
[EXTERNAL] Concerns about Voigt Park HDC Application

From Christine Sauve <beansauvec@gmail.com>

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To Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>; Public Spaces Planning Unit <PSPU@detroitmi.gov>

Cc CouncilMemberSheffield <CouncilMemberSheffield@detroitmi.gov>; Joshua Roberson <Joshua.Roberson@detroitmi.gov>; Keith Butler <Keith.Butler@detroitmi.gov>; Jkinloch@waynecountymi.gov <Jkinloch@waynecountymi.gov>; Theresa Mcarleton <theresa.mcarleton@detroitmi.gov>

Dear Historic District Commission,

I am writing in regards to [HDC Application 2025-00576](#) to be considered at the [October 8, 2025 Historic District Commission meeting](#).

In its current form, **I do not support the proposed plan** for installing new infrastructure in Voigt Park. I do not oppose restoring the historic paths, or adding benches and trash receptacles, but I do have serious concerns about the plan as it is currently proposed. **I urge the HDC to NOT approve the current plan presented**, and encourage the Parks Department to return with a revised plan.

Specifically, I have the following concerns regarding this application:

- **Excessive width of the proposed park paths.** 6 foot wide paths are overly obtrusive and will cause visual blight to Voigt Park's historic natural landscape. 6 foot paths are wider than the standard sidewalks in front of our homes and in other parks, and ADA accessible path standards only require 3 feet in width. Wheelchair passing could occur at the circle where each leg meets in the middle. In order to minimize the visual impact of the paths on the historic landscape, the paths should be reduced to 3 feet and installed to be flush or level with the ground.
- **Impervious concrete pathway materials.** Seasonal flooding and stormwater runoff are ongoing issues for Voigt Park, and the addition of significant amounts of impervious concrete will only serve to exacerbate the issue. There are many [permeable solutions like gravel](#) that still maintain accessibility standards and do not detract from the historic landscape. Campus Martius and Cadillac Square (also located in Historic Districts) make good use of natural materials for walkways instead of concrete. The Voigt Park paths should be revised to be constructed of natural and/or permeable materials to maintain the visual historic landscape and reduce runoff.
- **Installation of benches and garbage receptacles on concrete pads.** Similar to the issues above, concrete pads for these amenities are unsightly, impervious, and unnecessary. I urge the Parks Department to utilize a different method to secure these items in the park, e.g. bolt legs may be secured to a buried metal plate.
- **Removal of dead trees.** The Parks Department proposal includes removal of dead trees. We have spoken to GSD staff before about the value of removing limbs but leaving snags in the park. Snags are integral to the health and ecosystem of the park, which is home to many birds and insects that rely on decaying trees. [Municipalities like Ann Arbor recognize the value of leaving](#)

[snags](#). Recent park visits from arborists and Detroit Bird alliance encouraged the inclusion of snags in Voigt Park. I urge the Parks Department to leave the snags.

- **Timing - no partial construction, instead prioritize tree planting and flooding mitigation.** Instead of rushing forward to complete a portion of the pathway, with no plan or funding to complete the remainder of the paths, I would like to see the Parks Department focus on the items that neighbors have consistently agreed on: improving the tree canopy and mitigating seasonal flooding. I personally assisted with several efforts to survey and gather resident feedback, and these two issues have long been identified as consensus priorities for park users and neighbors living near Voigt Park. More plantings are needed to restore Voigt Park's historic forest canopy of hardwood and native trees. I urge the City to prioritize the health of Voigt Park's historic forest by planting additional trees as well as studying the seasonal flooding issues and making a plan for mitigating the standing water that can be a barrier to the use and enjoyment of the park several months out of the year.

I thank the Historic District Commissioners and the Parks Department staff for their attention to these issues for our neighborhood park. I hope we can revise the proposal to create a plan for our beloved park that truly reflects the desires and priorities of nearby residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to preserving Detroit's history, buildings and landscapes.

Sincerely,

Christine Sauvé,
Neighbor and daily park user