



[EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal

From Arlene Frank <fraganhome@gmail.com>

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To Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

I am a resident of the Lafayette Park Historic District neighborhood. 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, which is a central component of my neighborhood's National Historic Landmark designation.

The proposed project would generate a significant adverse effect on the historic landscape of my neighborhood. Detroit Thermal acknowledges that the project will kill and damage mature trees, shrubs, and planting beds that define our landscape. The project plans to convert the most sensitive and most beloved portion of our historic landscape into a work site. The work area impacts dozens of mature trees, dozens of shrubs, countless flowers and ground-covering plants, and raised beds that makeup our community garden. Detroit Thermal's plans fail to provide adequate tree protection. Detroit Thermal's own plans identify 47 mature trees in the project area and propose removing mature trees, shrubs, and raised beds in our community garden.

The plans submitted for this project by Detroit Thermal demonstrate its lack of understanding and respect for my neighborhood's historic status. This lack is also demonstrated by Detroit Thermal's work to date in my neighborhood. Despite promising to meet with our neighborhood after the public hearing on May 14th, Detroit Thermal developed and submitted new plans with no input or engagement from me or my neighborhood. Detroit Thermal has been working in my neighborhood for more than nine months. During that time, it has cut down most of a mature magnolia tree, damaged shrubs and flowers, and damaged an original bench near the playground.

I am also concerned that the project could damage the historic character of our neighborhood in other ways, including by installing new steam vents and conducting deep excavation near the foundations of our historic homes. I have no confidence that the impact on our historic neighborhood was considered in the development of these plans.

I want to assure the Commission that our opposition to Detroit Thermal's project is NOT about a "fight" between the Mies co-ops and 1300 E Lafayette co-op as DT has repeatedly insinuated. There is a long and valued positive relationship between our co-ops. The Mies co-ops are of course concerned about 1300's heating equipment situation and we want a positive resolution for them. However, to resolve their issue by creating a deeply negative and irreparable impact on the Mies historic landscape and possibly our buildings is NOT the answer. To be honest, we cannot really know the longer-term impact of the deep excavation, equipment weight on our fragile landscaping, and any future repairs that will impact our

landscaping over and over. Further, Detroit Thermal was not transparent with their plans when first presented to several representatives from the Mies co-ops (I was one of those present), continued to be less than forthcoming about the full extent of the staging work site and the potential damage and disruption, and insists on depicting our concerns in a negative light through their PR campaign.

I am asking that the Detroit Historic District Commission reject Detroit Thermal's application, which is not historically appropriate, to prevent it from irreparably harming the Lafayette Park Historic District.

Thank you kindly for your time and your commitment to serving the residents of Detroit and preserving the city's historic places.

Sincerely,
Arlene Frank
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