



Voigt Park

Boston-Edison Historic District

Historic Landscape Report

Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club

June 2023

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Executive Summary

Decorative green space is one of the *defining characteristics* of the Boston-Edison Historic District. A key feature of historic landscape is not just the landscape itself but its relationship to the buildings that surround it. In the Boston-Edison Historic District, the historic houses face immediately on the green spaces, both the boulevards and Voigt Park, creating a unified spatial neighborhood environment of houses and landscape. The historic neighborhood is the totality of boulevards, parks, and houses. No one piece stands alone and apart.

Voigt Park is a key element of the historic decorative landscape in the Boston-Edison Historic District. For that reason, any treatment of the park must be approved by the Detroit Historic District Commission in accordance with the Secretary of Interior (SOI) Standards for Rehabilitation.

The SOI has Guidelines for the treatment of historic landscapes. The Guidelines have expectations for the treatment of historic landscapes.

- Preserve and restore any surviving historic elements of the landscape.
- Replace missing elements for which there is documentation.
- Do not add new elements that compromise the character of the historic landscape.

The period of historic significance for Boston-Edison is 1900-30. The Vision for Voigt Park of the Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club is to reconstruct elements of the historic Voigt Park that were present in the period of historic significance and that now are missing, following the Guidelines. There is adequate documentation of the missing elements. The Vision has four elements.

- Restore 100+ missing historic trees in their historic locations with comparable species.
- Reconstruct the network of walkways that were in the park.
- Reconstruct the missing flower and planting beds that were in the park.
- Not add any new elements to the park.

The Historic Landscape Report has the format set out by the SOI.

- Historic park described
- Condition of the park assessed
- Treatment Plan for the park.

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Historic Landscape Report
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Voigt Park

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Preface

Decorative green space is one of the *defining characteristics* of the Boston-Edison Historic District. A key feature of historic landscape is not just the landscape itself but its relationship to the buildings that surround it. In the Boston-Edison Historic District, the historic houses face immediately on the green spaces, both the boulevards and Voigt Park, creating a unified spatial neighborhood environment of houses and landscape. The historic neighborhood is the totality of boulevards, parks, and houses. No one piece stands alone and apart.

Voigt Park is a key element of the historic decorative landscape in the Boston-Edison Historic District.

The City of Detroit designation of the Boston-Edison Historic District encompasses all elements of the neighborhood, including all historic homes and structures and all landscapes. The City ordinance establishing historic districts designates that the governing principles in historic districts shall be The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation^{1/} as issued by the National Park Service (*Detroit City Code Section 21-2-73*). **The historic landscape features are subject to the Standards, just as the historic houses are.** Historic preservation of one requires the historic preservation of both. The Detroit Historic District Commission (HDC) administers the City historic ordinance with respect to the Standards.

The U. S. Secretary of the Interior (SOI), National Park Service has issued Preservation Brief 36 "Protecting Cultural Landscapes".^{2/} The Brief applies The Secretary of the Interior's Standards to cultural and historic landscapes. SOI also has issued "Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Landscapes"^{3/} for applying the Standards more specifically to historic landscapes.

As Voigt Park is in the Boston-Edison Historic District, any proposed work in the Voigt Park landscape will have to be approved by the Detroit Historic District Commission in accordance with the Standards and the Guidelines.

Preservation Brief 36 calls for a Historic Landscape Report for guiding and planning historic preservation of landscapes. In the SOI framework, a Historic Landscape Report includes

- a description of the historic landscape,
- an assessment of the existing condition of the landscape, and
- a preservation treatment plan for the landscape.

I. Historic Voigt Park

I.A. The “Historic Voigt Park”: Two Reference Periods.

First, for the purpose of the City historic ordinance and its governance, the “historic Voigt Park” refers to the park **as it existed in 1974** when the Boston-Edison Historic District was designated by ordinance as a City of Detroit historic district. This is the *designated historic Voigt Park*.

Second, the period of historic significance of the Boston-Edison Historic District is **1900-30**, when the neighborhood was platted and most of the houses were constructed. This period of historic significance is recognized in the nomination of Boston-Edison to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Boston-Edison Historic District is significant as a large residential area of quality and substantial architecture of the first quarter of -the 20th century.... It is also significant for the associations of a number of persons important in the industrial, religious and cultural development of Detroit and the nation in the period between 1900 and 1930. (Nomination to National Register of Historic Places)

For the period of significance, “historic Voigt Park” is what the park was during 1900-30. This is the *true historic Voigt Park*.

I.B. Historic Designation of Voigt Park

In 1974, the City of Detroit created the Boston-Edison Historic District (*Detroit City Code Section 21-2-106*). The houses and landscapes that existed at the time of designation are by that Act deemed legally “historic”. Under the historic ordinance, historic preservation would center on the preservation of the neighborhood **as it was at the time of designation**, including the various green spaces, the boulevards and Voigt Park.

Voigt Park as it exists today is largely unchanged since designation. Foremost, Voigt Park has retained its **defining characteristic as an open decorative green space, faced immediately by the surrounding historic houses, which together create a unified historic residential environment**. Furthermore, at the time of designation, many elements of the park from 1900-30 already had been removed or disappeared (see below). Since designation, the only changes have been the final disappearance of the slim vestiges of some pathways and the loss of some of the original forest trees. Essentially, Voigt Park had become a “double-wide” boulevard with the same character as the other boulevards in Boston-Edison.

I.C. Voigt Park in the True Historic Period

From design, by conveyance, and in practice, Voigt Park was a decorative, passive green space during the period of historic significance.

When the Boston-Edison neighborhood was designed, it was platted with the historic houses immediately facing decorative green spaces. All of these spaces have the same purpose and function, which is to combine with the historic homes to create a unified residential neighborhood environment. This unity is a defining characteristic of Boston-Edison.

1. Chicago and West Boston Boulevards were platted with decorative boulevard median islands. These boulevard islands have always been decorative green spaces at the heart of the quiet residential neighborhood. Large shade trees were a distinctive feature of both the islands and the parking lawns. The boulevards run from Woodward to Linwood, with the small islands linked in a chain through their length. The boulevards constitute the largest green space area in the Historic District, measuring approximately 18 acres.
2. The decorative Voigt Park is bounded by Longfellow and Edison Streets and Second and Third Avenues. The very design of Voigt Park is decorative in character and embodies passive uses that complement the residential neighborhood, just as the boulevard islands do on their streets. Voigt Park was designed with a forest of approximately 150 large shade trees, numerous clumps of bushes, eight planting beds, and a network of walking paths through the forest. A small formal structure was at the center. The Park is slightly more than 7 acres.
3. At the entrance to Chicago Boulevard from Woodward Avenue, there are passive green spaces that create a gateway into the residential neighborhood. These spaces are Chicago Park and Maiullo Park. These were open spaces and did not have any other landscape design. Maiullo Park was purchased and donated to the City by Anthony Maiullo to preserve that open space as a gateway entrance to Boston-Edison. (See historicbostonedison.org/Attorneys-&-Real-Estate-Men-of-BE.) These spaces are an exception to the integration of houses and landscape, as no houses face directly on those parks.

The developer of the Voigt Farm Subdivision, which encompasses part of the area that became the Boston-Edison Historic District, conveyed ownership of the newly constructed streets, alleys, parks, and parkways (boulevards) to the City of Detroit with a restriction that the parks and parkways be used for ornamental purposes. The conveyance (Appendix 1) says:

The said grantor reserves to itself or its assigns, the reversionary interest in the streets, alleys, parks and parkways, hereon shown [in the plat map]. In the event of said park or parkways being used for other than park or ornamental purposes, the said park or parkways shall be vacated by such use and its reversion be operative.

