



[EXTERNAL] Please reject Detroit Thermal's application in Lafayette Park

From Melissa Francese <melissa.francese@gmail.com>

Date Tue 7/1/2025 10:01 PM

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

To the Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

As a resident of Lafayette Park Historic District, I urge you to reject Detroit Thermal's application for a project in the Lafayette Park Historic District. The project threatens our historic neighborhood which has been on the National Register of Historic Places for almost 30 years.

The proposal raises serious concerns that have not been fully addressed. The community was not properly engaged in the development of these plans. This lack of transparency and communication is unacceptable, especially considering the potential impact on the historic neighborhood.

Detroit Thermal has significantly understated the potential damage to valuable trees and plants. The current tree protection measures are inadequate to safeguard mature canopy trees, some of which are crucial to the historic character of Lafayette Park. Damage to trees, especially to their roots, can have delayed but devastating effects on their health and longevity.

A satellite view of the neighborhood shows how unique our landscape is compared to surrounding areas. The landscape was designed by Alfred Caldwell, a renowned landscape architect, who has National Historic Landmark projects such as Caldwell's Lily Pool as well as a recent National Register nomination for Promontory Point, both in Chicago. One of the reasons people want and choose to live here is because of the landscape design.

The planned construction includes deep excavation and potentially the installation of new steam vents near the foundations of historic homes. This raises serious concerns about the potential for damage to buildings, sidewalks, and other essential infrastructure. There appear to be no adequate plans in place for protecting these vital elements or for their restoration in the event of damage.

Detroit Thermal's previous actions in the neighborhood, including commencing excavation without proper notification or authorization, have eroded trust. They have already caused damage to landscaping and ignored attempts to communicate.

Given these serious concerns about the potential for damage to the historic landscape and infrastructure, the lack of thorough planning, and the absence of meaningful community engagement, I urge the Detroit Historic District Commission to reject Detroit Thermal's application. The Commission should postpone any decision until a comprehensive plan is developed. The plan should prioritize the protection and restoration of the historic neighborhood and include robust community input.

Thank you for your time and dedication to preserving the historic and cultural heritage of Detroit.

Sincerely,
Melissa Francese
1416 Joliet Place
Lafayette Park Resident