

Resolution #5-R-19
Rededication & Revitalization of Soldier's Square

Submitted by: Alderperson Schultz, District 9 & Alderperson Williams, District 10
Date: May 15, 2019

Referred To: Community & Economic Development Committee

WHEREAS; Monuments have long been used by civilizations as a way to commemorate a common history and to visualize a shared future and have historically been incorporated into the fabric of civic life through the formation of public spaces which embrace them, and;

WHEREAS; For the bereaved, military comrades, and the public at large, public memorials function as virtual graves for those who often died far from home on foreign soil and serve as permanent reminders of the steep price our nation, and our City, has paid for the preservation of its security and freedoms and the events that have helped shape our common history, and;

WHEREAS; the one-block long plaza roughly 80 feet in width between South Morrison and South Oneida streets, deeded to Appleton in the 1850's by Boston philanthropist Amos Adams Lawrence, the namesake of Lawrence University, holds a deed restriction that it function as a 'Pedestrian Mall', in perpetuity, lest it be returned to the Lawrence family, and;

WHEREAS; Market Street, as it was once known, was renamed in 1911 as 'Soldiers Square,' precipitated by the dedication of a monument created by Italian sculptor Chevalier Gaetano Trentanove and presented by Appleton industrialist A.W. Priest in memory of his brother, James Priest, who died in the Civil War, and;

WHEREAS; In 1915, in response to a national call to honor those who served in the Spanish-American War, the City of Appleton petitioned for and received one of the one thousand "Remember the USS Maine" memorial plaques, cast from the salvaged metals of the infamous warship before it was sunk off the shores of Havana Harbor and dedicating it, along with two Napoleon cannon from the same conflict, on the East end of Soldier's Square, and;

WHEREAS; In 1922, The City Planning Survey recognized the importance of Soldier's Square, its newly established memorial reflection space, as a primary element in its first attempt to create a bold new vision for downtown, featuring an expanded monument boulevard as an anchor to its propose civic centre on the bluff site, and;

WHEREAS; In the late 30's, to make way for parking, the Spanish American War Memorial was relocated to Pierce Park where, subject to vandalism and the scrap drive of 1943 which resulted in the loss of the cannon, has since deteriorated beyond recognition while the Civil War memorial, which remained in Soldier's Square, was largely neglected for over a century, forfeiting its prominence in the public plaza, and;

WHEREAS; More recently, the veterans of the Middle East conflicts, but also including those who served in Viet Nam, Korea and other conflicts over the last half century, have not been formerly recognized in the public commons of Soldier's Square, though deserving of the same recognition and honor afforded all veterans of foreign wars, and;

WHEREAS; Soldier's Square, once provided a place of solace and contemplation, where these memorials were appreciated for their aesthetic and symbolic value beyond their commemorative purpose, complementing the mission of the civic spaces in which they reside by connecting us and causing us to reflect on something larger than ourselves;

WHEREAS; the City of Appleton, presently in the midst of a grand redesign of its downtown core and

bluff sites, including multi-use development proposals adjacent to Soldier's Square, is being afforded a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to embrace its history and its reverence for our veterans and all who have served since the foundation of the City, by righting this long-standing violation of the spirit of the Amos Lawrence deed restriction and public trust;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED; That the City of Appleton will commit to an effort to revitalize Soldier's Square and make every attempt to recapture the former function of the space as an open and inviting pedestrian mall and reflection space by rededicating the original boundaries of the pedestrian plaza and public monument square;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that the City complete both the full restorations of the Civil War Memorial and the Spanish-American War Memorial in the newly revitalized plaza using funds allocated to such restorations in the projected budget for restoration, as well as accommodate the placement of a new 'recent conflicts' memorial at the heart of the plaza to be funded by the citizens of Appleton and a number of local non-profits leading the restoration effort including, but not limited to Sculpture Valley, The Hearthstone Historic House Museum, VFW Post 2778, Desert Veterans of Wisconsin – Fox Valley Chapter, American Legion Post 38 and whomever else rises to assist in this honorable and historic en-deavors.