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Controversial owner of clothing store is leaving the Pacific Garden Mall.

# Store owner calls it quits; he's sick of Pacific Garden Mall

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SANTA CRUZ — Downtown merchant Ron Trinchero is sick of the Pacific Garden Mall, the city's beautifully landscaped main street that is meant to be so quaint tourists can't help but spend money in the shops.

He is moving his shoe-and-shirt shop off the Mall after taking it over 10 years ago because his rent has tripled and he is sick

and tired of trees, planter boxes, public benches and downtown.

The vendor of the controversial "troll-buster" T-shirts is even sick of the T-shirts after three weeks of booming sales.

He's always been tired of the "trolls" — the name given to the streetpeople who haunt city streets and parks with backpacks and blankets on their shoulders, and food stamps, but little money, in their pockets.

He's sick of coming to his store and

finding the walls used as a public restroom. He's sick of bums rummaging through his trash cans or asleep on public benches. Once, he tried to have the city bench removed from the vicinity of his store.

The profit from selling more than 2,500 shirts at \$8 a copy was the only good thing about the T-shirt experience, says Trinchero, 41. The rest was "horrible."

He says there have been telephone death threats and swastikas painted on the windows of his Harris Bros. shop on the Mall.

"I don't want to be identified with a goddamn Nazi," he says.

The T-shirts sport a cartoon character of a bum with a diagonal slash through him, along the lines of the logo for the movie, "Ghostbusters."

The message was supposed to be funny, says Trinchero. But it picqued residents and liberal politicians, who felt the message of "troll buster" promotes violence and prejudice against the streetpeople. Police say violence against streetpeople is on the rise.

One high school principal banned the shirts from campus for a few days last week and used the shirts as a springboard for classroom debates about the principles of democracy and the roots of prejudice.

Trinchero calls Marty Krovetz, the Soquel High School principal, "kind of a jerk" and maintains Krovetz should give him equal time to present a merchant's

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perspective to the students.

"He's talking about democracy, and here he is, imposing his own ideas on the kids, and not letting them wear the shirts," commented Trincherro.

Students, feeling their personal freedoms were being violated, had been upset by the shirt ban, but Krovetz said that was his intention.

"I meant to get them really infuriated to open up the issue to debate. It worked really well. We've got to make students aware of these issues," said Krovetz Monday. "It was fun for me. I got to know a lot of the students." Krovetz took over as principal at the beginning of the school term this year.

Krovetz said only one student was sent home to change shirts. A few others had worn shirts purposefully to get into the principal's office to discuss their feelings, said Krovetz.

Students handed in petitions asking for the ban to be lifted. It was, on Friday morning.

Krovetz said those who called him regarding the incident were "three to one" in favor of the principal's action.

Trincherro says those who have called him are "three to one" in favor of the T-shirts. He claims wives wanted to buy shirts for their husbands to wear them while taking the kids to school.

"More than 2,500 people can't be wrong," claims Trincherro.

Trincherro says the message of the shirts "had nothing to do with violence. It made fun of a lifestyle ... people can't take a joke."

But the former city parks commissioner admits, "Yeah, I'm prejudiced against the streetpeople. I don't like 'em. They made a bad choice in their lifestyle."

Trincherro is not telling who designed the shirts, but does say "the idea was not all mine." He said "three guys" who

design shirts for his store on a regular basis had drafted the cartoon.

One artist who works for Harris Bros., Mike Erickson, is also a mathematics teacher at Mission Hill Junior High School. Erickson would neither confirm nor deny his involvement with the T-shirt design, and referred all questions to Trincherro.

He says he hasn't seen any shirts on campus, but thinks the students should be allowed to wear them. "Most of them like them (the shirts)," said Erickson.

"I think it goes beyond a joke. I think the people in the city should take notice. There is a voice out there, telling (the city) to do something," said Erickson.

Trincherro believes there should be aggressive enforcement of littering laws, illegal camping and other regulations, amounting to "legal harassment" of the streetpeople.

His advice to the Downtown Association, an organization representing downtown merchants, is "to show a little more guts and stand up and say what you really think, out in the open, instead of behind closed doors."

If he were going to keep his business on the Mall, Trincherro says he would keep selling the T-shirts.

But now that he is moving his shop to the east side of town soon, Trincherro says he will leave the shirts behind.

He leaves the issue of the streetpeople "forever," when he leaves the Mall, claims Trincherro.

In the meantime, he "is not apologetic for anything I've done" and is enjoying the view from his new store, located in a former carpet mart next to a "Wiener Works," across the street from a former disco and senior citizens handicrafts shop.

"It's so nice to see not one planter box or one tree. It's so nice to see pavement," he says with a smile.

Believing a bush outside his back door could be attractive to bums, Trincherro cut it down, with a chainsaw.