

Shop Local



Why Shop Local?

Shopping local does so much for your community.

From promoting entrepreneurship and product diversity to building prosperity and well being, keeping your money at home has plenty of tangible benefits.

LOCAL CHARACTER

We live in an increasingly homogenized marketplace, where the same stores, restaurants and hotels can be found at every highway exit. Shopping local helps preserve the one-of-a-kind businesses that give every town its distinctive character. Hometown shops also help sustain city centers, neighbor-to-neighbor communication and a variety of local charitable and civic efforts.

STRONG ECONOMY

Local ownership also helps ensure that those who live near you remain a part of the conversation when governmental decisions are made. These small business sometimes provide better benefits and wage packages, and often lead the way in fueling economic prosperity and innovation. Locally owned companies return a far larger share of revenue to the economy that immediately surrounds them, according to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Your money goes right back to your going straight into your village,



© ADOBE STOCK

town, suburb or city — helping it to thrive.

IMPROVED SUSTAINABILITY

Small businesses often revitalize empty existing properties, especially in city centers. They typically don't require the kind of massive infrastructure investments associated with newly built retail strips and big-box stores. Besides

cutting down on habitat loss, they reduce sprawl by encouraging walkable shopping — and that also cuts down on air pollution.

INCREASED COMPETITION

Bustling small-business communities encourage both low prices and more innovation. They also promote product diversity, since their business

plans are based on smaller city- or county-sized samples — rather than national or international sales models. Shopping local helps guarantee that you'll always have more choice in the marketplace.

PERSONAL TOUCH

Many local businesses are family run, meaning you'll get to know the owners and their unique stories. They'll provide

the kind of personal touch that you typically can't get from sprawling supercenters. This personal touch trickles down into the multitude of choices you'll find among small businesses. But it can have a big impact in the wider community, as well. Many of these businesses also support local charities and non-profits, so the money you spend helps make your town a better place to live.

Finding Hometown Spots

Looking for the best tucked-away local businesses?

It's easy enough to find the average big-box retailers, since they have large advertising budgets and even larger physical locations. Here's how to dig deeper.

LOCAL NEWS

Social media, monthly and weekly magazines, trade publications and the daily newspaper offer a wealth of information on hometown shops, family-run businesses and other unique local options. Take the time to look closely over each issue. You may find details in display ads, feature stories, personal reviews or in calendar listings. Neighborhood-focused sites like Nextdoor also have a recommendation feature where you can find tips to discover the next great shopping, home-repair, dining or entertainment spot.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Most local communities, no matter how small, have a group of civic leaders looking out for their local economy at the Chamber of Commerce. They make terrific guides for those searching for any form of goods and services offered in your area — and they have a vested interest in connecting those businesses with you. Some areas also have unrelated non-profit membership organizations who aim is to promote local businesses. A



© ADOBE STOCK

web search can easily tell you how to get in touch. Ask for brochures or directories with comprehensive listings of the companies around you, then start shopping.

THERE'S AN APP

Speaking of the internet, you can likewise rely on a host of

apps as a guide to small businesses. Thumbtack, Angi and the White Pages offer search functions based on your particular need. You can also find reviews, rankings and pricing guides in places like Yelp, TripAdvisor and Foursquare. Google Maps and Yahoo Local link out from general web que-

ries, while apps like HomeAdvisor, Porch and Houzz focus on home-improvement projects. IndependentWeStand also provides a general-search option for those who want to buy local across the nation.

GET OUT THERE

At the end of the day, the

most enjoyable way to find the next great hometown spot is probably just to drive to a new area, then get out and stroll down retail or business corridors. Devote a few hours to a walking tour of discovery. You may find something new that you never noticed when speeding by on your daily commute.

Grocery Shopping the Local Way

The best way to ensure you're eating local to buy from a farmer.

Farmers markets, pick-your-own operations and on-farm stores are meeting a growing demand for locally grown and organic foods.

LOOKING BACK IN TIME

The first-known U.S. farmers market was established in 1634 in Boston. By the mid-20th century, however, larger-scale stores led to a general decline among street vendors. Farmers markets finally began sprouting up again in the '70s — only this time far away from city centers. These suburban or upper-middle class locales initially drew in more affluent shoppers who had the time and money for more selective shopping experiences. Farmers markets have more recently been made eligible for the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, once known as "food stamps." This has made selecting and eating homegrown food accessible to far more people.

