

**PUBLIC COMMENT
REGARDING
WALDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT
APRIL 20, 2026**

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: Emily Wright <emj808@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 18, 2026 5:42 PM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Walden Park Special Use

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

To Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing to formally express my concerns regarding the proposed Special Use Permit for Walden Park located near my home at 709 Ambleside Dr. for the purpose of constructing a **two-story** school building adjacent to the existing school building.

I understand and respect the importance of supporting our local school district and planning for future educational needs. However, I am deeply concerned about the impact this rezoning and subsequent development would have on the student's safety, property values, families, and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The purpose of zoning is to set guidelines and expectations for real property to prevent incompatible land uses and to protect landowners so that their investments can't be ruined overnight. Any new school should be built in the current location of Walden (in the **middle** of the park) to alleviate the concerns raised below.

Specifically, I am concerned about the following issues, which merit against issuance of a Special Use Permit:

- **Health, safety and welfare:** Ongoing construction and noise from the construction project immediately adjacent to the existing school will negatively affect students trying to learn and further will present safety issues from all the construction trucks, students, parents, teachers and buses trying to share the one road entrance. There is not sufficient space in this small park to cram in a new school adjacent to the existing school in a safe and responsible manner. I can't imagine how an emergency would be handled with the current phasing plan.
- **Compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood:** The proposed **two-story** 88,640 square foot school in the proposed location represents a significant change in land use and scale compared to the existing zoning and character of the current neighborhood park that is not harmonious with the adjacent pre-existing residential homes and neighborhood. A two-story school does not belong so close to residences – especially when there are other options.
- **Property value and privacy:** A multi-story structure so close to residential properties will have negative effects on property values and result in reduced privacy.

Walden school is the only school that is surrounded by residential homes on all four sides and is truly unique, yet the school district's plans do not take this into account.

I respectfully request that the commission carefully consider whether this proposed rezoning aligns with the village's comprehensive plan and long-term vision for preserving established residential neighborhoods. The contemplated plans need to work for the community for generations to come (over 75-100 years) and not merely serve the short-term plans of the school district. We have one chance to get this right!

I ask that alternative swing-site locations be evaluated to mitigate potential impacts on nearby homeowners and families so that Walden school can be rebuilt in its existing location in the **middle** of the park away from residential homes and to preserve the safety of the students. Just because the school district has the money to rebuild schools, doesn't mean that the Village should approve the location requested by the school district if the Special Use conditions are not satisfied. The public didn't approve the site plans; we are relying on the Village to protect our interests while at the same time work with the school district to come up with a better solution. You wouldn't approve similar plans of a private developer. If pickleball courts or playgrounds would be harmful to adjacent residential homes, I don't see how a **two-story** school could be approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I appreciate your time, service to the community, and thoughtful consideration of the concerns raised by residents.

Sincerely,

Emily Wright

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: Coale Design <coaledesign@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 19, 2026 9:32 PM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Walden Park Special Use

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

To Members of the Planning Commission,

We are writing to formally express our concerns regarding the proposed Special Use Permit for Walden Park located near our home at 1365 East Canton Court for the purpose of constructing a **two-story** school building adjacent to the existing school building.

We understand and respect the importance of supporting our local school district and planning for future educational needs. However, we are deeply concerned about the impact this rezoning and subsequent development would have on the student's safety, property values, families, and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The purpose of zoning is to set guidelines and expectations for real property to prevent incompatible land uses and to protect landowners so that their investments can't be ruined overnight. Any new school should be built in the current location of Walden (in the **middle** of the park) to alleviate the concerns raised below.

Specifically, we are concerned about the following issues, which merit against issuance of a Special Use Permit:

- **Health, safety and welfare:** Ongoing construction and noise from the construction project immediately adjacent to the existing school will negatively affect students trying to learn and further will present safety issues from all the construction trucks, students, parents, teachers and buses trying to share the one road entrance. There is not sufficient space in this small park to cram in a new school adjacent to the existing school in a safe and responsible manner. Our students and neighbors will be experiencing a lot of dust, noise and possibly toxic air due to the building of a new school and tearing down the original school. I can't imagine how an emergency would be handled with the current phasing plan.
- **Compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood:** The proposed **two-story** 88,640 square foot school in the proposed location represents a significant change in land use and scale compared to the existing zoning and character of the current neighborhood park. This plan is not harmonious with the adjacent pre-existing residential homes and neighborhood. A two-story school does not belong so close to residences – especially when there are other options to explore.
- **Property value and privacy:** A multi-story structure so close to residential properties will have negative effects on property values and result in reduced privacy.

Walden school is the only school that is surrounded by residential homes on all four sides and is truly unique, yet the school district's plans do not take this into account.

We respectfully request that the commission carefully consider whether this proposed rezoning aligns with the village's comprehensive plan and long-term vision for preserving established residential neighborhoods. The contemplated plans need to work for the community for generations to come (over 75-100 years) and not merely serve the short-term plans of the school district. We have one chance to get this right!

