

# Takoma Park Elementary School

1889 to 2009 and beyond

The bluff behind Takoma Park Community Center has been the site of Takoma Park Elementary School since 1924. Until then the land was part of Hodges dairy farm. Over the years the school was moved from one spot to another on the 4.5 acre site, as part of three major alterations.

Now Montgomery County is planning another renovation, which includes a 16-room addition to the current building. Construction is slated to begin in the summer of 2009.

There is some confusion on the part of the county school system as to how old Takoma Park Elementary is because the school was originally located on Tulip Avenue just off Maple Avenue (where the Presbyterian Church fellowship hall now sits). The four-room schoolhouse was built in 1889 after an intense lobbying campaign by townspeople.

By 1922, Takoma Park had outgrown the little schoolhouse. And a new lobbying campaign began. As the local Takoma Enterprise described it:

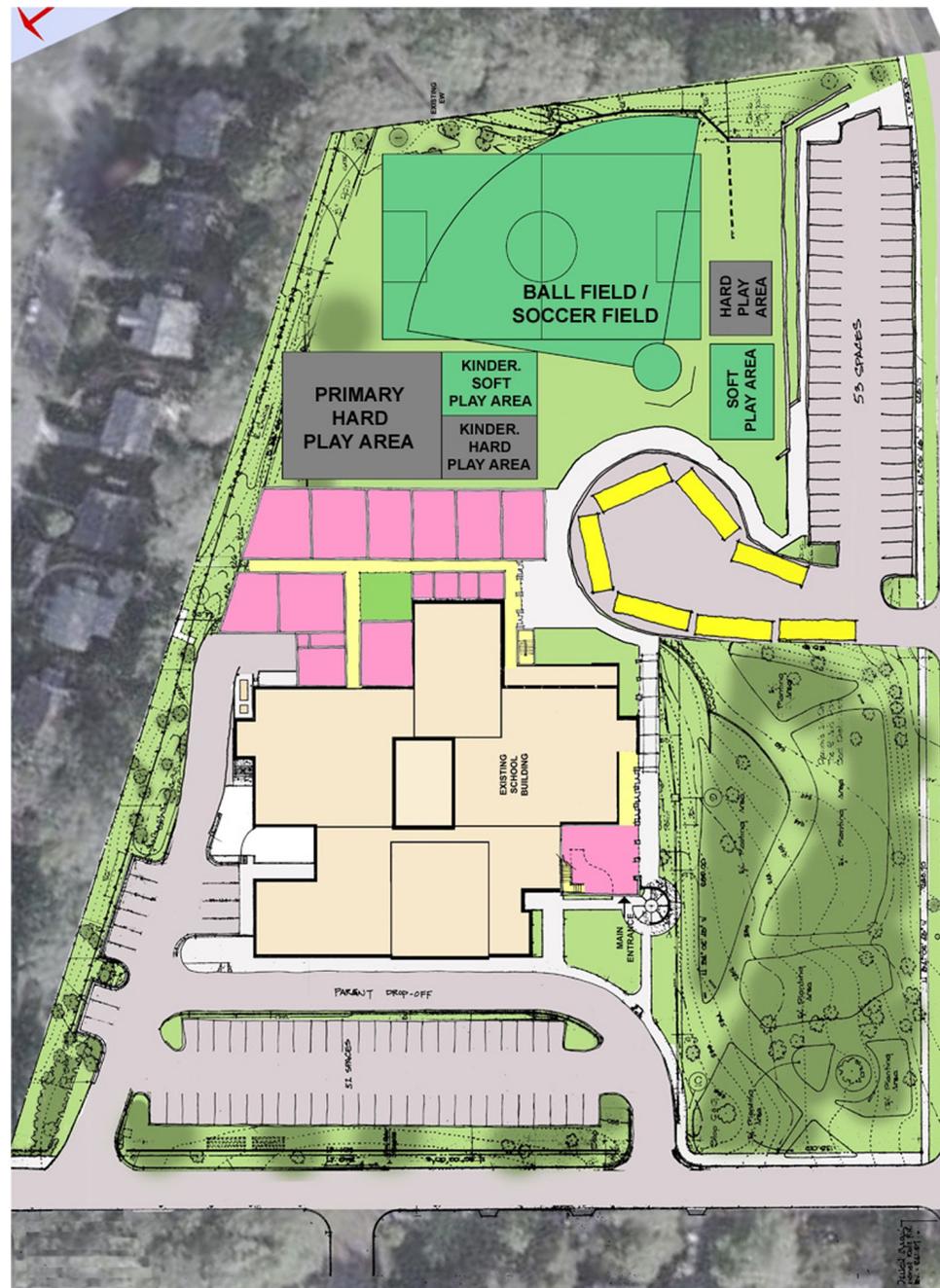
*“The proposition coming from a town that had slept in the woods for a third of a century, caused many to gasp for breath, and the word ‘impossible’ was sometimes heard. Mrs. Smith, Dr. Galloway, and their line-up inspired others with confidence, and it was not long until a new school seemed assured....”*

