

January 21, 2008

To City Plan Commission members, ZND, and members of the Milwaukee City Council,

The mural I painted is currently on display at Woodland Pattern Bookstore and Gallery on Locust St. at Fratney in Riverwest. I was invited to paint a mural as part of an environmentalist show, *Seeing Green* which opened in April. The mural has been very well received and has offers to travel after it comes down. I was very pleased to be invited to do a mural at Woodland Pattern, which has a tradition of inviting local artists to mount murals on their building.

I received no funding for this project and spent hundreds of hours over 5 months completing it. I was responsible for coming up with the supplies. All the materials were donated by local businesses. Not one of the businesses said no when I asked. I have a good reputation in the community, as does Woodland Pattern.

I decided to paint the mural in an art classroom at Bay View H.S in time before and after work. I am the School Nurse there. The Art Department Chair and the Principal welcomed this with enthusiasm. We all thought that it would be a good experience for the students to see how such a project was done and that someone such as myself, part of their school community, did projects such as this mural. Students later told me that they had their families drive past the mural to see it and felt a sense of ownership, having seen the entire process of its creation in their classroom.

It is unfair to be required to pay for a permit and inspection fee to do such a project. I also have to wonder about who exactly would be making the judgment call about whether or not a mural is acceptable. What is their art expertise? What would be the criteria? Isn't this an open invitation to censorship? It would seem that it could lead to 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment lawsuits and bad publicity for Milwaukee.

It seems a travesty. Other cities do mural tours and thank artists for donating their time and contributing to their community's spirit. I spent last weekend at an invitational retreat for prominent socially engaged artists from all over the US and Canada and was, in effect, promoting Milwaukee as a place friendly to artists. Please continue to make this so by dropping this mural ordinance.

Most Sincerely,  
Susan Bietila