1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Greenbelt, Maryland Historic District

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by Edmonston Road, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, and Greenbelt Road.

City/Town: Greenbelt, Maryland Vicinity: N/A

State: Maryland County: Prince George's Code: 033 Zip Code: 20770

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	X	District:	X
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
409	27	buildings
4	0	sites
5	1	structures
1	0	objects
419	28	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register___

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register
____ Determined eligible for the National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the national Register
____ Removed from the National Register
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DOMESTIC	Sub: single dwelling
	DOMESTIC	Sub: multiple dwelling
	COMMERCE	Sub: department store, specialty store
	EDUCATION	Sub: school
	SOCIAL	Sub: meeting hall
	RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: theater
	LANDSCAPE	Sub: plaza, garden
	FUNERARY	Sub: cemetery
Current:	DOMESTIC	Sub: single dwelling
	DOMESTIC	Sub: multiple dwelling
	COMMERCE	Sub: department store, specialty store
	EDUCATION	Sub: school
	SOCIAL	Sub: meeting hall
	RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: theater
	LANDSCAPE	Sub: plaza, garden
	FUNERARY	Sub: cemetery

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: 1) Modern Movement/Moderne, Art Deco, and International Style and 2) Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

MATERIALS: BRICK, CONCRETE, GLASS

Foundation:	CONCRETE
Walls:	BRICK, CONCRETE, ASBESTOS
Roof:	CONCRETE, STONE: Slate
Other:	Glass block

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

SUMMARY

Greenbelt, Maryland is a planned community built by the federal government along garden city principles. Located near the old Washington-Baltimore Boulevard (Route 1) in Prince George's County, Greenbelt is approximately 15 miles northeast of downtown Washington and 23 miles southwest of Baltimore. The community is one of three "greenbelt towns" built by the Resettlement Administration (RA) in 1935-38. Defense housing was added to the community by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1941-42. The plan of Greenbelt is a crescent-shaped layout of "superblocks." Each superblock contains rows of frame and concrete-block, group and multi-family dwellings. All dwellings feature a garden and service side, and are linked to one another via foot paths. Underpasses connect the housing to a town common, which features the original commercial buildings and community center/school. A recreational area with a swimming pool and athletic facilities is located behind the town common, and a 27-acre man-made lake is just beyond. Allotment gardens maintained by local residents since the community's origin are positioned at the edge of town. The architecture of Greenbelt clearly reflects a modernist approach, with straightforward housing and more stylistically conscious public buildings. The period of significance of the Greenbelt, Maryland National Historic Landmark (the "NHL") is 1935-1946.

The NHL boundaries encompass 756.8 acres in four discontiguous parcels. "Parcel 1" is 721.5 acres and is the core planned community built by the RA between 1935-38. Besides the initial RA housing, this core area also includes a family cemetery (pre-1935), defense housing built by the FSA in 1941-42, and maintenance buildings built by the Public Housing Authority (PHA) in 1944. "Parcel 2" is 30.9 acres and is the old Rural High School (now the Greenbelt Middle School), planned and designed by the government for the community. "Parcel 3" is 3.1 acres and is the Turner Family Cemetery (now the Greenbelt City Cemetery) identified in 1937 government plans as the community's cemetery. "Parcel 4" is 1.3 acres and is the Walker Family Cemetery/Indian Springs Park, a site of springs, forest, and a burial ground which was retained as an historical/recreational point of interest for the original community residents.

Contributing resources in the Greenbelt, Maryland NHL include the following elements:

1) residential units built by the RA between 1936-38, including group and multi-family housing and five prefabricated dwellings on Woodland Way;
2) integral transportation features, including the original network of streets and their extensions before 1946, as well as the "service courts" that accommodate deliveries, garages, and surface parking spaces;
3) integral pedestrian features, such as foot paths and underpasses;
4) original or early landscape features, such as parks and playgrounds, service yards, original hedges, shrubs, and trees;
5) the historic components of the town common, including the two original commercial buildings and the pedestrian mall between them with its statue, the school/community building, the fire house/repair garage, the gas station, and the original parking areas;
6) recreational features, including the 1935 Greenbelt Lake and what is now known as Buddy Attick Park, the swimming pool, and the ball fields and tennis courts;
7) remaining portions of the greenbelt, including wooded areas and open space surrounding the housing, and allotment gardens within the NHL boundary;
8) Parkbelt Homes' experimental housing, constructed as part of the original community;
9) the Rural High School (now Greenbelt Middle School);
10) defense housing built by the FSA on the perimeter of the original community; and
11) maintenance buildings built by the Public Housing Authority (PHA) in 1944.
12) three cemeteries: 1) the Hamilton Family Cemetery (located in the core planned community), 2) the Turner Family Cemetery, and 3) the Walker Family Cemetery/Indian Springs Park

(Note: The front page of the form lists 419 contributing resources. These are broken down as 409 buildings (including all residences within the period of significance, independent garage compounds, schools, commercial buildings, maintenance buildings, etc.); 4 sites (three cemeteries and the lake area); 5 structures (the swimming pool and four underpasses under Crescent Road) and 1 object (the Mother and Child statue at the Roosevelt Center). The remaining items on the list are not easily quantifiable as sites or structures (such as the system of footpaths or underpasses) and therefore are not counted individually on the form. The NHL includes 27 noncontributing buildings. (See List of Noncontributing Resources at end of Section 7.)

