

Goldsmith-Schiffman Elementary

Photography by Lewis Kennedy



The two-story mass and dramatic roof forms make the new Goldsmith-Schiffman Elementary School in Huntsville a landmark for its developing neighborhood. Fabricated stone and a complementary tone of brick establish its natural theme.



Exposed timber brackets that support deep roof overhangs give a vigorous profile to the curved roofs at the entrance and atop the stair tower.

By Philip Morris



When Chapman Sisson Architects was selected to design a new elementary school in the growing Big Cove area of southeast Huntsville, the firm was asked to follow the Huntsville Board of Education's policy of making each school distinctive. For the Goldsmith-Schiffman Elementary School, nature became the theme.

"This school is located about ¼ mile from a nature preserve, so we employed materials and forms evocative of nature. For example, the stone-clad columns in front have exposed wood framing that sprays out at the top like trees," says architect Robert Mercer, team leader on the project. The theme plays out in other details like some painted-steel interior railings profiled to resemble crops in a field.

With a capacity for 800 students, the building was designed with two stories to keep the footprint compact. "If we had spread the 123,000 square feet across the site, the distances between the classrooms and the gym would have been too much," Mercer notes. Given that and its distinctive roof form, the school makes an impressive contemporary landmark for an emerging part of Huntsville.



Illumination maintains the school's visibility at night. The full-sized gymnasium also serves the Huntsville Park & Recreation Department.



The ground floor plan shows an internal courtyard that classrooms face.