

01/10/2012

Hello. My name is Gregory Delzer, and I live on Kimball Rd. in Iowa City. I am the owner of Defunct Books, which is currently located at 521 E. Washington St. above the Red Avocado restaurant.

I first visited Iowa City in the summer of 1990, when I was nineteen years old. I took a bus from Laramie, Wyoming, where I was going to school, to attend the Iowa Summer Writing Festival. I returned in 1992 and again in 1995. Not only was I exhilarated by my experiences at the festival, but I grew to love the City. I loved the beauty of the campus with the Iowa River flowing through it. I loved the Pedestrian Mall. I loved Prairie Lights, and Ragstock, and Whitey's, and The Mill, and the Haunted Bookshop, all places which were as unique and memorable then as they are now.

I moved to Spokane, Washington in 1998 to attend graduate school and purchased Defunct Books in 2003. The store, then named Inland Bookstore, had been a fixture in Spokane since the 1950s. I am the fourth owner in those 55+ years.

In 2007, I decided to relocate the bookstore. I had the opportunity to move the store anywhere in the U.S.. Ultimately, my decision came down to either Portland, Oregon or Iowa City. I chose Iowa City. And the reason it won out was the uniqueness of the City. What impressed the 19 year old college student still impressed the 36 year old small business owner.

What impresses me less is the idea that these new developments will be a financial boon to the City. While it may be true that these buildings will provide the City an "increased tax base" as Senior Planner Robert Mikklo stated to the City Manager in his memorandum of January 5th, I don't believe the financial impact of uprooting these two small businesses has been fully understood.

I don't wish to speak for the Red Avocado, but I hope the owners of the Red Avocado don't mind if I speak about their restaurant. Both businesses are locally owned and pride themselves on giving back to the community. Both businesses source their inventory locally. In my four and a half years in Iowa City, I have pumped nearly \$80000 dollars directly into the community through the purchase of inventory. The owners of the Red Avocado source much of their ingredients locally through the support of local farmers.

In addition, the owners of both businesses pride ourselves in supporting local, independent businesses, so our profits are also funneled back into the community (which is then cycled back through those businesses' profits). We're both sponsors of the local roller derby team. Finally, the owners of both businesses believe in paying livable wages to our employees. The Red Avocado does a better job of this, as I only have one additional employee while they are providing multiple jobs, but the ethos is a shared one.

The Red Avocado contributes to a wide variety of local causes and charities through their series of benefit dinners. Defunct Books has contributed to the U. of Iowa Student Health Fair, Friends of the Animal Center Foundation, the Shelter House, and to the rebuilding of the Alpha Chi Omega sorority house, amongst others.

It's not just the historic buildings which give this neighborhood its character. And when these small, independent businesses are harmed due to a developer holding to the letter of the law, the City suffers. I was given the indication that we would be given at least 60 days to move. Receiving instead 30 days notice to vacate has put me in the position of having to decide whether this City is still in my best interests. I am not sure what the City Council can do regarding this pending demolition, but I do worry that Iowa City may be losing some of its character that initially was such a draw to me and many like me.

Sincerely, Gregory Delzer, Owner of Defunct Books