Hidden Gems - Analysis of Similar Apps

There are a few apps that offer users a way to find local businesses, but I can't find any that do exactly what I see my app doing that have gained much traction in the market. The idea behind *Independent We Stand* mirrors my idea almost exactly, but the UX and UI design of the app are pretty terrible and the reviews reflect that users aren't happy with the accuracy of the search results. *Buzz* seems fairly popular and skillfully developed, but the requirement to create an account before accessing the app and the heavy emphasis on the social component may alienate some users.

1. **Shop by Shopify** is well-known and popular, but it doesn't serve exactly the same function as my proposed idea. The primary function of the app is to track orders and package deliveries. The app was updated in 2020 to include a "shop local" function that even lets users purchase items through the app, but it only lists "local merchants that use Shopify's products" (FastCompany). My app will aim to include every single locally owned business.

    1. https://www.fastcompany.com/90497579/this-new-app-from-shopify-helps-people-find-and-shop-from-local-businesses

2. **Independent We Stand** claims to function almost exactly how I envision my app to function. The app has been on the App Store for 8 years and still only has less than 20 ratings and reviews, with a total star rating of 3.0, meaning that it is not well known and not popular among those who have used it. The UX and UI design of the app is severely lacking. Plus, several reviews complain about inaccurate and incomplete search results.

3. **Shop Local** is another website/app that sounds like it could be exactly like my app, but it is an e-commerce product where local businesses can list and sell items. There is no list/directory of local businesses.

4. **Buzz** seems to be the biggest competition for my app. It was released in early 2020 and already has a 4.9 star rating from 591 reviews. It has a prominent social component — business owners can publish videos and text posts, and members of the app can interact with these posts, and choose to be alerted to posts by following certain hashtags like they would on social media platforms. There is also a heavy emphasis on supporting businesses like you would support a friend or family member in need; business owners are encouraged to post their Venmo username so that customers can donate if they want to. It seems like it is primarily a way for business and customers to interact, as opposed to a simple directory like my app idea.

Hidden Gems will be useful because it will provide users an incredibly simple way to find local businesses. The app will be created with usability as the highest priority. Users will not be required to create an account or be pestered with notifications from overzealous business owners.