

THIRTY-ONE WAYS TO JUMP START THE LOCAL ECONOMY¹

Sarah van Gelder[©]

How to make it with less, share more, and put people and the planet first

At Home

- (1) Rent out a room in your home, or swap space for gardening, child or elder care, or carpentry.
- (2) Buy less so you can buy higher quality. Buy from companies that “internalize” costs by passing along to you the cost of living wages, low carbon footprints, or organic production.
- (3) Take your money out of predator banks and put it into a credit union, local bank, or an institution such as Shorebank Pacific that supports sustainable businesses.
- (4) Pay off debts. Try life without credit cards.
- (5) Downsize your home and shrink your mortgage.
- (6) Fix things. Mend clothing, repair the vacuum, fix the car — instead of replacing them. Or give them away on Freecycle.org.
- (7) Invest with passion. Know where your money is and what it’s up to. Go for a living return that builds your community. Or invest in tangible things such as a prepaid college fund or a piece of land.
- (8) Shorten the supply chain. Pick the wild greens and extra fruit growing in your neighborhood. If you can’t do that, then buy direct from a farmer. If you can’t do that, then look for local produce in season at your locally owned grocers.
- (9) Support other people’s local economies by urging your representatives in Congress to cancel debts to poor countries (see www.jubileeusa.org).
- (10) Find a place, put down roots, and stay put. Get to know people from other generations. Turn off the TV and talk to friends and neighbors.
- (11) Support local green businesses rather than distant energy conglomerates by insulating your house, upgrading windows, and installing solar.

Together With Friends

- (12) Form a dinner club and hold a weekly potluck, or trade off cooking and hosting.

¹ Yes! Magazine, May 07, 2009

- (13) Dip your toe in the barter economy. Check out Craigslist's "barter" category, and learn what WTT means (Willing To Trade). Even better, ask the guy at work who makes microbrews to trade a sixpack for a dozen of your chickens' eggs.
- (14) Get together with co-workers and start a list of things you can do at work. For example, buy fair trade coffee, change to energy-efficient lighting, or carpool.
- (15) Start a Common Security Club in your faith community or neighborhood to help folks cope in the crisis and act together to create the new economy (www.commonsecurityclub.org).
- (16) Exchange care of children and elders. Better yet, bring the generations together and support each in offering love and care to the others.
- (17) Pool funds with a group of friends for home repairs, greening projects, or emergencies.
- (18) Do home work parties. Each month, go to a different household to do major home greening, a garden upgrade, or some deferred maintenance.
- (19) Keep more people from becoming homeless by challenging evictions and occupying vacant homes.
- (20) Create a space at a farmers market to exchange or sell used clothes, electronics, games, CDs, plants, seeds, compost, and books. Encourage people to swap services, too, such as haircuts, photography, or prepared dinners.
- (21) Reach out to groups that are organizing people on the frontlines of the crisis, such as Jobs with Justice (www.jwj.org) and Right to the City (www.righttothecity.org).

In Your Community

- (22) Link up people looking for job skills with people who can offer apprenticeships.
- (23) Start a local currency or time dollar program to help link needs and offerings, those with time and those starved for time.
- (24) Use publicly owned lands for community gardens, farmers markets, business incubators, community land trusts (with affordable housing), community-rooted grocery stores.
- (25) Hold on to the local businesses you already have. Help retiring entrepreneurs sell to employees or other locals.
- (26) Create a car, kayak, and electric pick-up truck co-op to save money and carbon, and provide access to a variety of vehicles.
- (27) Create or join a chapter of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) or similar groups. Work together to find services or products you could substitute for imported ones, local assets you can build on, and ongoing institutions that could be serviced locally.

- (28) Start a community bank, loan fund, or credit union to invest in local well-being, or encourage existing ones to rethink their lending.
- (29) Declare an end to corporate personhood in your community. Barnstead, New Hampshire did, and, more recently, three communities in Maine have done it. You can too.
- (30) Hold a weekly dinner for the hungry. Ask those who attend to help serve food at subsequent dinners. (Having an opportunity to give is important for everyone's dignity).
- (31) Keep your energy dollars circulating locally. Launch a clean energy cooperative to install wind turbines or solar roofs, and to weatherize homes and businesses.