Plain reading of the conveyance is that if the park or parkways are used for purposes “other than park” the property reverts. And that if the park or parkways are used for “other than ... ornamental purposes” the property reverts.

The City honored this conveyance in practice and maintained Voigt Park as a decorative and passive landscape. The photo here looks toward the southwest corner of the park sometime during 1910-30, as suggested by the vintage of the cars in the background.



Figure 1 Historic Voigt Park Southwest View

A City map of Voigt Park from 1928 shows the original design of the park as a decorative landscape. The design has several *character defining* features. The map shows a forest of large shade tree species that were planted when Voigt Park was designed and created. A network of walkways began at each corner, went through the forest, and met at the center of the park. Eight planting beds were located in the park. Bushes were planted in clusters of three throughout the park.

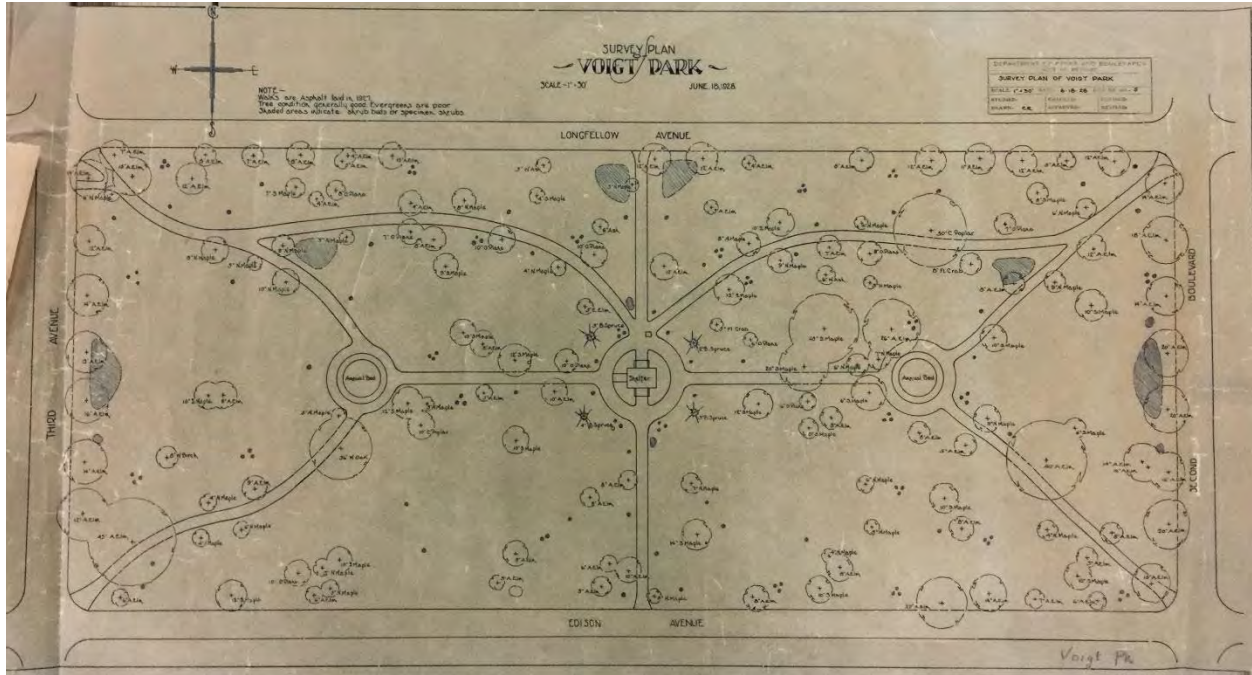
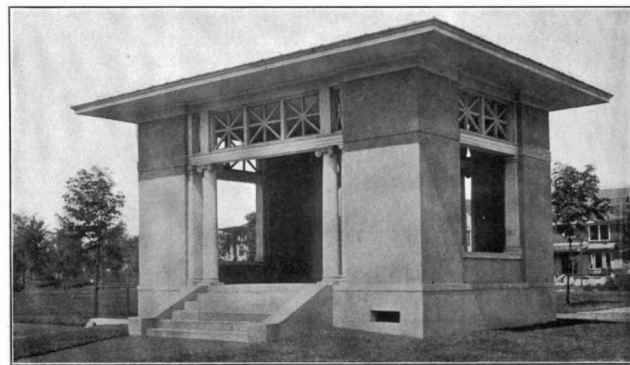


Figure 2 City Map of Voigt Park 1928

In the center of the park was an open-sided shelter. The design was eclectic. The overall structure had elements of prairie styling, as do many of the houses facing Voigt Park. There also were ionic columns and geometric screens at the tops of the openings.

A neighborhood memory is that the City at one time assigned a groundskeeper to Voigt Park. The structure had a basement. A long-time Boston-Edison resident reports that there were stairs going down into the basement.

The network of walkways also was a defining characteristic of Voigt Park. The walkways had a regular pattern, with two large circular flower beds symmetrically positioned. The walkways all connected to the central shelter area.



NEW SHELTER HOUSE IN A DETROIT PARK.

Figure 3 Shelter in Voigt Park

Eight planting beds were in the park, as shown on the 1928 map. Two are in the circular walkways at both ends of the park. The other six are shown as shaded areas.

II. Existing Condition of Voigt Park

Over the decades since Voigt Park was created, maintenance has been insufficient to preserve the elements of the design of the *true* historic park from the period of significance. Voigt Park had four principal features: Forest, Walkways, Lawn and Planting Beds, and the Structure. In general, the original elements in the historic park of 1928 had deteriorated or disappeared by 1974, the date of the *designated* historic park. Since 1974, modest deterioration has continued.

The key historic landscape feature is not just the park but its relationship to the buildings that surround the park. The spatial unity of the park and the surrounding houses remains as a *defining characteristic* of the historic park and its historic neighborhood.

Even with the deterioration of the historic design, **the essential scope and scale of the park has been unchanged.** It continues to be **the open decorative green space** of the 1928 park, which is **the foremost *defining historic characteristic*** of the park itself.

In sum, the *true* historic Voigt Park has devolved into what now is the *designated* historic park. In spite of this devolution, Voigt Park continues to have its *defining historic character* in the Boston-Edison Historic District.

II.A The Forest

The Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club (VPNBC) surveyed the forest in 2020. The survey shows that more than 100 of the original trees have been lost, that about three dozen survive, and that nearly 50 new trees have appeared. The survey is summarized in the following map.

The map is slightly out of date, as the trees shown as Dead were removed in 2022, along with a few severely diminished living trees.

The map grid has 60' squares laid out east from Third Avenue and west from Second Avenue. A narrow grid is at the center.