*Three acres of Hodges farm was donated by Mr. J. Roger Hodges and his two sisters, Mrs. Dean Judd and Mrs. Alfred Ray. The town of Takoma Park purchased five acres of the same estate, for \$7,500. Of these eight acres the Town donated 2.4 to the County as a school site, while the remainder is reserved as a municipal site and a public playground....*

*The original building of eight rooms and assembly hall were on the building program of 1923-24. Four rooms were added in 1927, and six additional rooms in 1928. The cost of the plant to date (1929) is \$133,544.36.*

*This up-to-date structure occupies a site so commanding that future building operations on adjacent property can never obstruct the magnificent view or interfere with the abundant supply of air and light.”*

The new Takoma Elementary school opened with 18 classes, including kindergarten, which was being offered for the first time in the county. Takoma Elementary was one of only four schools chosen to enroll five-year-olds. Local children remained at Takoma Elementary through sixth grade, before moving on to Takoma Silver Spring High School located



Current plans for the addition to Takoma Park Elementary School include: the current school shown as a tan box, with pink squares as the proposed two-story addition and new front entrance. The current vehicle entrance from Holly Avenue (gray oval at bottom) will be dedicated to student dropoff and visitor parking, while an entirely new access point from Philadelphia Avenue (the gray and yellow loop at the right) replaces the demolished Annex. The hard-surface playground (dark gray) and playing field (bright green), occupy their current spaces. The azaleas in the right corner (at Holly and Philadelphia) are left untouched because they are City property.

six blocks up Philadelphia Avenue at the corner of Chicago. An open park and basketball court are the only evidence of that school today. The expanding student population in the area eventually led to the opening of Montgomery Blair High School (in 1939) and Takoma Park Junior High (in 1944),

A small but momentous change happened in 1955, in the wake of Brown v. Board of Education. The Takoma Colored School located a few blocks away on Geneva Avenue was closed, and in September 1955, the African American

students joined their white classmates at the local schools.

Lee Jordan's daughter Patricia remembers starting second grade at Takoma Park Elementary and being welcomed by several white neighbors in her classroom. For years, black and white children had played together on the neighborhood streets, baseball diamonds and basketball courts and it made for a peaceful transition.

In 1959 the original brick building was altered by the addition of a concrete facade facing Philadelphia Avenue, today referred to as the Annex.

## Planning Takoma Park Elementary GET INVOLVED NOW!

**Oct 14 & 15, 7 p.m.**  
Public Hearings on  
Superintendent's Recommendation

**October 19**  
Board of Education Vote

**Public Meetings at  
Takoma Elementary:**  
**Oct 11, 3:30 pm:** Concerns about  
Relocation.

**Nov 12, 7 pm:** Continuing  
discussion about traffic congestion,  
bus access and final design of the  
building.

*TPES contacts for questions &  
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[westmont@erols.com](mailto:westmont@erols.com)

When the county decided to replace the old building nearly 20 years later, there was an easy solution. They commandeered the playground and ball field along Holly Avenue as the new site. Buddy Daniels is one of those who remembers with regret losing the baseball field where colorful banners hung along its fences.

Students moved into the new building in 1979, and the original school was demolished to make way for the playground. The Annex remained, however, providing space for Morgan Day Care

Meanwhile other forces brought change too. When Piney Branch opened several years earlier in 1971, the fourth and fifth graders left Takoma Elementary. And in 1997, the third graders followed, leaving only kindergarten through second grade at Takoma Elementary.

