

From: [Cynthia Pachikara](#)
To: [Historic District Commission \(Staff\)](#)
Cc: [Cynthia Pachikara](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal
Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 9:37:42 AM

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

My name is Cynthia Pachikara, and I am a resident of the Lafayette Park Historic District Neighborhood. I'm writing to state my staunch opposition to Detroit Thermal's application for a project in the Lafayette Park Historic District.

I work in Ann Arbor, where I teach in the University of Michigan's Stamps School of Art and Design. I moved to Lafayette Park because of its architectural significance as a mid-century modern masterpiece. However, what I discovered after only a few months of living here, is that the very thoughtful design of the whole complex (buildings + green space) gives rise to a sense of community and, in turn, a true neighborliness between the residents. The richness of living here has to do with the way the design engenders human relationships. This genius collaboration between architect Mies van der Rohe and Alfred Caldwell is often cited by urbanists as one of the most successful urban renewal projects *precisely because of* their integration of the landscape to create self-contained, community-oriented spaces. The design has rendered a stable setting for Detroit city living for 60 years. The uncanny age range of residents, from toddlers to 100+ years, is a testament to the livability of the complex.

These greens spaces, the very binding elements of the design, are now at risk due to Detroit Thermal's plans. It would seem short sighted to allow Detroit Thermal to proceed with their plans and "in-kind restoration" without absolute understanding of how this will impact one more very thoughtful piece of design history that puts Detroit on the map.

The city of Detroit is known for pioneering contributions to the arts and culture including a range of gems like the Detroit Institute of Art, Motown and Detroit Techno music, the Henry Ford Museum of Innovation, the Eastern Market, and exceptional public murals. In Lafayette Park, Detroit also houses one of the largest collection of buildings by the pioneering, high-modern architect Mies van der Rohe and his collaborator landscape architect Alfred Caldwell. Their design has significantly impacted the fields of architecture, design, landscape architecture, and urbanism. As a current resident, I meet international design enthusiasts who still travel to Detroit from across the world to experience this 60 year design precedent. It is a treasure to both Detroit and to the State of Michigan. It needs to be protected.

I strongly urge you to deny permission to proceed with the current project that Detroit Thermal has proposed. The consequences are too costly to the community and to the city. Please encourage Detroit Thermal to investigate other options. They have the resources to do so. Thank you for inviting our input and for your sustained commitment to preserving Detroit's historic places.

Cynthia Pachikara
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