



Historic Takoma

NEWSLETTER

Adventist Hospital Expansion Raises Neighborhood Concerns

The community debate precipitated last fall by Washington Adventist Hospital's announcement of a major expansion plan is forcing Takoma Park to confront the dilemma of living in an urban world. The hospital has been a vital part of our community for more than 100 years providing Takoma Park with local access to emergency and medical care. As a "neighborhood" hospital, however, the options for solving its economic challenges are limited.

The original proposal had a little bit of everything, and most neighbors seemed comfortable with several pieces of the proposal:

- expanding the emergency room;
- converting existing patient rooms from doubles to singles and adding additional rooms (a third, fourth and fifth floor to the main wing) so that capacity remains unchanged at 322 rooms;
- upgrading the power station.



View of the Washington Adventist Hospital main entrance on Carroll Avenue near Flower Avenue.

Two remaining components, however, drew substantial objections:

- a commercial office building for surgeons and physicians to be located between the current medical building and the main hospital to attract specialists whose patients would often be admitted to the hospital. At 144,000 sq. feet, it is more than three times the size of the existing physicians building.
- a parking structure for 1070 cars to address the current lack of parking as well as new traffic generated by the new

building. In the current plan this structure will be located between the existing physicians building and the main hospital (6 levels above ground, 2 under).

An opposition group, Sensible Growth, was formed. Signs sprouted up on lawns and a website (www.sensible-growth.org) was born.

WAH responded to this with a Powerpoint presentation, radio ads, flyers and its own website (www.healthytakomapark.org).

The basic dilemma is simple: WAH sees an increase in the number of patients as the key to its survival. The neighbors see more traffic. The parking structure becomes a vivid symbol of the impending traffic increase generated by the new office building. If there was a way to teleport all the people on and off hospital grounds there wouldn't be nearly as much debate.

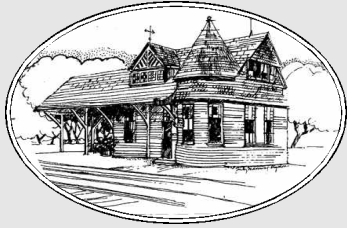
(continued on page six)

Saving the Maryland Heritage Rehabilitation Tax Credit – AGAIN!!

The *Washington Post Montgomery Extra* on July 3, 2003, carried a cover story describing the most endangered historic sites in Montgomery County. Accompanying this story was a sidebar on the renewed fight to save the Maryland Heritage Rehabilitation Tax Credit which has done so much to facilitate historic preservation in Maryland well beyond preservation efforts in surrounding jurisdictions. A study commissioned by Preservation Maryland shows that the law has stimulated private investment in more than 750 historic properties in Maryland. The tax credit has helped to save entire neighborhoods slated for demolition and locally was instrumental in the reconstruction rather than destruction of the B&O Railroad Station in Silver Spring. The planned adapted-use development of the nearby Canada Dry plant was also made possible by the tax credit.

This tax credit allows individuals and businesses a 20% tax credit if they restore designated historic structures. Last year Maryland granted nearly \$30 million in tax credits under this law. As part of short-sighted, short-term savings in state budget short-falls, the governor planned to eliminate the tax credit as of June 2003. (continued on page six)

HISTORIC TAKOMA NEWSLETTER



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Historic Takoma Newsletter is a publication of Historic Takoma, Inc., and is published quarterly.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Volunteers are welcome. Please contact HTI if you want to become more involved in the preservation of your community.

HTI is a membership-based non-profit organization founded in 1979 to promote historic preservation, citizen involvement, and community development in the Takoma community.

Membership is open to the public. Contributions are tax deductible. Federal ID No.: 52-1146960



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AROUND TAKOMA

Fourth Grade Walking Tour from HTI Education Committee

Mrs. Brobby's fourth grade class from Piney Branch Elementary staked out their claim on the Maryland-DC boundary line as part of their June 5 walking tour of Takoma Park. Although straddling the boundary line is everyone's favorite stop, the students also learn to identify bungalows, Victorian and four-square house styles along the route from Piney Branch Elementary up Maple Avenue, and back to the school down Cedar Avenue. Tour guide, Diana Kohn, chair of Historic Takoma's Education Committee, has been introducing fourth graders to local historic sites via walking tours for six years. In addition to leading the tours, Kohn has written *Takoma Park A-to-Z: A Kids Guide to the Town that Gilbert Built*, published by HTI under a CDBG grant in 2000, which the students read in advance of the tour. Using old photographs, Kohn has the students compare Takoma now with Takoma then and debate whether they would be happy living in the old days, without air conditioning, video games or CD players. Montgomery County includes local history as part of the fourth grade curriculum, but Historic Takoma sponsors these walking tours to help bring the history of our own community alive. As Kohn points out to the students, history isn't just what you read about in textbooks, history is also the memories you collect living in and watching this community change over time.

