



Oakwell Movement Statement to LMSD

January 25, 2023

The student-led Oakwell Movement is encouraged by Lower Merion School District's (LMSD) positive reception of our ideas presented in 2 recent School Board meetings and our [ACORNSE proposal](#), drawing from research available on [GrowOakwell.com](#).

We are grateful to Dr. Khalid N. Mumin and Dr. Alexis McGloin for meeting recently with our membership to provide an update on the results of our advocacy to date, and we look forward to continued engagement on these important issues with LMSD, the Acting Superintendent Megan Shafer, and the School Board.

While it is wonderful to hear that our proposal has had an impact, we feel that there is still more work to do to arrive at a creative, mutually-beneficial solution that conserves the intact biodiverse landscape of the 13.4 acres at 1835 County Line Rd and 1800 W. Montgomery Ave, while creating opportunities for hands-on education to benefit our greater community and for locating suitable field space for Black Rock Middle School 7th and 8th grade student athletes elsewhere in our community.

Along with our community, we await public release of detailed information on LMSD's revised plans for these 13.4 acres. In the meantime, we have prepared a list of respectful requests, sorted by urgency, to share publicly:

1. Immediate access to:
 - a. relevant details on any proposed revised plans for the 13.4 acres;
 - b. all research on previously explored field space options and needs assessments for BRMS sports and fields.
2. Prevention of environmental degradation to Oakwell property, including:
 - a. no removal of any heritage trees (trees over 30" diameter at breast height) on the property;
 - b. limiting the removal of trees, prioritizing environmental sustainability over development.
3. Reconsideration of:
 - a. placement of practice soccer/lacrosse field(s) on Oakwell by finding other partners for auxiliary fields, as there has been a [newfound partner for baseball and softball fields at the Polo Field in Haveford Township](#);
 - b. proposed access roads that require tree removal, especially heritage trees like Montgomery County's largest red oak, by finding creative ways to use existing roads and impervious surfaces on the property.



4. Meaningful student representation in decision-making about LMSD campus and curriculum through:
 - a. participation of Oakwell Movement student leaders in meetings relating to LMSD field sites, properties at 1835 County Line Rd and 1800 W. Montgomery Ave, and Environmental Sustainability curriculum;
 - b. a decision-making role regarding plans for the Oakwell site, to be treated as partners in decision-making and policy;
 - c. the creation of a School Board Student Advocacy Council, allowing student representatives a steering role in board decisions;
 - d. collaboration with LMSD administration to further develop the details of student representation in board decisions.
5. Creation of an education center in keeping with the ACORNSE Proposal, including community gardening and the preservation of all buildings on the property, including the Greenhouse Complex, Superintendent's Cottage, Tea House, Oakwell Residence (Class II), and Poolhouse.
6. Immediate stewardship of trees (deadwood pruning, proper mulching, and removal of dead trees). Care is urgently needed for the ash trees, which require treatment to protect them from emerald ash borers, treatment that was discontinued when LMSD purchased Oakwell in 2019.