



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal

From MJackson <marion.jackson@fulbrightmail.org>**Date** Tue 7/1/2025 11:10 PM**To** Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

Date: July 1, 2025
To: Detroit Historic District Commission
Subject: Lafayette Park Historic District Application from Detroit Thermal

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners:

As a 30-year resident of the Lafayette Park Historic District Neighborhood, I write to express my opposition to Detroit Thermal's proposed project in the Lafayette Park Historic District, and I strongly urge the Detroit Historic District Commission to reject Detroit Thermal's current application for the following reasons:

- 1. Damage to Landscape in an Historical Landmark Neighborhood** - Excavations for the proposed project, if allowed to proceed, would result in irreparable damage to Lafayette Park's mid-century modern design that integrates landscape and architecture. Nearly fifty mature trees (many dating to the 1950s when Lafayette Park was built), as well as dozens of shrubs and flower gardens would be destroyed in the construction process, requiring decades (if ever) to recover to the present level of beautiful mature growth.
- 2. Introduction of Safety Hazard in a Children's Playground** – Detroit Thermal proposes to install open steam stacks in and near a children's playground area, which would not only be unsightly but would introduce the unnecessary safety hazard of hot steam being released into a heavily used recreation area frequented by young children and other residents and visitors.
- 3. Potential Loss of Historic Landmark Status** – Designed by internationally acclaimed 20th century Modernist architect Meis van der Rohe and landscape architect Alfred Caldwell, Detroit's Lafayette Park is internationally known as a ground-breaking mid-20th century residential project that integrates Modernist architecture into a carefully planned landscape setting. As such, Lafayette Park was recognized as a Detroit Historic District in 2003 and designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark in 2005. The Lafayette Park Historic District is an internationally known Detroit treasure and is visited frequently by architects and architectural historians from around the world. Detroit Thermal's current proposed design and location for its

steam pipe infrastructure project would significantly detract from the graceful ambiance of this historic neighborhood and could jeopardize its National Historic Landmark status - ultimately undermining the civic and economic value of this presently thriving downtown Detroit neighborhood.

4. Alternate Design Options exist for Detroit Thermal's proposed steam pipe project – It is important to note that installing a steam pipe system directly through the Historic Lafayette Park Historic residential area and playground is not the only option available to Detroit Thermal for meeting its stated objective of providing steam heat to the condominiums at 1300 East Lafayette Ave. When the Detroit Thermal's initial application was publicly reviewed by the Detroit Historic District Commission on May 14, 2025, alternate design options and underground pipe locations emerged in discussion. These possibilities included abandoning the idea of running the pipe project through the Lafayette Park residential and playground area and, instead, relocating the pipe infrastructure project to an existing easement along Rivard Street bordering the western edge of the Lafayette Park Historic District or, alternately, linking into previously used piping near the Chrysler School on E. Lafayette Ave. Detroit currently has many thermal projects located along public easeways. The option of locating steam pipe installation along a public easeway respects the integrity of neighborhoods and is, by far, preferable to Detroit Thermal's current proposal which is to run a steam pipe system directly through Lafayette Park's historical, exquisitely landscaped, and high-density residential area and children's playground.

In closing, I thank you for considering seriously the concerns that I and other residents and stakeholders have raised regarding Detroit Thermal's proposed installation of a steam pipe system through Detroit's Historic Lafayette Park Neighborhood. I strongly urge that the Detroit Historic District Commission reject Detroit Thermal's current proposal that would be so destructive to the Lafayette Park Historic Neighborhood but, at the same time, I would like to suggest that the Commission consider advising Detroit Thermal to consider options to its current design and location plans in order to accomplish the goal of providing heat to 1300 E. Lafayette Ave in such a way that the plan would not jeopardize the vitality and future of Detroit's Historic Lafayette Park District and its vibrant residential community.

Oversight of the Detroit Historic District Commission is essential to thoughtful community planning and in both honoring the past and present and in ensuring for Detroit a bright and creative future. I thank you for your important work and hope that you will find the input of residents and other stakeholders to be valuable and worthy of your protecting the history and assuring the future of Detroit's Historic Lafayette Park neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Marion Jackson
1336 Nicolet Place
Detroit, MI 48207
Tel: 313-405-6443
Email: mjackson@wayne.edu