
[EXTERNAL] Fwd: FYI 808/816VP developer application misrepresents community feedback

From Jeffrey S Cowin <jeffreyscowin@gmail.com>
Date Mon 10/6/2025 10:53 AM
To Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

To HDC Staff and Commissioners,
Virginia Park Historic District members have held several meetings and conducted surveys about this proposed development and the issue of Notice to Proceed.

The majority of district residents have consistently voiced opposition to the inappropriate development proposed for 808/816 Virginia Park Street.

Per our most recent survey, 100 percent of respondents disagree with the suggestion, by the developer, that this property presents any hazard to our community. Additionally, the survey found that the majority would prefer the parcel to stay as-is, rather than to proceed with the proposed development.

Please do not hesitate to reach out, if we can provide you any additional support or documentation. Link to the survey included below in forwarded comments from our community.

Thank you,

Jeff Cowin 313-354-1868

From: Paul Mack <paulhudsonmack@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 3, 2025 5:11:10 PM
To: Butler Benton <bbenton@ameritech.net>
Cc: waldrop steve <waldropsteve@yahoo.com>; Amy Rencher <rencher.amy@gmail.com>; Donald Rencher <donauldrencher@gmail.com>; Josh Feasel <josh.feasel@gmail.com>; mrsjwolff@gmail.com <mrsjwolff@gmail.com>; Deborah Williams <debwilliams15@yahoo.com>; Virginia Park <virginia-park-block-club@googlegroups.com>; Jeff Cowin <jeffreyscowin@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: FYI 808/816VP developer misrepresents community feedback

Thanks Butler.

I agree that it's not a binary choice between the proposed design and site remaining vacant. I mentioned the site remaining vacant b/c part of the "[notice to proceed ordinance](#)" (6a-d at link, screenshotted below) includes a stipulation that the one of the four criteria must be met. In this case, my understanding is that the developer is asking for a Notice to Proceed based on 6a (that the vacant lot is a hazard to the community) and 6d (the proposed design is a benefit to the majority of the community).

Per [survey results](#) from June:

- The community unanimously disagrees with 6a applying ("I believe the vacant parcel at the NW corner of Virginia Park and Third (808-816 VP) constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or the neighborhood." 22 voted No to this, 0 voted Yes)
- The community largely disagrees with 6d applying ("I believe this vacant parcel would be better left as is than developed according to the developer's current plans" - 14 yes, 8 no - I think we can pretty clearly say that the proposed design is not a benefit to the majority of the community if 63.6% of respondents think the lot is better left vacant than developed with the proposed designs).

paul hudson mack
c: 517.755.7087
[LinkedIn](#)
[ElevatedEnneagram&Co](#)
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- (6) Work within a historic district shall be permitted through the issuance of a conditional use permit if it can be demonstrated by a finding of the commission to be necessary to:
- (a) The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or to the health of the community;
 - (b) The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that is consistent with the comprehensive planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental clearances;
 - (c) Retaining the resource will cause undue financial hardship to the community, and all feasible alternatives to eliminate the financial hardship, within the historic district, have been attempted and exhausted by the owner;
 - (d) Retaining the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community.

On Oct 3, 2025, at 16:43, Butler Benton <bbenton@ameritech.net> wrote:

I'm not in favor of the current design, and I think it's pretty hard to argue it's architecturally consistent with our community. On that point I'm in full agreement with the prior decision of the HDC. I'm also not in favor of that site remaining vacant. Nor do I believe it to be a binary choice. If the developer wants to adhere to HDC guidelines I'm all in. If they don't, I believe the site is desirable enough to attract other proposals in the not too distant future.

Butler

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On Tue, Sep 30, 2025 at 3:20 PM Butler Benton <bbenton@ameritech.net> wrote:

Good afternoon,

How can we best proceed to make clear to the HDC that the perspective being attributed to us is inaccurate and not one we collectively share?

Butler Benton
669 Virginia Park

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From: virginia-park-block-club@googlegroups.com <virginia-park-block-club@googlegroups.com> on behalf of mrsjwolff@gmail.com <mrsjwolff@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 9:17:54 AM
To: Deborah Williams <debwilliams15@yahoo.com>
Cc: Virginia Park <virginia-park-block-club@googlegroups.com>; Jeffrey S Cowin <jeffreyscowin@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: FYI 808/816VP developer misrepresents community feedback

Thanks so much.

Mrs. JoAnne Wolff WolffHausa
.com WolffHausa Collectible
mrsjwolff@wolffhaus.com
313-618-7223

On Sep 29, 2025, at 12:01 PM, 'Deborah Williams' via Virginia Park Block Club <virginia-park-block-club@googlegroups.com> wrote:

This is a playbook often used by people in leadership positions.
We are not surprised, nor have we changed our minds. We vote No on the proposal.
James and Deborah Williams
700 VP