We ask that alternative swing-site locations be evaluated to mitigate potential impacts on nearby homeowners and families. Walden School should only be rebuilt in its existing location in the **middle** of the park away from residential homes in order to preserve neighborhood and student safety. Even though the school district has the money to rebuild schools in Deerfield, the Village should not approve the new location for Walden School requested by the school district if the Special Use conditions are not satisfied. The public didn't approve the site plans; we are relying on the Village to protect our interests while at the same time work with the school district to come up with a better solution. Similar to pickleball courts/playgrounds that were considered harmful to adjacent residential homes, positioning a **two-story** school backing up to several homes in Deerfield should not be approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective. We appreciate your time, service to the community, and thoughtful consideration of the concerns raised by residents.

Sincerely,

Linny and Mark Freeman

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: maur6123@aol.com
Sent: Sunday, April 19, 2026 3:20 PM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Walden Park Special Use

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

To Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing to formally express my concerns regarding the proposed Special Use Permit for Walden Park located near my home at 719 Ambleside Drive for the purpose of constructing a two-story school building adjacent to the existing school building.

I understand and respect the importance of supporting our local school district and planning for future educational needs. However, I am deeply concerned about the impact this rezoning and subsequent development would have on the student's safety, property values, families, and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The purpose of zoning is to set guidelines and expectations for real property to prevent incompatible land uses and to protect landowners so that their investments can't be ruined overnight. Any new school should be built in the current location of Walden (in the middle of the park) to alleviate the concerns raised below.

Specifically, I am concerned about the following issues, which merit against issuance of a Special Use Permit:

- **Health, safety and welfare:** Ongoing construction and noise from the construction project immediately adjacent to the existing school will negatively affect students trying to learn and further will present safety issues from all the construction trucks, students, parents, teachers and buses trying to share the one road entrance. There is not sufficient space in this small park to cram in a new school adjacent to the existing school in a safe and responsible manner. I can't imagine how an emergency would be handled with the current phasing plan.
- **Compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood:** The proposed two-story 88,640 square foot school in the proposed location represents a significant change in land use and scale compared to the existing

zoning and character of the current neighborhood park that is not harmonious with the adjacent pre-existing residential homes and neighborhood. A two-story school does not belong so close to residences – especially when there are other options.

- **Property value and privacy:** A multi-story structure so close to residential properties will have negative effects on property values and result in reduced privacy.

Walden school is the only school that is surrounded by residential homes on all four sides and is truly unique, yet the school district's plans do not take this into account.

I respectfully request that the commission carefully consider whether this proposed rezoning aligns with the village's comprehensive plan and long-term vision for preserving established residential neighborhoods. The contemplated plans need to work for the community for generations to come (over 75-100 years) and not merely serve the short-term plans of the school district. We have one chance to get this right!

I ask that alternative swing-site locations be evaluated to mitigate potential impacts on nearby homeowners and families so that Walden school can be rebuilt in its existing location in the **middle** of the park away from residential homes and to preserve the safety of the students. Just because the school district has the money to rebuild schools, doesn't mean that the Village should approve the location requested by the school district if the Special Use conditions are not satisfied. The public didn't approve the site plans; we are relying on the Village to protect our interests while at the same time work with the school district to come up with a better solution. You wouldn't approve similar plans of a private developer. If pickleball courts or playgrounds would be harmful to adjacent residential homes, I don't see how a **two-story** school could be approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I appreciate your time, service to the community, and thoughtful consideration of the concerns raised by residents.

Sincerely,
Maureen O'Brien
[from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: Carrie Kirchen <carrie.kirchen@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2026 9:22 AM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Mayor Dan Shapiro; Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Resident Comments - Walden Elementary School Special Use April 23, 2026

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

To Members of the Deerfield Plan Commission,

I am writing as a resident of Ambleside Drive, located directly north of the proposed Walden Elementary School redevelopment. I have reviewed the application materials and have significant concerns as they relate to the Village's Special Use criteria. The purpose of zoning is to prevent incompatible land uses and protect landowners. We have one chance to get this right.

Compatibility with Existing Development

The institutional scale and massing of the proposed 88,640 square foot building — 44 feet 8 inches at its tallest— is of an entirely different character than the residential homes that surround it. The existing school reflects a deliberate choice to site its largest elements away from neighbors — the only two-story element on the current campus, the gym, sits approximately 300 feet from the nearest residential property. The proposed redevelopment abandons that principle entirely. The proposed location is significantly closer to the homes on the north side where the new structure sits on an incline above those homes magnifying the visual impact of a building being moved both closer and significantly taller with the structure rising 28 feet to the second floor. In addition, there is a requested height modification of 28% over the P-1 maximum further impacting the neighborhood.

The swap of park land for a massive two-story building will negatively impact neighboring property values. Neighbors who bought property on parkland now find themselves abutting an institutional building of this scale — a fundamental change in the character of what surrounds them.

