



Outlook

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**[EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal**

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From katie fontana <katherine.m.fontana@gmail.com>

Date Sun 6/29/2025 11:13 AM

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

 1 attachment (4 MB)

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Dear Detroit Historic District Commission,

My name is Katherine Fontana, I am a resident of Nicolet Co-op and I am writing in strong opposition to Detroit Thermal's current proposal of running infrastructure through the heart of our historic neighborhood. This is being done without any exploration of other potential routes that would satisfy all stakeholders. Please consider the points below in your decision making.

**What we know:**

- 1300 Lafayette needs safe, reliable heat
- The Mies Co-ops want our neighbors to have safe, reliable heat
- **Detroit Thermal could provide service to 1300 AND keep the historic nature of our neighborhood intact. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive.**
- Detroit Thermal and its subcontractors have not offered or shared any alternative routes for their infrastructure that would satisfy EVERY stakeholder's needs.
- Detroit Thermal and its subcontractor Kaltz Excavating have a poor record of site maintenance, safety and follow through. This raises questions about leaving an internationally recognized historic landscape in their care. I have attached a photo of a site on Rivard and Antietam which has been in this disheveled state for almost a year - the excavator was just removed in the past few weeks.
- Observations of Detroit Thermal's system show that vegetation is often stunted or does not grow near their infrastructure.
- The utility easement/ROW under which Detroit Thermal is claiming use for this project has not been verified to be legitimate, as the portion connecting to 1300 has been unused for 30+ years. They have not provided clear or satisfactory documentation of such property interest.
- The presentation made at the May 14th meeting by Detroit Thermal's subcontractor included several statements pointing to lack of certainty about the state of the abandoned infrastructure that they are trying to reclaim and the process with which they hope to reclaim it.

**What we don't know:**

- Detroit Thermal's most recent proposal eliminates the steam stacks at the end of Joliet and Nicolet Place. They thought they needed them, ostensibly to satisfy an engineering need, but now they don't? What is the trade-off? Is safety being compromised? Is this connected to the switch in their

proposal from fiberglass manhole covers to the temperature-conducting cast iron covers that led to a class action lawsuit? On most days, many children are playing in the area where the pipes will run through, will their safety be at risk?

- What recourse does our historic neighborhood have if Detroit Thermal and its subcontractors run into issues that expand the scope, footprint, or further damage historic landscape or buildings now or in the future?
- Is Detroit Thermal trying to use this project as a precedent to plan future expansion of their network through our neighborhood?
- DTE and its subcontractors laid a new gas line across the north end of Lafayette Plaisance in approximately 2023. Why can't Detroit Thermal do something similar and "T" -off their existing infrastructure in the Plaisance and trench new service to Lafayette Blvd along their same proposed route for site access?
- Assuming these steam pipes are constantly going to need repairs, big equipment will always be needed on the property. This is going to turn the neighborhood into a constant work-site. Even if they "replace" what they originally destroy, what's going to happen the next time, or the next time? The contractors already ripped out trees and landscaping, I don't have a lot of faith they will be more careful each subsequent time.

### **What should happen:**

- The Historic District Commission should vote against this proposal because it will permanently alter our local and internationally recognized historic neighborhood. Those changes would be based on unconfirmed property claims and a poor track record of stewardship for the easements that the applicant currently works within.
- Detroit Thermal should find alternative routing from their existing infrastructure in the Plaisance. They could cleanly engineer and establish a new route a mere ~100' to the east. Thus providing the much needed heating service to our neighbors in 1300 Lafayette. The current proposal already outlines an effective routing alternative as the blue "approach" path, or a linear approximation thereof. (HDC review materials: "HDC\_presentation\_final\_0.pdf", Exhibit 7a, callout 2)

Thank you for your consideration,  
Katherine Fontana  
1412 Nicolet Place