

## Adrienne Breitfelder

---

**From:** Citizen Support Center <dubuqueia@mycusthelp.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 5, 2022 3:29 AM  
**To:** Adrienne Breitfelder  
**Subject:** "Contact Us" inquiry from City of Dubuque website

This sender is trusted.

**Attachment:**  
[Dubuque City Council.docx](#)

### Contact Us

**Name:** Doug Donald  
**Address:** 2920 Arbor Oaks Ct  
**Ward:** 2  
**Phone:** 5635806444  
**Email:** dsdplay69@gmail.com  
**City Department:** City Council  
**Message:**

Dubuque City Council  
Dubuque, Iowa

Doug Donald  
2920 Arbor Oaks Court  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001  
563-580-6444

Members of the City Council:

Sorry to be contacting you so close to the work session you will be holding on Five Flags but I have been involved in a project that has taken a great deal of my time and I am just getting around to sending you a few thoughts. Plus, I must confess that it seems that every time I was getting close to forming those thoughts the ground would shift concerning the direction the future of Five Flags would take. Understanding the demands your position on the council puts upon you and the short period of time between this communication and your meeting, I will try and be brief. I will be dealing with two areas.

I should also preface my thoughts by letting you know that my first job after moving to Dubuque in 1979 was at the Civic Center, right after it opened. Also, that I am the founding artistic director and current board member of Fly-By-Night Productions, a theatre company that performs in the Bijou Room. In fact, we performed in the Bijou Room during our first season 40 years ago. However, I am contacting you as a private citizen and not as a representative of Fly-By-Night.

First, it is my hope as you move forward on deciding the future of Five Flags that you will change the name of the facility. I understand that this involves time and money, but it needs to be done. As to what it should be changed to, I have no thoughts: perhaps it might be a task for the Five Flags Commission. If called upon I would be willing to help in any way.

To explain, this started for me as I am working on a land acknowledgment statement for Fly-By-Night Productions, to be included in the programs for our plays. As I was doing this, I was struck by the fact we perform in a city building whose name only recognizes what happened in the area after it was invaded and conquered by Europeans; it totally ignores the thousands of years that an Indigenous culture existed in this area and that we live on what once was native land. Many different nations occupied this land; among them were the Ho-Chunk, Ioway, Otoe, Missouriia, Meskwaki, Sauk, Potawatomi, Dakota, and Lakota. I have been proud of the city's efforts in the areas of DEI, BIPOC and AAPI; all of the city's efforts to increase diversity and belonging in our community. But calling the civic center Five Flags goes against those efforts. Especially given the connection between the individual, Dubuque, our city is named for and that Indigenous culture. If we are to put our words into affirmative action, we must find a different name for the theatre and the civic center. It would also seem to me that this would be the ideal time for such a change given the future changes that might happen to the building.

The next section you do not need to read if you have already decided on what needs to be done within the current footprint of the civic center as what follows are my thoughts on what to do

with the building that differ from various ideas I have heard. They come from having worked within the building in many different capacities and over a long period of time. This leads me to approach the future of the building based on three starting points.

One, the design of the building's interior footprint simply does not work for a modern arena; limiting the type of events it can be used for and adding to the cost of running it. I know you know many of them such as seating limits and lack of bathrooms. I will add 3 others, but I could add more. If they have already been brought to your attention, I apologize. The ceiling is too low for modern staging practices. This has been a complaint from the very beginning; this limits the number and types of productions that want to use it. There is no freight elevator, adding to the time it takes to change over from one event to another; again, adding to the cost of running the building, but also limiting what can be done using the lower and upper levels of the facility. The storage space is too small and is not connected directly to the arena, which again adds to the time it takes to change over events, adds to cost and limits the variety of uses.

Two, over time there have just been too many "small cuts" to the arena in terms of uses and competition. When the Grand River Center was built it was decided that Five Flags could no longer be booked for conventions or activities such as Home Shows or RV and Boat shows. When the Ice Center was built it took all ice activities from the building. University of Dubuque built the Heritage Center. Now there are plans to build an amphitheater on the island. Plus, it seems between the mood of the city and the economy there is no desire to build a larger arena.

Three, the Five Flags complex is the only facility in the area that if available for use by community groups to use. Groups such as the Dubuque Symphony, the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, and yes, even Fly-By-Night Productions. I would hope that would remain a focus of the center in the future.

So, since you are not taking it bigger in the future, why not think smaller. Use the foot print of the building to create a community-based art facility, centered around the Five Flags Theatre. I don't want to take up your time here, so without going into great details, I believe the following general items could be achieved.

The following would make the Five Flags Theatre more attractive to both audience and performers. Thereby increasing its use and the attendance.

- Increase the lobby size of the theatre. Providing more space for an audience to wait during inclement weather or get out of the heat.
- Increase the number of bathrooms on the main floor of the theatre.
- Provide a proper box office.
- Provide a concessions area with seating at tables, a small stage for performances before a show and/or at intermission.
- Provide more off-stage area on the stage making the theatre available for a greater variety of activities and events.

- Provide a hydraulic lift pit allowing it to easily be set at one level when an orchestra is needed or at floor level when more seating is needed, or at stage level when a larger stage is required.
- Provide a hydraulic lift trapdoor in the stage increasing the ways it can be used.
- Provide more modern dressing rooms and backstage bathrooms for the performers.

Using the rest of the arena space you could do the following.

- Create a small performance space, seating around 125 to 150 audience members; something the city does not have for community organizations, but is needed. I would note here the Bijou Room will never be an optimal performance space for a number of reasons.
- Create a small art gallery that can focus on local art and be open when other events in the center are happening.
- Move the cities Art and Cultural office to the facility. They would then be centered in the middle of the downtown cultural corridor.
- You would still be able to adapt the north wall to create an outdoor space.

I know it seems like a lot but I believe it all could be done and would serve the needs of the city well.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time. I thank you for both taking time to give a hearing to my thoughts and for your service to the city. Finally, I do hope you take into consideration my first point.

Doug Donald  
2920 Arbor Oaks Court  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001  
563-580-6444