RANGE OF OPTIONS

Many people probably associate these shopping trips exclusively with just-picked vegetables and fruits, and you'll certainly find that at any of the estimated 9,000 farmers markets across the United States. But they're increasingly offering a wider array of related vendors, adding to the experience — and the fresh options.



© ADOBE STOCK

You may find artisan cheeses, cured meats, homemade jellies, local crafts and even live entertainment.

GOOD FOR FARMERS, TOO

Shopping at pick-your-own farms and farmers market obviously helps these growers' bottom line. It's also a critical element in protecting our

national food system. Person-to-person transactions offer new farmers, makers and ranchers a low-barrier entry point for sales, and that's increasingly critical as competition to appear on larger chain's shelves continues to increase. In fact, studies show that new produce businesses that blend local and regional food sales with wholesale

efforts survive longer than their counterparts who focus only on trying to break into the chain marketplace.

MARKET FACTS AND FIGURES

There were just 1,755 in 1994, the first year USDA figures were kept. Today, both storied history and impressive numbers back up the growing

trend: For instance, there are more than 400 farmers markets in New York state alone, to go with 250 farm stands and 10 mobile markets. The market in downtown Easton, Pa., has been a staple for nearly 270 years. Some of them, like Pike Place Market in Seattle, have become tourist attractions in their own right. Annual sales in the U.S. total some \$1 billion.

Small Business Trends

When something impacts small business, it impacts our whole economy.

Small firms — defined as those with 500 employees or less — actually account for 99.7% of all businesses while also providing nearly 70 percent of the nation's jobs, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. Here's a look at the latest trends for this incredibly important economic sector.

E-COMMERCE

Online shopping became a principal form of retail when the pandemic began, and the trend continues unabated: Habits made in the wake of lockdowns remained, even as life began a return to normal. E-commerce is now of parallel importance to brick-and-mortar businesses, rather than a secondary consideration.

The number of unique internet shoppers has never been higher.

CUSTOMERS FIRST

Customers remain a key priority, even if they aren't walking in the front door of a store.

Small businesses must work to anticipate and meet the needs of their prospective buyers, exceeding expectations from the point of sale in store on an app to the delivery of their item. Client loyalty has never been most important, as other apps proliferate at such a dizzying rate.

MOBILE MARKETING

There have been changes within e-commerce too, as many customers transitioned from desktop to mobile-only shopping — and then from mobile-web to app traffic. In keeping, there's been an ever-growing focus on mobile marketing — with striking results. Mobile marketing is leading to exponential small-business growth, in

terms of reach, impressions and sales.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Small businesses are increasingly relying on user data which never existed back in the brick-and-mortar-only days. Proximity marketing and artificial-intelligence breakthroughs can help track sites, other apps and previous purchases made by prospective customers, then

targeting future ads or inventory buys to these specific details. At the same time, customers are increasingly worried about data breaches, privacy and security. Small businesses must take advantage of new encryption options and secure digital processes.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability measures are helping to create a more

earth-friendly future, while also doubling as a terrific marketing tool. Customers increasingly want to spend their dollars with companies that are doing what they can to save the planet. Larger companies with high ratings in environmental and social responsibility are consistently beating the market averages in earnings — both long-term and medium. It works for hometown businesses, too.



A Huge Economic Impact

Shopping local may seem like a personal transaction, but there are huge payoffs.

Whether discussing macroeconomics on the nation level, or microeconomics back home, buying locally made, sourced and crafted goods and services drives our entire economy.

NATIONAL FIGURES

Small businesses created nearly 11 million net new jobs between 2000 and 2019, according to the Bureau of Economic Development, compared to less than 6 million from large businesses. In fact, small firms have accounted for just over 65 percent of net new jobs since the year 2000. The small-business community also encourages diversity: 36 percent are owned by women, and 15 percent by people of color. In fact, the number of women-owned companies has grown by nearly 115 percent in the last two decades.

LOCAL STAYS LOCAL

Local retailers return more than half of their revenue to the economy immediately around them, according to one study. Local restaurants do even more, returning 79 percent. Their national counterparts, meanwhile, returned an average of just 14 and 30 percent respectively, as reported in a Civic Economics study. Hometown shops pay for



© ADOBE STOCK

more local wages, typically purchase needed materials locally, and then in turn spark economic growth through job creation and salaries. Large corporations and big-box stores, on the other hand, tend to rely on nationalized systems that don't typically contribute to the local economy, according to another study by the University of Pennsylvania.