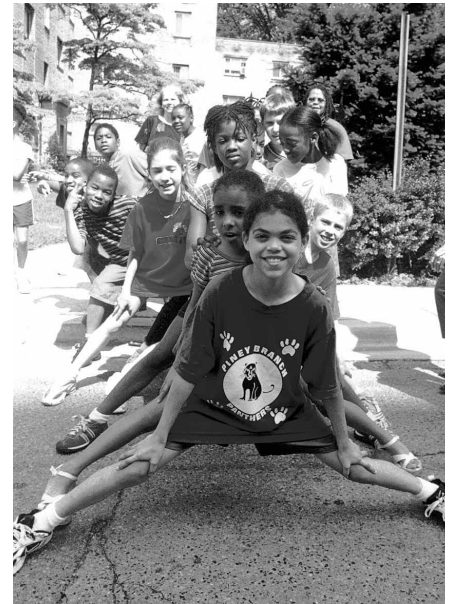


Photo courtesy of Julie Wiatt.

Mrs. Brobby's students bridge the gap between Maryland and DC.

HTI Walking Tour of Takoma DC & Takoma Park, MD

On behalf of the DC Preservation League, HTI Board Members Diana Kohn and Loretta Neumann developed and conducted a walking tour on June 22 of Takoma DC and Takoma Park, MD. It was the first time DCPL, a District-wide historic preservation organization, has featured Takoma on one of its tours.

The two-and-a-half hour tour started at the Takoma Metro Station, located at the heart of where Takoma began in 1883 when developer Benjamin F. Gilbert bought 93 acres of rural land along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad straddling the DC-MD line. Tour participants viewed homes along Eastern and Holly Avenues and Denise E. Hanna, Director of Operations for the Forum of Youth Investment, conducted a tour of the first floor of the Cady-Lee Mansion (at Eastern and Piney Branch Road). Built in 1887, it was designed by Leon Dessez, architect of the Vice President's home at the (continued on page three)

HTI Board Extends Thanks to Departing Directors

The President and Board of Directors of HTI extend their sincere thanks to out-going Board members Lisa Bentley, Jared Hughes, and Anne Juneau. Lisa Bentley has contributed to the activities of many committees over the years, especially the Oral History Committee. In addition, she stepped in to edit the *Historic Takoma Newsletter* on short notice and did a wonderful job. Her work with the newsletter is particularly appreciated. Anne Juneau also was active in many aspects of Historic Takoma. Her greatest contribution, however, was the organization of the Historic Takoma Archives. Through Anne's dedication, her committee secured grant funding to purchase office furniture and computer equipment and software as well as archival supplies. She participated in every level of this project and should be credited with a majority share of the success that the Archives has thus far experienced. Jared Hughes was with the Board as Director for Development and Membership for only a short period, but he brought many excellent ideas to the organization and started us down the road toward obtaining gift and donor funding. HTI will miss all of these excellent directors.



Participants in the DCPL Walking Tour of Takoma.

2003 House Tour A Big Success

Despite gray and chilly weather, the 2003 Takoma Park House Tour on May 4 was a resounding success, selling out all 600 tickets printed and garnering receipts of over \$6,000 for HTI's treasury, to be used for funding programs and furthering HTI's mission. The tour, whose theme, "Phoenix Rising," celebrated the many wonderful old Takoma Park houses that were "reborn" after being nearly lost to neglect, started at the historic Cady-Lee mansion and took tour-goers down Eastern Avenue to nearby Cedar, Holly, Tulip, and Maple Avenues. Tour-goers were delighted with the fascinating selection of distinguished houses, some beautifully restored and others in the midst of restoration.



Visitors enjoy themselves at the Boat House.

This year's tour also marked the launch of Friends of the Cady-Lee, formed jointly with the Forum for Youth Investment, current owners of the Cady-Lee, to ensure its permanent survival. A raffle was held on the day of the tour to introduce the new organization, with High Tea at the Cady-Lee as first prize, and copies of the book *Takoma Park: Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, 1883-1983*, for five second-place winners.

Historic Takoma wishes to thank all who participated in the tour, and especially those who opened their wonderful homes to visitors and volunteers who assisted with the tour.