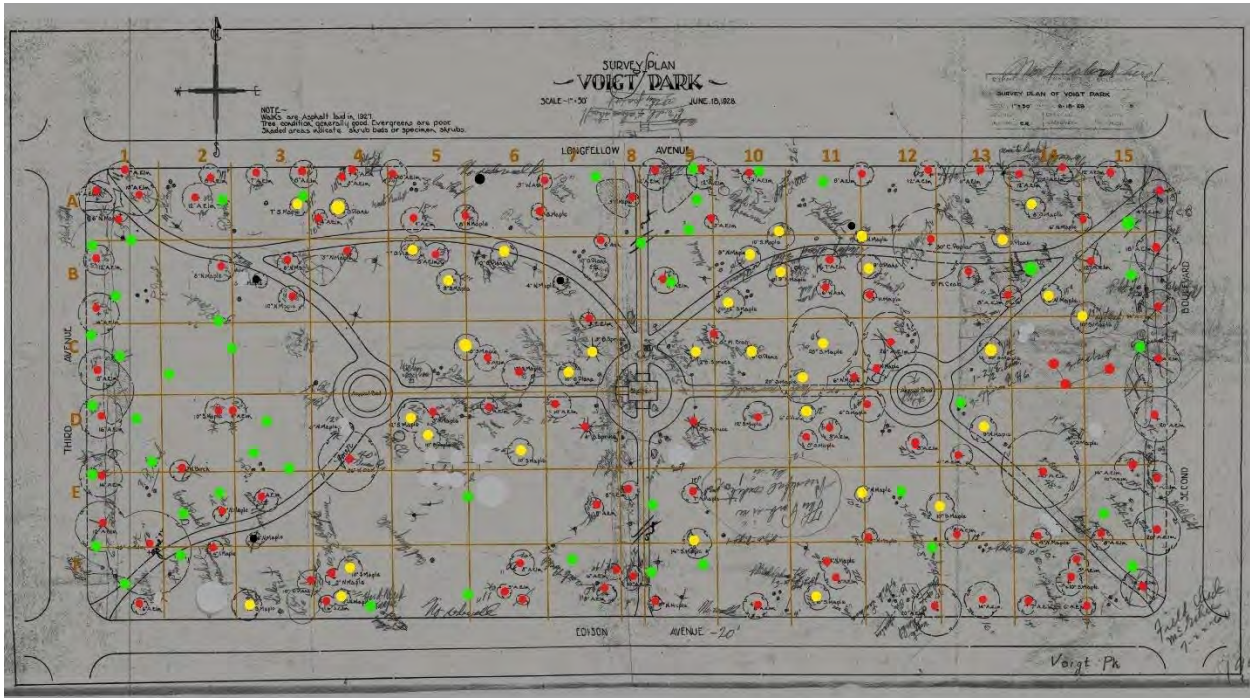


Figure 4 Voigt Park Tree Survey Map 2020

Key

- Yellow** 35 Original historic trees on 1928 Voigt Park map
- Red** 113 Missing historic trees on 1928 Voigt Park map
- Green** 46 New trees planted or volunteer since 1928 (locations are to scale)
- Black** 5 Dead or dying trees

In the historic design, the west side and the south side of the park had large open lawns. Many of the new trees were planted in these open areas and do not, therefore, conform with the historic design.

II.A.1 Condition of Existing Trees

In 2020 the City engaged Davey Tree Service to assess the condition of the existing trees in Voigt Park. This assessment was a preface to hiring a tree service to remove dead or dying trees and to provide needed maintenance.

The Davey map is a summary of the trees that have defects. Trees that are in good condition are not indexed. The Davey survey found that 64 trees had defects that needed correction.



Figure 5 Voigt Park Tree Conditions Map 2020 Davey Survey

The specific species of each indexed tree and the defects found on that tree are listed in Appendix 2. Most of the defects are branches that need to be trimmed or removed.

II.A.2 Weed Trees

Besides the forest, Voigt Park has a variety of shrubbery. Over the years, some of these bushes have harbored seedlings that have grown to be saplings inside or near the bushes. As these trees mostly are not important or valuable species, and as they are in non-historic locations, these volunteer trees are essentially weeds.

In 2020 the Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club surveyed and documented these weed trees. Appendix 3 summarizes the survey. Since that time, VPNBC has removed some of the weed trees as part of the annual Motor City Makeover cleanup campaign.



II.B The Walkways

The original asphalt walkways, as shown in the 1928 map, have deteriorated, become covered by the growing lawn, and disappeared underground. As the original walkways disappeared, the City spread a layer of small gravel or slag over parts of them. This treatment did not entirely follow the original network pattern. Remnants of this secondary series of walkways were all that was present at the time that the Boston-Edison Historic District was designated in 1974. They persisted into the 1980's, until they gradually disappeared as well.



Figure 6 Historic Walkway Traces in Dry Period 2007

Faint surface traces of the historic walkways are discernible today under certain conditions. However, an aerial photograph of Voigt Park during a dry period in 2007 clearly shows that traces of the walkways are visible as discolorations in the park lawn.

II.C The Lawn and Planting Beds

The park lawn is in good condition. The most consistent maintenance of Voigt Park has been the regular mowing of the park by the City.

The eight flower and planting beds shown on the 1928 map have not been maintained. No evidence of them remains.

II.C.1 *Ponding*

In many areas of the park, following snowmelt or heavy rain, water stands in ponds that create a swampy condition. Standing water makes these sections of the park unusable. Ponding can persist for some time.



Figure 7 Extensive Ponding in Voigt Park

This map shows the areas of most extensive ponding. The ponding has become more extensive over time.



Figure 8 Extensive Ponding in Voigt Park Map

Some of the ponds are rather large. Ducks have been observed several times on one of the larger pools during the early spring.



II.D The Structure

The structure has been gone for decades. It was no longer present in the park in 1974 at the time of designation of the Boston-Edison Historic District. One resident remembers standing in the structure sometime in 1965 or later. This person reported thinking at that time that the structure was in poor condition. Another resident moved near to the park in 1967 and says the structure was gone at that time. The City may have a record of when the structure was removed.

A resident who arrived in 1972 remembers a legend that the structure had become an attractive nuisance for vice and drugs. This is plausible in light of subsequent experience with the park.

On the site of the former structure, there remains a subterranean space filled with debris. This space is a safety hazard.

III. A Preservation Treatment Plan for Voigt Park

The Secretary of the Interior has issued Guidelines for applying SOI Standards of Rehabilitation to historic landscapes.

Under the SOI Guidelines, a Treatment Plan for Voigt Park could use as a reference point either the *designated* historic park or the *true* historic park.

III.A Guidelines

The first concern in the Guidelines for preservation of historic landscapes is to retain surviving landscape features and materials important to the landscape's historic character. **This includes visual and spatial relationships that are character defining.**

III.A.1 Guidelines for the Designated Voigt Park

The *designated* Voigt Park, as it existed in 1974 at the time of historic designation, had two defining characteristics. The **most important defining characteristic was and remains the spatial relationship of the park and the surrounding houses.** The park space itself is an open green space that combines with the immediately adjacent historic houses to create a unified residential neighborhood. In addition, parts of the original forest remained as a defining characteristic.

Voigt Park as it existed at designation is the *designated* historic park. Per the Guidelines and the City historic ordinance, the preservation Treatment Plan could be simply to preserve what remained of the park at that date. This would be an appropriate treatment option and the simplest one.

Voigt Park as it exists today differs from the park at the time of designation in 1974 in minor ways. Since designation, the minimal vestiges of the walkways have disappeared, some historic trees have been lost, and some new trees have appeared.

The Guidelines call for repair of any deteriorated or damaged elements, which for Voigt Park would mean principally maintenance of the surviving forest.

The *true* historic park devolved over several decades into the green gem that is the *designated* historic park. While many original elements of the park have been lost, the SOI Guidelines specifically state that *accepting the loss is one possibility* as a treatment option.

Furthermore, the scope and elements of the park in 1974 and today are congruent with the scope and elements of the 1928 park. The spatial relationships that are the foremost *defining characteristic* of the park and historic district remain unchanged. The difference is that some of the elements of the park in 1928 have deteriorated and been lost.

III.A.2 Guidelines for the True Historic Park

The SOI Guidelines also urge the replacement of elements missing from the *true* historic Voigt Park. With the surviving landscape features preserved and repaired, the Guidelines then **allow and encourage the replacement of features that are missing entirely** and for which there is documentation. The reason is that

*[w]hen an entire feature is missing, the landscape's historic character is diminished. Although accepting the loss is one possibility [as in simply maintaining the park per designation and as is], where an important feature is missing, its **replacement is always recommended** in the Rehabilitation guidelines as **the first or preferred, course of action**. Thus, if adequate historical, pictorial, and physical documentation exists so that the feature may be accurately reproduced, and if it is desirable to re-establish the feature as part of the landscape's historical appearance, then planning, designing, and installing a new feature based on such information is appropriate.*

(Guidelines, emphasis added).

