**What is Truly-Local DNA?**

Thoughtful quote of the week: General Shinseki said, *"If you don't like change, you are going to enjoy irrelevance even less."*

 When we ask people, what does ***Truly-Local*** mean, we get varied responses, but invariably, most will say that it is shopping local. While shopping local is certainly a component of being ***Truly-Local***, I would suggest that being ***Truly-Local*** is much more that just shopping local. In fact, the shopping component only makes up 10-20% of the ***Truly-Local*** DNA needed in a community to become an economic force from which the community can prosper and grow. Let me explain.

First, let’s quickly discuss shopping. Yes, shopping local is part of the ***Truly-Local*** DNA, but understand that not all shopping local is created equal. When one shops at a locally-owned and operated business, it has between 3-7X the local impact than shopping at a Big Box, Chain or online where the owners aren’t local. We will explain this in greater detail in future columns going into the compounding impact, reinvestment of profits and so forth. Understand that locally-owned and operated businesses have the ability to impact your economy greater than most will ever imagine.

Do you realize that not all-economic development has the same impact on your community? There are certain types of economic development that not only return a far greater ROI, but that will spur outside and private investment dollars at a much higher rate than any other economic investment. Future columns will touch on where and how to invest your city development dollars most efficiently.

Do we understand the devastating impact when a community loses its media base? Your local newspaper is your community’s ambassador to the outside world, if it were to disappear, who would tell your story and promote your town to the world? A recent Notre Dame study showed that where newspapers have gone out of business, the cost of local government grows in excess of 30% within five years. Not only that, but when communities become what is referred to as news deserts (those without a newspaper or voice), that business declines, less people vote and civic involvement dwindles. We will discuss this in future columns.

Regardless of whether you have a small or large tourism base, there are simple ways to double down on this base. Nearly every town can create some sort of tourism and those with ample tourism can grow that substantially with simple tactics and strategies. Those will be discussed in future columns as well.

Most city and community governments will agree that the ***Truly-Local*** mentality is critical to their growth and future. However, did you know that most governments, while with the best intentions, have changeable laws, regulations and procedures that actually harm their own efforts? We will discuss how local governments can make minor adjustments and stimulate their communities without spending a dime more.

We will discuss a simple method that every community can employ and that will send hundreds of thousands, if not millions of new dollars circulating through their community without anyone having to spend a nickel more than they do now.

Does your community need job growth? Are your children leaving for college, never to return other than for trips home to say hi? We will discuss ways your community can employ tactics that drive innovation, entrepreneurship, job growth as well as quality of life that will tackle these issues head on.

While we intuitively understand that the arts, music and entertainment are vital to the ***Truly-Local*** mentality, we will discuss ways that your community can utilize those resources to a greater advantage. We will show examples of what others are doing. As they say, the greatest form of flattery is to not reinvent the wheel, but to copy programs that have shown success.

In addition to the above and much more, this weekly column is all about vision, leadership and excitement. Communities must change; employing the same traditional strategies only spell doom. With the influx of non-local Big Boxes, Chains and of course, online offerings, communities that don’t utilize new techniques will fail. We are excited to bring you weekly ideas on how your community with the assistance of your local newspaper cannot just survive, but thrive in 2020 and beyond.

**John A. Newby,** author of the "***Building Main Street, Not Wall Street*** " column dedicated to helping communities and local media companies combine synergies allowing them to not just survive, but thrive in a world where their “***Truly-Local***” identity is being lost to Amazon, Wall Street chains and others. His email is: john@360MediaAlliance.net.