

How to Build a Local Economy

1. Local businesses are vital to the economic health of a community. They create long-lasting connections between the members of a community. People have a greater ability to control their own economic destiny when working with their neighbors. They can see the cause and effect of economic actions and are able to hold others responsible for their actions.

2. Big-box stores, corporate chains, and factories that hire most of a community offer a model that disrupts communities and economic security, such as Wal-Mart. It is far better to have 80 businesses hiring 100 people each than one corporate business hiring 800 people.

3. Wal-Mart enters a community with large supplies and low prices that put small local businesses out of business. Many times they offer the only employment for those who lost work. Wal-Mart classifies all its employment as part-time work, pays less than a living wage, and offers inadequate health insurance and pension benefits.

4. Those who work at Wal-Mart find that they can only afford to shop at Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is able to have low prices, which drive out local businesses, by externalizing costs to the community in terms of low wages and precarious employment. Wal-Mart offers short-term consumer advantages at the expense of long-term stability and job security.

5. The colonization of communities by businesses like Wal-Mart creates a dependency with no security for workers. It is very easy for a corporation to leave a community if it is not profitable to be there, but this will result in massive unemployment and shockwaves throughout the local economy where subsequent businesses close due to lack of consumers with stable incomes.

6. A diversity of local businesses will result in adaptability for the entire economy of the community. Over time there will be greater stability and a level of protection from the various massive shifts in the national and global economy. Corporate businesses, when they create dependencies in a community, operate according to larger economic factors that are oblivious to the needs and concerns of the local economy. They expose the community to these continual shifts that they are unable to deal with since the community has less financial resources than one corporation.

7. Loans for small businesses should be easier to get than loans to buy products, and should have smaller requirements of collateral, because there is a higher return on investment for the bank in question and the community as a whole. This can be done through a micro-credit system for small loans or a community investment fund for larger loans.

8. Regulatory exemptions should be available to small businesses and regulations strictly enforced for larger companies on a graduated scale. This will encourage a diversity of locally-owned businesses and make it harder for

one single corporation to gain a foothold in a community. Above all, cooperatives should be encouraged at every opportunity, where its democratic structure offers the best job security and goals oriented towards the community as a whole.

9. Many communities have established local currencies, which are used to buy local goods and services, expanding individual buying power and maintaining a steady flow of income for local businesses. They are organized in different ways, but all of them require open access for all residents in the community and limit purchases to businesses owned locally. These currencies should be encouraged as much as possible as a catalyst for local exchanges and a supplement for individual and family incomes.

10. The Green Party is guided by 10 Key Values. Three of these values are "Community Economics", "Decentralization", and "Social And Economic Justice". In the opposition to corporate power infiltrating local economies there is an intersection of these values that shape any subsequent policy advocated by the Green Party. Supporting community economics requires a decentralized structure that in turn promotes economic justice. This decentralized justice transforms local economic action into community economics where individuals can realize and shape their own destiny. By working together with neighbors and family, this empowerment is fortified against the almost daily disruptions by corporations.

11. The Green Party is at the forefront in formulating methods for communities to be empowered. This would mean working with communities in the creation of local currency systems, funds to help start cooperatives, and establishing a micro-credit system for small businesses. It would also require voting for Green candidates at the local level in order to facilitate an environment that is more supportive of small businesses and cooperatives than corporations that originate from outside the community. This partnership of activism and progressive public service can begin the process where local economic decisions are made by the community for the benefit of the community and the nation overall.

12. In 2004 and 2005 George Bush talked about the "ownership society". It created a pleasant image of people expressing their freedom by way of private property but had flaws in reality. The president meant the limited ownership of consumer goods, which does nothing to protect liberty, while a real ownership of the means of production in community-based economies is an authentic "ownership society". Just as political democracy protects and expresses political liberty, economic democracy protects and expresses economic liberty.