The Guidelines also **recommend against adding elements that were not in the historic landscape**, if those new elements would compromise the defining characteristics of the landscape.^{4/} The Guidelines do recognize that elements may need to be added to an historic landscape: for example, in Voigt Park the landscape may need to be changed in order to mitigate ponding (see above).

III.B A Vision for Voigt Park

The Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club envisions Voigt Park rehabilitated as an open, natural decorative green space, in accordance with the historic design from the 1900-30 period of historic significance, as in the City of Detroit 1928 Survey Plan.

The vision that Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club has for Voigt Park includes:

- Maintaining Voigt Park as one of the passive decorative green spaces in the Boston-Edison Historic District.
- Rehabilitating Voigt Park to its historic plan as shown in the 1928 Survey Plan and conforming to the SOI Rehabilitation Standards and Guidelines that govern all City historic districts.
- Replanting trees according to the historic plan for the park, while expanding the variety of trees to sustain the health of the Voigt Park forest and to provide a collection of tree species for education and enjoyment of City residents.
- No non-historic elements installed in Voigt Park (i.e. playgrounds, picnic tables, barbeque grills, etc.).

The full Vision Statement is attached as Appendix 4.



III.C A Treatment Plan: A Preface

III.C.1 *Replacing Missing Features*

The SOI Guidelines specifically recommend replacement of missing historic landscape features as a first and preferred course of action.

The Guidelines also require accurate documentation of the missing features (see above). Fortunately, the 1928 City map of Voigt Park provides much detail about the landscape in the period of historic significance. Most of the missing landscape features of the park can be reproduced with reasonable accuracy from that documentation. The City may have further documentation from that time.

The Vision is that Voigt Park:

- (a) is continued in its condition at the time of designation; that is, as it now is; or
- (b) is rehabilitated to restore elements of the park as it existed in the period of historic significance.

In the historic park design as demonstrated in the 1928 map, the clearly documented design elements were the forest, the walkways, the planting beds, and the structure in the center of the park. Likewise, at the time of designation, only vestigial traces of the walkways remained as infrastructure. The Vision is that the Treatment Plan will not include the installation of any hardscape, infrastructure, or equipment that were not part of the historic 1928 design, because that would compromise the historic character of the park.

III.C.2 *Voigt Park Diversifies the City Park Portfolio*

The natural open green space of Voigt Park enhances the portfolio of City parklands.

The City's 2017 Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan⁵¹ gave priority to natural parkland. *Detroit's parkland is almost entirely programmed with play equipment and other active amenities. When compared to cities with natural landscapes, the Trust for Public Land ranks Detroit as third most programmed for play and suggests the need for a more balanced system of active and passive landscapes. As the Goals and Community Open Spaces sections of this plan suggest, retention of parkland that shifts towards more natural land conservation and passive space options will mean increased quality of life for residents as well as decreased maintenance costs over time for the General Services and DPRD departments. (2017 Parks Plan p. 108, emphasis added.)*

In the historic period, Voigt Park was a natural and unprogrammed landscape that respected the terms of the conveyance from the developers that the park be ornamental. Today the park remains as a natural green space in the heart of the City. The City has large natural landscape parks located mostly at the outskirts of the City. Voigt Park, however, is a natural and unprogrammed landscape in the center of the City. As such, it complements and balances the more active and programmed parks within the City's parks portfolio.



The City's 2022 Parks and Recreation Strategic Parks Plan^{6/} does not provide an update on the balance between programmed and unprogrammed City parks. But a major Plan Goal is to *"Protect and connect residents with Nature & the Environment"* (2022 Parks Plan, Ch. 2, p. 3) A Design Insight in the 2022 Plan is that a priority is shifting focus to *"creating high quality natural spaces for Detroiters to explore within [City] parks..."* (2022 Parks Plan, Ch. 3, p. 27)

The Treatment plan for Voigt Park would contribute to this change in emphasis by recreating a natural space that provides accessible walkable paths.

The place of Voigt Park in the City portfolio of parks is demonstrated by a map of the playgrounds and parks in the central part of the City. The map shows that Voigt Park is surrounded by parks that are programmed for activities: 15 of the 16 surrounding parks are programmed. Some of these parks are scheduled for rehabilitation, probably at an earlier date than for Voigt Park.



Figure 9 Parks and Playgrounds in Central Detroit

Keeping Voigt Park as it is with reference to the time of historic designation or rehabilitating the park to its character in the historic period would enhance the diversity in the City parks portfolio.

III.D Proposed Treatment Plan

III.D.1 A Precondition: Resolve Extensive Ponding

A precondition for restoring the historic Voigt Park is mitigating the extensive ponding that occurs in the park (see above). In the parts of the park with ponding, constructing walkways may not be possible until the ponding problem is solved. Ponding also may complicate the replanting of trees in those areas, or at least require planting tree species that can survive in the ponding areas

Ponding may simply be a natural phenomenon and should be accepted as a characteristic of the park. However, ponding is so extensive that large parts of the park are unusable for long periods of time after rains or snow melt. Mitigating or eliminating the ponding would make Voigt Park usable for more of the year. The City's 2022 Parks Plan includes strategies for Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) (Chapter 3, p.33). GSI interventions may be able to mitigate ponding and manage stormwater without draining the water into the City storm sewers.

III.D.2 Treatment Plan Step One: Restore the Forest

The extensive forest is a prominent *character-defining* feature of Voigt Park. Accordingly, the VPNBC Vision proposes that the highest priority in a Treatment Plan is to replant the missing portions of the forest. Replanting should use the historic tree locations and plant equivalent species of large shade trees. In 2021, only 35 of the original 150 trees remained. Restoring the forest will require replanting over 100 trees.

III.D.2.a Current Treatment Plan: Maintenance

Maintenance and preservation of existing landscape features is the first concern of the SOI Rehabilitation Guidelines.

In 2018, the late Wayne County Commissioner Jewel Ware designated \$25,000 of Wayne County funds to be transferred to the City of Detroit to support Voigt Park.

The Davey tree survey (see above) established priorities for maintenance work. The scope of this work and the priorities for the maintenance work are exhibited in the map from the Davey survey. Appendix 6 has the Scope of Work for this project, along with details about the specific trees and the needed maintenance work.

Using the Davey survey, the City in 2022 deployed the Wayne County funds to remove 9 trees that were dead or severely diminished, including a large cluster of intergrown weed trees. Much of the remaining Scope of Work was crown thinning and elevation of the canopy to maintain and extend the health of the existing forest in the park. Much of the Davey Scope of Work remains to be done.

As part of current maintenance, some of the weed trees have been removed from Voigt Park with two different initiatives during 2022. First, Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club asked the City to remove some of the largest weed trees and weed tree clusters in 2022, and part of this request

was accomplished. Second, Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club volunteers have removed weed trees as part of the annual park cleanup project during Motor City Makeover (Appendix 3).

III.D.2.b Long-term Treatment Plan: Replanting the Lost Trees

In order to respect and rehabilitate the historic character of Voigt Park, new trees should be planted in the locations of missing historic trees. The Guidelines encouraging replacement support this. The VPNBC Vision is that the 113 lost trees plus any historic trees removed in 2022 will be replanted in phases over several years.

VPNBC proposes these priorities for replacement of trees.

- Replacements of any historic trees removed in 2022
- Unique trees in the original forest be replanted
- Plantings along the perimeter of the park have first priority
- Plantings to replace missing trees throughout all other areas of the park

Replacements for Trees Removed in 2022

Only 6 of the trees removed in the 2022 maintenance program are historic trees. These are numbers 25, 26, 40, 45, 52, and 61 in the Davey Survey.

