

Shop Local

Contact us by Wednesday, April 13
to be a part of this packaged deal!

Receive \$50 OFF each ad
plus a FREE digital ad.

As ever, our annual Shop Local section is packed with reasons for consumers to spend their dollars locally. Topics include ideas of local goods and services to support, from photographers to furniture stores to local events, and explainers on where tax dollars go and how local businesses drive tourism to your town.

Publication Dates: Friday, April 29 & Nov. 12.

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Buy Local Furniture

There is no substitute for high-quality materials, natural wood foundations or assistance from a local expert when it comes to furniture.

Sure, you can visit a big box retail store and purchase a new table while you stock up on groceries, but the actual experience of customizing your living room is working one-on-one with a local vendor.

With their expertise, you have access to special order furniture, numerous color options and the personalized touch that is non-existent through other outlets.

Your local furniture stores need your support more than ever. While the coronavirus shutdowns of 2020 affected many retail outlets, the furniture sector was hit harder than most. According to a study by UBS Securities, LLC, the industry closed about 820 permanent stores throughout the nation.

The future continues to look grim as the same report estimates the country will lose another 11,280 home furnishing stores by 2025. If you're in the market for a new sectional or piece of furniture, consider keeping your hard-earned dollars within the local economy and pay it forward to those who support the community.



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UNIQUE OPTIONS

When browsing a local furniture store, don't limit your search to what is available in the showroom. In most cases, a salesperson can listen to your wants and needs and advise you to special order the right set.

While you may have to wait for the model to be cus-

tom-built, you can ensure that it is made with quality and hardy craftsmanship. If you fall for something in stock, ask about getting it delivered and set up in your home. Sometimes building furniture like sectionals and bed frames can be challenging and lead to premature failure when constructed

incorrectly.

The local service provider may even be willing to pick up your old inventory and dispose of it, saving you from the inconvenience.

LOCAL FINANCING

The financing department at a locally owned store likely has solid relationships with

in-town lenders. In many cases, they work with consumers who need help boosting their credit score while receiving a low- or no-interest loan by buying furniture. Check for deals that include terms that avoid interest when the model is paid off before a designated time frame.

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Building Connections

When you're in the doors of a locally owned business, you can ensure that you'll be treated to top-tier customer service.

The experts in charge of the shop must be well-versed in their product to remain competitive against other retailers, and their professionalism shows. If you want to feel respected and have all your questions answered, shopping locally is a safe bet.

Especially if you're new to the area, the local knowledge can be a significant contributor to finding your way around. As you shop, start a conversation about your recent move and ask about the community.

Someone excited about your visit will be more willing to make personal time and share hidden gems around the neighborhood that are also locally owned.

Here are some other excellent ways to familiarize yourself with small business owners and contribute to their operation by committing to shop locally.

MEET UNIQUE CHARACTERS

As you navigate a locally owned store or restaurant, you will begin trusting the owners and employees with their expertise. You may also notice that a relationship with other regulars will build over your like-minded views. Try to be



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open to new experiences and rubbing shoulders with others who frequent the businesses. Having a vast network of unique characters in your life can open the door to unexpected opportunities.

KNOW WHERE YOUR ITEMS COME FROM

It's a good idea to under-

stand precisely where your products are coming from and how they are acquired. For instance, when purchasing items that aren't built with quality, you risk buying something that won't last or crafted with unethical materials or practices.

You should also understand how the groceries you use to

feed your family are harvested. Local vendors are more likely to purchase their meats and vegetables from hometown farmers who run their operation without harsh treatment to animals and limit pesticides.

ORDER CUSTOM GOODS

When you can't find what you're looking for locally, ask

an employee if they can special order the item. Many vendors can pull inventory from partners across the country or custom create the product that fits your needs. If you're not in a hurry, avoid ordering from a big-box e-commerce website to keep your money at home and support your local businesses.

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Local Businesses Drive Tourism

While sometimes you may wish that your favorite local restaurant or shop remains a hidden gem in your town, tourism dollars can create significant benefits for the business owner and community.

Thanks to the internet, out-of-towners can seamlessly research locally owned outlets with review sites and decide to stop by while they're in the area. As word spreads about the available unique products, don't be surprised to see people traveling into the neighborhood to check out the services. This is one of the best ways businesses can organically grow their loyal customer base.

You can do your part to increase your local business's reputation by sharing your experiences online and recommending the shop to family and friends.

When an area is flush with tourism spending, it becomes an enticing location for additional entrepreneurs to set up shop and give the community more character. Take a look at the positive benefits created when non-locals visit the area to get a taste of the neighborhood's flair.

CREATES MORE JOBS
As businesses welcome a



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surge of customers and attention into their shops, an increased need for employees is created.

Many entry-level positions open the door for teenage employees seeking their first job without previous experience. According to the World Travel Tourism Council, around half of all employees in the hotel, catering and hos-

pitality sector are under 25 years of age.

Here are some other interesting statistics regarding the tourism industry from IBISWorld.

- In terms of employment, the tourism sector ranks first in accommodation and food services, the third-largest overall in the United States.
- There are 5,459,152 people

employed in the industry as of 2021.

