

Welcome, Mr. Jester; who says we can't laugh?

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A multi-colored, eight-foot high statue of a jester? In downtown Boca Raton? The city with no sense of humor? What a great idea!

How refreshing to learn that the members of Boca Raton City Council, wearing their Community Redevelopment Agency hats, seem to be leaning toward approval of the offbeat gift being offered by local art dealers Richard and Claire LaPointe. In a city where certain public officials fought against allowing a major, upscale department store to build in downtown; a city where certain officials wanted fig leaves placed on abstract statuary in Mizner Park, and a city where the mayor sued the city (and himself) over development, the impending arrival of The Jester just might mark a turning point in the sweetening of

Boca's frequently sour image.

What needs to be decided is where to place this laughing and laugh-inducing artistic creation, and when to formally approve acceptance of M. Jester as a citizen of Boca Raton. Details. Fine-tuning. Let's get the job done, get the statue in place precisely because it is so un-Boca. And then have a *big* party to honor his arrival!

There is a precedent. In 1928 the Chamber of Commerce decided to spread the name of Boca Raton — then a tiny, seaside resort town — far and wide by building a huge wooden camel to straddle Dixie Highway. Why? A national Shriners convention was being held in Miami, and Dixie Highway was the only way to get there. Since the camel was the symbol of the Shriners, city leaders felt they could make a big impression on tourists passing through — and under.

Later, with enough tools and artistic license, the "camel" was altered to resemble an elk in honor of the Elks convention



YOU HAVE THE POWER LIGHTEN UP, BOCA

This laughing harlequin, a colorful bronze jester, bids welcome to visitors to East Palmetto Park Road. At least he will, when city officials approve the placement of the eight-foot-tall statue somewhere along the rebuilt roadway. What a great way to attract visitors — and put smiles on their faces.

in Miami.

So you see, Boca can be a little wild, a little crazy. Let's encourage this kind of uncharacteristic behavior by ensuring no last-minute nitpicking derails this project. The Jester will be placed somewhere on East Palmetto Park Road, already home to many arts-oriented shops and numerous small and intimate dining places. Just the place for an eight-foot Jester.

Keith O'Donnell, chairman of the city's Visions 90 committee, was right on target when he stated this week, "I think art in the downtown is an idea I'd like to see promoted more. We're truly supportive of this effort."

The Jester could become another landmark in Boca Raton; like the historic train depot, the Taverner Belltower in Mizner Park, Sanborn Square. And his mischievous visage will do something we need very much in this town — it will make us smile. With luck that will become contagious.

City officials are considering three locations — the median in front of Washington Mutual Bank near the pedestrian crosswalk, on a planter island on the north side of Palmetto between Mizner Boulevard and Fifth Avenue, the southeast corner of Palmetto and Fifth Avenue in front of Silver Palm Park.

Wherever! Let's make it a done deal and celebrate a new spirit of artistic mirth that the Jester will bring to a city in need of a good belly laugh.