Unique Trees

- Four evergreen trees originally were at the corners of a square around the structure in the center of the park. A large one remains in good health. A tall one is scraggly. Two are missing.
- A trio of flowering trees on the far east side of the park (affectionately named The Three Graces) were noted as crabapple trees in the 1928 landscape map.
- Only one oak tree, one beech tree, and three ash trees are shown on the 1928 map. All are lost.

Phased Replanting

In the longer-term replanting of historic trees, VPNBC proposes that the first available trees be planted in areas along the perimeter of the park. The perimeter locations are not close to the historic pathways to be restored (see below).

As additional phases of replanting are planned, VPNBC proposes to give priority to areas where the most historic trees have been lost. These phases can be coordinated with the restoration of the pathways to avoid conflicts.

Maintain Open Spaces

Trees should not be planted in areas where there were not trees in the historic plan. These open spaces should remain open in order to conform to that plan. The open spaces already have been compromised by haphazard and unplanned planting of new trees.



III.D.2.c New Trees Since 1928 Plan

In the 2020 VPNBC survey of existing trees (see above), 36 trees were identified as non-historic trees that have appeared. They either have been planted by someone or have grown voluntarily, sometimes as weed trees.

In general, these “new” trees are not in historic locations. The Guidelines do allow removal of added features that do not conform to the historic character of a landscape. However, as many of these new trees are generally healthy, VPNBC does not see a compelling reason to remove them at present as part of restoring the historic park. When trees that are not in historic locations eventually die, not replacing them would reopen the spaces in the historic park design. In the meantime, these trees augment the surviving historic forest until it can be replanted in full.

A willow tree at the southwest-most corner of the park was planted squarely on the site of the historic walkway. A compromise will be necessary.

III.D.2.d Increased Variety for Health and as an Education Resource

The historic forest had only a few species of trees. The two predominant species were elms and maples. There were specimens of a few other species (oak, beech, ash). This narrow variety proved to be disastrous for the health and viability of the forest. Dutch elm disease eliminated

dozens of elm trees, which originally encircled the park at its perimeter. Maple trees, especially silver maples, are not strong trees and are susceptible to storm damage.



To create a forest that has more long-term viability and health, VPNBC proposes that replacement trees be a wider variety of species. While the defining characteristic of the historic park forest was large shade trees, trees of equivalent size and character are available in many varieties as potential and appropriate replacement trees. When historic features must be replaced, the Guidelines say that

*[u]sing material which matches the historic in design, color, and texture is always the preferred option; however, substitute material is acceptable if the material conveys the same visual appearance as the historic period. For example, ... **planting a tree of new stock that matches the historic form, and composition.** [Emphasis added.]*

The narrow range of species of the historic trees also made the forest less interesting and educational. As the forest is replanted with a wider variety of species, VPNBC sees an opportunity for education. The 2022 Parks Plan identifies as a strategy creating opportunities to educate park users about nature and the environment (Chapter 3: 27). If a self-conscious decision can be made to plant a wide range of interesting varieties, an educational forest would be created. VPNBC envisions those trees could have identifying labels with information. VPNBC has imagined replanting the new varieties of elm and chestnut. Such a forest would be interesting to many residents. It would be another way to add diversity to the City portfolio of parks.

III.D.3 Treatment Plan Step Two: Maintain the Lawn and Replace the Planting Beds

III.D.3.a The Lawn

The lawn is in good condition. There has been some damage to the lawn surface from vehicles driving over soft ground. There are unlevel places where trees have been lost and stumps have decomposed. But the major problem is ponding.

III.D.3.b The Planting Beds

The locations of the eight historic planting beds are shown on the 1928 map (see above.) Two of those beds are in circles in the walkways and are shown as annual beds. Six others are shown as shaded areas on the map. The notation on the map is that these were “shrub beds or specimen shrubs.” The two beds at the east and west sides of the park are in locations where City park signs stood for years.

Historic restoration of the park should include a commitment by the City to reestablish and maintain the planting beds.



There are options for reestablishing the various planting beds. Flower beds of any sort require maintenance. Beds of annuals require the most maintenance. If the City is not able to devote resources to maintaining the two flower beds at this time, then the beds could be recreated in the historic locations, but with low maintenance plant options.

Perennials require less maintenance than annuals. Perhaps shrubs or native plants or grasses could be used instead of flowers as a placeholder option.

The planting beds for shrubs are much lower maintenance. Perhaps these could be recreated without a large maintenance requirement. This would recreate the beds as a decorative element.

III.D.3.c Park Signage

The City had Voigt Park signs facing both Second and Third Avenues at the center of the blocks. The locations were roughly where the two planting beds are shown on the map. At the time of historic designation, these signs were simple horizontal wood signs on wood posts with no embellishments, as shown in the photo. They deteriorated and disappeared.

Later signs on steel posts were installed. These also fell into ruin and have been removed.



Figure 10 Historic Park Signage



Figure 11 Modern Park Signage

The Historic Boston-Edison Association (HBEA) installed Voigt Park signs at the northwest and southeast corners of the park. These locations were selected for high visibility. But those are not historic locations for signage. The signs also are installed squarely in the middle of the location of the historic walkways.

VPNBC approves of the signs installed by HBEA in the corner locations, although they must be located so as not to interfere with the reconstructed walkways.

III.D.4 Treatment Plan Step Three: Restore Walkways

The network of walkways is a *defining characteristic* of the *true* historic Voigt Park. The Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club Vision is that replacement of walkways will use the locations of the historic walkways. If replacement has to occur in stages, the vision is that the historic network of walkways eventually will be restored.

The 1928 map of Voigt Park indicates that the walkways were asphalt. While asphalt would be a historically correct material, VPNBC would prefer a more environmentally appropriate surface that is permeable to water and would not create run off. Since such a surface is likely to be a natural material, it also would add to the natural character of the park.

The historic paths extend over one-half mile, including the connecting sidewalks along Second and Third Avenues. The network provides 16 unique half-mile routes within the historic network of pathways. Someone could walk over 8 miles without repeating a route.

The historic pathways would provide access to the park for persons with limited mobility. There are no curbs, and paths could be smooth and flat.

In the historic park design, there are open meadow areas. The historic walks do not break into these areas. These open areas are valued as such.

III.D.5 Treatment Plan Step Four: The Structure

The immediate need is to secure the subterranean space filled with debris, which remains on the site of the former structure. It is a safety hazard. Although it is not open, it can be opened readily. There is an eye-witness observation that when the structure was removed it revealed a basement with descending stairs. How much of this basement still exists is unknown, but knowable.

Excavation of the shelter site could be a good “modern archaeology” project to see what is there. For example, there might be bricks that would document the material of the original structure.

For replacement of the historic structure, the VPNBC Vision is that this should be a very long-term goal in the Treatment Plan. The cost undoubtedly would be large. VPNBC proposes that available funds go toward the other three steps in the Treatment Plan, until those are realized in full.

Furthermore, as legend characterizes the structure as having become an attractive nuisance in the neighborhood, VPNBC is eager to avoid its replacement. SOI Guidelines do not mandate that all historic elements be replaced, if they are not desired.

Exact reconstruction of the structure would be consistent with SOI Standards and the Guidelines. The detailed photo of the structure, along with dimensions shown on the 1928 map, should be sufficient information that a historically correct structure could be reconstructed.

Since there is exact information about the historic structure, any other structure design would not be consistent with the SOI Standards and Guidelines.

