find better deals on items? Often, locally produced goods are less expensive because there are fewer hands involved in the creation and delivery process.

In cases where local goods cost more than their big-box counterparts, it's mainly due to mass production. Receiving a manufacturer price break requires capital that most small businesses can't afford. When it comes to saving a few bucks by buying from big chains or spending a little extra to support local businesses, remember that the latter keeps more dollars in your community's economy.

According to the New Economics Foundation, when buying locally, twice the amount of money spent stays in the community compared to buying imported or out-of-state goods.

Here are a few ways to shop locally and save money while you support your favorite small businesses.



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FIND LOCAL GOODS AT CHAIN STORES

If you can't complete your entire shopping list at a single local business, do your best to find homegrown products at big-box stores. Many chains will offer a section featuring regional items, including groceries, hardware or clothing. Items will often be cheaper since the cost of

transportation and overseas packaging expenses are eliminated from the asking price.

If a retailer does not separate local products from its name-brand selection, check the packaging to discover where it's made.

Don't be timid about asking employees where the goods originated. Most store managers are knowledgeable

about their inventory.

CUT DOWN ON TRAVEL COST

If you find yourself going out of your way to visit malls or shops that are out of town, you may be spending a substantial amount on travel expenses.

The cost of fuel or finding a hotel after a shopping spree

for those long-distance trips can add up to significant expenditures. Rather than make a long trip to find your favorite necessities, ask a small business in your area to order the same product for you. They may be able to offer a better deal, as it's possible they can buy it at a wholesaler's cost and share the savings.

Buying Local Helps Farmers

Show your support to farmers markets and roadside produce stands in your area. Buying these local products can positively impact the seller and your local economy.

When buying from the direct source, expect the food to taste more delicious than at a big-box grocer. Typically, homegrown produce is harvested at peak freshness rather than picked early and shipped, then distributed to stores in the city.

Learn the importance of supporting your farmers and promote better health by shopping local with these tips from the Michigan State University MSU Extension.

LOCAL EATING SUPPORTS A SAFER FOOD SUPPLY

Cut down on the processing steps your food makes before it reaches your plate. Mass-produced fruits and vegetables are at risk of being contaminated by food safety issues at harvesting, washing shipping and distribution. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the typical American meal has ingredients that, on average, originated from at least five foreign countries.

Local farmers will often boast about their healthier growing conditions and limit



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the use of pesticides or other dangerous chemicals. When shopping at a farmers market, it's common for the person in charge or someone familiar with the growing process to be involved in the operation. Take the time to ask about their commitment to safety and more about how they grow the fruits and vegetables they offer.

BENEFITS THE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

By supporting local farming operators, you can make a significant impact on maintaining farmland and open space in your community. Buying locally also lessens the amount of travel time that is needed for food to reach your neighborhood. A study by Michigan

State University's Center for Regional Food Systems reveals these eye-opening statistics regarding how commercially grown food travels before it reached a local farmer's market.

- Produce grown locally in Iowa traveled an average of 56 miles to market.
- Conventionally grown food

traveled an average 1,494 miles to market.

- Produce traveled eight to 92 times farther than local produce before reaching its point of sale.

Shopping local can limit the need for long-distance transportation that releases dangerous carbon emissions harmful to the environment.

Impacts on Local Economy

Small businesses in your neighborhood rely on a plethora of other local companies to operate efficiently.

Owners are more likely to recruit construction companies from the area to complete tasks or in-town lenders to fund expansion plans. By ensuring these smaller vendors can thrive in the community, you are encouraging a unique choice of products and services, a diverse staff and a booming economy.

To determine which companies in your neighborhood qualify as a small enterprise, check out these guidelines created by the United States Small Business Administration (SBA).

- It is organized for profit.
- It has a place of business in the U.S.
- It operates primarily in the U.S. or makes significant contributions to the U.S.
- It is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field on a national basis.

The SBA also states that small businesses are operated with 500 employees or fewer. As of 2018, the group estimated that 30.2 million micro-enterprises resulted in jobs for 58.9 million workers. Their presence in local communities creates incredible contributions to their neighbors and serves as the backbone of the regional economy.



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TAXPAYERS

In addition to being charitable within their communities, small businesses also pay taxes that enhance local government. As a company generates more revenue, it pays higher taxes. The money they contribute is then used to enhance services like the police and fire departments and local schools. Their thriving presence can also improve

property values throughout the neighborhood, which benefits homeowners.

EMPLOYS LOCAL WORKERS

Every business requires a diverse team to excel and innovate within its industry. Because the need for unique talent is so essential, smaller companies create employment opportunities for work-

ers that larger companies may not employ. A unique staff is required to invent new products and implement problem-solving solutions. Many times, a larger company will recruit talented small businesses to complete various tasks through outsourcing.

GROWING INTO A CORPORATION

Most corporations started

as a small business before moving into the national and international stage. Once a company reaches immense success, it's common for the operation to remain within the community or to continue to contribute to the neighborhood. This opens the door to numerous employment opportunities and a market that encourages more small businesses to move in.

Direct Benefits

Small businesses offer multiple advantages to your community, such as job creation, a more robust economy and providing diversity in products.

When smaller companies shut down due to the presence of major corporations, a community enters a social and economic void. You can help your local business owners by spending your hard-earned money to support their operations.

Consumers will also find direct benefits when shopping from locally owned shops and stores.

MORE PERSONALIZED SERVICE

Passionate employees and dedicated owners often operate small businesses. Their expertise and knowledge on a product or service offer an intimate experience when shopping within their doors. The professionals usually have more time to discuss their goods with interested customers, providing an in-depth view of how to get the most out of their products.

The shopping experience becomes more personal than buying from big-box stores with workers who may not share the same enthusiasm about their products.



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DIVERSE PRODUCTS

From cutting-edge inventions to a diverse range of art, shopping local introduces you to innovative items that you won't find anywhere else. By avoiding chain stores, you have options to find one-of-a-kind products inspired by local creativity and passion.

Search your community for

local art shows or boutiques to find an immense range of pieces. You may get the chance to meet the artist behind the painting or sculpture and find a personal connection with their art.

LOCAL FOOD IS BETTER FOR YOUR HEALTH

Supporting local farmers

markets and produce stands gives you access to homegrown goods. Most smaller farming operations are dedicated to growing their crops without the use of chemicals like pesticides. It's also common that the food you buy is fresher than commercially grown fruits and vegetables that traveled long distances to reach the market.

Locally owned diners frequently purchase from farmers and vendors within their community. This gives you access to ethically raised meat sources, delicious produce and homemade recipes. Not only will you receive fresher dishes, but the money you put into their business directly impacts your local economy.