

Helping to Keep Voigt Park Historic, as planned, 🌲 🌲

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Historic Voigt Park

POSITION STATEMENT -

1 - HISTORIC VALUE & LEGACY

Along with all Detroit Historic District Homeowners, we in Boston Edison Historic District provide tremendous value for the city. With our blood, sweat, tears we restore these architectural gems, as we contribute to the quality of Detroit's image, as well as Detroit's tax-base. The Boston Edison Historic District, has City, State and Federal Historic designation. We pay dearly in adhering to the required Historic Standards, which outlines the Restrictions and Regulations for maintaining our homes exterior character and detail. We accept this responsibility so that - collectively we can maintain a cohesive Historic integrity of our Homes and the Park. The park was designed as an "ornamental park" what is it actually being Ornamented but the houses around the park. It is undeniable that the park and surrounding homes were always considered as one, visually aesthetically and historically.

What is certain and what we all can know from the Original Park Plans, (that we are so fortunate to possess), is that the Park's designer, in their wisdom, designed the park as an "Ornamental Park". No benches no play structures...no bike racks... We can provide results of our inquiry and research, into the park's landscape designer... and their connections to the Henry Ford home and Albert Kahn, who designed Mayor James Couzens home, on the N/W corner of Longfellow at Second.).

Historic Voigt Park, welcomes everyone and is enjoyed by many for it's 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 park's majestic Arbor.

The intimacy of the Park makes the seven acres, feel small and safe, with all of the homes so close surrounding the park. Benches would destroy that safe feeling, and necessitate increased vigilance on the part of Parkside Residents.

2 - THE VALUE of NATURE'S BEAUTY & PEACEFULNESS

Sublime Historic Voigt Park is a unique, serene, Arbor, planned & always maintained as an "Ornamental Park". It offers to all Detroiters this peaceful place, a respite to savor. Check out the local Heat Map, to know that Historic Voigt Park, offers a special amenity, as a cooling refuge from the heat of Detroit summers.

Park visitors may also enjoy the park for it's "Old- Timey-feel", surrounded by stately Historic architecture that we Parkside Stakeholders work hard to lovingly restore.

Historic Voigt Park, is happy to welcome a wide variety of transient events; e.g., acoustic concerts of instrumental jazz...or classical strings... (where concert goers bring their own blankets and chairs), a variety of Neighborhood and Community events, like ice cream socials... group tai chi & yoga in the park, community drumming circle, croquet tournaments... dancing, birdwatching, tree identification projects for school kids, community snow sculpture, traditional games like clapping... old fashion meaningful play.... I am also a State Certified Teacher, and have experienced the value of children's exposure to safe, natural environments and unstructured creative play.

Non-intrusive, non invasive, non-permanent activities and events can find a happy home among the trees in, beautiful Historic Voigt Park. We do not want events that are too loud or spewing noxious fumes, from food truck generator exhaust... Anything that disrupts the Historic, natural peace of the park and neighborhood, is not acceptable. When we invested in our homes we relied on the park remaining as it was designed, as a Historic, Ornamental Park.

The Park provides peaceful sacred space to commune with nature, as well as enjoy Detroit's Architecture and History... A unique Historic park, as planned over 120 years ago, with two flowerbeds and the "Three Graces", (3 pink flowering trees, original to the park). More on my Historic research... with landscape designer at the the Edsel & Elenor Ford House, in Grosse Pointe Shores. I'm happy to report my findings and our plans to replace the Historic Three Graces...!

We Parkside Stakeholders are of course most directly affected, by any proposed changes to the park's usage. We find the proposed changes to be destructive of what we've worked for so many years to maintain - a natural, peaceful, safer, Historic Voigt Park.

There are many other parks and places that are amenable to a variety of structures and playscapes... Historic Voigt Park, is sublimely unique and should be respected and appreciated by all, for it's integrity and it's adherence to the City, State and Federal Historic Standards, just as we Historic Boston Edison Homeowners, are required to adhere to, as well.

Certainly any available funds raised or allocated, need to be spent on prioritizing the significant drainage problem, which is a major impediment for park visitors. Additional funds should be spent maintaining the health of Historic Voigt Park with necessary tree trimming and plantings.

There used to be a very old, sweet handmade sign in the park, that announced "Park Closes at Dark". To us, a very important sign, that we would like to see reinstalled for our security. We would like to see every attempt made to duplicate the historic signage that would have been originally placed. How charming for all to see ! We would like Historic Signage to duplicate materials, construction and font type... what would have existed way back when. Think Greenfield Village, how interesting to connect Historic Voigt Park with The Henry Ford ...