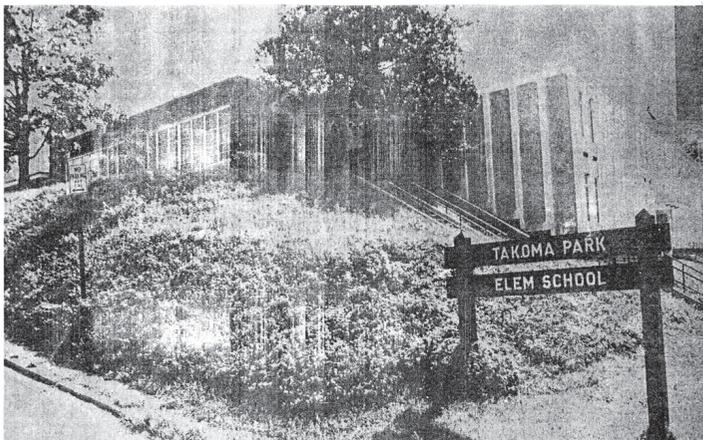
That turned out to be a good thing, because in 1999 the county brought all-day kindergarten to Takoma Elementary. Coupled with smaller class size for all students in the school, the building was suddenly short several classrooms. Portables sprouted up on the playground, providing some relief, but it was clear that a permanent addition was necessary.

Given the traffic congestion as buses and parents converged daily on Holly Avenue, some remedy was necessary for that as well. A year-long feasibility study concluded this summer that a 16-room two-story addition should be attached to the back of the current building (where the

# schools

Takoma Park  
Sentinel 8-28-75  
600 Small School

**TRACKING HISTORY:** This faded copy of a 1975 newspaper clipping found in County Schools files is the only photograph I have been able to locate showing the old, now demolished building. The view from the west includes the Annex. Next month, the first graders hope to dig up the time capsule buried on site in 1978.



Courtesy of The Sentinel

portables now stand). In addition, the old Annex should be completely demolished to make way for a separate bus drop-off and staff parking lot.

Construction is scheduled to begin in summer 2009 at an estimated cost of \$12,280,465. The biggest question is how to accommodate the students during the building period. The options are far from ideal. At an October 2nd meeting, parents debated with school system staff over the merits of leaving the children in place amidst the noise and dust of construction versus relocating them.

Given the small site, construction with students in place is projected to stretch out for three years. Relocation reduces construction time to one school year (plus

summers). But for that year, children would be bussed to Grosvenor Elementary in North Bethesda (the only school available in 2009).

A decision on this issue will happen quickly. Superintendent Jerry Weast makes his recommendation on October 29 as part of his Capital Improvements Plan budget. Opportunities for public comment follow on November 14 and 15, with the final Board of Education vote on November 19.

Although it will be at least a year and a half before the bulldozers arrive, the debates will continue over the next stage for Takoma Elementary.

*Diana Kohn is Education Chair of Historic Takoma.*



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**References Available**

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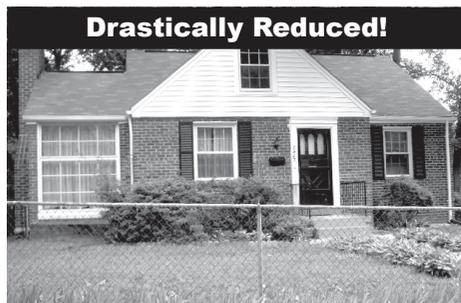


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#### TAKOMA PARK: \$409,900

Pretty expanded Cape Cod near Sligo Creek Park and the Hospital. Gleaming HWF, Sep DR, finished attic BR, LR with FP. A wonderful screened porch overlooking private back yard. 3 BR, 2 FB. Huge finished rec room.



#### TAKOMA PARK: \$529,900

Pristine cedar contemporary in a country setting of more than a half acre. 4 finished levels, Kitchen and all 3 baths are updated. The yard is amazing with trellises, trees, flowering shrubs and rolling lawns. 2 master bedrooms, (4 BR in all) and a 2 car garage.



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#### TAKOMA PARK: \$510,000

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