



Nevada Gift Shop and Visitors Center owner Dave Asher points out one of his favorite photos, a shot of a lightning storm over downtown Reno from Kevin Cooper and Andy Horstmanhoff's Mindful Images Photography.

At first, the business struggled. "That's a tough mall," Asher said. Reno Town Mall opened in 1972. It still sports the dark, brick-lined interior of its era, and fellow tenants include a small handful of retailers, a radio station and branches of the Washoe County Library and Nevada Job Connect.

"I didn't have any money for payroll for nine months," Asher said. "I worked seven days a week for nine months. Retail's tough." He said that increasing the store's size helped, and so did teaming up with the mall's owner on television and radio ads. (Asher said that a re-brand for the entire mall is underway that will include new retail and "some really nice restaurants," which he's not at liberty to name yet.)

The latest trends

In an era when chain stores are closing and online retail is soaring, it turns out that a few sectors of retail are actually thriving—for a few different reasons.

Asher observed, about his neighboring tenant in Reno Town Mall: "Burlington's booming," even despite the reduced square footage. "There's always 50 cars in their parking lot. They rebranded ... and I've watched who goes in there. It's minorities who are doing well. They're driving the Escalades. They don't want to go to Savers. They don't want to go to Target. But they're not going to go to Macy's."

According to the fashion retail trade publication Footwear News, Burlington customers "are typically 39 or younger, African-American or Hispanic and earn around \$64,000 to \$77,000 annually," and the 2018 rebrand led to an increase in

Burlington's stock price from \$30 a share to \$180. "Off-price" retailers like this one are among those who are doing well.

Another indicator of retail success was outlined in a Forbes article defining the top retail trends of 2018: "More and more, consumers are shopping with their emotions instead of their wallets. Indeed, millennials' changing preferences and attitudes regarding corporate responsibility, social consciousness, and more have already impacted how retail brands present and position themselves."

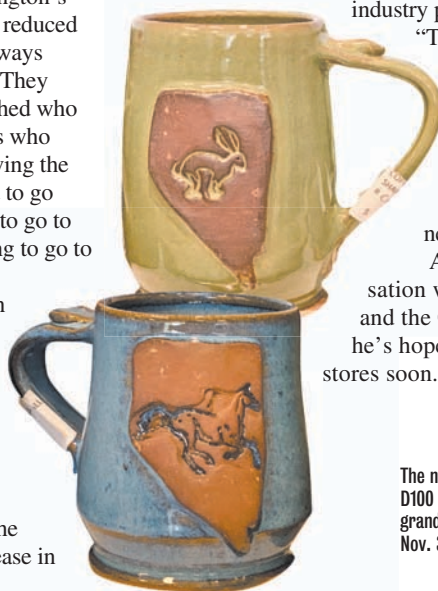
And buying local is among their priorities.

Brad Scribner from the Nevada Small Business Development Center, when asked for data on the benefits of buying local, pointed out an often cited 2018 study by American Express, reporting that for every dollar spent locally, 67 cents stays in the community. That study doesn't say what percentage of a chain-store purchase stays local, but an oft-cited 2012 study by Civic Economics, a business consulting firm, puts the figure at 13.6 percent.

Perhaps more importantly, according to industry publication Small Biz Daily,

"The buy local movement is all about telling the story of small businesses. ... Compelling data can—and does—make customers listen, but it's not the only story small businesses have to tell."

As for Asher, he's in conversation with a downtown developer and the Chamber of Commerce, and he's hopeful that he'll open two more stores soon. □



The new Nevada Gift Shop and Visitors Center is in space D100 in Outlets at Legends, 1310 Scheels Drive, Sparks. A grand opening celebration is scheduled 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Nov. 30.

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