Duplication of what is historically accurate, according to the Park Plans is what Historic Voigt Park merits , no modern creativity, not here

3 - SECURITY

We Parkside Stakeholders with our homes surrounding Voigt Park, have long been the eyes and ears of the park. However reluctantly, we provide the 24 hour security and call the police when trouble arises or someone screams... many of us around the park can give testament to our experiences with security problems over the years. I for one, am tired of responding to problems we see or hear... Vigilance is not our job. We have been caring for the park and providing the first line of security. You of course can understand why we would want to minimize any potential for increased security problems to arise.

I have been living in and restoring my home here on the park, for over 40 years and have seen many things go down in the park; drug use, prostitution, drunken behavior / loitering (& new concerns with the near, new bar, "Burn", on Woodward...) and the growing difficulties for the unhoused. The city has gone through it's changes, as evidenced by the Crime Statistics.

Residents who grew up playing in the park, as children, have spoken of how important Voigt Park was in their early years and how it inspired their values and their lives. I've heard stories from Residents who grew up here, sisters, who reminisced about laying in the park grass, laughing at the characters they saw in the clouds floating across the sky." They also said, that "no, they would not have felt safe, knowing that anyone could sit close and comfortably on a bench in the park, to Watch Them While They Play."... The intimacy in the park, makes the seven acres feel small and safe, with all of the homes so close surrounding the park. Benches would destroy the safe intimate feeling we've become accustom to here. Benches would also increased the need for sharp vigilant eyes on the park. Are we to be paid for this additional responsibility of increased security duty?

I've personally had to run, ducking down low, to dodge bullets...on Second Ave. It's so terribly sad to relate to you - that my very most wonderful cat, my Zamboo Kitty, was brutally tortured and strangled in Voigt Park.

With very short front lawns, on Edison and Longfellow, someone with criminal intent, sitting so near to Parkside homes, can have cover, sitting on a bench, while casing our homes for nefarious opportunities... just too close for comfort ! We do not want any intrusive furniture... that criminals would love and we, would come to deeply regret.

Security issues arise at any time of day but especially late at night, when many of you, who understandably are not in, nor right around the park, to understand the reality of what we Parkside Stakeholders experience. Maybe your packages have been stolen too ? Rhetorically - would benches also be available after dark ? Of course they would. Problems galore ! You really need to live right on the park, to understand our very specific perspective. We are here 24 seven not just on sunny days.

We Parkside Stakeholders, are well aware of the security issues and have seen criminal behavior rise and fall with the economy and temperament of the city. Unless the city wants to permanently post an officer in the park 24-7, (which, I for one, would not endorse). We Parkside Residents have always been the Parks First Responders. We see & hear problems in the park first, and often are compelled to react or call authorities. Parkside Stakeholder's security, is not to be compromised nor overridden, not bullied nor censored. It is our homes, our families, our packages, our lives... that are at greater risk ! Incidentally... my car was stolen from 2nd Ave., We've had porch packages stolen and our home has been broken into. Good thing we have an alarm system, however... some Detroiters are understandably desperate these days and we in the Boston Edison, are targeted.

While we continue to advocate for the care of the unhoused who need to be provided safe places to live, we wouldn't want to tease them with furniture in the park. There are much better solutions.

Those with criminal intent, see our neighborhood as a very desirable, as it appears to them, that there is more to gain from these large stately homes. Therefore convenient benches placed so near to us and our homes, where a perpetrator can comfortably sit nonchalantly, and observe us, our children, our schedules and our homes vulnerabilities, waiting for packages to be delivered or waiting for us to leave...or to arrive...

We expect that all good neighbors will empathize with the threat posed to us, who are Parkside, and understand that we dread the thought of potential predators, having a bench so near, to sit on, or sleep on, and use as a convenient observation perch, from which to watch our comings and goings. The children need to feel safe playing in the park. We haven't seen many benches in residential neighborhoods. We believe there is good reason for that - the primary reason benches are not acceptable here - Is Our Security ! This is an existential threat, to us.

We Parkside residents are more vulnerable. We request that you, who are not Parkside, generously consider our safety, over any Park furniture. Some empathetic altruism, practiced by all who use & love the park, could really protect our homes & our lives.

4 - LITTER & VERMIN CONTROL

Benches would certainly encourage people to sit to and eat, lunch or late night snacks or fast food carry-outs...

Increased litter is likely. We have seen the garbage cans overflowing with garbage, especially after events and have watched as rats and squirrels perch on tree branches, feasting on slices of pizza, chicken wings and all sorts of things... We don't need the additional litter that benches would likely encourage and we certainly do not want an increased urban rat problem.

