March 11th, 2019

Racine Board of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
c/o Mr. Tom Molbeck, Director
800 Center Street
Racine WI 53403

Dear Mr. Molbeck:

The Douglas Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) has been working on a number of initiatives to beautify the corridor. One of those initiatives, identified in 2015, was to create a small park in a vacant lot owned by the City of Racine, at the northeast corner of Hamilton Street and Douglas Avenue. This property was within the scope of the Douglas Avenue road reconstruction project. The DOT had committed enhancement funds to the area and DPW had already created designs that would have made the space substantially more attractive.
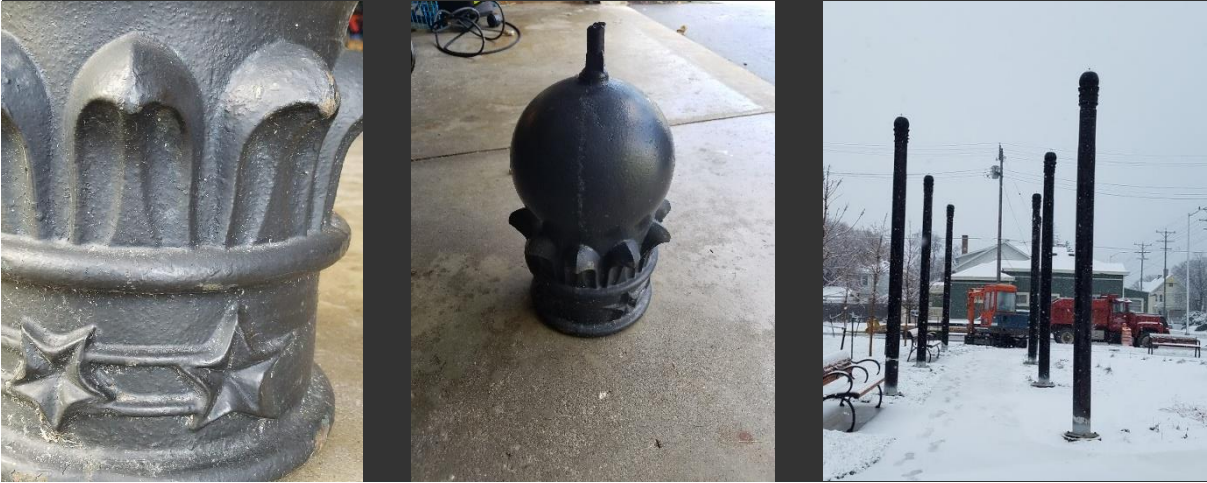
The Douglas Avenue BID board wanted to do more with the space. The BID was also cognizant of the need to improve lighting in that area of the neighborhood. The BID engaged the help of the UWM Community Design Center to build upon the existing plan. As a result, the BID salvaged 15 of the historic trolley poles from Douglas Avenue. The poles were shorted and repaired and installed along the walkway in the new park. Sixty-seven overhead light fixtures were strung that utilize reproduction LED bulbs that look like vintage Edison bulbs. A crushed granite walkway was added through the middle of the space and the large flowerpot that was previously located at the Karel Jonas statue was relocated to the center of the space. When the temperatures are sufficient, we plan to put a fresh coat of paint on the trolley poles.

