

# New eatery opens, gives different twist to local scene

## *Dough's Brian Ross shares about first days*

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Photo by Maisey Cooley - A&F Editor

Dough opened to the public on Feb. 12.



Photo by Emily Honeycutt - Asst. A&F Editor

Brian Ross is the owner and head chef of Dough.

Brian Ross nodded, leaned back in his chair and placed his hands behind his head in a relaxed fashion.

"I had enough of the corporate life," he said.

Ross, owner and head chef of Dough, a new marketplace and eatery on Merrimon Avenue, opened the doors on Feb. 12 to a crowd that packed the establishment from open to close.

"I was here until 2:30 the night before we opened," Ross said. "Then I came back at 6:30 in the morning and worked all day, until 9:30. It was nonstop."

Ross worked as the director of food and beverage at the Biltmore Estate before he decided to break away from the corporate world and start his own local eatery.

Although Dough sits outside the downtown limits, the establishment exists for the North Asheville community almost exclusively.

"This is my neighborhood," Ross said. "I live basically right next door. I have two young kids, 7 and 9. I know the people in this community, which are who this place is for. It's for my neighbors."

Ross's attitude toward corporations inspired him to create a place where locals could come and order a personal pizza, cup of tomato bisque, craft soda or sit and chat at one of the new, shiny tables with a few friends. His dream reflects what many Asheville business owners desire – a town without chain establishments.

Locals of Asheville recall the uproar caused by the arrival of retail store Urban Outfitters on Haywood Road, right in the center of downtown Asheville. Internationally known, the Urban Outfitters company owns more than 400 retail stores across nine different countries, according to their website, urbanoutfitters.com.

Urban Outfitters' arrival generated mixed feelings toward the company, the city and its attitude toward large businesses.

Tara Spencer, a 20-year-old junior at the University of North Carolina Eshelman School of Pharmacy, Asheville campus, and former employee of Urban Outfitters in Durham, said she feels positively toward the introduction of a large company into the downtown scene.

"I think repurposing the CVS space into a hip, popular store actually helps our downtown," Spencer said. "I would say that in general, the audience that Urban Outfitters attracts would also appreciate local efforts and aims. I also think it would be wrong to say that if someone visits the store, they're not going to go next door for a cup of coffee or to one of our art galleries. If you aren't a local, Urban Outfitters could be a familiar face that might bring you downtown to search for more. Over-

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all, I think that Urban Outfitters just gives our already dynamic downtown a little push."

Asheville welcomes large businesses into the city limits, as stated by Meghan Rogers, the membership and marketing manager for the Asheville Downtown Association.

"The city does not have any ordinances or permits against big business in Asheville," Rogers said. "But we are certainly a community that works to support local businesses."

The Asheville Downtown Association is similar to a chamber of commerce, according to Rogers. They plan large-scale events for the downtown community, such as Downtown After Five, Oktoberfest, the Asheville Holiday Parade and other family-friendly events.

Today, large businesses in Asheville do not dominate the skyline, even though the streets now include Kilwin's, Subway, BB&T, Biltmore, Jimmy John's and a Starbucks just outside the downtown limits on Charlotte Street.

With his previous experience in the corporate world, Ross now works in the kitchen at Dough, donning a baseball hat and rumpled apron instead of a full suit.

"It's nice to do what you want to do, and without confines," Ross said, rolling his eyes and smiling.

Dough's location on Merrimon Avenue reflects his values as a community member, as he said he chose the location strategically.

"If we had started downtown, we wouldn't have as much of this community we have," Ross said. "Downtown has its own community too, but this area around here – Kimberly, Grove Park, Montford, Beaver Lake – it's a very community-based place. My whole idea was to try and do something different."

Looking out the windows that face Merrimon Avenue, Ross laughed to himself about the giant, red dancing balloon man his brother rented for Dough's grand opening.

"It doesn't seem very Asheville," he said. "But it's pretty funny."

He walked back into the main retail shop and dining area, checking in with employees and customers and answering endless questions about food shipments and chair orders, seeming happy he had built a place like Dough.