

**From:** [Gourley, Jason](#)  
**To:** [Historic District Commission \(Staff\)](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposition to Detroit Thermal's Proposed Project in Lafayette Park Historic District  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 14, 2025 2:06:22 PM

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City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

I am a resident of Lafayette Park and am writing to express my frustration, concern, and opposition to Detroit Thermal's application to reactivate a dormant steam system through extensive disruption (and potential irreparable destruction) of the Lafayette Park Historic District. My family have lived in Lafayette Park since 2008, and our 12-year-old son, Isaac, has known no other home than Lafayette Park.

In its site plan submitted to the HDC, Detroit Thermal admits that it's plan will cause disruption and require restoration in kind of wide swaths of the historic district. All of the proposed work will occur on private property in a neighborhood designated as a National Historic Landmark. As anyone who has visited Lafayette Park even once can attest, the pastoral landscape and meticulously planned and maintained grounds are a central and essential element of the neighborhood and constitute over a 60-year commitment to preserving the natural landscape and character of the neighborhood. Detroit Thermal proposes massive excavation throughout the neighborhood, including within feet of resident's units, without any articulated plan to actually restore the site to its original state. For over seven months, Detroit Thermal has quietly occupied the neighborhood, destroyed multiple trees and internal landscaping, and left a large construction site in the middle of private property.

Detroit Thermal has repeatedly refused to engage in meaningful communication with neighborhood residents and has kept its plans under a shroud of secrecy instead of engaging in transparent communications with those most directly impacted by the plans. As proposed, Detroit thermal would irrevocably damage large swaths of mature trees and landscape and has also proposed installation of steam vents that would forever damage the character and original landscape that led to the 1993 historic designation in the first place. Since Detroit Thermal has refused to share its site plans or discuss the potential impact with residents, we are left to imagine the worst-case scenario, with large steam vents over 6-ft high being inserted into the middle of private property in a residential neighborhood protected by national historic status. We are left to envision steam vents like those at the corner of Gratiot and St. Antione towering over our homes and spewing steam throughout the neighborhood.

Detroit Thermal's application to the HDC is further frustrated by the fact that reasonable alternative routes exist that would utilize public rights of way without any potential impact on the Lafayette Park Historic District. Detroit Thermal has refused to discuss its refusal to utilize these less restrictive means that would create a solution for 1300 Lafayette's heating issue without impacting the HDC in any manner, whatsoever. Detroit Thermal's open refusal to engage the community, its ever-shifting "plans", and its intentional disregard of alternative

routes on public rights of way are confusing at best and intentional at worst. It's lack of transparency makes it impossible to trust that any disruption to the Lafayette Park Historic District will be properly restored. Even as submitted, Detroit Thermal's plan would forever change the character of the neighborhood, stripping it of the character that underlies the historic designation of Lafayette Park. Perhaps most troubling is the fact that this hearing, the associated public attention, and threats of legal action are completely unnecessary because Detroit Thermal is aware of an alternative that would only utilize public rights of way. Detroit Thermal's intentional refusal to pursue this alternative – and its intentional omission of those alternatives in its submission to the HDC – offer additional support to reject its application.

I am hopeful that the HDC will preserve the character of Lafayette Park and reject Detroit Thermal's application.

Thanks,  
Jason



**Jason Gourley**

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