

June 30, 2025

RE: Concerns and suggestions - revised Detroit Thermal project application in the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District  
Detroit Historic District Commission - July 2, 2025 meeting

Dear members of the Detroit Historic District Commission,

I am writing as a resident of Lafayette Park Historic District neighborhood to share some concerns I have on the above referenced project and offer some suggestions going forward.

I provided a letter to the HDC as part of public comment on May 11, 2024 in advance of the May meeting of the HDC on this matter and in that letter I conveyed strong opposition to the project based on a number of issues,

Many of these serious issues were recognized by the HDC staff and commission members in their evaluation of the proposal from Detroit Thermal and the HDC staff determined that the project plan did not meet core elements of working in nationally designated historic site. Many of these issues were discussed at the May 14, 2025 HDC meeting and shared by public comment.

Given the fragility of the historic ecosystem in the Nicolet-Joliet-LaSalle-Lafayette Cooperatives area and the uniqueness of this area for Detroit, I remain concerned that there will be irreparable damage to the historic ecosystem there that will play out in years ahead and thus remained opposed to the project as conceived

I also understand that there is a heating issue faced by 1300 Lafayette residents that is a major concern that this project proposes to address.

While I am opposed to the project in the context of the potential and risk of lasting damage to the nature of the community, I believe the applicant (Detroit Thermal) has made a good effort to adjust their initial project plan to address the issues recognized by the HDC at the May meeting and many members of the community.

However, I believe the revised project plan is not quite where it needs to be, given the designation of this area as a National Historic District and that there are several details of the revised project plan that need to be clarified and/or corrected and concerns remain on the potential impact on the historic community setting.

Nevertheless, if I am reading the HDC staff report correctly, it appears that the HDC staff has determined in their report that the revised project plan has met their standards and is recommending approval.

If this revised project plan is approved by the HDC, I would strongly suggest that the following items be considered.

- 1) Such HDC approval would be contingent on the completion of due diligence by the HDC and/or the City of Detroit confirming that Detroit Thermal has legally documented easement rights to the property owned by the Nicolet-Joliet-LaSalle-Lafayette Cooperatives.

I would suggest that this is a core element of the basic relationship between and expectations of land owner and any public/private utility entity, particularly with respect to federally-recognized historic districts as is the case in the current situation.

- 2) Provision of additional details and clarifications on specific elements of the revised plan related to landscaping as shared by the impacted community (e.g. harmonization of pavement replacement with original and in place pavements, arbor-related impacts and plans on specific tree elements).

- 3) Establishment of an active communication link between the project applicant and the impacted Nicolet-Joliet-LaSalle-Lafayette Cooperatives. As far as I know, the project applicant has not fully engaged with the Nicolet-Joliet-LaSalle-Lafayette Cooperatives and this lack of communication and partnership with the land owner is a communication issue that must be addressed and would be of great benefit for all involved parties.

This could be achieved by establishment of a core representative committee from the Nicolet-Joliet-LaSalle-Lafayette Cooperatives that, if the project is approved by the HDC, would interface with the project applicant Detroit Thermal on a regular weekly basis as the project proceeds.

- 4) A commitment and documented process involving the HDC to assure that, if approved, that the project applicant proceeds in strict accordance with the approved project plan.
- 5) Establishment of a contingency fund by the project applicant Detroit Thermal that would remain in place for a defined period after completion any approved project and not to be less than ten years.

Thank you for all that you do and for your consideration of these important matters.

Stephen M. Lanier