

September 4, 2026

To: LTHS District 204 Board President Tim Albores
Members of the District 204 Board of Education

CC: Superintendent Brian Waterman, Lyons Township High School
Mr. Moses Hall, MoHall Commercial & Urban Development
Willow Springs Village President Melissa Neddermeyer
Willow Springs Village Manager Ryan Grace

Re: North Willow Springs Road Corridor Planned Development District Tree Preservation Proposal

Dear President Albores and Members of the Board of Education,

We are the 14 residential property owners whose properties directly abut the District's Willow Springs land. As the Board prepares terms and conditions for its upcoming sale, we respectfully ask the Board draw prospective purchasers' attention to an important requirement of the North Willow Springs Road Corridor Planned Development District zoning and consider a proposal that would greatly allay the concerns of those most directly affected by your property's potential development.

Specifically, we ask that any prospective purchaser be required to preserve in perpetuity the existing mature trees within a continuous, undisturbed buffer of at least 100 feet along the entire western boundary shared with the adjoining residential properties. This can best be formalized by the District including a specific deed restriction requirement prior to closing to protect this area from development and tree removal.

There is zoning precedence for such a request. Ordinance 2007-O-31 established the applicable NWSRC-PD development standards under Section 9A-1-5-1(G)(4) of the Village Code. Its Buffer Yards provision, paragraph (iii), already requires a minimum 100-foot landscaped buffer along the entire property line of any use abutting existing or planned residential property. The ordinance also calls for transitional areas, adequate setbacks, screening and landscaping to protect the residential character of neighboring properties.

The District communicating to prospective buyers that, prior to the sale's closing, it will include a deed restriction that prohibits development of this 100-foot buffer would not create any additional requirements a prospective buyer isn't already aware of from the stated zoning. What it does do, however, is create a permanent woodland protection zone and removes the possibility that variations or departures from the zoning code could be granted through the development zoning process. This would provide neighboring property owners significant peace of mind before the zoning review process even begins.

Legally protecting the existing mature tree line as it stands today is the most effective means to fulfill the purpose of these zoning requirements and build goodwill between a future developer and adjacent homeowners. It provides immediate privacy and visual screening, reduces noise and intrusive lighting, and creates a meaningful physical separation between our homes and future development. Any developers with designs on clearing the woodland and attempting to recreate the entirety of this buffer with potential berms and/or young plantings would provide substantially less protection for many years.

The trees and their established root systems also absorb stormwater, stabilize soil, limit erosion and help preserve existing drainage patterns for adjacent homes. Removing or disturbing these could increase the rate and volume of runoff reaching our properties and existing drainage facilities.

A deed restriction best preserves in perpetuity the existing trees and their critical root zones within the prescribed minimum 100-foot buffer. The area should remain free from tree removal, grading, filling, roads, parking, utilities, stormwater facilities and construction staging, except for the potential removal of trees certified by a qualified arborist as dead, diseased or hazardous. Any authorized disturbance should be minimized and followed by native-tree replacement and restoration that maintains density per Sections 9A-1-5-1(G)(4) and 8-10-5 of the code to preserve the area's wooded character.

While a buffer provision has existed in the current zoning for nearly 20 years, the idea of preserving the existing tree line also was suggested as a potential compromise between District 204 and neighboring Willow Springs residents by then-candidate and now current board member Shawn Kennedy. Board Member Kennedy made mention of perhaps retaining a significant tree buffer while discussing the issue with neighboring property owners in the run-up to the 2025 school board election. A Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions created by the District and recorded against titles to the properties prior to closing would provide the most protection for neighboring residents and also for the community as a whole.

It's no secret developing this property will inevitably result in the significant loss of green space, mature trees and wildlife habitat that have existed for decades. There undoubtedly will be significant public pushback over the demolition's scope. Therefore, we implore the Board, as members and representatives of this community, to exercise responsible environmental stewardship and do whatever it can to preserve as much of this natural landscape as possible, with the legal protection of the existing minimum 100-foot tree buffer serving as a meaningful and achievable first step currently in your power.

The District's previous attempt to sell this property was deeply fraught and unfortunately damaged trust among neighboring residents. Although another sale process is now underway, the District has yet to directly contact us—the residential owners who share a property line with the parcel and will experience the most immediate effects of its development. Taking this concern off the table and working with us now would help repair that relationship during a consequential period for both of us.

As directly adjoining owners, we have a substantial and legally cognizable interest in any zoning or development approvals affecting the property, as well as standing to participate in and, if necessary, challenge those proceedings. Establishing this tree-preservation deed restriction before bids are received would reduce the potential for zoning disputes, objections and delays while giving every prospective purchaser fair notice of the property's development expectations. This could help move the sale forward more quickly and allow the District to secure the funds it needs for planned campus improvements.

We respectfully ask the Board to consider this proposal. If the Board elects not to take this step ahead of approving terms and conditions, we ask, at a minimum, that every prospective bidder be provided a copy of this letter and expressly informed of the adjoining property owners' request before submitting a bid as this issue will become a major focus should the eventual contracted buyer begin the zoning process at the village level.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal with you further and respectfully request a response to this letter before the terms and conditions of the sale are finalized. Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this proposal in more detail, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Willow Springs neighbors.

Sincerely,

Kathy & Jim Distasio, 10932 German Church Road, [773-569-4680](tel:773-569-4680), jimdistasio@gmail.com

Deb & Fred Whiting, 7965 Howard Ave. [708-557-0335](tel:708-557-0335), fjw2049@cs.com

Bernadette McCarthy, 10938 German Church Road

Brian & Mary Kelly, 7905 Howard Ave.

Jim & Erica Gerros, 7915 Howard Ave.

Jim & Cheryl Bullerman, 7925 Howard Ave.

John Volmer & Rachel Low, 7945 Howard Ave.

Robert Agner, 7955 Howard Ave.

Kieran & Sue Gobey, 8005 Howard Ave.

Gerald Schnulle, 8015 Howard Ave.

Rick Moose, 8025 Howard Ave.

Jack & Tina Bator, 8035 Howard Ave.

Dan & Linda Moose, 8045 Howard Ave.

Christine Zerkel, 8055 Howard Ave.