The condition of the district is generally very good. None of the RA housing has been demolished and only one of the defense housing structures was, due to severe settling caused by poor soil conditions. The focal point of the town, the community center, has just been restored. The unique site plan and design unity that set Greenbelt apart 60 years ago are still in evidence today, giving the planned community of Greenbelt a strong sense of integrity. There is a significant amount of synthetic siding on the houses.

EARLY CEMETERY SITES

When the land for Greenbelt was purchased by the Resettlement Administration (RA), three family cemeteries were located within its bounds: The Hamilton, Turner, and Walker family cemeteries.

The 3.1-acre Turner Family Cemetery is located on Ivy Lane, just west of Edmonston Road in an area that includes the Marriott Hotel and several large office towers. The cemetery rests on a hillside surrounded by mature trees and enclosed by a simple wrought-iron fence. Associated with the Turner family since 1739, the cemetery at one time probably held the graves of 12 family members, their deaths recorded in Sarah Turner's bible. Only one headstone remains legible today, that of Thomas Parker Turner, who died at age 15 in September 25, 1855. It has been removed from the ground and posted within a commemorative glass case. According to a historical plaque at the cemetery, the cemetery grew when Works Progress Administration (WPA) construction crews clearing land for Greenbelt found other burials on the Greenbelt property that had to be removed, and reinterred them at the Turner Cemetery. A construction worker without family is said to have died on the job and been buried at the Turner Cemetery. The 1937 Zone Plan for Greenbelt, Maryland, prepared by the RA, identified the Turner Cemetery as a location for a public cemetery and in 1941, the government sold the land to the City of Greenbelt. It has been operated ever since as a city cemetery.

The Walker Family Cemetery is located in a small wooded area that used to be part of the greenbelt surrounding the Lake. Because of the Capital Beltway, it is now physically separated from the original community, and is accessed instead via Walker Drive, a road on the north side of Greenbelt Road. The cemetery sits within an area known as "Indian Springs," which features some natural springs and used to contain an Indian cemetery as well. (The Indian cemetery and a stand of extremely old trees was destroyed when the Beltway right-of-way was cleared.) What remains is a small city park located behind the Golden Triangle Office Park's parking structure. The cemetery within this park is enclosed by a chain link fence and features the gravestone of Isaac Walker, who died in 1807, and a plaque to Revolutionary War heroes Isaac and Nathan Walker. The plaque was designed by the RA and placed by the Prince George's County Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution some time after 1935.

TOWN PLAN: THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE

The NHL is a portion of the larger City of Greenbelt. It represents the "first town unit" (hereafter, the "town") planned and built by the federal government as a greenbelt town for modest-income workers. Additional units were planned for the town, but were not built until many years later, causing Greenbelt to be likened to a medieval European fortress town, with a walled core surrounded by contemporary neighborhoods.[1]

Greenbelt's planned community is located on a north/south, crescent-shaped plateau that slopes gently westward into a valley. Topography guided the town plan. The original RA housing is clustered along this plateau to take advantage of prevailing breezes and is contained principally by two parallel roads (Crescent and Ridge Roads) which join at their north and south ends to form a continuous loop. (Defense housing added five years after the town was built is located both outside of the loop and at its northern extension.) A town common is located to the west of the housing in a valley, on the central east/west axis of the plateau.[2] A stream, also on axis with the plateau, is the source of a 27-acre man-made lake to the west of the town center and forms the heart of the recreation "cell" of the town. The original 1937 water tower, just outside the district, is located on Hurley Hill, the highest point in the town,[3] and the original sewage and disposal plant (now demolished), was located in one of the lowest areas, on Edmonston Road west of the residential area.

The government's role as single owner of the land made several innovative planning strategies possible for the town, including the creation of large blocks of 10-18 acres each (the so-called "superblocks"[4]), the running of utility lines without regard to lot lines, the ability to double up on plumbing lines, and provision of one heat source for multiple units. Housing was placed within the superblocks where it would be protected from surface water by fast run off. At the same time, units were placed low to the ground to eliminate steps down to grade and porches, which RA architects considered unsightly.[5] Some buildings were oriented across contours and stepped down to appear in keeping with the sloped ground and to provide an aesthetically pleasing composition.

In addition, techniques tried seven years earlier at the planned community of Radburn, New Jersey, were employed at Greenbelt including: the use of service courts (modifications of Radburn's cul-de-sacs); attached housing turned "inside out" with a garden side facing interior public parks and a service side facing the service court; pedestrian foot paths linking housing within the superblocks and throughout other park areas; and underpasses to separate pedestrian and automobile traffic. These features, employed so skillfully at Radburn and Greenbelt, would have tremendous influence on future cooperative housing and new town

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[1] Joseph L. Arnold, *The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-54* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1971).

[2] This location for the town common was considered typical of early American town common schemes. See J.S. Lansill, Director, Division of Suburban Resettlement, Farm Security Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., *Final report of the Greenbelt Project of the Greenbelt Town Program, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*. Housed at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 36 C (Records of the Legal Division), Box 2.

[3] Also planned for Hurley Hill was a board-and-batten Exhibition Shelter/Guard House. It is not clear from the evidence found to date whether this structure was actually constructed.

[4] The superblock, first developed by planner Raymond Unwin in England, came to this country via Clarence Stein and Henry Wright at Radburn, New Jersey. At Greenbelt, the superblocks were 10-18 acres each, 1200-1500 feet long, and 500-700 feet wide. Each contained roughly 120 dwelling units apiece.

