

Benjamin Buckley

From: Ann-Marie D'Anna <amdk@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 11:48 AM
To: Historic District Commission (Staff)
Cc: garretlandsbergg@detroitmi.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Historic Voigt Park

Good Morning Mr. Ben Buckley,

It was very nice to speak with you the other day, when you informed me that a summary would be prepared by HDC after all comments had been received by the deadline of noon today, Tuesday, 12 / 12 / 2023.

My name is AnnMarie D'Anna, I've been living and paying taxes at 161 Longfellow for over 40 years. My husband Paul and I, are writing to you today, with the sincere expectation that the HDC will stand firmly and continue to protect unique Historic Voigt Park, from any intrusive development. It is important to note that there is precedent for this decision, when about 20 years ago, the city offered similar grant funds to develop the park. The HDC agreed with Parkside Stakeholders, and rejected the proposal, deciding to keep the Historic Park as it's been for over 100 years. There are many alternative park spaces and amenities in the nearby vicinity. We had expected that the supportive decision of the HDC was final and lasting, until this new city proposal, threatened the important historic president set.

You may be aware of the fact that the city has big plans for further development in Historic Voigt Park. The benches are just the first unwanted intrusion into the park.

In the wisdom of the park's designer, you will notice that furniture was not, in the original Historic Park Plan / Design. There are very good reasons for this. We would like to discuss further details with you, in person. (Please see the original Voigt Park Plan / Design, that you have received from Voigt Park Block Club).

The Detroit City Parks Plan, prioritizes for a diversity of different types of parks. Historic Voigt Park is unique and should be respected for its historic integrity as an "Ornamental Park". What is the Park ornamenting but the homes, directly on the park. It seems the park and homes were really designed to be considered as one. We have been in discussions with landscape architects and unearthed inter-relationships with the Park and surrounding homes, including the Henry Ford Home, e.g., where we've found that a connection exists, with the Edsel and Eleanor Ford Home in Grosse Pointe and the Ford home on Voigt Park. The same configuration of 3 flowering trees, were located at both homes and loving referred to as "The Three Graces". We've had plans to replace the historic three flowering trees and it appears that one of the benches proposed at the east end of the park, is now to be placed within the space that the Three Graces occupy. This is absolutely not acceptable.

As you may know Historic Voigt Park, is a sublime experience, nestled in the heart of Detroit; for all to enjoy it's quiet majestic Arbor, where one can feel safe among the trees and Historic homes that surround the park, beckoning one to linger, in what some refer to as nature's cathedral, which provides space for needed tranquility and spiritual contemplation. Our homes present a stately backdrop and we also bear the burden of providing the first line of security for the park. The existence of benches would offer tremendously increased security risks necessitating our increased vigilance !

The idea of benches may seem benign but in reality, the consequences and ramifications of benches are terrifying for us Parkside residents . We are attaching just below, the Testimony written by respected neighbor, Alfred Johnson, who addresses this existential threat. We ask that you understand the seriousness of this decision.

Who will be liable for the security breaches... or physical harm, due to the proximity of benches...?

The Boston Edison Historic District has City, State and Federal, Historic designations We are bound by the Historic Standards and Restrictions, and pay dearly for our homes to be in compliance. While investing in our Parkside homes in Detroit, we have relied on the park also being required to adhere to Historic Standards. There are recorded Deed Restrictions on the park, that restrict it's changes. (Neighbors will be submitting details on the recorded Voigt Park's Deed Restriction, which is attached to their mortgage.)

Yes, we assume you at HDC, would agree that we desire to see historic integrity maintained in Detroit, whenever possible ! We've lost too much in the city already, haven't we.

There are many Parks in the nearby vicinity which offer a variety of amenities. Detroit's Parks mission statement mentions supporting a diversity of types of parks. As Historic Voigt Park is so unique, we believe it has a specific value to the city, that needs to be maintained and protected.

We Parkside Residents are the primary stakeholders who are intimately and directly affected. The Voigt Park Block Club (for which I was a founding member), became a larger group that was originally supportive of keeping the park as it's always been without benches... We Parkside Residents do not want benches nor any intrusions into the Park. Any benches will change the character of the Park... which we primary Parkside Stakeholders have not sign up for.