References

- ^{1/} Secretary of the Interior, National Park Service, “**The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation**”. <https://home1.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>
- ^{2/} Secretary of the Interior, National Park Service, “**Preservation Brief 36 “Protecting Cultural Landscapes.”**” <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-36-cultural-landscapes.pdf>
- ^{3/} Secretary of the Interior, National Park Service, “**Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Landscapes.**” <https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/landscape-guidelines/rehab/approach.htm>
- ^{4/} SOI Standard (3): “*Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken*”. As expressed in the Guidelines, Standard (3) applies to adding falsely historic landscape features as well.
- ^{5/} City of Detroit, General Services Department, “**2017 Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan.**”
- ^{6/} City of Detroit, General Services Department, “**Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2022-2032.**” <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/detroit-parks-recreation/parks-and-recreation-strategic-plan>

APPENDIX 1

Conveyance of Boulevards and Voigt Park to City of Detroit 1902

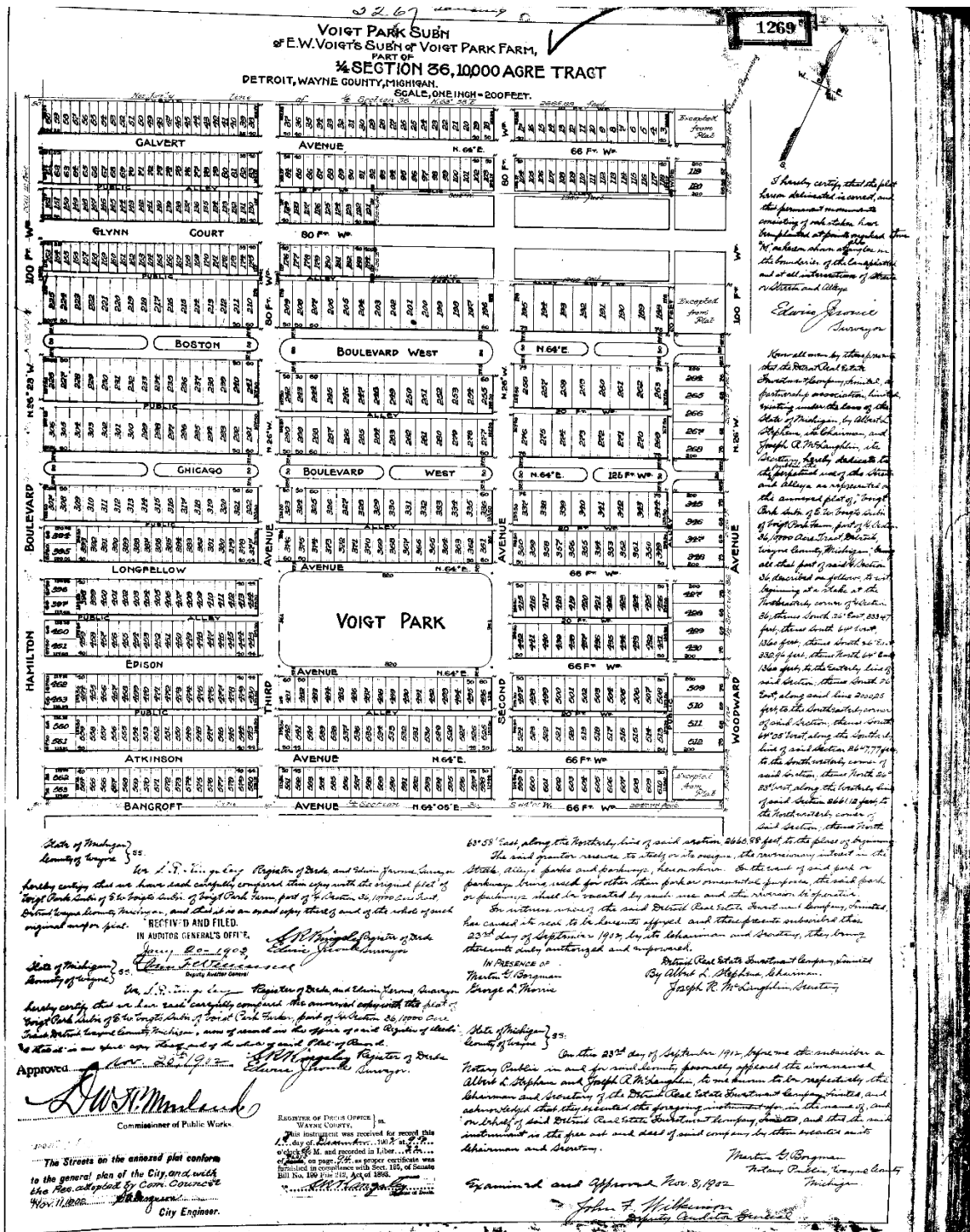


Figure 12 Conveyance of Boulevards and Voigt Park to City of Detroit 1902

This is the section that restricts the parks and parkways (boulevards) to decorative purposes only.

The said grantor reserves to itself or its assigns, the reversionary interest in the streets, alleys, parks and parkways, hereon shown. In the event of said park or parkway being used for other than park or ornamental purposes, the said park or parkway shall be vacated by such use and the reversion be operative.

The section says:

The said grantor reserves to itself or its assigns, the reversionary interest in the streets, alleys, parks and parkways, hereon shown [in a plat map]. In the event of said park or parkway being used for other than park or ornamental purposes, the said park or parkway shall be vacated by such use and its reversion be operative.

APPENDIX 2

Davey Survey of Condition of Voigt Park Forest 2020

Map ID	Species: Common Name	DBH*	Condition	Structure	Defects
1	Common linden	24	Fair	Fair	Branches
2	White mulberry	24	Fair	Fair	Branches
3	Crimson king Norway maple	20	Fair	Fair	Trunk
4	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
5	Pear spp**	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
6	Silver maple	36	Fair	Fair	Branches
7	Norway maple	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
8	Mulberry spp	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
9	Ash spp	18	Dead	Poor	Trunk
10	Norway maple	30	Fair	Good	Branches
11	Silver maple	30	Fair	Good	Branches
12	Honey locust	25	Fair	Good	Branches
13	Sycamore spp	30	Fair	Good	Branches
14	Silver maple	30	Fair	Good	Branches
15	Honey locust	15	Fair	Good	Branches
16	Honey locust	15	Fair	Good	Branches
17	Sycamore spp	42	Fair	Good	Branches
18	Silver maple	42	Fair	Fair	Branches
19	Silver maple	42	Poor	Poor	Branches
20	Mulberry spp	42	Poor	Fair	Branches
21	Norway maple	15	Good	Good	Branches
22	Silver maple	35	Fair	Fair	Branches
23	Sycamore spp	25	Fair	Fair	Branches
24	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
25	Silver maple	45	Poor	Poor	Branches
26	Norway maple	45	Poor	Poor	Branches
27	Silver maple	45	Fair	Fair	Branches

28	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
29	Norway maple	15	Fair	Fair	Branches
30	Honey locust	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
31	Norway maple	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
32	Silver maple	45	Fair	Fair	Branches
33	Blue spruce	15	Poor	Poor	Branches
34	Norway maple	15	Fair	Fair	Branches
35	Silver maple	20	Fair	Fair	Branches
36	Silver maple	45	Fair	Fair	Branches
37	Black walnut	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
38	Sycamore spp	45	Fair	Fair	Branches
39	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
40	Norway maple	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
41	Sycamore spp	45	Fair	Fair	Branches
42	Ash spp	12	Poor	Poor	Trunk
43	Silver maple	24	Fair	Fair	Branches
44	Sycamore spp	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
45	Silver maple	45	Poor	Poor	Trunk
46	Silver maple	40	Fair	Fair	Trunk
47	Sycamore spp	35	Fair	Fair	Trunk
48	Sycamore spp	15	Fair	Fair	Branches
49	Silver maple	25	Fair	Fair	Branches
50	Honey locust	20	Fair	Fair	Branches
51	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
52	Sugar maple	20	Fair	Fair	Branches
53	Norway maple	15	Poor	Fair	Branches
54	Red maple	20	Fair	Fair	Branches
55	Red maple	20	Fair	Fair	Branches
56	Silver maple	30	Fair	Fair	Branches
57	Honey locust	15	Fair	Fair	Branches
58	Red maple	10	Fair	Fair	Branches
59	Red maple	18	Fair	Fair	Branches

60	Honey locust	18	Fair	Fair	Branches
61	Silver maple	18	Poor	Poor	Branches
62	Silver maple	20	Fair	Poor	Branches
63	Sycamore spp	25	Fair	Good	Branches
64	River birch	15	Fair	Fair	Branches

*DBH is diameter at breast height, meaning at 4.5 feet above ground.

