

July 14, 2009

To the Mayor and City Council

City of Burien
415 SW 150th St
Burien, Wa 98166

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CITY OF BURIEN

I am writing about the statue of the nude, squatting woman which is in the Burien Town Square. My wife and I have visited the art section a number of times and consider it to be a collection of somewhat "funky", but interesting items. We do not consider the nude statue vulgar or offensive. However, it seems to be out of place and out of character with the rest of the works.

Our daughter, her son (8) and his friend (9) were visiting from Portland and toured the art section with us last week. The nine year old boy took one look at the statue and said "Why doesn't she have any clothes on?". We answered that she was in the garden thinking and we did not know why she didn't have any clothes. Other than that, the boys did not pay the statue any more attention and they enjoyed all the other "funky" works. We believe that children's questions can be and should be answered briefly and honestly and appropriately to the child's age.

However, it seems to me that the statue would be better in some other setting. I suggest moving it to the old Burien Library area which we understand will become a Senior Center. It would fit in quite nicely in a quiet garden area there, parents would not have to worry about what their children are thinking or saying (about the nude statue) and it would not be a distraction from the Burien Town Square art.

Sincerely,

Donald G. Dorres

Donald G. Dorres, Burien resident since 1954
1943 SW 167
Burien, WA 98166

Ph: (206) 242-5285

Email: sddorres@msn.com

*cc: Michael Lafreniere
CFTR: 5/17/09*



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July 28, 2009

Donald G. Borres
1943 SW 167th Street
Burien, WA 98166-2746

Dear Mr. Borres:

Thank you for contacting the City of Burien regarding the sculptures next to Town Square Park. The sculptures and the area you are referring to are part of the Burien Interim Art Space (or B/IAS) project. For your information, the project is not part of Town Square Park or on public property; it is on private property. The B/IAS project is a temporary art park, open to the public, and created by the community. It is designed and intended to creatively use land that would otherwise be sitting idle. The site is scheduled for construction of the next phase of the Burien Town Square project; at that time the art will be removed and returned to the artists. More information about the project is available at www.interim-art-space.com.

Certainly many people often have a wide range of opinions regarding public art, and I do respect your point of view. As has long been said, art is in the eye of the beholder. It is also the case that we have heard many positive comments about the project from the public. It has also led to some interesting partnerships that are beneficial to the community. For example, students from the Highline School District's Puget Sound Skills Center recently learned to fabricate metal sculptures for display at the site, and members of the local plumbers and pipefitters union stepped forward to work with the students on this effort. There is also art there made by students at Gregory Heights and Cedarhurst elementary schools, and the hubcap art was done by students from Highline High School. Due to the uniqueness of the B/IAS concept regarding the use of unused spaces for community art, this project has certainly received considerable press, most all of it positive, and significant regional attention for the city of Burien.

As I clarified earlier, the B/IAS site is not part of the City's new park but is on private property; it is not owned or maintained by the City. The artwork placed there does not require the Council's review or approval. The site is maintained by community volunteers from a local non-profit arts organization. The project is a partnership between a handful of art organizations and the property owner, i.e. the Town Square developer, Urban Partners. With respect to your suggestion about locating the "nude" sculpture in the garden area of the old library, it is my understanding that the sculpture has been purchased by a private buyer, and the old library will not be fully repurposed as a new interim home for the Community Center and senior programs (and therefore accessible to the public) until the spring of 2010. As I said, this exhibition is expected to be on display through the end of the year. We will relay your comments to the citizen volunteers who have organized the B/IAS project. If you would like to contact them directly, you can do so through their website.

If you have further questions or suggestions, or if you have some art that you would like to contribute to the space, you can contact our Cultural Arts Supervisor, Gina Kallman, at 206-988-3713.

Sincerely,

Michael Lafreniere

Michael Lafreniere, Director
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

cc: Council Members
Mike Martin, City Manager

CFTR: 8/17/09