Importantly - now that the original proposal has changed (including bench placement), a new survey must be conducted. The new proposed placement of the benches would allow direct observation of the alleys, providing a convenient perch from which to case our homes for criminal opportunities. This new proposal and bench placement, now impacts additional Homeowners, who need to be afforded the opportunity, to voice their concerns over this new proposal. Any previous surveys / polls, should be considered irrelevant in light of this new proposal. Impacted Residents need the opportunity to speak and be heard before any final recommendations or decisions are to be made. Who will be liable when the incidences of crime increase, threatening our homes, families and our very lives. I personally have experienced break-ins, auto theft, fires set at our garage and my precious cat was killed, viciously tortured strangled In the park. We do not want benches to encourage a precarious security situation, which invites and enables increased criminal activity.

In future discussions we will be providing testimony from officers at the 10th precinct as well as statements written by Kevin Sayers, from DNR, Urban and Community Forestry Division, concerned Arborists, as well as many other supportive individuals and groups.

Historic Voigt Park welcomes everyone to enjoy the Park for its Historic character as an Ornamental Park, for strolling, for playing, for contemplating and gaining spiritual strength from the calm that may be found within the parks majestic Arbor. The park is open to welcomes a wide variety of transit events e.g. acoustic concerts of instrumental Jazz or classical strings - were concert goers bring their own blankets and chairs, a variety of neighborhood and community events like ice cream socials, group tai chi and yoga in the park, community drumming circle, croquet tournaments, dancing, bird watching, tree identification projects for school kids, community snow sculpture, traditional games like clapping... old fashion meaningful play. I am also a State Certified K-12 teacher, and I've experienced the tremendous value of children's exposure to safe natural environments and unstructured creative play.

I've been on Historic Voigt Park's Tree Committee for years now. We do advocate for planting large hardwood trees which will contribute significantly to addressing the serious drainage issue. Sugar Maples and other major shade trees will add to the Park's ratings concerning Detroit's Heat Map.

The lives of the existing large trees must not be compromised.

Detroiters need unique Historic Voigt Park and should not be denied it's safe Historic splendor. There is much reasoned precedent for this position.

Very Sincerely,
Parkside Homeowners,
AnnMarie D'Anna & Paul Kashat
161 Longfellow St.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL WHO LOVE HISTORIC VOIGT PARK !

Below, is the **TESTIMONY**- " Warnings from a Senior", written by **Alfred Johnson**.

Alfred Johnson, is very respected by Neighbors for his kindness and integrity. His experience and keen observations of Voigt Park, are important for all who care about the Park, and who also care about the safety of Neighbors, who live right around the Park.

Alfred has asked for help to circulate, his Video and Testimony, so please SHARE !

This is Alfred's written Testimony below entitled: "Warning from a Senior" !

My name is Alfred Johnson and I have been a Boston-Edison resident since 1969 living in my own home at 1258 Edison. I am 84 years old and still enjoy my evening walks to Voigt Park across the bridge. I find it welcoming and serene.

The other day in the wee hours of the morning (sometimes I cant sleep) I was walking past Voigt park and in the moonlight it was nature at its best in the heart of the City of Detroit. Please, I beg of you, it should not be tampered with. It is a green Oasis right in front of me, that has passed the test of time and believe me when I say it was looking just the way it looked when I moved here 54 years ago likely how it was intended- by Mr.Voigt when he donated it to the city in 1908 as a place of serenity where it seems that time has stood still between 2nd and 3rd. Thank you Mr Voigt.

Now I have to get to the bad news and here is my warning. I know thingsI walk all hours through the night when i cannot sleep. I know these Woodward people. I walk to Woodward. I know what happens at the liquor store. I see what happens in Voigt Park. Trust me when i tell you that a single development in the park will increase public safety issues, and decrease quality of life for the residents of Edison and Longfellow around the park FOREVER MORE!!

We Detroiters don't want to talk about this but here it is: this is as much a homeless element as it is a criminal element. Some crimes of opportunity, some crimes of desperation for a drug fix. People will be coming from the liquor store to Voigt Park in more ferocity than ever before because it will become a destination to get their high on. Boston Edison residents such as myself will become targets on evening walks.

Home security will change. Belongings, garages, Park closes and these people will welcome themselves over a wall or into an alley. They will stash their belongings. There will be more liquor bottles, food wrappers, garbage and public urination because this is how they act on Woodward. I am a 84 year old black man who see this every night. There is no amount of policing that will be able to combat what the people around the park will have to endure. The people around the park will be penalized by the

addition of benches. Please vote NO to Voigt Park development. If they take away the natural green from Voigt Park, they are taking away a piece of me with it.

Alfred Johnson