[5] J.S. Lansill, Director, Division of Suburban Resettlement, Farm Security Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., *Final Report of the Greenbelt Project of the Greenbelt Town Program, Volume II, Report on Architectural and General Planning*. Housed at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 36 C (Records of the Legal Division), Box 2.

developments across the world. (See "Greenbelt's Legacy" at end of this nomination.)

After various revisions to the overall plan, the first town unit completed in 1938 contained 574 group houses in 135 buildings (seven families/28 people to an acre), 306 multi-family residences in 12 buildings (16 families/56 people to an acre), five detached experimental houses[6], ten prefabricated homes built by Parkbelt Homes, Inc., and seven rehabilitated farmhouses. It also featured integral commercial, community, and recreation buildings. The peripheral "greenbelt" of farms and woodlands that gave the town its name was never fully implemented. This green buffer was intended to unite urban and rural economies and to protect the town from unwanted development. In the end, Greenbelt ended up being far more suburban, and far less rural, than originally intended.

ARCHITECTURE OF GREENBELT

GENERAL CHARACTER

The architectural significance of Greenbelt lies in its visual cohesiveness and harmonious quality. These attributes arise from a government mandate on functionalism and from a superb resolution of siting, materials, and economic constraints.[7] Lewis Mumford, the regional planner and social critic, called the town's design "straightforward," and "a vast advance over the second-hand picturesqueness of the better American suburb." Mumford went on to praise Greenbelt as the harbinger of future planned communities: "Urbanity and openness - rather than the bogus rustic and pseudo-historical are the key to the new order of design."[8] Raymond Unwin, the planner of many of Britain's garden cities and new towns, visited Greenbelt in 1938 and summarized it as follows:

> The siting and placing of the town in relation to the character of the land is excellent. The dwellings are well economically planned, and the treatment, though quite simple, is very pleasing; and will become more so as the trees and shrubs and perhaps a few creepers grow up. The whole has a harmony of effect and treatment which gives a great sense of unity . . . I do hope that this will be cared for in the future. . . [9]

The buildings developed for the community were carefully adapted to the site. They were easily constructed, durable, functional, healthful, suited to local taste, made of available materials, and economical. Chart after chart prepared by RA planners and architects indicate the scientific approach to the housing's layout and design. Pure aesthetics were a last consideration and were a natural extension of plan rather than from preconceived notions: "No effort was made to develop so-called "style" in the design, but emphasis was laid on the matter of good proportion and scale in the exterior facades together with harmonious use of materials

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[6] These houses were designed because Resettlement Administration Director Rexford Tugwell wanted to build some units with "unconventional construction." Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning.*

[7] The RA architects noted that "it was essential to omit all features which could not be justified as being fitting or essential requirements, in an effort to keep costs down, but exercising care not to jeopardize lasting stability." See Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Report on Architectural and General Planning.*

[8] Lewis Mumford, *Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1938).

[9] Unwin went on to say: "In England we have found it necessary in such places to appoint a consulting architect, whose approval for any new plans is required before they can be accepted. . . . Would it not be possible to protect and preserve Greenbelt in like manner?" [Letter from Raymond Unwin to Department of Agriculture Secretary Wallace, March 25, 1938, contained in Record Group 16 (Records of the Department of Agriculture), Correspondence Files of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1906-56.]

and color, all in relation to the site groupings."[10]

Despite the professed stylistic vacuum, likenesses to existing structures can be discerned. The pitched roof group dwellings, for example, are similar to row house dwellings erected at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities in England with their unadorned wall surfaces, slate roofs, and steel-sash casement windows. The concrete block buildings, on the other hand, appear related to International Style (especially Bauhaus) dwellings of the same period, with their flat roofs, white walls, and lack of ornament. While the latter comparison is apt on a surface level, it does not hold up to deeper analysis for the following reasons: 1) the concrete block walls at Greenbelt's group housing still serve a supporting function rather than a shell function; 2) their floor plans are fairly traditional, as opposed to volumetric containers; and 3) their composition is based on bilateral symmetry, rather than the "regularity" of an underlying skeleton.[11]

RESIDENTIAL

Group Housing

The group housing that predominates in the town was a result of questionnaires distributed to potential residents and to the economy of attached construction. Most units are two stories tall, with sixteen one-story units located at the ends of rows originally dubbed "honeymoon" units. Rows range from two to eight units long. The present appearance of the group housing clearly reveals the original, unified design, but today that design is more individualized than in the 1930s. This change has happened as a result of the conversion of open porches to screened-in porches, the construction of other additions, a broader color palette, the shuttering of windows, and the addition of fencing and prefabricated sheds to individual lots.

Because of the high water table in the area, group houses were designed without basements. The decision to omit individual basements resulted in a second decision to heat the units as a group via one boiler in a single basement under one unit only. All foundations, and first-floor beams and slabs, are made of reinforced concrete. This material enabled architects to have flexibility in the choice of superstructure. Based on a large pool of unskilled labor and a limited choice of materials, RA architects selected two basic types of construction for group housing: 1) 44.6% are concrete or cinder block wall construction with poured-in-place beam and slab floors and flat roofs covered with built-up roofing; 2a) 51.6% are balloon frame with pitched roofs covered in slate and brick veneered walls; and 2b) 3.8% are balloon frame with pitched roofs covered in slate and cement asbestos shingled walls. The concrete block units were built entirely by unskilled laborers. These units saved money because concrete floors in upper stories meant ceilings didn't have to be plastered. Concrete block and brick veneer also were materials that would reduce maintenance costs down the road. Construction was done mostly by hand, in order to employ as many men as possible from relief rolls.

