



[EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal

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

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

We write to you as a Detroit family, having lived in the Lafayette Park Historic District since 1977 (since before it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, under the U. S. National Park Service). We strongly oppose the revised application for a project involving the steam line in the Lafayette Park Historic District, from the company known as Detroit Thermal. We oppose approval of Detroit Thermal's application because their project poses a grave threat to the integrity of the historic district, and because Detroit Thermal has violated the procedures required by the City of Detroit and the process required by your own commission. Detroit Thermal has demonstrated that, should the application be approved, it cannot be trusted to carry out this project and be faithful to its stated promises to make the district and its elements whole.

We are particularly concerned that the significant landscape features of the historic district are jeopardized by the construction work planned by Detroit Thermal. While we are relieved that a certified arborist has been hired to assist with planning for replacement of damaged trees, and shrubs, and other landscape features, we are dismayed that the arborist has not consulted with our Boards and Grounds Committees to get community input into these decisions – as, indeed, directed to by your own commissioners after the Public Hearing of May 14, 2025. Why would Detroit Thermal and its representatives NOT meet with our community? What reason could they possibly have to NOT consult and share information with the stakeholders who stand to lose the most if their proposed plans go awry?

In addition to concerns about the unique landscape features of the historic district, we have major concerns about safety. While Detroit Thermal now says that there won't be ventilation stacks, they say that there will be large manhole covers over the steam line, and it appears that there are small holes in the manhole covers. We are not engineers, so we want them to explain how this works. This is another reason why it would have been good for them to meet with the community before a public hearing, to talk this through. We have many questions regarding safety:

- What will be the surface temperature on the manhole covers? Could a dog or a barefoot child get burned?
- How and where will the steam get ventilated, if not at the manhole covers?
- How much noise happens at the location of the steam ventilation?
- Who monitors the safety of the system, and how is that done?
- Will the system (now unused for nearly 40 years) be disconnected from the steam lines that still run under my building and the others in my co-operative? Will our old boiler rooms be impacted? Who will monitor safety aspects and other implications of any re-start of the steam system?

In the 48 years that we have lived here, we and our neighbors have provided testimony to, and cooperated with, the Planning and Development Department, the Detroit Historic District Commission, and other government bodies. Those cooperative efforts with the city agencies and other stakeholders have been quite productive and gratifying, resulting in accomplished goals for the Detroit River Walk, the DeQuindre Cut Greenway, and historic designation for the Mies van der Rohe co-ops and Lafayette Park Historic District. There is a strong legacy of the Historic District Commission doing well by all stakeholders, and we hope that that strong legacy prevails as we navigate these current challenges.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to historic preservation.

Sincerely,

Carol Weisfeld and Glenn Weisfeld
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