SPARKING INNOVATION

Beyond these incredible facts and figures, supporting small business encourages innovation across an array of fields and disciplines. These homegrown companies have produced 16 times more new patent applications per worker than larger firms, contributing to about 44% of the country's gross domestic production.

PROTECTING CHARACTER

Chain department stores, grocers and restaurants can make every town seem the same. Local businesses protect your town's unique character, ensuring that it always has a sense of place.

At the same time, small-business owners tend to be more involved in the com-

munity, since they've invested so much of their own personal time and money into building a local presence.

From supporting area causes to serving on civic and charity boards, they're more likely to give back to their community in a variety of ways, according to the American Independent Business Alliance.

Shopping Local on the Web

As online shopping becomes more and more popular, it's important not to leave small businesses behind.

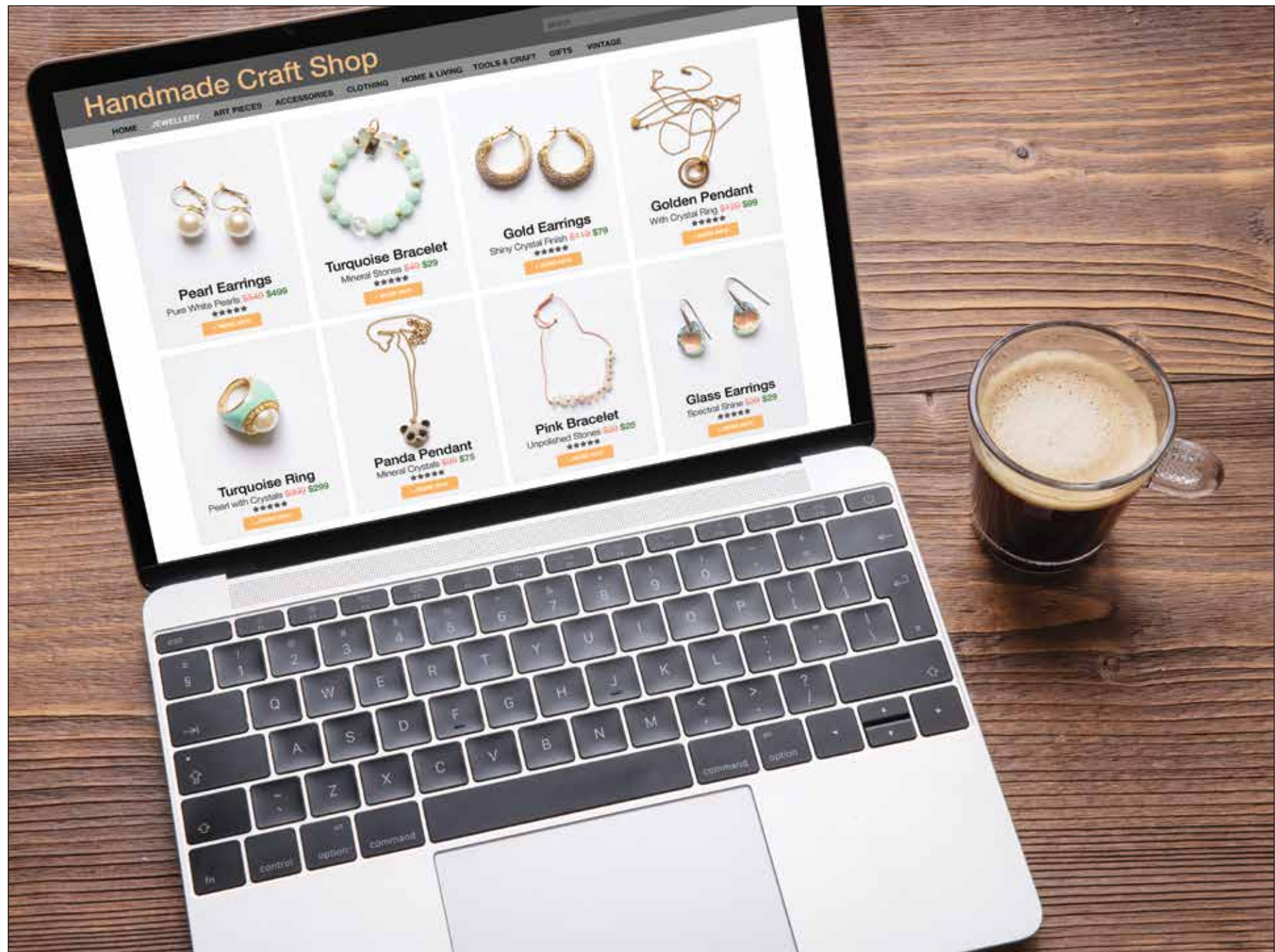
You don't have to give up the comfort of your couch at home to keep crucial dollars in your hometown economy. Here's how to shop local on the web.

