



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Detroit Thermal Application in the Lafayette Park Historic District

From Drew Johnson <johdrew@gmail.com>**Date** Tue 7/1/2025 10:31 PM**To** Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

I live in the Lafayette Park Historic District neighborhood. I strongly oppose Detroit Thermal's application for a project in the Lafayette Park Historic District. The proposed project would irreparably damage my neighborhood's historic landscape, which is a central component of my neighborhood's National Historic Landmark designation. I am especially concerned about the loss of the neighborhood's general environmental character. The Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District was designated a Historic Landmark as a substantially-intact planned community, and with great care over time, it has remained so. Excavation of the community's landscape destroys that substantially-intact quality in the near term, and based on the current proposal, gives no realistic plan to provide for it in the long term.

In the absence of sufficient care and meaningful consultation with the neighborhood on Detroit Thermal's part, we are being asked to take a leap of faith and trust that this utility corporation will preserve the environmental elements of this historic site. Time and again, though, Detroit Thermal has squandered that trust. 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. Detroit Thermal has approached our neighborhood not as the singular site that it is, but as though this landscape were a stretch of unremarkable asphalt like any other. Similarly, they have treated my neighbors and I not as partners in stewardship of this historic site, but as obstacles to be bulldozed over. This pattern from Detroit Thermal does not inspire confidence that proposed plans to protect the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District will be followed through.

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 proposed project would generate a significant adverse effect on the historic landscape of my neighborhood. To quote the elements of the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District's designation: it would damage "the relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments (13);" it would disturb the low-rises' "arrangement of buildings in relation to open space

(14);" and, as previously stated, would destroy the neighborhood's "general environmental character (22)."

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
1344 Joliet Pl
Detroit, MI 48207