I respectfully ask that alternative options be evaluated so that Walden can be rebuilt on or near its existing location. For instance, using Wilmot as a swing site for Walden alleviates many of these issues without impacting compatibility with the neighborhood.

Public Safety

This location will at some point simultaneously serve approximately 900 students from two elementary schools — Walden and Kipling — through a single vehicular entry and exit point on Essex Court.

I am concerned about children and their ability to focus at school while a new school is being built. And I am also concerned about safety after the new building exists and the site is being utilized by 900 students and teachers. I did not see any emergency response or evacuation plan for when two fully operational buildings will share a single access point. In an active threat or fire scenario,

where the park is surrounded by homes, how will emergency response be handled with one vehicular entry and one egress point? The traffic study does not appear to address the two schools scenario.

Stormwater and Drainage

Similarly, how will stormwater and drainage be handled when there are two operational buildings, a temporary gravel contractor lot, an underground detention under active construction, and disrupted drainage infrastructure? How will drainage be handled in this interim phase without placing undue risks on neighboring properties? What if a 100-year storm hits at that time? The proposed retaining wall along the north property line may concentrate runoff toward adjacent residential properties. The ability of parkland to absorb rainwater is essentially removed during the time that two schools reside at this location. Can a complete drainage plan addressing impacts on surrounding properties during this portion of the development be requested before proceeding?

Adequate Buffering and Privacy

Second-story windows will look directly into the rear yards and living spaces of neighboring properties in a manner the existing building does not. Can a visual impact analysis be requested?

I did not see a landscape plan in the documents. What has been shown along the north and northwest corner of the site is wholly inadequate to screen a building of this institutional scale. The 2-foot retaining wall raises the effective grade on the school side, further reducing screening value when evaluated from natural residential grade. Can a formal sight line study and landscape plan be requested before any public hearing proceeds?

Conclusion

I am not opposed to improving Walden Elementary School. I am opposed to this building, at this scale, at this height, in this location and the risks to the children, staff, and community of running two schools in a small park. The decisions made here will shape this neighborhood for generations — residents deserve complete analysis before that decision is made. We are relying on the Village to protect our interests while working with the school district toward a better solution.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Carrie Kirchen

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: Marc Zaslavsky <marczas@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2026 11:25 AM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Walden School and Walden Park

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

To the Planning Commission (plancommissioncomment@deerfield.il.us),

I am writing to object to the proposed Special Use Permit for Walden Park located near our home on Carlisle Place. Our kids have gone and do currently attend Walden and we are in support of improving the bones of the building, but we do not agree with the current development plans of constructing a two-story school building adjacent to the existing school building.

Ongoing construction and noise from the construction project immediately adjacent to the existing school will negatively affect students trying to learn. Additionally, the construction project raises safety issues from all of the construction trucks, students, parents, teachers and buses trying to share the one road entrance.

Walden is unlike any of the other elementary schools in terms of the size of the park, access points and being surrounded on all four sides by residential homes. There are not sufficient roads or land area in this small park to squeeze in a new school adjacent to the existing school in a safe and responsible manner. Other than the noise, dust and daily chances of danger, in an extreme emergency, what is the evacuation plan and how will emergency responders be able to manage the problem? None of these issues are addressed in any of the plans published for the Planning Commission.

The massive school in the proposed location represents a significant change in land use and scale compared to the existing zoning and character of the current neighborhood park. The new Walden plans do not fit with the adjacent pre-existing residential homes and neighborhood. A two-story school does not belong so close to residences – especially when there are other options. A multi-story structure so close to residential properties will have negative effects on the property values of the homes that abut Walden Park.

Lastly, over the next several years, there will be no green space for recess, for the surrounding community, or for any DYBA or AYSO sporting events. While this may be short-term, the lack of recess for young students over a few years is vitally important to their learning, and the School District can consider other options to avoid this. By contrast, the plans for Wilmot (or the other

schools) do not affect the green space for recess or the public parks, there are multiple access roads, and the new or improved school is not being squeezed-in adjacent to residential homes (it appears that the School District is even buying some homes near Wilmot to create more space and buffering).

We believe there are enough funds in the School District's budget (or the School District can value engineer the budget) to change the phasing of the school construction projects to address these vital community issues. Any new Walden school should be built in the current location of Walden (in the middle of the park) to alleviate these concerns. The School District needs to consider the long-term nature of the plans for the entire community, not just try to alleviate and address the short-term issues of the School District. If alternate third-party locations cannot be used to educate the students for 1-year periods, then the School District should consider using one of the other elementary school sites that has more free space so that they can (i) construct away from the existing students and residential homes and (ii) be faced with less safety concerns because there will be multiple access points and additional space to separate the kids from the construction. If the project takes a few years longer, the School District can safely invest the proceeds of the bonds in short-term investments to hedge against rising construction costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

Sincerely,

Marc