

Mayor's Column
November 29, 2016

This past Saturday was “Small Business” Saturday initiated by the American Express Company offering incentives to shop small and local on that particular day.

However, the social and economic facts prove that it is a “bargain” to shop in one’s hometown small stores every day. The beneficial nexus is clear:

- Small businesses generate local sales tax revenue that is a vital component of every community’s budget. If we lost that one revenue line in the Bronxville budget and all other line items remained flat, your Village taxes would have risen 12 percentage points last year!
- For every dollar spent in a locally owned independent store, \$.68 returns to the community. This occurs because of the multiplier effect as small business hire local accountants, architects, computer specialists, sign makers, attorneys etc. Local merchants often even buy ancillary supplies from each other.
- If the same item is purchased at a chain or a mall store, less than \$.40 returns “home.” The reason being chain stores often bypass local service providers, rather having everything handled homogeneously through “headquarters.” Thus, the local accounting firm doesn’t have a chance to even pitch business. And if all of one’s shopping is done on the internet, nothing flows back to the community where the package was delivered.

To play out an all too possible scenario as internet sales increase significantly on a yearly basis, and mom and pop stores close at an alarming rate, if our small downtown shuttered, there would be an immediate 12 to 15 percent tax increase and/or municipal services cut so drastically that quality of life in the Village would be severely affected. Home values would decrease due to their location so close to a non-thriving business district. Home prices are directly related to the nearby amenities offered in the surrounding area, be they attractive gift shops, movie theatres, exercise studios, or small restaurants.

No ones home is increased in value by living near a thriving Costco.

I believe in my core that each time you spend a retail dollar, you must weigh the full value of your choice, not the immediate financial “deal”/benefit, but rather look to the future and what you want for the sustainability of your hometown.

The disappearance of local businesses leaves a social and economic void that is palpable and real – even if unmeasured by an index. The quality of life of a community will change more quickly and negatively than any economic indicator can translate.

A small business district is a treasure - a glue that defines a community – a place where seniors and stroller meet.

Small town businesses not only provide convenient access, they save on fuel and ancillary costs, encourage a walking environment, foster a human connection often lost between a merchant and customer and local merchants support the local community with raffle donations, prizes, gift certificates.

Important to note, when was the last time a donated prize at St. Joe's events, the Bronxville School, the Junior League was from Amazon.com or Costco?

A purchase made in our Village not only delivers a much deserved message of appreciation to our merchants for their sustained local generosity, but our stores offer unique, personalized gifts that are often delivered, wrapped, explained in detail and able to be returned. Small stores also buy from other small start-up manufacturers whose unique products are not produced on a scale mass enough to be a part of a national sales plan for a chain or big box store.

Net net, a purchase in the Village sends money directly back to our public school and Village government via the significant share of the tax burden our small businesses shoulder though they do not use the school or use many municipal services, most notably having their garbage collected privately versus Village labor.

Bronxville shop owners are vested in our community and the unique ambiance/vibe they provide and the pleasing windowscapes that grace our downtown will remain a permanent attribute of our Village only if we walk in and support the merchant inside. As is borne out economically and socially, a purchase made in the Village is the ultimate long term “bargain.”