SUMMARY -

Historic Voigt Park, must remain as originally designed and as Parkside Stakeholders have always relied upon, while investing in our homes in the great Historic Boston Edison Historic District. Many support this view. We love our Historic Homes and Historic Voigt Park as designed, as it's always been. Changes can always bring unexpected consequences and ramifications. The park is protected, as it is, as a valuable Historic Asset for the Boston Edison Historic District as well as for the city of Detroit. The tremendous value to the city, of our wonderful Historic District Homes and the unique legacy of Historic Voigt Park, must not be under-estimated.

We would welcome the city's help in maintaining the health of the park; with tree trimming and planting of additional appropriate trees & designated flower beds only, the posting of Historic signage and urgently addressing the persistent drainage issue. This drainage problem is the major impediment to Detroiters access to this natural sacred space, where we and the birds and the rabbits and pheasants... find peacefulness, a Historic old-timely kind of quiet natural experience, unique in our wonderful city.

It's understandable that Upon first thought, the idea of benches may have seemed to be a nice, however upon examining the ramifications and consequences of furniture permanently placed in intimate proximity to our Historic Homes, we see that benches and any other structures are absolutely unacceptable. There Is much more distance between the boulevards and the homes on Chicago and Boston Boulevards. Would benches be wanted there ? We understand that the answer is a resounding NO. They don't want benches either. It's understandable.

To summarize our position - we understand that the idea of benches in a park, seems nice however, as we have outlined above; The Historic Standards, the Natural Beauty, The Security Threat and Vermin Problems are among the reasons that

benches in Historic Voigt Park, are not a innocuous gift, but the potential destruction of Detroit's beloved Historic Voigt Park as an Historic treasure.

I am a dedicated and responsible Artist, known for my prolific body of socially relevant Art works and known as well for my activism and community involvement. Among the many battles for freedom and justice I've fought ; I spent three years of my life, fighting the Detroit incinerator, as an original founding member and one of the Evergreen 19, arrested demonstrating against the incinerator. I was pro per at our hearing. We were exonerated from all charges. We finally succeeded in closing it down.

I also have extensive experience with other environmental groups and have written and produced Performance Art for Green Peace fundraisers and performed fundraisers for Citizens for Peace... I'm the artist that was responsible for the sculpting and casting of missing portions that were cast in bronze for restoration of the Sailors and Soldiers monument on Woodward Ave. , and the Alger Fountain, (originally by Samuel French, who sculpted the Lincoln Memorial in DC.) in these projects for the city I had to replicate the historic portions. It is in the same way I believe, that we need to only replicate what was historically planned for the park. No Benches.

I have organized security events; with AmeriCorps in Detroit, to benefit our neighborhood and hosted the 10th precinct police department, for Block Club educational meetings... I have spearheaded and planned a Community Security Fair, you can see that I / we have been intimately involved in many aspects of security issues, along with many Neighborhood homeowners - in reaction to the existential threats we've all known.

When a proposal with funds was made available, over 20 years ago for park "improvements / development", we rejected it then, and we reject it now. The Boston Edison Board, was in agreement with the Park Committee's Work and had ratified the plan to keep the park as originally specified in the Historic Park Plans, as an Ornamental Park. We will die on this hill.

We find that we are needing to rekindle our efforts; as we've come to understand that there are commercially motivated plans, to use the park, and our stately homes and watchful eyes, as a back drop for their financial gain and egotistical satisfaction and as feathers in the caps of those administrators and friends of administrators, who have not understood the subtle security ramifications, since they do not live right here on the park. We are threatened by the thought of their benches in front of our homes. We Parkside Homeowners are not willing to take on additional security duties and the risks that benches would necessitate. Furthermore we see the pushing of these benches down our throats, as a "gateway intrusion", into the park, as we are aware of plans to add additional structures and elements. We as Parkside Stakeholders find this totally unacceptable !

We are compiling the letters of support, written by environmental supporters as well as eloquent lovers of the Voigt Park. We have the support of local arborists, landscape architects, and both local & national environmental groups, who stand with us. We look forward to keeping the park a naturally beautiful, Historic Ornamental Park, for all Detroiters and for posterity ! It is our honor, and great responsibility to help protect the Historic design and significance of our Historic homes and Historic Voigt Park. We will protect the park's character and integrity, protecting it from self serving interests.

Thank you for reading this and for caring about the safety of Parkside Stakeholders, as well as for caring about the Legacy of Detroit's Historic Voigt Park.

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Sincerely,
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