



## FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

May 10, 2023

Dear Friends,

I write to you today with gratitude and enthusiasm about a future change to our campus. After several years of thoughtful work and careful discernment, we have made the decision to create a new community dining space on campus. While construction is still a few years out, I'd like to describe in broad brushstrokes our needs, process, and ultimate decision to build a free-standing dining space.

Meals at Westtown have always been about much more than nutritional sustenance—they've also been about building community, sharing experience, and growing connection. In our current Dining Room, food is prepared and served in a way that honors our essential Quaker values of community and service. Every week, our fabulous dining services team prepares more than 7,500 meals and 4,200 snacks for the entire school community. Wholesome, fresh-baked goods are delivered to the Lower School for our youngest learners to enjoy in the comfort and age-appropriate ease of their classrooms. Middle School students enjoy their lunches family style in the Dining Room to intentionally foster friendships and connections across all three grades. Community Dinners bring together our Upper School, including students, faculty, staff, and their families, and allow us to celebrate and enjoy holiday and cultural events with fellowship and connection.

Over the years, though, Westtown's program, schedule, and population have evolved and grown in such ways that we struggle to consistently provide the shared experience to which we are committed. The size and configuration of the Dining Room no longer align with the scheduling needs of Middle and Upper School, our dining services staff is challenged to shoehorn their excellent work into a space that was designed for a very different era, and students and adults who eat their meals here daily encounter a degree of traffic that significantly diminishes the community dining experience.

Several years ago, a committee of faculty, staff, students, administrators, trustees, and alums—skillfully co-chaired by Director of Food Services Beth Pellegrino and Trustee Charlotte Triefus—was convened to discern a way forward to significantly improve the current dining experience at Westtown. Throughout this process, it became clear that drivers for any redesign must center connection, reflection, warmth, and simplicity. We are grateful to have partnered with SHoP Architects, a renowned firm in New York City whose founding principals Bill Sharples '83, Chris Sharples '83, and Corie Sharples know Westtown well. In addition to Chris and Bill's long relationship with the school as alums, Corie and Bill are the parents of a current Upper School student. Their deep understanding of this community has been essential in helping us to imagine the possibilities in this exciting work.

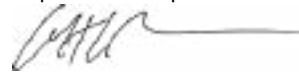
Through our process, it became clear that we should consider two scenarios for our dining program: the renovation of our current space and the creation of a new structure. We gave much consideration to both options and were ultimately led to recommend the construction of a free-standing space. Factors included the prohibitive expense of both renovating our outdated location and building a temporary kitchen and dining space to serve our community, as well as the inevitable disruption to the Middle and Upper Schools throughout the year-long construction process. Furthermore, with the careful relocation of dining to another nearby area of campus, we will gain 3,000 sq. ft. of flexible programmatic space in the heart of the Main Building.

Below, you will see an early vision of the new space as conceptualized by the talented and thoughtful team at

SHoP. While these are only conceptual renderings and do not necessarily reflect what will be the final design, we hope they will give you a preliminary sense of the project. This free-standing space, situated just across the Central circle on the north side of the Main Building, will enable the entire Upper School (both students and adults) to enjoy meals at the same time, both building community and removing constraints from the daily schedule. The space will provide our dining services team with the facility they require to accommodate the variety of dietary needs of our students, while aspiring to the highest standards of sustainable practices. Additionally, the location of the new Dining Room will provide much-needed and accessible space for gatherings, celebrations, and meetings all year round. Detailed plans for the newly imagined facility (kitchen, dining, and outdoor space) are in their early stages and will evolve thoughtfully to ensure that both current and future needs are met.

This project will be funded through a combination of existing school resources and philanthropy, and we are deeply appreciative of those donors who have already made financial commitments. We are also grateful to the Board of Trustees for their support and approval of this project, and we are glad to be able to share our progress and vision with the broader Westtown community now. For those of you who are able to join us in person for Alums Weekend, we will have a chance for more conversation then. For others, stay tuned for many more progress updates as we thoughtfully move this project forward in the coming months and years. Meanwhile, I hope you will join me in thanking the many Westonians who have contributed to this process so far, and I look forward to breaking bread with you on campus soon!

In partnership,



Chris Benbow '90  
Head of School



*The new space will facilitate essential connection among members of the Westtown community and foster a fundamental sense of connection to things greater than ourselves.*



*As a gathered center of our community, the dining room will feel unpretentious, welcoming, and lived-in to all members of our community.*



*The dining room will emphasize simplicity—eschewing visual flourish and distraction—in order to focus our attention on what matters most.*



*The dining room will nurture a sense of calm and encourage presence and reflection.*