

**Innovative Connections: Finding Your
Municipal Clerk Groove (Municipal Election
Innovations) - May 25, 2016
IIMC Conference, Omaha, Nebraska**



Takoma Park

2.4 Square Miles

17,000 residents

49% owner occupied, **51% renters**

35% African American, 49% White, 16% Other

Large immigrant population (Languages: English, Spanish, French, Amharic, German . . .)



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Takoma Park

- Diverse
- Progressive
- Increasing property values
- Low income residents struggle. City has rent stabilization to preserve some affordable housing.



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Single Family Homes



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Garden Style Apartments



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Hi-Rise Apartments



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Safe Routes to School 5K



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Takoma Park Elections

- November of odd numbered years
- Mayor elected at large
- Six wards, one councilmember elected from each
- All serve two year terms.
- Non-partisan
- No primaries
- Candidates nominated at nominating caucus



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Takoma Park Elections (cont.)

- All six wards vote at one polling place (City Hall)
- Polls open on election day from 7 am to 8 pm
- Elections conducted by the City's Board of Elections in coordination with the City Clerk



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Takoma Park Elections

- Registered Voters: 12,000
- Voter turnout ranges from 10-25%



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Maryland Election Law

Does not apply to municipalities except:

- Baltimore City
- A Maryland registered voter in a municipality is considered to be registered for municipal elections. Municipalities may maintain a supplemental list.
- Qualified voters may vote in a municipal election by absentee ballot.
- Copy of campaign finance reports must be submitted to the MD State Board of Elections.
- Vacancies resulting from tie vote must be filled within 90 days.



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Municipalities Can Be Innovative

Who can vote in Takoma Park?

- ✓ Any TP resident registered to vote in the State of Maryland
 - ✓ Non-US citizen residents (1993)
 - ✓ 16/17 year old residents (2013)
 - ✓ Resident felons no longer incarcerated (2013)*
- *Maryland extended the vote to felons in 2015.*



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Municipalities Can Be Innovative

Voter Registration:

- ✓ Citizens register through the State of Maryland
- ✓ Others register with the City Clerk's Office anytime up to and including the day of the election (2013)



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Municipalities Can Be Innovative

When to vote:

- ✓ No-fault absentee voting – option to vote by mail (2009)
- ✓ In-person “absentee” became early voting
- ✓ Early voting (2011)*
- ✓ Election day voting



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Municipalities Can Be Innovative

How to Vote:

- ✓ Paper Ballots (2005) – paper allows for transparent recounts
- ✓ Instant Runoff Voting – rank candidates in order of preference



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Paper Ballots and IRV

Ward 5 Special Election in 2012



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Paper Ballots and IRV

Ward 3 Special Election in 2014



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Municipalities Can Be Innovative

Tenant Access:

- Landlords must provide voter information packets to new tenants.
- Candidates are to be permitted access to apartment buildings to canvass or register voters.



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Intro to Additional Information

Takoma Park has a long history of policies to allow access and encourage participation in elections. Focus on:

- 1. 16/17 Year Old Voting**
- 2. Same Day Registration**
- 3. Expanding Early Voting**
- 4. Voter Outreach**



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16/17 Year Old Voting

- Maryland allows 16 year olds to register, but they cannot vote until 18.
- City Charter amendment initiated by members of the City Council to extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds. Passed on a 6 to 1 vote.
- Allowing young people to cast their first vote while in high school before they leave home encourages development of a lifelong habit of voting.
- Neighboring City of Hyattsville also implemented in 2015.



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16/17 Year Olds

Allowing 16 year olds to vote drew national attention to Takoma Park. (Video)

- 2013 – 134 registered; 59 voted; 44%
- 2015 – 105 registered; 47 voted; 44.8%

Easy to administer.

Education for young voters is important.



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Same Day Registration

- Takoma Park implemented in 2013.
- Very popular with voters (and candidates).
- Proof of residency/address and identification is required.
- As a last resort, affidavit of identifying witness is available.
- Handled by the City Clerk's office. Less easy to administer.



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Expanded Early Voting and Voting in New Locations

- Takoma Park began in 2011 with advertised opportunity to vote in-person with absentee ballots during office hours.
- In 2011, in-person absentee/early voting was advertised for office hours plus several hours on Saturday. Of the 1,957 who voted, there were 85 early voters (4.3%).

Nov 2 (2); Nov 3 (2); Nov 4 (2); Nov 5 (28);

Monday, Nov 7 (51)



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Expanded Early Voting and Voting in New Locations

- In 2013, early voting was conducted by the City Board of Elections the same as election day voting. Of 1199 voters overall, 226 voted early (19%).

Oct 30 (12); Oct 31 (21); Nov 1 (48); Nov 2 (67);

Sunday, Nov 3 (78)



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Expanded Early Voting and Voting in New Locations

- In 2015, early voting extended from Wed, Oct 28 through Sunday, Nov 1.
- Of the 2,552 who voted, 784 voters chose to vote early (31%).