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[10] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning*. Greenbelt and Greenhills' housing displayed modern qualities characterized today as International Style, while Greendale's housing was more traditional. Greenbrook, the greenbelt town that was never constructed, would have had the most traditional conservative architecture of the four towns, because of the planning team's aesthetic preferences.

[11] For International Style principles, see Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966).

The architects grouped the flat and pitched-roof dwellings to achieve appealing vistas and aesthetic variation. Decorative work in the group housing is essentially nonexistent, except for brick rustication between windows. Group housing units were planned in pairs to economize on plumbing (kitchens and baths of adjacent units are located back-to-back). In most instances, units were designed with their long axis parallel to the service court to take advantage of light, ventilation, and ease of circulation. This orientation also allowed for wider plots for each individual unit and, in most cases, stairs in a central location. Setbacks between units were determined by the size of the bricks and blocks, so that all walls were fully bonded.

All of the units have a "garden side" and a "service side." The former face interior parks, and the latter face service courts. Wood and glass panel doors lead out from both sides, with original doors in evidence today still featuring addresses adhered to the glass. Wall surfaces were flat, except for modest projections at entries. On the garden side, these consist of narrow hoods on brick homes or wider, pitched hoods supported by metal posts on block homes. Both brick and block homes feature concrete terrace platforms on the garden side. On the service side, slate-roofed porches cover the service door, and are adjacent to a tool and trash can closet (accessible from the exterior porch via wood paneled doors). Some units also feature a projecting living room closet opposite the trash can closet that is accessible only from the interior. In many cases today, a screen door has been placed at the porch opening, altering the original play of recessed and protruding wall sections on the service side.

Originally, the RA architects planned to paint all exterior trim (doors, windows, brick rustication) to "relieve the severity of the design.[12] One color was to be used per building, or per group of buildings, with variations in color between groups. As for walls, they planned to paint the concrete block units an off-white color and "a few" of the peripheral brick veneer units "in deeper shades of color."[13] The concrete block units were consistently painted with an off-white cement paint. For contrast to the off-white walls, the rustication of these flat-roofed houses was painted in seven or eight shades of "bright," "pastel" colors (blue, yellow, salmon, green, and orchid are mentioned).[14] When the brick was discovered to be porous prior to 1938, the RA architects decided to paint the walls of these units as well as a waterproofing precaution, but historic photographs indicate that consistent painting of the brick units was not undertaken.[15] The architects commented in their *Final Report* that "where there is a tendency to monotony in general effect, color plays an important part in the design."[16] For additional softening of the architecture, the architects counted on mature landscaping.

Ten different plan types are evident throughout the 574 group units. Plans were developed so that they could be used interchangeably to construct a grouping, allowing the RA architects great flexibility. The most popular plans were the C2-1 and C2-7 plans of 5- and 5 ½-rooms, intended for 3.33 to 3.75 persons.[17] The plans were designed to be "exceedingly compact, yet practical."[18] Living rooms almost always extend from one side of the house to the other, and feature doors at both ends for access to the service

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[12] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II - Architectural and General Planning.*

[13] Ibid.

[14] Janet M. James, who visited Greenbelt in 1937 during its open house, and Major John O. Walker, former director of the PHA recall that this paint scheme was implemented. See John O. Walker, "Life in a Greenbelt Community," *Shelter*, December, 1938 and *Greenbelt is 50: Looking Back*, page 41.

[15] Historic photographs indicate that some brick units were painted and others were not.

[16] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning.*

[17] Given the community's modest-income market, it is an unusual feature that the C3-2 plan had an auxiliary water closet and lavatory off of the kitchen for "servant's use." See Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning.*

[18] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architecture.*

and garden sides. Corner units always feature windows on both elevations to furnish additional light and cross breezes. Kitchens are small, often only a strip within the living room or dining area, but were provided with the most modern appliances, such as mangles, small washing machines, and electric ovens and refrigerators. Closets are small and limited in number. To compensate for the smallness of the units, other amenities were provided: children's closets, for example, were equipped with special built-in ladders for accessibility and residents could purchase a sewing machine that folded into a table, the seat of which also held scraps and supplies. Extra storage space was available in the attics of the pitched roof units.

In the frame structures, the first floors are constructed of concrete and second floors of oak. In the concrete block houses, all floors are concrete. All concrete floors were initially covered with asphalt tile laid in mastic, which proved difficult to shine. Today, most units feature modern flooring materials. Interior walls are constructed of plaster and trim of gumwood or ponderosa pine. The walls were originally painted in various soft shades. Furniture made available to the residents was designed by the Special Skills Division (of first the RA and later, the FSA) in a variety of woods using Scandinavian design models. It was manufactured by private companies contracting with the government.

In 1978, Greenbelt Homes Inc., the cooperative that owns most of the town's housing, initiated a $18 million "rehabilitation" project to improve energy efficiency and security in its housing. After the completion of that project in the 1980s, additional changes were made as needed. Today, the following alterations have been made to most of the group housing: utilities have been adapted from a common system to individually metered systems; block homes have been painted in several colors; many brick homes have had their paint removed through high pressure water blasting treatment (at owners' request); vinyl siding in approximately seven colors has been added to block and some cement asbestos shingle homes for greater insulating value (also at owners' request); original windows have been removed and replaced with vinyl sliding units; new roofs have been added to the block homes; copper gutters and downspouts have been replaced in kind in the brick homes; and many window openings have been fitted with air conditioning units.

