

editor's message



Shop Right

Bloom Magazine has four missions: to support local businesses, to support the arts, to support local charities, and to support diversity. In this issue, our 75th, I want to talk about the importance of shopping locally.

Looking back over the years, I realized that this is the eighth “Editor’s Message” I’ve devoted to the subject, beginning with the sixth issue of *Bloom* in 2007. Buying local wasn’t talked about much in those days, as the internet was not yet the shopping gorilla it would become.

With the holidays approaching, I want to recount again the reasons it is so important to buy local.

Keep the money here

When you spend your money in a locally owned enterprise, more recirculates here, invigorating the local economy. According to a study conducted in Michigan, if you spend \$100 in a local store or restaurant, \$73 stays in the community; if you shop at a national chain, \$43 stays. Shop online or from a catalogue? All of that money flies away.

Job creation

Small businesses, those with fewer than 100 employees, create more jobs than large businesses—52 percent versus 48 percent. As well, entrepreneurs are drawn to communities that support small, start-up enterprises. They hire local people, creating even more jobs. Another benefit—in general, local businesses offer higher wages and better career opportunities.

Better service

Would you rather be seen as a consumer statistic or a valued customer? Chains see you as data while local owners see you as a person. Local owners know your name and remember your preferences. Plus, in a brick-and-mortar store, you can pick up items

to see how they look and feel, try on clothes, and, if something doesn’t work out, returns are easy.

Local businesses give back

It makes sense that when business owners live in a community, they are more likely to support its schools, libraries, arts organizations, and charities, both with donations and volunteerism. Corporate bigwigs in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles are not helping out at Middle Way House or coaching your kids’ team.

Character matters—a lot

Local businesses are part of what define a place and give it a distinctive character. A preponderance of large chains do the opposite—their sameness homogenizes communities, making them all appear the same. Character is particularly important in a college town like Bloomington, where milieu and quality of life are important in attracting top-notch professors and students.

My suggestion: If you are looking for a particular item, and you can’t find it in a local store, go to an area big-box store. And if you can’t find it there, only then order it online.

I know resisting the urge to shop online can be challenging. But the long-term consequences of surrendering to the internet are profound: fewer local stores, more unemployment, more foreclosures, less money for education and social programs, less money all around. And, ultimately, the diminishment of our special town.

Shop local for the holidays and throughout the year. Let’s keep Bloomington Bloomington.

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