HTI Walking Tour (continued from page two)

Naval Observatory, and is the only property in Ward 4 that is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The tour snaked its way around Takoma, stopping at Trinity Episcopal Church (Piney Branch and Dahlia), built in 1936, designed by Philip H. Frohman, the architect of National Cathedral; Takoma Library (Fifth and Cedar Streets, NW) built in 1901, a Carnegie-endowed library and the first branch library in DC; Takoma Theatre (Fourth and Butternut Streets, NW), opened in 1924, designed by noted theatre architect John Jacob Zink; Watkins Apartments (corner of Fourth and Cedar Streets, NW), built in 1908-9 by William Watkins for his six daughters; the historic Boundary Stone (Maple Avenue), placed in 1791 at the direction of George Washington; and the Historic Takoma Archives in the basement of the post office building at 6903 Laurel Avenue.

The tour may be offered again this fall. For further information, contact Loretta Neumann, (202) 882-9274, Lneumann@boo.net.

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Takoma Auto Clinic Fence – Update

Congratulations and thanks are due Auto Clinic owner Johnny Kahane and the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission who worked together to harmonize Kahane's need to fence his property with its situation in the Takoma Park Historic District. A 6-foot chain-link fence topped by barbed wire has been replaced with a 3-foot high wrought iron fence more appropriate to the location. Kahane will also remove one of the outdoor car lifts, which is no longer functional. This success story shows how the needs of everyone in an historic district can be met with a little patience and willingness to work together.

City Makes Improvements at Thomas-Siegler Carriage House

City of Takoma Park staff and contractors are in the process of installing water lines to the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum, located at the corner of Tulip and Cedar Avenues. Water lines will allow for installation of rest room and drinking fountain facilities. The Carriage House will also get a new coat of exterior paint. This work is funded through grants as well as some matching funds from HTI and the City. These improvements will facilitate future events at the Carriage House, owned by the City and administered by HTI under a memorandum of understanding. Thanks to the City and Carriage House Committee Chair Laura DiCurcio for seeing through these much-needed improvements.

HTI Board Resolution on Historic Building at 6901 Laurel Avenue

At its June meeting, the HTI Board of Directors passed a resolution opposing any consideration of demolishing 6901 Laurel Avenue, a building that is a contributing resource in the Takoma Park MD Historic District Master Plan. This building exhibits rare Amsterdam-style brick work, an architectural feature that is clearly mirrored in art deco design elements of the neighboring group of shops. The building may once have housed the community's fire department immediately prior to construction of the present fire station in 1926.

Laurel Avenue Streetscape Project in Old Town – Update

The City of Takoma Park has been working with the community on a design to make the commercial streetscape on Laurel Avenue more visually appealing and pedestrian-friendly, but the project has been delayed. Several contractors' initial estimates came in over budget, and in the meantime, county funds for the project have been lost. However, the funds may be recommitted if the city can resubmit the project at a lower cost. According to Rob Inerfeld, the City of Takoma Park's Community Development Planner, the city is considering modifications that include fewer trees, more brick pavers, and a revised pattern of materials on the median to create a congregation space. This will involve relocation of the statue of Roscoe the Rooster and HTI's interpretive historical plaque as well as other elements in the median. The city will resubmit a design as early as July, and resume the project as soon as funding becomes available.

Forested Lot on Hancock Avenue Threatened

A developer has purchased a lot on Hancock Avenue that was never developed and thus, retains a full growth of mature trees. Neighborhood residents are working to save this mini forest from inappropriate development. The state of this lot provides an excellent example of what Takoma Park would have been like in its early days as houses were intermingled with such sylvan settings.



On October 4 and 5, take Metro to DC Open House, a weekend of free walking tours and free museum admissions presented by members of Cultural Tourism DC. At more than 50 sites in 12 neighborhoods, museums, historic houses, and other attractions – as well as the city's finest walking tour guides – invite residents and out-of-town visitors to sample the places that make DC unique. New this year, DC Open House will host a welcome center at the City Museum featuring live entertainment. Takoma sites will also be featured.

Adventist Hospital Expansion Raises Neighborhood Concerns

(continued from page one)

The concerns about over-development are also increased because WAH shares the site with Columbia Union College, which has its own vision for expansion in the next several years. Neighbors fear that this would be only the first stage in ongoing development.

One approach to this dilemma is for WAH to send some of the new patients off-site. Historic Takoma has joined Sensible Growth, Mayor Kathy Porter and council members in urging Ken Bauer, WAH President and its public face in this debate, to reconfigure the WAH proposal so that a significant portion of the parking and office space is located at a second campus away from the neighborhood. The newly announced Enterprise Zones (tax breaks and other incentives for building in designated areas along University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue) may provide public money. Public money would reduce the influence of private money from WAH's current business partner, a large developer, Foulger Pratt, who would receive most of the income from the proposed office building.