Multi-Family Housing

The 12 multi-family buildings in the original planned community were designed with complete floor plans, rather than assembled in modular units like group houses. Three different apartment floor plans were available to prospective tenants, who were mostly small families, childless couples, and single dwellers. Each building features 18 to 48 dwellings. The apartment house basements were used for tenant storage, laundry, and play space for children.

The buildings are constructed of 12"-thick, cinder block walls with reinforced concrete slab floors and roofs. They are three stories tall, and staggered like the group housing units for visual interest and to adapt to the topography. Where staggering occurs, corner windows are employed to form sun porches and an open, third-floor porch accessed via French doors. Unlike the group housing, the primary facade of multi-family housing faces the street. The entrances on the street frontage feature a prominent glass block treatment. Glass block frames the door and highlights the stairhall for a full three stories[19] The garden-side entrances are much simpler, featuring single-leaf wood and glass doors without decorative embellishment. Like the group housing, the apartment blocks feature brick rustication between windows for added decoration.

Of all the buildings at Greenbelt, the multi-family (apartment house) buildings are the ones that resemble Bauhaus examples most strongly. These white-walled buildings with flat roofs and corner windows also were constructed, for the most part, according to a key tenets of the style -- with floors and roofs supported

[19] Glass blocks had only just come into widespread use in 1935, making their appearance at Greenbelt a significant, early use. Chester Draper, a regional engineer for the Resettlement Administration and an early Greenbelt resident, recalled that businesses eager to launch new products recommended them to Tugwell, who would then try them out at Greenbelt. Other new products used in the town were threaded copper fittings for water pipes and brass plumbing for the waste system. See *Greenbelt is 50: Looking Back*, (City of Greenbelt), 16.

on interior, reinforced concrete columns.[20]

On the interior, the multi-family housing featured materials similar to those used for the group housing, including the burgundy and black asphalt tile flooring.

The apartment houses owned by Greenbelt Homes, Inc., were rehabilitated in the 1980s. The utilities were upgraded, buildings repainted, windows changed to aluminum sliding or double hung (depending on the size of the opening), porches enclosed on the lower two floors and third-floor French doors replaced with sliding glass doors. Those units fronting Parkway and Crescent Roads which are still owned by others retain a majority of their original steel-sash casement windows. Window air-conditioning units are prevalent.

Resettlement Administration Prefabricated Units

Five prefabricated units were built by the RA on Woodland Way, north of Crescent Road as a demonstration of economical construction. Prefabrication economized on cost because it substantially reduced the amount of on-site labor. The government prefabricated homes at Greenbelt were constructed of plywood walls upon a masonry foundation. They are one story in height with a sloping roof and two bedrooms. The use of plywood reduced the dead weight of the building significantly. A 40-inch module was used to prefabricate the units of the house. Because of their lightweight construction, the buildings had to be sited carefully to take advantage of topography and wind conditions. Resin-bonded plywood was used as the original exterior material for four of the five houses. Windows varied, with steel casements, wood casements, and wood double-hung units used in the various buildings. Today, all of these homes are covered in newer siding materials and all but one feature replacement windows.

Parkbelt Homes

These ten homes located on Forestway Road are the only privately built buildings sanctioned by the government as part of early plans to expand Greenbelt. When it became politically unviable for the government to carry on additions to the original town, the FSA looked to private industry to carry on. The only manifestation of this effort is Parkbelt Homes, a small enclave of ten, streamlined houses built by General Houses of Chicago, a pioneer in the field of prefabricated housing. Arthur Fisher, who had made his fortune as a steel company owner, founded the business. His firm's buildings predate the better known, mass-produced, steel-frame Lustron Homes by nearly ten years.

General Houses of Chicago leased the land on which the houses were built. The homes were to be cooperatively owned by residents within ten years of occupancy. The firm also had plans to build 190 more units at Greenbelt, but this expansion never materialized. The limited impact of the venture may have been due to serious maintenance problems faced by original residents or to lawsuits in the late 1940s between the government and the company over rental fees.[21] During the 1952/53 liquidation of the town, Parkbelt Homes obtained full ownership of the property.

The one-story, flat-roofed homes have a copper-bearing steel frame that is bolted to a concrete foundation. The walls and roofs are made of factory-made insulated panels. Those for the roof were originally covered with tar and gravel and those for walls, in asbestos cement. Original windows were steel-sash casements.

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[20] According to Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning*, the outside of the slabs are still supported on spandrel beams resting on the cinder block walls. The current engineer with Greenbelt Homes, Inc. describes the buildings as "load bearing."

[21] Information on the legal battle between the government and Parkbelt Homes can be found at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 36C (Records of the Legal Division), Greenbelt, Maryland, Box 3.

Today, many of these homes are no longer recognizable as prefabricated, steel-frame dwellings because they are covered in newer siding materials or brick veneer, and have pitched roofs and replacement windows. Two of the ten original homes still feature a flat roof and one features original windows. The unit at 7 Forestway is the most intact.

Garages

RA planners originally intended that 100% of the dwelling units have garages, but only 50% of them were built as project overruns mounted. Paved parking was substituted for garages in the service court areas. There are two types of garages in the town today: 275 units are arranged in compounds adjacent to service courts and 100 are attached to housing units when service courts are too far removed. The garages are flat-roofed buildings constructed upon poured concrete foundations with concrete block walls. Those attached to dwellings have a brick veneer, asbestos wall board partitions for privacy, and reinforced concrete roofs for fireproofing. Those within compounds adjacent to service courts have only brick pier partitions and wood roofs with built-up finish. In 1937, only those garages attached to housing units featured overhead doors; those within service courts were left open for cost-cutting purposes. However, the RA architects designed the compound garages so that they could be easily fitted with doors in the future, and today, all garages feature wooden panelled, mechanically operated, overhead doors.

