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How Our Shopping Habits Help Predict the Future of Our Community

Do you make it a point to shop in your local community whenever possible? Do you value the ability to make most of your purchases at home? Do you personally know the retailers in your community? Can you remember a time when your community was better able to provide the goods and services you needed on a daily basis? What would your ideal community look like today? What would you most like your community to offer residents in the future? Do you think your ideal community would fit most age groups?

These questions and more will be considered as we discover how our personal shopping habits help determine what the future of our communities will look like.

Shopping Spree - Let's begin by taking a virtual shopping spree. Fill out the columns below. In the column to the right of the item listed, write down where you would go to purchase that item. Answer without thinking too hard.

Item or Service Needed	Where would I normally purchase it?	Could it be purchased in my community?
Peanut Butter		
Sheets		
Television Set		
Steak Dinner		
New or Used Car		
Garden Plants		
Tune-up for Your Car		
Haircut		
Prescription Drugs		
Refrigerator		
Fresh Fruits & Vegetables		
Wedding Gift		
Flower Arrangement		
Toothpaste		
Screwdriver		
Fabric		
Dog Food		
Women's Sweater		

Community Business Scan - Take another look at the shopping list. Can any of these items be purchased in your local community?

You are Important to Local Merchants - All merchants and service providers are in business to provide a living for themselves and their families. They want and need you as their customer. When you shop in your local community, your dollars stay in the community. Look at it this way, if you buy an item from a local merchant rather than from the big discount store in the larger community down the road the merchant in that local store might take that same dollar and purchase something in the store across the street. The owner of the store across the street might pay his employee with that dollar. That employee might make a purchase at another store in your community. The owner of that store might use that dollar to make a contribution to a local sports program. The local sports program attracts shoppers from other communities to your town. While the visiting shoppers are in town, they bring outside dollars into your local economy. If they get the impression that something special is happening in your town, they might become return shoppers. When that happens, your community has "pulled" new dollars into your town's economy.

I'm shopping out of town because...I'm looking for the best price; I want greater variety of merchandise; I like the convenience of store hours; I have a desire to be "different"; I like to get away with friends.



Ask yourself the following questions, and answer honestly.

- Does it really pay to get a lower price if it costs more to drive the distance to get the savings?
- How much is it costing my community if I take my dollars out of town?
- Does my out-of-town shopping behavior reflect a trend in my community?
- If I continue to shop out of town, will I have any options to shop locally in the future?

Can't Find It? Just Ask. Go through each of your reasons for shopping out of town. Are there any situations where a frank discussion with your local merchant might help influence your decision to shop elsewhere? How can your local merchant know you prefer a certain brand or product if you don't tell him/her? Remember that your local merchants depend on your business to be successful. They want to please you, their customer. They aren't able to read your mind, so you need to communicate with them if you want to see the types of goods and services you would like to purchase.

Now is the time to help your local community grow and prosper. You can make a difference by changing your shopping habits and shopping locally as a routine. You can also encourage others by your strong example.

"Buying locally keeps wealth circulating in our own communities. It is estimated that for every dollar spent locally, that same dollar will be spent another five times before leaving the community. Imagine how much business we are losing each time someone buys something outside of the county."

Source: Unknown