

**From:** [Vanessa Miller](#)  
**To:** [Historic District Commission \(Staff\)](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from DetroitThermal  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025 3:52:01 PM

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Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

I have been a resident of the Lafayette Park Historic District for the past 15 years. I am writing to state my strong opposition to Detroit Thermal's application for a project in the Lafayette Park Historic District. I oppose the proposed project because it would irrevocably damage my neighborhood's historic landscape—a central component of its National Historic Landmark designation—and would make it no longer a safe or enjoyable place for my daughter to grow up and play.

The proposed project would have a significant adverse effect on the historic landscape of my neighborhood. That is an understatement. The project will destroy mature trees, shrubs, and planting beds that define the very character of our neighborhood. Most concerning to me as a parent, the plans convert the most sensitive and cherished portion of our landscape—a place where my 1.5-year-old daughter plays and socializes daily with other children—into an active work site. This area is labeled on project plans as “disturbance” with “restoration in-kind,” but you cannot simply restore a 60-year-old landscape in-kind. It took decades of growth, care, and community investment to create what we have today.

This is not the only area of our historic landscape that will be damaged. A second section near Lafayette Avenue—also home to mature trees and plantings—is similarly identified for “disturbance.” The trees, shrubs, and living canopy that make our neighborhood so unique cannot be replaced overnight, and the loss will be deeply felt by everyone who lives here, especially families like mine.

The plans submitted by Detroit Thermal clearly demonstrate a lack of understanding and respect for our neighborhood's historic significance. This is further evidenced by the company's actions to date. Detroit Thermal has been active in our neighborhood for more than seven months, leaving a large open trench and scattered construction debris right next to the park where my daughter plays every day. During this time, they've cut down a mature magnolia tree, damaged shrubs and flowers, and repeatedly refused to meet with me or provide any meaningful updates or responses to our concerns. This disregard for neighborhood residents—especially families—is unacceptable.

I am also deeply concerned that this project could cause lasting structural damage to our neighborhood in other ways, such as through the installation of new steam vents and deep excavation near the foundations of our historic homes. Based on what we've seen, I have no confidence that Detroit Thermal has fully considered the potential impact of their project on our community's safety or historic integrity.

I respectfully urge the Detroit Historic District Commission to reject Detroit Thermal's application and prevent this project from causing irreparable harm to our historic neighborhood and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your time and for your continued service to the residents of Detroit and the preservation of its historic places.

Sincerely,

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