COMMUNAL AND COMMERCIAL: THE TOWN COMMON

The town common was planned to serve 1,000 families, with expansion anticipated to serve for 3,000 families. The original town common was composed of two commercial buildings, an elementary school/community building, a combination police station/fire department and automobile repair shop, a gasoline filling station, and one set of closed garages. All buildings were heated by a central heating plant located in the basement of the theater and all were painted off-white with maroon trim. Some of the buildings planned for the first phase of construction were never built, because of budgetary problems. These included a restaurant within one of the commercial center buildings; a separate, three-story Inn/Restaurant; and an Administration Building.

Community Building

The Community Building/Elementary School is the heart of the original town and is a superb work of Art Deco architecture. It was built by the RA for 550 students and leased to Prince George's County for educational purposes. The original building was composed of a main block and a classroom wing. The main block contains the auditorium/gymnasium and rooms used originally for the community library and home-making room. The north wing features the classrooms. The building is two stories tall, with a flat roof and concrete frame covered in brick veneer. The building's rigid concrete frame is strengthened by protruding buttresses, which are fluted to stress the verticality of the Deco style. These buttresses also allow for unobstructed interior surfaces. On the exterior, the base of each bay between the buttresses, and the entry above the principal door, holds a carved limestone bas-relief panel. Each panel represents part of the preamble to the Constitution and the composition reflects the democratic ideals of the Greenbelt community. The panels were sculpted by Lenore Thomas who, at that time, worked for the Special Skills Division of the RA. She also was assisted on the project by Tony Lucasini. The panels display the muscular Art Deco style associated with federal art of the late 1930s.

The building was planned so that a future school wing could be added west of the original portion, extending to the south, but the second wing, added in 1947, was located behind the original north wing instead. A newer addition is the adult care center located to the rear of the main block on the north side.

The interior of the building features gold, glazed ceramic tile; wooden classroom doors; and glass block to admit borrowed light into the corridors and provide sound proofing. The building recently has been restored for use as a community center.

Commercial Buildings

Greenbelt's commercial center features buildings from the original RA town plus additions which conform in location to early plans for expansion of the town common. The original pair of commercial buildings on Centerway (Building 4 to the left of the pedestrian mall and Building 3 to the right) originally housed a movie theater, drug store with soda fountain and lunch counter, variety store, post office, a self-service food store, a beauty shop, barber shop, shoe repair, valet, and a bus station. Above the stores were offices for the town government (in Building 4) and cooperative endeavors (Building 3). An open market and second grocery store planned for the area west of Building 4 never materialized.

The brick-veneered, concrete block buildings have the "low modern lines"[22] of the Streamlined Moderne, with their horizontal compositions; curved walls; flat roofs; and banded corner windows. The theater shares the construction technique of the Community Center, with buttressed walls.

The commercial center is a noteworthy example of an integrated neighborhood shopping center because of its siting within the larger community and its emphasis on pedestrian needs. Clarence Stein, architect for Radburn and consultant on the Greenbelt project, stated in his seminal work, *Toward New Towns for America*, that Greenbelt's largest contribution to the evolution of New Towns was its shopping center and related community center, calling it "one of the finest small town centers of these days: "Here at last the modern market square was integrated into the plan for complete separation of walkers and motors."[23]

With its focus on the 100-foot wide pedestrian mall, known in the 1930s as a "shopping court," RA planners stressed the cultural and social experience of the place to the same degree as the economic experience. The separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic also guided the plan, which includes access via a secondary road off the main arterial, and parking for the great majority of cars at the rear of the shops.[24] In planning the town's center, Greenbelt's planners adapted the typical 1930's "drive-in shopping center" to their own needs, thus anticipating the pedestrian malls that would reappear many decades later.[25]

The original shopping court was very open, with concrete/wood benches, four small planting beds, and small holly trees. The focal point of the shopping court then and now is the statue "Mother and Child," also sculpted by Lenore Thomas in 1938 while she was working for the Works Progress Administration on work relief.[26] The statue is an appropriate symbol for the community, given the planners' emphasis on children, and the role that the community should play in nurturing children. The large, heavy, iconographic work is sculpted of sandstone. It sat originally on a higher, more substantial base that featured drinking fountains. A second object, this one commemorative in nature, was planned for the town (most likely the town common), but never erected. It was to be a bronze tablet with a plan of the town and names of all the architects, planners, and engineers involved in the property.[27]

Building 4 received an addition at its southwest end in 1947. Planned initially for the Town of Greenbelt

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[22] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume II, Architectural and General Planning.*

[23] Clarence Stein, *Toward New Towns for America* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1957).

[24] When the stores opened, there was provision for one row of parked cars parallel to the buildings.

[25] Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington, D.C., 1930-1941," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, March 1992.

[26] Typed biographical summary of Lenore Thomas Straus obtained at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The biographical summary indicates that the sandstone for the sculpture was procured by Tugwell as one of his last acts before the dismantling of the RA.

[27] The plan room at Greenbelt Homes, Inc. includes multiple drawings for this tablet.

offices, it ultimately was built to house the Prince George's County Bank and Trust Company. Other changes to the buildings include the alteration of several window openings and storefronts.

