



BUFFALO FIRST!

What is it?

WHAT IS BUFFALO FIRST?

BUFFALO FIRST! an affiliate of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), is a local advocacy group that works to build long-term economic empowerment and community self-reliance through local business ownership, economic justice, cultural diversity, and environmental stewardship. Our primary mission is to:

- Promote the growth and development of community-based business
- Encourage local purchasing by consumers and businesses
- Create opportunities for business leaders to network and share best practices
- Devise strategies to help underemployed individuals become more actively engaged in the economy
- Advocate public policies that strengthen independent local businesses, promote economic equity, and protect the environment

RATIONALE

The future of Buffalo rests upon our ability to develop a strong economy, where employment opportunities are ample and wages high enough for people to adequately meet their needs.

While national companies can (and do) generate additional jobs, the benefits they bring to a community are easily negated if local businesses are hurt in the process. As local businesses shut their doors, individuals are forced to clamor for the few (typically lower paying) jobs available locally, or leave town altogether. Either way, Buffalo's tax base shrinks and the entire region suffers as a consequence. Also, given that multi-

national corporations are legally bound to maximize shareholder profits at any social and environmental cost, they are prone to abandon communities, further debilitating the local government which is often left paying for the damage – in the form of unemployment compensation, higher welfare payouts, and diminished property taxes.

On the flip side, several studies have shown that money spent at locally-owned businesses stays in the local economy and continues to strengthen the economic base of the community. A 2002 case study in Austin, Texas showed that for every \$100 in consumer spending at a national bookstore in Austin, Texas the local economic impact was only \$13. The same amount spent at locally-based bookstores yielded \$45, or more than three times the local economic impact (*Civic Economics, Austin Unchained October 2003*). Beyond that, local businesses generally provide more spending per worker in terms of charitable and in-kind donations to the wider community, provide stable employment, make more efficient use of financial and environmental resources, and maintain the uniqueness of communities – which is something creative workers look for when choosing where to settle. (*Richard Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class, 2002*).

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months, **Buffalo FIRST!** plans to launch a "Buy Local" advertising campaign in which we will 1) Educate consumers about the social and economic benefits locally-owned businesses bring to our community and 2) Develop and execute innovative strategies to help local businesses increase their market share.

Think Local. Buy Local. Be Local.

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