



Why Shop Main Street?

Americans love Mom & Pop shops. We love their attentive customer service, their unique merchandise, and the special atmosphere of their stores, as opposed to the cookie-cutter retail chains that all seem to sell the same thing. We also love our heritage, and many Main Street districts are the cultural centers of their communities.

Many people consider shopping on Main Street “experience shopping,” because you interact with people and a community, instead of frantically hunting for rock-bottom prices. Shopping on Main Street means finding merchandise that is infused with local heritage and can’t be found anywhere else. It’s about making a connection. It’s also about keeping the entrepreneurial spirit alive and helping local businesses compete against Big Box retailers and other large retail institutions. Choosing to shop Main Street lets these businesses know you appreciate them and want them to stick around.

Still unconvinced?

Here are 10 reasons to spend your holiday shopping dollars at independent businesses in Main Street districts and online:

- **Maintaining diversity and community character:** Local businesses reflect the character of their community through their unique products, services, and atmosphere and through their location in historic buildings, which preserve an authentic sense of place.
- **Vibrant Main Streets help reduce sprawl.** These districts embody smart growth principles by concentrating retail; offering housing on Main Street or nearby to create pedestrian-friendly communities; and using community resources, such as infrastructure, tax dollars, and land, wisely.
- **Historic preservation is the ultimate recycling.** When buildings are demolished, most of the materials are used for land fill. By finding new uses for historic buildings, we reduce demand for new materials and prevent unnecessary land fill. Many Main Street businesses are located in rehabilitated historic buildings.
- **Commercial districts are prominent employment centers.** Even the smallest commercial district employs hundreds of people, and often the district is collectively the community’s largest employer. There has been a cumulative net gain of 331,417 jobs in Main Street districts since 1980.¹
- **Main Streets are home to entrepreneurs.** Small businesses are the lifeblood of social mobility, enabling people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. A marketplace of thousands of small businesses ensures innovation.²
- **Main Streets increase choice.** Thousands of small businesses offering products based on the needs of their customers instead of a national sales plan promote a wider array of choices for consumers.²
- **Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate.** Parades, special events, and celebrations held on Main Street reinforce an intangible sense of community. Private developments like malls and strip centers can and do restrict free speech and access.
- **Everyone benefits from revitalized historic districts.** From residents to financial institutions, from property owners to local governments, everyone is

- better off with a vibrant Main Street district. See a chart on the [Main Street website](#). Historic shopping districts also boost the community's heritage tourism potential, which can be a significant revenue generator for Main Street. Cultural heritage travelers spend, on average, \$623 per trip compared to \$457 for all U.S. travelers.³ Forty-four percent of cultural heritage travelers shop during their trips, compared to 33 percent of all other travelers.⁴
- **Online shopping for the holidays is rising for all businesses.** In 2005, E-commerce sites rang up more than \$30.1 billion during the weeks leading up to Christmas.⁵ Online sales positively affect the bottom line for independent businesses, which usually operate on a thin profit margin, and can make a difference in their ability remain competitive and stay open.
 - **Community-based businesses give more time and money to community activities.** According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses give more time and money to charitable organizations than their large competitors.
 - **Buying from independent businesses has a greater economic impact.** Recent studies have shown that a larger share of each dollar spent in a local business stays in the community as compared to chain stores. Furthermore, the economic impact of dollars spent at local businesses is increased through a local multiplier effect.⁶
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Notes:

1. *2005 Main Street Reinvestment Statistics compiled by the National Trust Main Street Center to measure cumulative reinvestment of all active Main Street communities (1,900 districts throughout the nation) spanning 1980 to 2005.*
2. *The New Rules Project - www.newrules.org.*
3. *The Historic/Cultural Traveler 2003 Edition study prepared by the Travel Industry Association of America.*
4. *The Historic/Cultural Traveler 2001 Edition.*
5. *eSpending report produced by Goldman Sachs, Nielsen//NetRatings and Harris Interactive.*
6. www.civiceconomics.com/Anersonville;
www.newrules.org/retail/midcoaststudy.pdf; www.liveablecity.org/lcfullreport.pdf.