Throughout the process of working on this project, we were reminded again and again that this was the site of the former Camelot Supper Club, know for "elegant food and fine cocktails." The structure, at 1201 Douglas Avenue, was built in the early 1900's as the Hotel Musil by Louis Musil. Many have expressed fond memories of celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, corporate events and other special occasions there. It's been reported by former employees that, "People would come from Milwaukee and Chicago just to see the spectacular Christmas decorations."
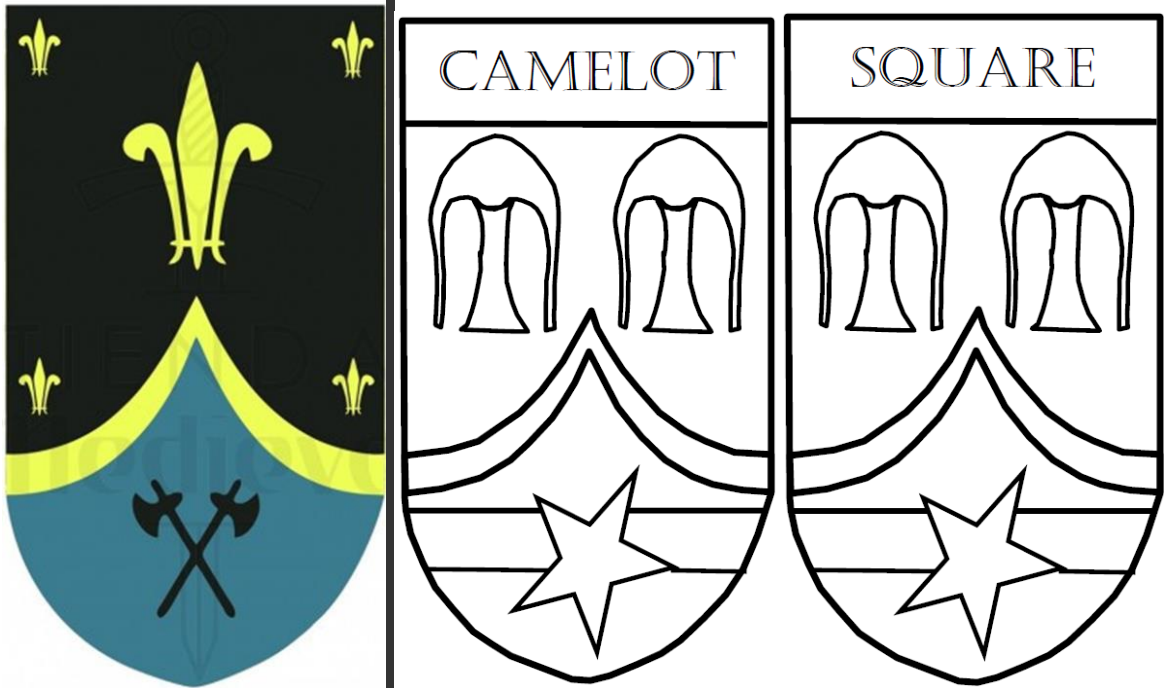
The Camelot burned on New Year's Day, 1979. While thankfully no lives were lost, it was reported that 18 firefighters were injured fighting the fire in extreme winter weather conditions. The building, a total loss, was encapsulated in ice and is the subject of many historic photos.

While the idea of recommending the park be named Camelot Square was discussed early in the project, the board opted to not consider any names until the project was built. As the various design elements were being added, the name Camelot Square seemed even more appropriate. The 15 tall, cylindrical historic trolley poles, give the space an almost medieval feel, reminiscent of the heavy metal and iron hardware and decorative elements forged during that period. As you will see from the photos below, each pole is crowned with a decorative cap that has a sort-of fleur-de-lis and five-point star design.

If Camelot Square is adopted as the park's name, the BID intends to add signage, shaped like medieval banners, to the two poles that flank the main entryway to the space. The banners will include the fleur-de-lis and five-point star design elements as well as the words Camelot and Square.

As with the names of every park in our community, there will be those who don't have the historical context for Camelot Square to resonate with. But, we have created this beautiful little space, with twinkling lights overhead at night. Is it possible that using a name that represents a mystical land where knights in shining armor lived to an honorable code of chivalry might stimulate and inspire imaginations, particularly in the minds of our technology-driven youth?

On behalf of the Douglas Avenue BID, I would like to thank you for your consideration of this request to name the newly created park, located at the northeast corner of Hamilton Street and Douglas Avenue, Camelot Square.

Best Regards,

Devin Sutherland, Manager
Douglas Avenue BID