

**PUBLIC COMMENT
REGARDING
WALDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT
APRIL 21, 2026**

Daniel Nakahara, AICP

From: jason wright <lifewas777@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2026 4:02 PM
To: Plan Commission Comment
Cc: Daniel Nakahara, AICP; Jeffery Ryckaert, AICP
Subject: [PUBLIC COMMENT] Walden Park Special Use

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

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 twostory school building adjacent to the existing school building.

Again, 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 twostory 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 multistory 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,

Jason Wright

April 21, 2026

Dear Board of the Village of Deerfield,

We are writing to seek a change to District 109's plans at Walden. We moved into our house at 623 Ambleside in 2017. When we bought the house, we asked our realtor who owned the land on which the park sits and she told us the Deerfield Park District, not the school district. We thought the Park District would protect the only park space in the Northeast quadrant of Deerfield but we now must seek the Village's help to protect its residents by fairly enforcing the Special Use Rules on construction of new buildings.

We are not opposed to new schools in Deerfield, despite paying some of the highest property taxes in the United States. And we do appreciate that the District has changed the plans since it published them in the fall of 2025. However, what we now seek is simply for the District to tear down the current school and build a new one on its own property. Rushing to build a new school right next to houses would have a drastic

effect on the neighborhood and would not be compatible with existing development.

Walden school and park sit in the middle of residential properties on all four sides. Rushing to build a school right next to an existing, functioning school presents a number of issues, including safety of the children during the construction process as well as the safety of the children and the community to operate a school and a construction site simultaneously. Not only will it be unsafe for the children, they will find it difficult to concentrate as an entire school is being built next to them. There will be no recess, park, ball fields, and soccer fields for two to three years. A swing site would have none of these issues; it is clear that there is a better way to do this.

The building of a two-story school right next to existing homes will clearly lower property values of those homes. This school is not compatible with the existing development and homeowners should not be made to take the brunt of the rush to build a school without doing any of the work to find a swing site. The Village Board would never allow a private developer to engage in this construction and just because a school is seeking it should not change how the Village approaches this issue. The District should be treated the same as any other developer –

particularly where the District comes to the Village having done nothing to find a swing site.

There is a need for a swing school while the new school is being constructed. By swing sites, we mean somewhere other than the current school where the children can learn while a new school is under construction. That could consist of mobile classrooms, Highland Park elementary schools not in use, churches, temples, Sachs, Patty Turner. Or the District could build at Kipling and using that as a swing site (i.e. 3+1 plan), or use Wilmot as a swing for all 3 schools, since each of these schools has more land and can be staged off in a safer manner than Walden. And each is located on major public roads with multiple access roads and not immediately next to residential homes as at Walden.

For reasons only the District can answer, it has insisted that it has to take over Park land and there is no evidence that it seriously sought a swing site. If the District now complains about timing, it had four years to find a swing site and did virtually nothing to do so during that time. The homeowners and community should not suffer because the District never seriously considered a Plan B.

We thank the Village for its open-minded consideration and believe the Village should uphold the law and order the District to find a swing site to build the new Walden School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken & Jodi Wittenberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken and Jodi Wittenberg