



January 3, 2023

Lucy Klain - President  
Lower Merion School Board  
301 E. Montgomery Avenue  
Ardmore, PA 19003-3399

**Re: In Support of Oakwell Preservation**

Dear Ms. Klain and the Lower Merion School Board,

I am writing on behalf of Radnor Conservancy, a nonprofit organization whose mission includes raising awareness and supporting sustainability on a local level. We support Lower Merion Conservancy's position on the preservation of Oakwell and join them in strongly urging the Lower Merion School Board and the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners to abandon their plan to destroy valuable tree canopy, wildlife habitat and historic assets on the Oakwell property.

As you likely know, Oakwell's trees clean our air and water, sequester carbon, provide wildlife habitat, manage our stormwater, and reduce sound pollution. The greater Philadelphia area is losing important tree canopy and wildlife habitat in rapid fashion due to development. If Oakwell is destroyed, the shade tree and natural habitat benefit Oakwell provides will not be regained in our lifetime or our children's lifetime.

Radnor Conservancy joins the pleas of students, community members and ecological experts to consider carefully the example being set for young students if hundreds of years of tree growth, wildlife habitat and history are destroyed for ball fields. The student-led Oakwell Movement has highlighted the amazing educational opportunities available in the biodiverse landscape of 13.4 acres at Oakwell. The Radnor Conservancy applauds the efforts of the students and fully supports their proposal for transformative uses of the land that would benefit an entire community and learners of all ages.

We understand that increased development makes it difficult for Lower Merion to find land for this and other needs, but the same growth makes preserving natural spaces all the more important. Fields devoted to organized sports are used only for limited times in limited seasons, which makes creative solutions possible. For example, could the public and private entities in the township (including the many K-12 private schools and colleges in the area) collaborate to find a solution to more playing fields that does not necessitate the destruction of hundreds of years of woodland growth and a historically significant site?

On behalf of the Radnor Conservancy, and all of the residents of the area who deserve a thriving environment for decades to come, we urge the Lower Merion School District Board and the Board of Commissioners to make the right decision for their students, residents, taxpayers and our local environmental health, now and into the future.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Groebel, Executive Director, and Radnor Conservancy Board of Directors

Cc:  
Dr. Kerry Sautner, Vice President (LMSD)  
Todd M. Sinai, President (LM Board of Commissioners)  
Andrew S. Gavrin, Vice President (LM Board of Commissioners)  
Sara Erlbaum, Chair Montgomery County Conservation District  
Jessica Buck, District Manager Montgomery County Conservation District  
Richard Widmann, Chair (LM Shade Tree Commission)