

The News Sun

Yes to a gurgle, splash and spray

Work will soon be under way on Sebring's streetscaping project around Historic Circle, and the resurfacing of downtown streets.

With the renovations, it is an ideal time to make changes in the area, so there has been a lot of discussion.

One issue that arose, not for the first time, is community discomfort over the way people, especially children, use the Circle's memorial to Sebring's war dead as a playground.

Several individuals have called for moving the monument to a more appropriate spot.

While some of those who died for our nation might appreciate being at the center of things, so to speak -- that is, being positioned in the park, able to listen to the sound of children's laughter, at peace with such proof of the importance of their sacrifice -- there are those left behind, living with a tearing hole in their lives, once filled by a loved one. That kind of pain lasts forever.

We understand the need for reverence and gratitude. The need to honor and remember the men and women killed at an enemy's hands.

So we agree there is probably a better place to put the memorial.

Veteran's Beach has been suggested as an obvious choice. Rotary Park behind Highlands Little Theatre has also been mentioned. City Hall is yet another idea.

At the city council meeting Tuesday night, Gene Brenner, president of the Sebring Community Redevelopment Agency, suggested that once the right space is found for the monument, a fountain be installed at the Circle instead.

We think the idea of a water feature in the park is a wonderful one.

Besides being visually pleasing, the sound of water has a soothing effect. Drawing people to the area is a major reason for the renovation. Providing a relaxing sound that masks traffic noise is one way to create an oasis that becomes a destination.

With comfortable benches and tables added, people could gather to play chess,

checkers or dominoes; or simply take a moment to rest tired feet.

Now there are those who think installing a fountain is only asking for trouble. That children and adolescents won't be able to keep their feet, or the rest of their bodies, out of the water.

We don't see that this will be a major problem, and even if a child here and a teen there can't resist temptation, there is little harm to be done.

Besides, we know of no such trouble reported in Avon Park where two fountains grace that city's Mile-long Mall.

The only serious caveat is using water for aesthetic purposes in a state where drought is prevalent.

If, however, it is designed to be self-contained and recirculating, and becomes a metaphor for the value of water and the need to self-ration it, the work of art would serve a more practical purpose.

Those who have been fortunate enough to travel the world know there are public fountains in most major cities that enhance life for those who live around them.

We say, create a hallowed ground to celebrate our heroes, and a public space to celebrate life.

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