** spp meaning is not known.

APPENDIX 3

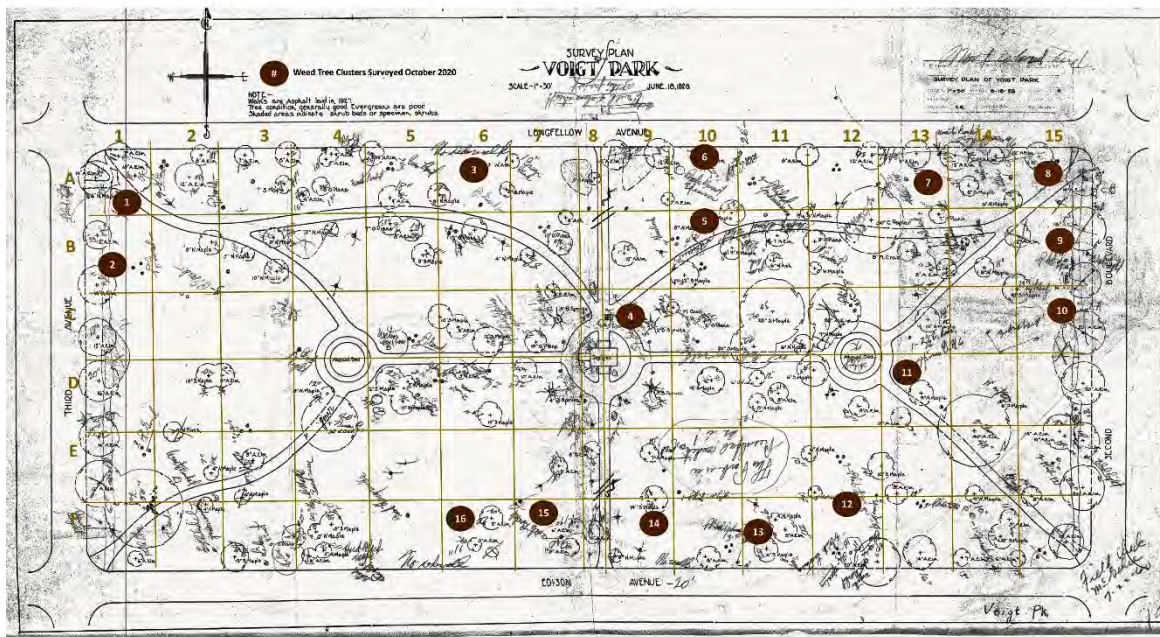
Voigt Park Weed Tree Survey 2020

Updated
October 2022

Introduction

In 2020 the VPNBC found 16 weedy overgrowth situations in Voigt Park. Some were volunteer trees that had grown up among and were sheltered by established large bushes. Many of the bushes appear to be original in the park landscape plan. Other weedy material had grown around the bases of large trees. A few clusters of weed trees seem to have just established themselves.

Those 16 clusters of weed trees are shown on this map.



Here are several examples of the weedy tree situations that VPNBC found and how they have been addressed.

Cluster 1

A large bush sheltered several volunteer weedy plants.

One of the volunteer trees is a 25' tall Hawthorn tree, which is an attractive variety and worth saving. It has a good shape.

Much weedy material had grown in the bushes..

Cluster 1 (before, east view)



Cluster 1 (before, north view)



Hawthorn tree as an attractive element.



Cluster 4

A weedy mulberry cluster grew under a maple tree.

Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club removed the mulberry cluster to isolate the maple tree.

Cluster 4 (before)



Cluster 4 (after)



Cluster 8

Two adjacent clusters are large lilac bushes that had weedy maple and mulberry saplings growing in their shelter.

Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club removed the saplings and isolated and exposed the lilac bushes.

Cluster 8a (before)



Cluster 8a (after)



Cluster 8b (after)



The lilacs also were overgrown, nearly obscuring the stop sign. VPNBC trimmed the lilacs to give them more shape. Lilacs bloom on new growth, so the trimming will produce more flowering in the spring.

Clusters 9 and 10

Huge free-standing mulberry clusters.

VPNBC requested that the Parks Department have the contractor remove these two clusters as an item in the tree maintenance plan for 2022.

The contractor did remove much weedy material around Cluster 9, but they left a large mulberry cluster in place.

Cluster 10 (before)



The contractor removed Cluster 10 entirely.

Cluster 9 (before)



Clusters 9 and 10 (after)



Cluster 12

A pair of Mock Orange bushes probably are original to the park landscape.

Cluster 12 (before)



An ash tree was growing out of one of the bushes. The tree was not straight and lacked integrity.

Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club removed the ash and restored the integrity of the original bush cluster.

Cluster 12 (after)



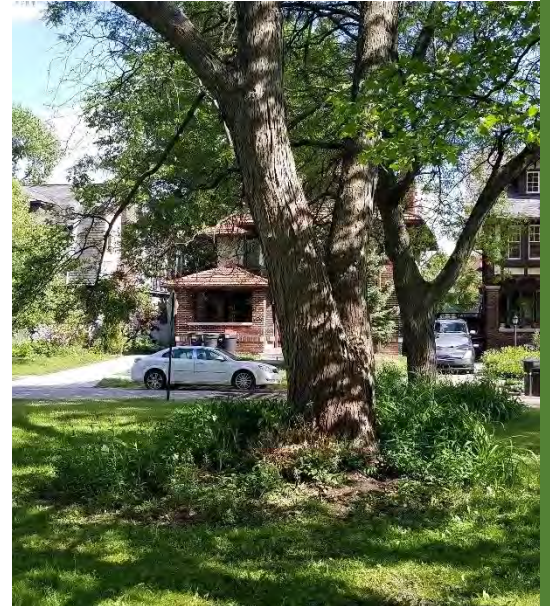
Cluster 16

Weedy growth around a large maple. VPNBC removed the weedy growths.

