
[EXTERNAL] Assessing a Notice to Proceed for 808-816 Virginia Park

From waldrop steve <waldropsteve@yahoo.com>

Date Wed 10/8/2025 12:48 AM

To Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

Dear HDC,

I would like to thank you for your staff report, but I would also state my concerns opposing a notice to proceed based on facts.

On Page 10 of the application, the applicant states that "two conditions prevail (for a NTP)"

1) The vacant parcel constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public due to ground contamination from oil and gasoline....but yet I could not find any assessment report prepared by a licensed engineer as dictated in SHPO of April 2022.

SHPO's HDC Best Practices #2 states:"

"As a best practice, use of this criteria should be based, at minimum, on a thorough, unbiased structural assessment report prepared by a licensed engineer. Reports should be prepared by engineers experienced in historic preservation as historic building systems are often quite different from their modern counterparts.

In documenting its decision, the HDC should reference specific evidence to support its conclusions and show that the burden of proof has been met rather than broadly stating the "report is satisfactory" or something similar."

Since the hazard claim is contaminants, rather than structure, a civil engineer with a specialty in soils is required for such a report.

4) The applicant claims that "Retention of the resource would not be in the interest of the majority of the community...That during meetings with the community it was overwhelming the need to develop the site and remove the unpleasant vacant lot."

This statement is clearly a "catch-all" out for a NTP to benefit an individual developer.

SHPO's HDC Best Practices #2 states:

Majority Community interest should not be looked at as a "catch all" out for a NTP or used lightly to benefit an individual developer or development company. The fact is that historic preservation in and of itself has been determined to be a public purpose under state and federal law. As such, any effort to demonstrate that retaining a historic resource is not in the interest of the community at large must be well founded and documented. Isolated editorials representing one person's opinion or off-the-cuff remarks at a meeting or on social media do not by default represent majority community interest. The burden of proof lies with the applicant—not the HDC—to explicitly demonstrate why it is not in the interest of the majority of the community to retain the resource and how that majority interest was determined."

At this point, there is nothing historic remaining with this lot other than its location and its zoning restrictions. And these factors ARE most likely to persevere with a different design and developer...the majority of the community oppose this development in it's current form.

Respectfully,
steve waldrop Owner of 63/83/97/and 109 Virginia Park
586-764-8386