Another part of the solution to combat increased traffic from WAH expansion is to lobby WMATA to keep open the option for future additions to bus-bay space at the Takoma Metro station

which could be used by hospital shuttles. This is especially crucial in light of WMATA's proposal to sacrifice transit space at the Metro site for use by a private residential developer. While WMATA insists that their would be sufficient room for future bus service, projects like an expanded WAH show that there needs to be growth space at the Takoma Metro for new developments that affect the community as a whole. A new traffic study projects more gridlock for the streets around the Metro station in the near future even without the WAH expansion.

One possible reconfiguration to mitigate construction of the physicians building comes in the wake of an announcement by MAMSI, the largest medical insurer in Maryland, that it will start reimbursing for certain surgical procedures only when done outside the hospital in free-standing buildings. Not surprisingly, surgeons are the ones most insistent on being near the hospital. However, physicians dealing with chronic care, ambulatory care and other medical specialties have far less reason to have offices on the hospital site and could be moved elsewhere.

The need for free clinics has been raised often in this debate. The current state of medical insurance coverage makes it more difficult than ever to operate such a clinic.

(The recent announcement that Spanish Catholic clinic in Langley Park is in financial trouble points up both the difficulties and the need). Ken Bauer estimates operating costs for such a clinic at \$1 million a year because of a high percentage of patients who lack insurance.

On July 24, 2003 WAH and the College made a joint presentation of their plans at City Hall. A large number of WAH employees testified. Their testimony emphasized the issue of maintaining the hospital in Takoma Park and supported the plan. The overwhelming majority of residents, who were not employees of WAH, were against the plan in its current form. At the July 28th city council meeting, five of seven council members expressed dissatisfaction with the current plan. But the final decision rests with the County Board of Appeals in the months ahead. Many of the relevant documents are available at (www.cityoftakomapark.org) or at the Takoma Park Library. In the event of approval, WAH predicts three to five years of construction.

How well we address the dilemma of development will determine not only the fate of WAH but the fate of Takoma Park as well.

Editor's note: at press time WAH announced new consideration of off-site options.

Saving the Maryland Heritage Rehabilitation Tax Credit – AGAIN!!

(continued from page one)

The efforts of a number of state and local preservation groups and municipalities, including Historic Takoma and the City of Takoma Park, were successful in preventing the immediate elimination of the tax credit.

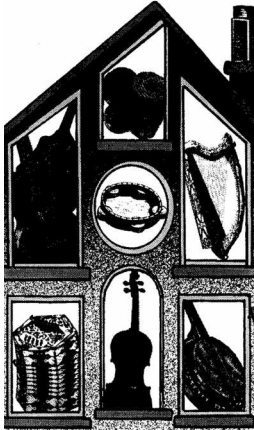
But the tax credit is again under attack and preservation groups must once again show that the long-term economic and cultural benefits of this law are far more fundamental than quick-fix, expedient, political gains. Please support HTI, Preservation Maryland, Montgomery Preservation, Inc., 1000 Friends of Maryland, and other groups working to save this vital law. Write or call your state legislature representatives Senator Ida Rubin, Delegate Sheila Hixson, and Delegate Peter Franchot. Call us at (301) 270-2831 or see our website at www.historictakoma.org for more information.

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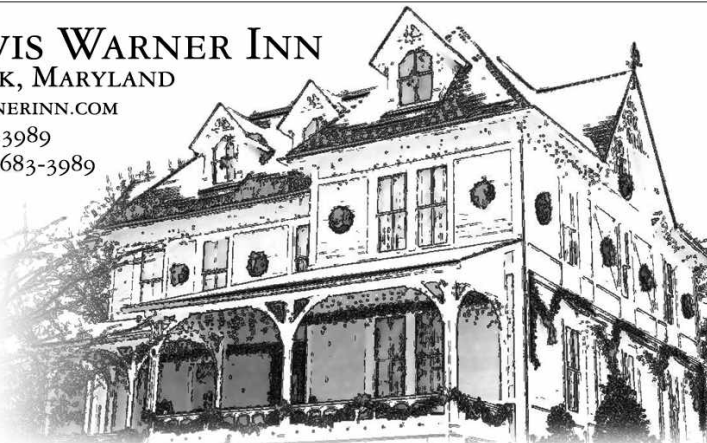
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