STUDY UP BEFORE YOU BUY

It's easy to assume that the only place to get a certain item is from a major retailer. In fact, that's exactly what their massive advertising campaigns are meant to convey. But plenty of small businesses, and even mom-and-pop stores, have an online shop. Start by searching for the item you'd like to buy coupled with the name of your city or town. Local websites will typically include online shopping access, in addition to standard information about their brick-and-mortar operation like operating hours.

WHAT ABOUT AMAZON?

You can also use list and ranking sites like Yelp, Foursquare or Angi that focus on goods and services in your area. You can even shop local on the hugely popular Amazon: Just click on the site's Support Small page. Nearly two million small- and



© ADOBE STOCK

medium-sized American businesses listed their products there between 2019 and 2020 alone, according to Amazon's Small Business Impact Report.

MAP OUT YOUR PURCHASE

Most local businesses maintain a presence on Instagram or Facebook, so they can

always be searched for when you're using those apps. But what if you're new to town, or want to branch out of your immediate neighborhood to shop local? Try Google or Apple Maps, where you can enter search terms that will then render area options with specified route information to get you there fast.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Once you've found a cool new local spot, it's time to spread the news. Word of mouth helps small businesses survive, since they don't often have a huge budget for ad buys. Your glowing review, on their website or elsewhere on the internet, makes sure that the next person hoping to

shop local finds them a whole lot easier.

If you find yourself taking a picture of your new find, be it a special craft, a great meal or a well-done renovation, remember to tag the local business on social media. You're helping boost their business, while strengthening the local economy.

Remodel Locally

Home remodeling projects are stressful enough without dealing with out-of-area vendors.

Include local distributors and craftsmen in your conversations about building materials, design updates and unique customizations. They'll provide a personal touch, while potentially cutting down on wait times. They might also help you save the planet.

MAKE IT TRULY CUSTOM

Working with local companies ensures that your voice is heard through every step of the process, since you'll be getting person-to-person customer service. Design consultants, sellers and skilled tradesmen from your area offer the kind of personal touch that ensures your remodel is custom and truly one of a kind. It's harder to get that kind of individualized attention, not to mention skill and craftsmanship, from faceless chains or some far-flung corporation. You'll see your vision created in a one-of-a-kind fashion.

SMALLER FOOTPRINT

When you shop locally, you're prioritizing the well-being of your neighbors in our increasingly globalized economy. You're also bolstering a sense of civic pride. Together, that can have sweeping benefits for any local community.



© ADOBE STOCK

But you could also be strengthening our ecosystem. Ordering material from right down the road also cuts down on transport miles, meaning your remodel may boast a drastically smaller carbon footprint. Sustainable or green materials do even more to improve our planet's health when they don't have to travel so far to be delivered.

HIGHER STANDARDS

Aside from the obvious environmental and cost impacts associated with shipping products made outside of North America by either sea or air, local products are simply more eco-friendly. Stricter environmental standards are typically in place here, both in terms of pollution and process waste product. The U.S. and

Canada have led the way, for instance, in banning toxic chemicals like formaldehyde and lead.

FASTER TURNAROUND

Manufacturers in other places will necessarily have to add in additional time to get materials or your finished product to the front door. Waiting around can cost you more

than time; it might also break your budget if it leads to cost overruns elsewhere. Consider shopping locally, and custom doors, glasswork, furniture and mirrors should arrive within a shorter timeframe. Local shops won't make you deal with middle-man issues commonly associated with larger companies. That could save you days, or even weeks.