- The average tourism business in the U.S. employs 12.1 employees.

Between 2016 and 2021, the field increases at a rate of 0.4% each year.

TAXES STAY LOCAL

In addition to gaining revenue from cash spent by out-

of-town visitors, tourist taxes also maintain the community's funds.

Many states and municipalities enact a lodging tax that property owners and managers must pay when renting a room or property.

The costs are often levied to the person staying and retained by the state for distribution.

You're never truly finished finding unique things about the town you live in. To see a side of your local community that you may not have experienced, keep an eye out for local events like fairs, festivals and craft shows.

Participation will introduce you to new passions, hobbies and create incredible networking opportunities. Events offer a chance to bring the community together and celebrate what makes its residents unique.

An excellent way to discover upcoming gatherings is by joining community pages on social networking channels. You can find concerts performed by local musicians, events hosted by various restaurants or food trucks, and showcases for artists to sell their creations. Celebrate the distinctive traits of your town and the extraordinary people who help the economy tick.

FIND A FESTIVAL

When a music festival comes to town, local vendors and business owners unite to show off their goods to attendees. An in-town event offers a great chance to catch a well-known live band or indulge in



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your favorite local acts. Indulge in festive foods, reconnect with old friends and revisit your childhood in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Being a part of the magic also helps build a sense of bond throughout the community and celebrate dishes and traditions that make the location special.

CELEBRATE THE ARTS

Show your appreciation for creativity by contributing to causes like museum exhibitions, orchestras and art shows. Events that celebrate your area's creativity can produce significant growth in terms of revenue and tax concessions. According to the Americans for the Arts organi-

zation, communities with arts and culture strategies are seen safer by their residents. They also report more positive relationships between citizens and police as the arts are thought to bridge the two parties together.

BOOST THE ECONOMY

As exciting events take form

around your community, support its potential success by inviting family and friends from out of town. Spread the word to help draw more people to spend their money on unique goods and homegrown services in your local area. The additional funds can cause a substantial increase throughout the local economy.

Local Events

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Business and the Community

Through hiring employees to giving back to their communities, local business owners play a formative role in shaping the region around them.

When you spend your money within their doors, think of it as neighbors helping neighbors.

Small businesses are often considered the backbones of their communities. According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, when \$100 is spent locally, \$58 remains in the area to boost the economy.

In contrast, if the same amount of money is paid at a chain store, the local area typically only keeps about \$33. Find out other ways that local business owners help the region in which they operate.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Since many small business owners live and work in the community, they are likely to volunteer during local

events, sponsor youth's sports teams and mentor other entrepreneurs. A recent report from Small Business Trends also shows that about 52% of operation owners donate to charity, with 90% of their contributions benefiting local causes.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

In many areas, locally owned businesses set up shop in the downtown area of their community.

Owners cause less impact on the environment by revitalizing historic landscapes, updating to energy efficient appliances and upgrading lighting systems rather than building new structures.

The Environmental Protection Agency suggests that clusters of small

businesses in a walkable area can reduce car usage while encouraging green transportation modes like walking or bicycling. Buying local also cuts down on demand for industrial production, which is responsible for about 50% of pollution in the United States.

CREATES LOCAL COMPETITION

When businesses strive to compete with other companies and solve problems with innovative solutions, the entire community wins. Prices must remain competitive to stay relevant to consumers, and owner-operators will continue to reinvent their current products or services and push the envelope to create a more enjoyable experience.

Where your Taxes Go

When you make a purchase at a store, do you ever stop to think about where your money goes?

When you look at the receipt, are you ever curious to find out where and how your tax dollars are spent, or do you chalk it up to the government using your funds on agendas you have no control over?

While it's easy to become frustrated when seeing a portion of your money go into taxes, shopping locally ensures that your contribution stays in the community. That's why it's so important to show your support to local business by being a consistent customer for them.

Rather than buying online and having items delivered, get some fresh air by personally visiting the store and making your money work toward your neighborhood's growth. Check out how your area's tax flow is positively enhanced simply by buying from locally owned businesses.



BUILD LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In most cases, areas that charge sales taxes divide the earnings between the state and local communities. Regions that are positively impacted include counties, cities and special districts. According to the Tax County Policy, sales taxes account for about 10% of all gained revenue.

Most of the expendable income is used toward improving roadways by repairing potholes or other defects. Citizens also gain safety and recreational benefits due to the development of bicycle paths and public park maintenance.

BENEFIT INSTITUTIONS

Many of your local institu-

tions rely on your dollars being spent in the area. Collected taxes are often used to fund state education for grades K-12 and higher education. The revenue collects supplies for classes, making building upgrades and training programs to increase teacher awareness.

Some emergency services also benefit from local sales tax

collections like police and fire departments. They receive funding to purchase new safety equipment, K-9 units and updated vehicles.

HELP A NEIGHBOR

One of the most significant contributions from collecting sales taxes is programs that benefit community members

who struggle financially. With the support of the federal government, states often fund health insurance for families. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, tax-driven programs aid about 74 million low-income children, parents, older adults and those with disabilities every month.

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