Cluster 16 (before)



Cluster 16 (after)



APPENDIX 4

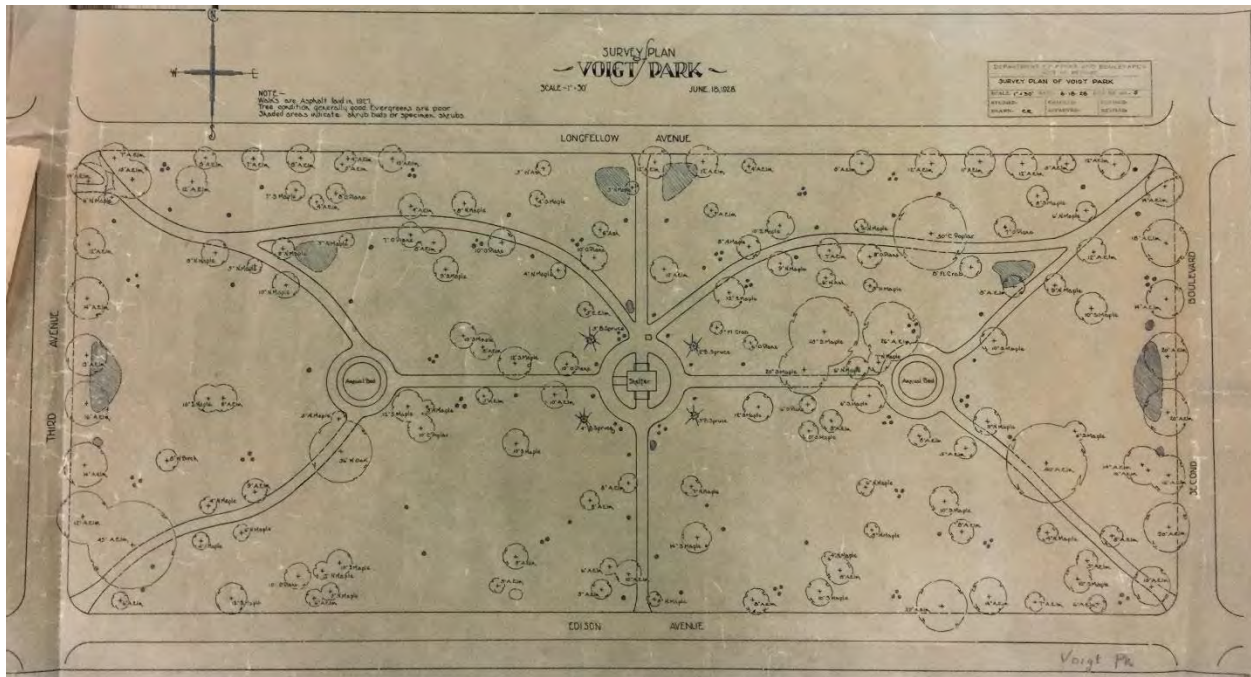
Our Vision for Voigt Park

Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club

The historic character of Voigt Park is a beautiful, open, natural green space. The vision of the Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club is to preserve the historic character of Voigt Park and maintain the park for the enjoyment of residents. Accordingly, we envision rehabilitation of the park landscape to restore the original historic design indicated in the 1928 Survey Plan. The historic plan contains a pleasant balance of open space and a variety of trees and shrubs. This configuration, along with the lack of hardscaping or infrastructure, lends to the park's wide appeal and allows it to serve a diverse group of people in a number of different ways.

The vision that Voigt Park Neighborhood Block Club has for Voigt Park includes:

- Maintaining Voigt Park as a welcoming and open green space in the historic district for the enjoyment of residents of the district and nearby neighborhoods.
- Rehabilitating Voigt Park to its historic plan as shown in the 1928 Survey Plan—minus the historic shelter, which was removed decades ago—and conforming to the Rehabilitation Standards that govern all City historic districts.
- Replanting trees according to the historic plan for the park, while expanding the variety of trees to sustain the health of the Voigt Park forest and to provide a collection of tree species for education and enjoyment of City residents.
- No permanent equipment installations (i.e. playgrounds, picnic tables, barbeque grills, etc.).
- Enjoying the park space socially through occasional and temporary events and programming that bring neighbors together, e.g. nature walks, ice cream social, Easter Egg hunt, etc.



APPENDIX 5

Map of Playgrounds and Parks in Central Detroit



NOTES:

- Calvert Playground (Calvert and Woodrow Wilson) is derelict and is a prime candidate for redevelopment to serve the area west of the Lodge.
- Keiden Playground (Rochester and Lawton) is underdeveloped and is a prime candidate for enhancement. This is a large space that has a basketball court. It could accommodate more basketball courts and tennis courts and similar facilities.
- Yates Playground (Linwood and Blaine) is large and has been recently redeveloped.
- Litsitz Memorial Playground (Linwood and both sides of Gladstone) (not shown on map) is a huge area that now is entirely undeveloped.

APPENDIX 6

PART III SCOPE OF WORK

CITY OF DETROIT

GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
VOIGT PARK (WAYNE COUNTY 18-19) REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

1. Tree Removal (Priority 1):

Improve the health of existing trees by removing dead or diseased trees.

Total of (9) Priority 1 trees in this category to be removed. Grind & remove stumps per GSD standards. (See Tree Inventory list and Exhibits): The tree numbers are: 9, 25, 26, 40, 42, 45, 53, 61, Dead tree S.E. of #43

- a. Contact "Miss Dig" prior to beginning any work in order to locate any underground utilities.
- b. Remove existing trees as indicated. Remove all branches & tree stumps. All items of removals shall be disposed of offsite. Stumps shall be removed by grinding or other approved means. Contractor responsible for restoration, as a result of their construction activities.
- c. Protect existing trees, by approved means.
- d. The work shall include clearing, protection and disposal as necessary for the complete implementation of the work as shown on the Drawings. Implementation is to be performed as per latest version of A.N.S.I.(American National Standards Institute(A300-1955) or current.

2. Crown Thinning/Branch Removal (Priority 1):

Improve the health of existing trees by removing branches and deadwood from trunks & branches of diseased trees. Remove branches overhanging sidewalks.

Total of (9) Priority 1 trees in this category (See Tree Inventory list and Exhibits):
The tree numbers are: 2,12,18,19,20,23,38,49,62

- a. Contact "Miss Dig" prior to beginning any work in order to locate any underground utilities.
- b. Remove dead branches and deadwood of diseased trees as indicated on the plan and inventory list. All items of removals shall be disposed of offsite.
- c. Protect existing trees by approved means.

The work shall include clearing, protection and disposal as necessary for the complete implementation of the work as shown on the Drawings. Implementation is to be performed as per GSD construction standards.

3. Wayne County Sign:

- a. Install one (1) custom park sign rider at existing City of Detroit park sign and it shall be 6"-tall x 30"-wide x 3/4"-thick, single-sided. Graphics to be provided by GSD. Rider to be attached to existing sign using screw eyes and chain, or method approved by City Representative. Installation to be performed according to Manufacturer's and standard GSD Specifications and Details. Known Supplier: Performance Creative Resources, Inc. c/o Pete Eichinger (peichinger@sbcglobal.net -- 810.523.3159)
- b. Rider location on the existing Voigt sign shall be reviewed & approved by HDC (Historic District Committee) prior to final graphic approval.

10. Alternate #1 (Priority 2):

Improve the health of existing trees by pruning/thinning the crown of trees. Remove defective & decaying portion of branches and tree trunks. Raise canopy height to 12'-15' above grade. This work can be completed in the Fall/Winter. Total of approx. 12 trees in this section of park (see drawing).

The tree numbers are: 1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,13,14

11. Alternate #2 (Priority 2):

Improve the health of existing trees by pruning/thinning the crown of trees. Remove defective & decaying portion of branches and tree trunks. Raise canopy height to 12'-15' above grade. This work can be completed in the Fall/Winter. Total of approx. 12 trees in this section of park (see drawing).

The tree numbers are: 15,16,17,21,23,24,27,28,29,30,31

12. Alternate #3 (Priority 2):

Improve the health of existing trees by pruning/thinning the crown of trees. Remove defective & decaying portion of branches and tree trunks. Raise canopy height to 12'-15' above grade. This work can be completed in the Fall/Winter. Total of approx. 12 trees in this section of park (see drawing).

The tree numbers are: 22,32,34,35,36,37,38,39,41,43,44,46,47,63,64

13. Alternate #4 (Priority 2):

Improve the health of existing trees by pruning/thinning the crown of trees. Remove defective & decaying portion of branches and tree trunks. Raise canopy height to 12'-15' above grade. This work can be completed in the Fall/Winter. Total of approx. 12 trees in this section of park (see drawing). Total of approx. 12 trees in this section of park (see drawing)

The tree numbers are: 48,49,50,51,52,54,55,56,57,58,59,60