



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### The 'megastructure' at Northern Virginia Community College

*Alexandria Times, February 23, 2012*

*Image: Northern Virginia Community College. Photo, Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria Campus Library.*

Established in 1964, Northern Virginia Technical College opened in autumn of 1965 in a warehouse at Bailey's Crossroads. The following year, the school was renamed Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC or NOVA, colloquially).

Over the next four years, NVCC acquired land in five locations to create new campuses — the central campus in Annandale and four others. In 1969, NVCC purchased 22.5 acres along the Alexandria-Fairfax County line so the Bailey's Crossroads facility could be closed and moved to the new Alexandria site, then known as Eastern Campus.

In a 1970 letter describing the new campus's master plan, Eastern Campus Provost Donald Bisdorf explained the challenges of the land, which overlooked a ravine, and the need to build "a megastructure which could grow in phases and serve growing concepts of education." In the summer of 1973, when this photo was taken, the first phase of that building, seen to the far left, was complete, and by that fall, 6,000 students were enrolled at the Alexandria campus.

In addition to the original building, which was later named for Bisdorf, a future NVCC building is present in this photo. Just north of a small parking lot is John Tyler Elementary, an Alexandria City Public School then officially located at 3101 N. Beauregard St. Tyler had opened at the beginning of the 1971-72 school year, but in 1979 the school board voted to close the relatively new school. In 1980, NVCC purchased the land and the school building and modified it for college use. Today it is still known as the Tyler Building.



*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*