

## Press Kit on Local First Campaigns:



by the **American Booksellers Association and Civic Economics**

This press kit includes:

1. Summary from Stacey Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self Reliance *to adapt to your local needs*
2. Recommendations for crafting and localizing a press release, blog post, or news article
3. Example posting on the study by BALLE member network Local First Indiana
4. Links to other media about the Indie City Index

**You can download the full text, executive summary, and view results of the Indy Cities Index study here:**

[http://www.civiceconomics.com/html/indie\\_city\\_index.html](http://www.civiceconomics.com/html/indie_city_index.html)

Press Kit compiled by **BALLE**.

## New Study Ranks Metro Areas on the Vitality of Their Independent Retail

By Stacy Mitchell on January 25, 2011

Available at: <http://www.newrules.org/retail/news/new-study-ranks-metro-areas-vitality-their-independent-retail>



A groundbreaking new study, the [Indie City Index](#), ranks all 363 metropolitan areas in the U. S. according to the vitality of their independent retail sectors.

Produced by Civic Economics, the index analyzes the share of retail sales captured by independent retailers and assigns a score to each metro. In regions that score above 100, independent retailers capture a larger than average share of spending, while chains are more dominant in those metros that score less than 100.

Topping the list are Ocean City, NJ; Bellingham, WA; Medford, OR; Carson City, NV; San Jose, CA; Barnstable, MA; Austin, TX; Dalton, GA; Harrisonburg, VA; Gainesville, GA and Glens Falls, NY.

The Indie City Index also ranks cities within their region and within their population class, identifying those that outperform their peers.

Overall, the study found that independent retailers are strongest in the Mid-Atlantic, Pacific, and New England regions, while chains had the largest market share in the Midwest.

Perhaps most useful for civic and community leaders, the index identified 36 metro areas that outperform their peers in both their region and their population class. While this list includes many of the leading scorers overall, there are a number of additional cities that rank as top performers by this measure, including New York; New Orleans; Portland, ME; Poughkeepsie, NY; Tucson; Louisville; Boston; Asheville, NC; and Charleston, SC.

More than half of these 36 "Top Multi-Category Performers" are served by an Independent Business Alliance or a Local First group. "That so many of leading Indie Cities boast an independent business alliance or local first effort is striking, and testament to the impact this movement is making," the authors note.

The Indie City Index was commissioned by the American Booksellers Association. "Few informed community leaders would dispute the enhanced economic development value of local business," the study notes. "For that reason, Civic Economics and the ABA now hope to move the discussion from the underlying economic impacts to ways in which communities can harness the power of independent retail to build local economies."

Because no reliable data exists on the market share of independent retailers, the authors worked backwards. They determined the market share of the top 107 retail chains in each metro area, developing a measure of chain store saturation, which provided a reverse gauge of the vitality of independents. These 107 chains account for most of the revenue of chain stores and about half of overall retail sales.

While there are advantages to working with Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), there are also limitations to using these federally defined regions, which are meant to encompass areas linked economically, but vary widely depending on the specifics of local geography. The Index, for example, may overlook the robustness of independent retail in cities whose scores are diluted by extensive suburbs.

Because of this, Civic Economics hopes to contract with community organizations or local governments to develop a more fine-grained analysis of particular metro regions. This kind of detailed mapping of a region would illustrate how zoning, transportation, and other policy choices work to undermine or strengthen independent retail.

## Recommendations for crafting a press release, blog post, or news article

1. Summarize the survey
  - a. What: Indie City Index 2011
  - b. Who: American Booksellers Association and Civic Economics
  - c. Data interpretation and key talking points
    - i. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), not by “community”, breaks down the data as we often define it. For example, Local First Indiana covers a specific geographic area—Bloomington and Monroe County but the Bloomington MSA encompasses a three-county area. Alternatively Sustainable Connections serves all of the Bellingham MSA (Whatcom county).
    - ii. The results provide an “index”, where MSAs with an index of over 100 have a healthier than average independent retail sector, and those with an index of lower than 100 have an independent retail sector that is less healthy than the national average.
    - iii. The index represents the percentage of dollars spent at independent businesses, not the total number of independent businesses.
    - iv. The data represent independent retail (not manufacturing, farming, etc.) and exclude groceries and automotive retail (such as gas stations)
    - v. Many of the top-ranked MSAs are served by BALLE networks
    - vi. The Indie Cities Index ranks Bellingham and Whatcom County, Washington #2 in the nation. Bellingham is home to BALLE headquarters, BALLE Hub Network Sustainable Connections, and host of the Living Economies 2011 Conference.
2. Localize the results:
  - a. What is the index for your MSA? How does your MSA rank?
  - b. Quote local business members: How are their sales? How do they feel about the health of your independent retail sector? Where can customers shift their spending?
  - c. Mention other reasons why local businesses are important
  - d. Mention your campaigns (10% Shift and ongoing Local First efforts)
  - e. Include photographs of member businesses and business owners
3. Include charts and images from the study (if the medium allows)
4. Keep the message positive
5. Share your post or article using social media

