



Dear Friends,

We need your help.

These are powerful words, and I don't write them lightly. The Lower Merion School District has indicated it may use **eminent domain** to take [Stoneleigh: a natural garden](#) to build a new school and/or playing fields.

Perhaps best known for the iconic hare sculpture located near the intersection of Spring Mill and County Line Roads in Villanova, **Stoneleigh was the beloved home of the Haas family**. Following the deaths of John and Chara Haas—whose ashes are scattered on the property—in an extraordinary act of generosity the estate of John Haas donated all of Stoneleigh to Natural Lands in 2016. The donation had a singular purpose: **to open Stoneleigh up to the general public, so that everyone could enjoy this natural treasure free of charge.**

The Lower Merion School District has previously stated its willingness to condemn a 6.9-acre portion of Stoneleigh so that it can build new ball fields. Natural Lands has told the District that we will fight, vigorously, any attempt at a taking. [On April 18, the district sent a letter to Natural Lands](#) stating that it wants to inspect **the rest of the 42-acre Stoneleigh garden** “in anticipation of a potential condemnation of all or part of the property.”

Unfortunately, saying “no” to the School District will not be enough. We need your help to send a clear message to the School District: should the Lower Merion School District take Stoneleigh, **it would rob the residents of Lower Merion and the broader region of a one-of-a-kind community treasure.**

The timing of the School District's potential action is ironic. **This weekend, we celebrate the grand opening of Stoneleigh: a natural garden.** After two years of planning and planting, everyone will be able to explore Stoneleigh—free of charge—in order to enjoy its tranquility, delight in its history, and learn about the benefits of gardening in concert with nature. Just as the Haas family intended.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

I hope you share our commitment to preserving Stoneleigh. **You can help us by telling the Lower Merion School Board and Superintendent Robert Copeland that Stoneleigh must remain preserved so that its beauty is available for all to enjoy forever,** and that they should look elsewhere for a location for a school and playing fields.

You can do that by **emailing the School Board at communitycomments@lmsd.org**.
(Please copy us at info@natlands.org.)

Please also mark your calendar for May 21 at 8 p.m. The Lower Merion School Board meets that evening and we need concerned members of the community to show up in support of saving Stoneleigh.

You can also help by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). Share this news with your friends! This is not just a local issue. This is a horrible precedent for conserved lands and public gardens everywhere.

For more ways to help, visit savestoneleigh.org.

Again, I don't say it lightly. We need your help.

Sincerely,



Molly K. Morrison
President



We hope that you enjoy your visit here, and when you depart, may a bit of the peacefulness and beauty, which is so much a part of Stoneleigh, be with you.
John & Chara Haas

Steeped in history, Stoneleigh was a palate for renowned landscape architects, including the Olmsted Brothers. **Over 50 years, Olmsted Brothers prepared 237 drawings for the grounds, making Stoneleigh the best-documented property in the firm's history.** Of the more than 80 projects Olmsted Brothers undertook in the Philadelphia region, few survive beyond trace remnants. Stoneleigh's gardens have remained remarkably intact.

Natural Lands is dedicated to saving land, caring for nature, and connecting people to the outdoors. **Stoneleigh: a natural garden exists so that adults and children can explore its gardens and open spaces for free**—marvel at its towering trees (including 10 state champions), delight in the Olmsted-designed gardens, and immerse themselves in nature.