




[EXTERNAL] Letter of opposition to Detroit Thermal

From Cynthia Pachikara <cpachika@umich.edu>

Date Wed 7/2/2025 5:52 AM

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

 1 attachment (23 KB)

Pachikara HDC Opposition Letter for Detroit Thermal Project June 2026.pdf;

Dear City of Detroit Historic District Commissioners,

My name is Cynthia Pachikara, and I am a resident of the Lafayette Park Historic District Neighborhood. I'm writing to state my staunch opposition to Detroit Thermal's application for a project in the Lafayette Park Historic District.

I teach at the University of Michigan's Stamps School of Art and Design. I moved to Lafayette Park because of its architectural significance as a mid-century modern masterpiece. However, I soon realized that the thoughtful design of the whole complex (buildings AND surrounding greenspace) fosters sense of community and, in turn, a true neighborliness between the residents. The glass facades and adjacent open cooperative spaces together naturally foster human relationships. This genius collaboration between architect Mies van der Rohe and Alfred Caldwell is often cited by urbanists **as one of the most successful urban renewal projects precisely because of** the inventive integration of buildings and landscape to create self-contained, community-oriented spaces. The age range of residents, from toddlers to 100+ years, is a testament to the livability of the complex, and the design has rendered a stable setting for Detroit city living for 60 years.

It is a terrible insult therefore that, despite the Department of Neighborhoods promise that Detroit Thermal would meet with the Mies co-ops before submitting new plans, this was not fulfilled. It is the opposite of community building. Plans were submitted without engaging the residents of Lafayette Park and a hearing was scheduled during the week of a national holiday which would significantly limit the number of residents who could be involved. The green spaces, which are the very binding elements of the design, are now at risk due to Detroit Thermal's plans. Lafayette Park has significantly contributed much to the fields of architecture, design, landscape architecture, and urbanism. Approving this project will irrevocably damage an invaluable example of contemporary urban design that is a part of the signature of Detroit.

The city of Detroit is known for pioneering contributions to the arts and culture including the Detroit Institute of Art, Motown and Detroit Techno music, the Eastern Market, and exceptional public murals. In Lafayette Park, Detroit also houses one of the largest collection of buildings by the internationally renowned pioneering, high-modern architect Mies van der Rohe and his collaborator landscape architect Alfred Caldwell. As a current resident, I regularly meet international design enthusiasts who travel to Detroit from across the world to experience this 60 year design precedent. It is a treasure to both Detroit and to the State of Michigan. It needs to be protected.

I strongly urge you to deny permission to proceed with the current project that Detroit Thermal has proposed. The consequences are too costly to the community and to the city. Detroit Thermal should be

asked to reroute their project around the neighborhood just as they are rerouting the discussion and implementation around the residents of Lafayette Park.

Thank you for inviting our input and for your sustained commitment to preserving Detroit's historic places.

Cynthia Pachikara
1310 Joliet Place, Detroit MI