

Conversation with the Mayor - November 21, 2011  
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**It's Important to *Shop Local* All Week Long**

Saturday, November 26, just past, should have been a really big day in your home town. *Shop Local Saturday* started as a promotion by American Express but developed into a nationwide effort to entice people to shop in their own communities. Following immediately after Black Friday, which in too many cases actually began immediately after dinner on Thanksgiving Day itself, *Shop Local Saturday* is a great contrast – and a welcome one.

Full disclosure: Black Friday has no appeal for me. Parking at a distance which requires a shuttle bus to just get there; standing 3 or more deep at a counter to find something which may or may not be a bargain; standing in line again to pay at a centralized check out point because there are no longer sales people in individual departments, and, the final straw: discovering that the sought after purchase was 1) wrong size, 2) wrong color, or 3) available locally at the same price - all reasons to not be there. This is not an attitude that developed with age. I felt the same way many, many years ago when the Newark Sibley's did their Midnight Madness.

Having revealed my negative attitude about the whole thing, let me assure you that there are important positive reasons to shop locally, not just in the holiday season, but year round. A vibrant business district is more than just a place to buy things. In many ways it is the heart of the community. It's downtown, or uptown depending on your perspective. It's where you meet people, pick up news that has not yet made the papers or wouldn't because of its nature. It's where the shopkeepers, many of whom live in the community, know you and your preferences. Their kids go to school with yours. You may work on the same committees, belong to the same service clubs, volunteer at the same sites, and attend the same church. They are part of the community and contribute to it in multiple ways. Their involvement goes well beyond donating to the local fundraisers. And the money that is spent in the locally owned shops stays in the community, recycling again and again. 68 cents of every dollar stays home where it is spent, where it belongs. That 68% of every dollar spent here pays mortgages, rent, and grocery bills. It buys gas and heating fuel; paint and wall paper; treats for your puppy and fudge for you; Friday night's fish fry and the Pancake Breakfast at the Fire Hall. The county sales tax it generates helps reduce other tax levies. The local shop keepers and service providers are an integral part of the community in a variety of ways.

So, if you missed *Shop Local Saturday* on November 26<sup>th</sup>, make up for it. Not just for the holiday season but all year round. Shopping locally is a gift for yourself and your entire community.