## Bloomington, Surrounding Area Receive Low Ranking on Indie City Index

By Martin Sorge, Local First Indiana Resource and Technology Coordinator

Available at: <http://www.localfirstindiana.org/2011/02/bloomington-surrounding-area-receives-low-ranking-on-indie-cities-index/>

Earlier this month, the researchers at Civic Economics, in partnership with the American Booksellers Association, released a [study](#) measuring the strength of independent retail across America.

The researchers created an index that measures the proportion of total retail sales captured by independent retailers in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). An “index” of 100 is the national average proportion of independent retail to chain sales. MSAs with an index higher than 100 have a healthier than average independent retail sector. Bloomington (the MSA includes Green, Monroe, and Owen counties) ranked 245<sup>th</sup> out of 366, with an index of 87.4—lower than the national average.

As a Bloomington resident, I was shocked to see such a low index! We have a vibrant independent retail sector, a downtown full of unique shops, and a culture of supporting our local businesses! However, the data speaks volumes about our area—the proportion of total retail sales spent at locally owned stores is much different than the sheer number of independent shops in our community. Just because we have independent business does not mean that our community is supporting them.

What does this mean for us? Several things.

- First, we can **shift our spending** to locally owned businesses. Think about buying your next birthday card from a local shop instead of a chain—I bet you’ll find a more unique card for that special someone. The [10% shift campaign](#) asks communities to do the same thing.
- Second, we can **plug the leaks** in the local economy. If people are heading to a chain store to buy something—it may be because they can’t find the product at a locally owned store! We should see this problem as an opportunity for entrepreneurship. Locally owned businesses can provide many of the same types of products for the same price with better, more personalized service.
- Third, we should continue to **support our local business network**, Local First Indiana, by spreading the word and encouraging people to Think Local First! The authors of the report note that a Local First-type network serves most of the best-performing MSAs, and that well-run networks can improve the strength of the independent businesses in their communities. Networks can help market business, support entrepreneurship, share best practices, and encourage sustainability. Support Local First Indiana by [becoming a member](#), attending an event, telling your neighbors, or simply following us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)!

### Limitations of the study:

The authors of the study highlight the limitations of their data. Cities are ranked by MSA, not by city, which usually expand “community” beyond what we typically think of. Data do not include grocery stores or automotive retailers (including gas stations). The complexity of the data also mean that discerning what businesses should be considered local and independent can be difficult when looking at the entire nation.

I follow the work of [Civic Economics](#) because they are the analytical brains behind many studies that show the impact of local, independent on their communities. Civic Economics is also looking to localize this study and examine city- and county-level data for interested communities. Let us know if you'd be like to know more.

If you'd like to see what a town of a similar population, ranked #2, with an Indie index of 139.5 looks like, join Local First Indiana in Bellingham, Washington this June for the [9<sup>th</sup> Annual BALLE Business Conference!](#)

### **The Indie City Index in the media:**

- “Shoppers go local in Sonoma County”, by Nathan Halverson for the Press Democrat: <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20110206/BUSINESS/110209703?Title=Shoppers-go-local-in-Sonoma-County>
- PD Editorial: “Cheer local”, by the editorial staff of the Press Democrat: <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20110209/OPINION/110209504/1042?Title=PD-Editorial-Cheer-local>
- “New Orleans likes to shop locally”, by Don Ames for WWL AM870/FM105.3: <http://www.wwl.com/New-Orleans-likes-to-shop-locally/9202858>
- “Asheville area ranked 53rd in ‘independent retailer vitality’”, by David Forbes for the Mountain Xpress: [http://www.mountainx.com/news/2011/asheville\\_area\\_ranked\\_53rd\\_in\\_independent\\_retailer\\_vitality](http://www.mountainx.com/news/2011/asheville_area_ranked_53rd_in_independent_retailer_vitality)