

## Village of Paw Paw

# Downtown Development Authority

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## What Retail Characteristics are Important to Small-Town Consumers?

Competition is everywhere. It's dog eat dog and often the first dog eaten is the local independent retailer who gets run out of business by corporate giants and big box retailers.



How do you survey?

Small-town independent retailers need to continuously examine and re-examine their business strategies to meet the changing expectations of their local consumers. Small-town consumers' expectations of local independent retailers are shifting due to varying dynamics of retail environment including the entry of big-box retailers. It is essential that independent retailers know their local customers and exploit niche strategies that big-box retailers do not provide.

Studies have shown many strategies performed by small-town independent retailers do not meet their local consumers' expectations. Specially, merchandise assortment and availability, such as offering a unique and large selection of products, showed the largest discrepancy between respondents' expectations and retailers' performance.

**Participants who were satisfied with their independent retailers, shopped locally, were strongly attached to their communities, and were willing to support their local independent retailers.**

In order to co-exist with big box retailers, small town retailers may increase customer traffic and sales by emphasizing the availability of high quality merchandise in stock and convenient customer services such as satisfaction guaranteed on product returns, effective handling of customer complaints, and knowledgeable sales associates. Also, addressing store environment issues such as user friendly location of merchandise, store cleanliness, wide shopping aisles and public restrooms located close to the store may be beneficial for small town retailers who are trying to differentiate themselves from large discount competitors.

It is not impossible to not only survive but thrive in the face of increasing competition.

**Check out the following two pages, based on one such study, for information that matters to small town consumers – your friends and neighbors – as they shop in your store, non-local stores, or on-line.**