Oct 28 (76); Oct 29 (75); Oct 30 (89); Oct 31 (226);

Nov 1 (318)

- Voting on Friday, Oct 30 and Saturday, Oct 31 was conducted off site.



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Early Voting in New Locations 2015

Voting at the Takoma Park Recreation Center



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Early Voting in New Locations 2015

- Friday, Oct 30 – 2 pm to 8 pm
- Takoma Park Recreation Center located by two large apartment buildings in a part of Takoma Park that has particularly low voter turnout.
- This day, 55 residents of the rental building cast ballots. **24 of these were same day registrations.**
- The second building is condos. 23 of those residents voted. All were previously registered.
- (Video)



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Early Voting in New Locations 2015

Voting in Sligo Creek Park



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Voting in the Park



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Early Voting in New Locations

At Sligo Creek Park

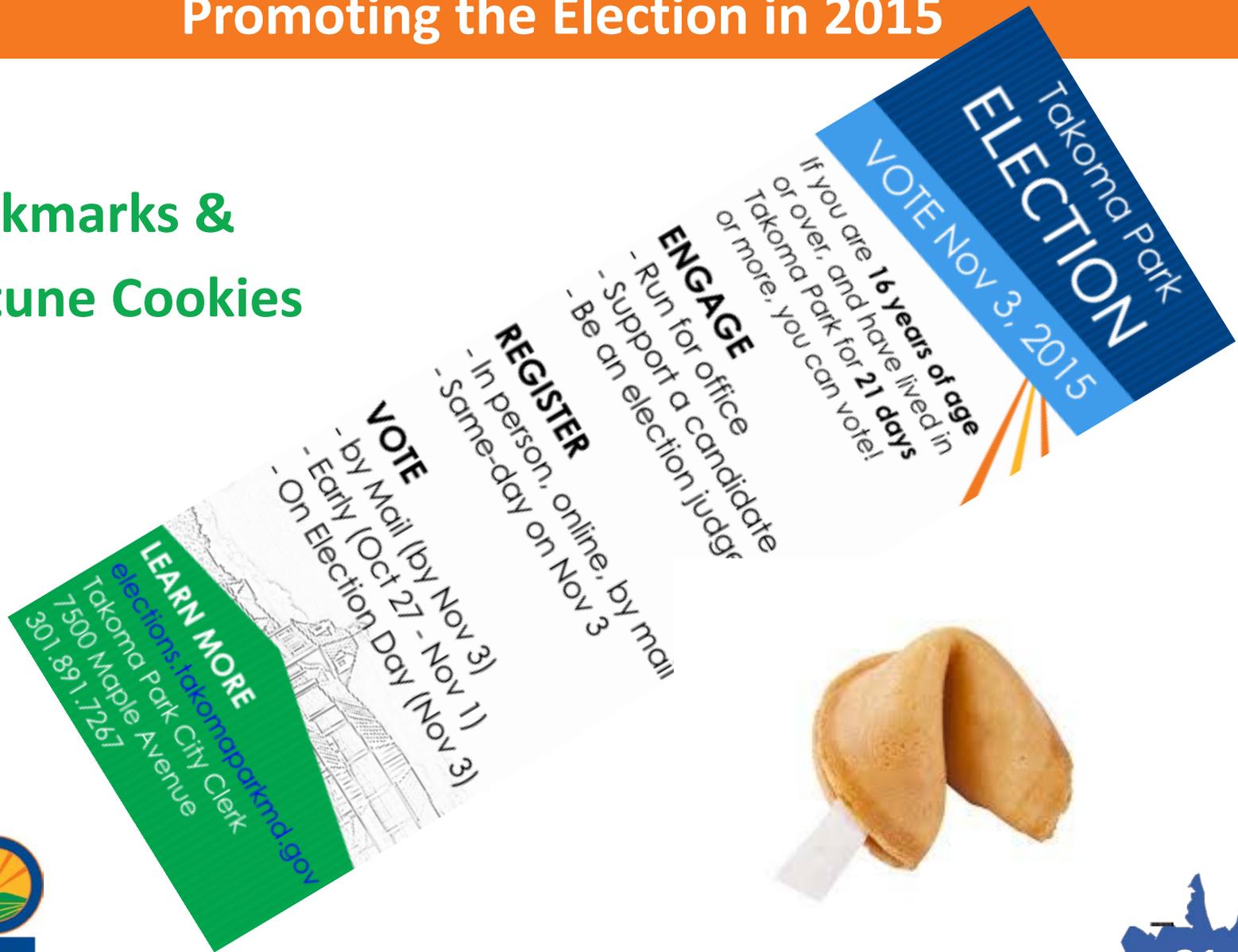


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Promoting the Election in 2015

Bookmarks & Fortune Cookies



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Promoting the Election – Voter Registration

Conduct voter registration at events in the City.



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Promoting the Election in 2015

- Promos on City TV
- Bus Shelter Ads
- Fortune Cookies
- Bookmarks



- Entered E Pluri-Bus in the 4th of July Parade



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Voter Outreach

- 4th of July Parade with the E Pluri-Bus



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What's Next?

Takoma Park is exploring changing its election date to coincide with state and federal general elections.



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