

## Benjamin Buckley

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**From:** William Gourlay <wgourlay@ameritech.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 10:59 PM  
**To:** Historic District Commission (Staff)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment for public hearing, Historic District Commission Special Meeting of April 10, 2024

William Gourlay  
1162 Vinewood St #1  
Detroit, MI 48216

Dear Detroit Historic Commission Staff,

I am writing to give public comment on the alterations being done at 1180 Vinewood St, on my block where I have lived for over 45 years. I am sorry to learn this work was done without appropriate approvals.

I believe the commission's recommended flat-out denial of the proposed and existing alterations is not appropriate under the circumstances. The structure was vacant and subject to vandalism and deterioration for many years, and when it was finally being re-rehabilitated there was a tragic fire that destroyed much of the building. Since I live just a few houses away on this block, I was saddened by the event and thought that the structure would ultimately need to be demolished, just as two other structures on the same corner had been. Seeing someone actually working to restore the building into a habitable structure was a joy.

I think a compromise should be worked out with the owner rather than trying to undo much of the work that has been done. Sure, in a perfect world it would be nice to rebuild the tower on the roof that was destroyed by fire, but is it practical? The changes made to the roofline and porch façade are not ugly, I would say they are tastefully done and practical, although not historically accurate. Perhaps a compromise involving changing and reconfiguring the windows and the proposed new siding is in order to keep the project from being abandoned. Wood double hung windows instead of ultra cheap vinyl sliders, and a more tasteful choice of siding that would be in keeping with the commission guidelines would be good.

Allow me to give some context on who I am to make this recommendation: Not only have I lived on this block for over 45 years, I was deeply involved in the process of obtaining historical designation for Hubbard Farms in the first place, and I am also a licensed residential builder (since 1975) who has specialized in remodeling and repair, including some historical preservation work. When our community organization decided to go after historical designation for Hubbard Farms, it was primarily for the purpose of keeping our housing stock from being torn down, and maintaining our community as a diverse area in many ways. We did not want to gentrify, and we were not "purist" even though we sought to keep the historical nature of the homes intact.

Our neighborhood is a mosaic of structures, some of which have awesome historical significance, and some of which appear to be 1960's infill housing that is bland. The changes made so far to the façade of 1180 Vinewood are not a threat to the desirability of the neighborhood. Quite to the contrary the changes are reducing blight, and to see this project abandoned will possibly increase the blight by adding another empty shell or yet another vacant lot where a habitable residence could be.

Sincerely,

William Gourlay

Owner / resident at 1162 Vinewood