Fire Station/Repair Garage

This two-part, concrete block, brick-veneered building originally housed a fire and police station in its southwest end a repair garage at its northeast end. The building was designed specifically to house two related functions and have communicating interiors. RA planners intended that the same mechanic would be used for both fire house and repair garage needs, but this arrangement never materialized since a consumer cooperative managed the garage but not the fire station.

The fire station, facing Centerway, was built to house two fire apparatuses and other equipment, and originally featured two large doors on Centerway. When the new fire station was built on Crescent Road in 1961, the vehicle doors were bricked in to accommodate a retail use. The police station was located at the rear of the building. Today, it functions as a video store.

The repair garage retains its original material, including most of the steel-sash windows and garage doors. It continues to be used as an auto repair facility.

Gas Station

The gas station also is a brick veneered, concrete block building. Today, the streamlined features of this building are concealed underneath newer siding. The building does still retain its multi-light, steel-sash windows.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Swimming Pool and Bath House

The swimming pool and bath house were constructed in 1938, after swimming was banned in the lake due to bacterial problems. The pool was designed to serve 1,000 families. Today's pool has the same dimensions as the original, but the shell and gutter system have been rebuilt several times. The concrete wall behind the diving board is original. Originally a freestanding building, the bath house is now the southwestern end section of the 1992 Acquatic Center. In the 1940s, it featured a central brick shower/check room and wood-frame dressing room wings. Porthole windows are located at the attic level. The original entrance to the bathhouse still features triple doors, but is no longer a working entrance.

Recreational buildings planned for Greenbelt Lake but never constructed included a regional recreational center, a rustic styled boat pavilion, and a bath house. In addition, a linear bathing beach was to run along the north side of the lake. A preliminary scheme for the lake also showed a children's recreational area on the east shore.

RURAL HIGH SCHOOL (GREENBELT MIDDLE SCHOOL)

Like the Community Center/Elementary School, the Rural High School is a striking, Art Deco building. The Rural High School was planned to be the "outstanding rural high school in the county...and the greatest factor in developing desirable relationships between Greenbelt residents and neighbors in other communities."[28] It is located on Edmonston Road, at its intersection with Greenbelt Road (now near the Beltway), and was sited there to be equidistant from the Greenbelt and Berwyn elementary schools. Before the construction of the Beltway and the expansion of the roads in the area, the school was accessible from the town of Greenbelt by a wooded trail that skirted the west side of the Lake. The trail's underpass under Edmonston Road can still be seen near the school's entrance drive, but is now closed off with metal screening.

This building was constructed primarily between 1936 and 1945, in two major and perhaps several minor phases. All of the building's additions contribute to its architectural significance. The RA designed and a private contractor built the initial building for 200 students,[29] which contained classrooms and a small cafeteria. On the interior, glass blocks were used at stairwells and corridors, as they were in the Community Center/Elementary School. RA architects also drew up site plans for a future addition to the school to increase its capacity to 1200 students.

The building is constructed of 12"-thick brick walls supported on concrete footings. The addition was built in 1944-45 by the Public Buildings Administration and added an auditorium to the west and a second wing to the north. Behind the school to the north are athletic fields. The area behind the school immediately alongside the Greenbelt Road was to be a "wooded valley," but is today devoted to a large parking lot for school buses.

DEFENSE HOUSING

One-thousand units of defense housing were constructed by the FSA for the Federal Works Agency in 1941-

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[28] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Technical Planning.*

[29] The *Final Report* cites this initial enrollment figure, but the number "600" is mentioned in another federal government source.

42. This housing was located in areas generally designated for RA housing that was never built due to cutbacks. The buildings are sited in the same general manner as the RA housing, but several modifications/omissions in plan made them less skillful adaptations of garden city principles. These modifications included: 1) the defense housings' orientation directly onto the service court, as opposed to being separated from it by garages or hedges; 2) the dimensions of the service courts, which were shorter and squatter than the original courts; 3) the dimensions of the service yards, which also were shallower than those in the original community; 4) a lack of garages; 5) insufficient top soil and lack of foot paths on the garden side; 6) lack of underpasses under Ridge Road to connect the housing to the other parts of the community; 7) lack of trees, hedges, and interior gardens; 8) lack of an underground storm sewer system; and 9) generally poor grading.

The defense homes are frame buildings on masonry foundations that originally featured cement asbestos shingles (in a two-tone composition of gray shingling in the lower half and white shingling above). Instead of a projecting service closet, all but some end units feature a trash closet within the plane of the building. This trash closet is located to the right of the entrance door on the service side and is actually a partitioned section of the utility closet. Window openings are single units and pairs and originally featured four-over-four, double hung wooden sash. As a result of Greenbelt Homes, Inc.'s 1980's rehabilitation, the original shingles were removed in order to place board-type insulation and vinyl siding on the walls. Original window sash remains in several units, but most units have received aluminum, double-hung, one-over-one sash.

With the change in the heating technology for the defense homes in the 1980s, four detached heating plants that served the far northern defense homes were razed and the one-story boiler rooms located as end units in the more southern parts of the community were either locked up or turned to alternative uses.[30]

The floor plans of the defense homes are not identical to those of the original community, but still feature garden and service side doors, small kitchens, combination living/dining rooms, and hardwood flooring. There was no usable space in the attics, and cost saving measures led to the omission of closet doors in the bedrooms. Stairs in the defense homes were typically accessed directly from the garden side of the house. In addition to two-story town houses, the defense homes actually feature some flats stacked on top of one another. Many of these are entered via side porches at the ends of units. Other second-floor flats are accessed via a central, first-floor door that leads to a common stair.

MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS

The three buildings to the east of Ridge on Hamilton Place were constructed in 1944 for the PHA to house maintenance activities for the community. They are long, low, brick buildings contained within a polygonal site plan. The main building served originally as an administration building (the front portion) and warehouse (the rear portion). Attached to this building at its east end is a garage. To either sides of the main building set at an angle are buildings that served as repair/maintenance shops. These also have attached garages. Today, the buildings are used essentially for the same purposes as they were in 1944, and are owned by Greenbelt Homes, Inc. As part of Greenbelt Homes, Inc.'s upgrading of facilities in the town, the buildings were sandblasted in the 1980s, causing pitting of the brickwork.

STREETSCAPES AND UNDERPASSES

The streets within the original town plan should be considered contributing elements of the NHL. In addition, the service courts for the RA community, which lead from Crescent and Ridge into the interior of blocks, also are significant elements of the plan. According to Clarence Stein, Greenbelt's service courts

[30] Today, some of these rooms are used by residents of adjacent units for living space, or by multiple residents for storage and community meetings.

represent an improvement on Radburn's cul-de-sacs because they permit easier use of sloping land by planners, and a more thorough separation of cars from house entrances -- a safer and more private solution.[31] Although not as well designed, the service courts for the defense housing continued the theme established in the original plan, and also should be considered contributing resources.

Five underpasses were built - four under Crescent Road and one under Edmonston Road near the Rural High School. These too should be considered contributing resources. Those that would have passed under Ridge Road ultimately were omitted due to cost.

LANDSCAPE FEATURES

GENERAL CHARACTER/ORIGINAL PHILOSOPHY

The mature landscape of a garden city was intended to add greatly to the town's rather functional architecture. Landscaping features of the original plan included interior parks, trails through woodland, and vistas to nearby farms. Angus B. MacGregor, a Scotsman who had worked for the British aristocracy and wealthy Americans of the gilded age, was employed by the Community Manager's office as head gardener for the town. As land was cleared for the lake, a nursery was established on a portion of the acquired land so that plants could be saved. By the end of the clearing process, 25,000 mature plants and shrubs had been saved for replanting. The original RA plans include a planting schedule for the public areas and schemes for the planting of individual lots.

RESIDENTIAL

Garden Sides/Service Sides

The turning of houses "inside out" laid the foundation for the landscaping scheme. On one side of a row, gardens spanned the 90-foot distance between one group of buildings and its neighbor. On the opposite side of the row, a width of 55 feet accommodated two sets of service yards, or, 70 feet, both service yards and a service court.[32] The garden sides of houses overlooked play areas and other common park land that were to be maintained by the Town management. Between the units and the common park land were individual lots of 30 by 90 feet to be cared for by the tenant. On the service side, the service yard held two wooden clothes poles that attached to iron hooks on the face of the homes (many of the poles and virtually all of the hooks are still intact) and one drying rack to be placed on the service yard was provided for every pair of homes. Sunken trash receptacles for organic garbage were located within the strip of grass between porches, but these have since been covered up with plantings. Within the grass near the service courts were fuel oil fill boxes which still remain but are obsolete.

Foot Paths

Foot paths were the network that linked people within the superblocks and allowed pedestrians to walk free of automobile traffic. Clarence Stein described Greenbelt's path system as "like the orderly growth of a tree - or the human nerve system."[33] Using Stein's terminology, the "backbone" of the foot path system passes through the center of the superblocks in a north to southwest fashion. "Collecting paths" connect the backbone to the Crescent and Ridge Roads. Off these collecting paths are "private walks" that lead to the

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[31] Stein, *Toward New Towns*.

[32] Correspondence files in John Lansill's Papers at the University of Kentucky include a research report comparing the plan of Greenbelt to that of the University of Virginia, with its inner ranges and pavilions facing upon a central lawn (the equivalent of Greenbelt's garden side) and its outer ranges and "hotels" facing upon enclosed gardens (the equivalent of Greenbelt's service side). Information comes via the archivist of the Papers.

[33] Stein, *Toward New Towns*.

dwellings. (Because each unit shares the private walk with one neighbor, they are also referred to as "common walks."[34]) On the garden side, collecting paths, also known as "public park walks,"[35] are ten- or eleven-feet wide. On the service side, the common walk leads to a seven-foot wide walk that runs parallel to the houses' service side. (See historic aerial photograph included with this nomination for image of footpath network.)

Hedges, Plantings, and Fencing

The unified appearance of Greenbelt depended not only on architectural consistency, but on landscaping consistency. Fencing, for example, was not permitted in the early days at Greenbelt. Hedges planted on lot lines were supposed to define residents' yards. In fact, the landscaping scheme for the individual units depended on the pairing of units since they shared a common walk. In referring to their landscape plans, the RA planners insisted that they "cannot be deviated from by lessees sharing common walks."[36]

In the government planners' eyes, privacy between lots was to be accomplished through plantings. Columnar privet hedges were the primary source of enclosure between each pair of residences' garden and service sides. On the garden side, the FSA planted the hedges, intending that they be formally pruned to a height of six feet within the first 20 feet from the house, tapering down to a height of three feet for the rest of the length of the lot. Grass was planted in the area enclosed by the hedges and the public park walk. At the front of the lot, bordering the public park walk, flowers were to be planted by residents and could be confined by small green wire wickets.[37] Low trees and high shrubs also could be planted near corners of the lots to help soften the edges. Flower beds no wider than two feet across were recommended for parallel strips bordering the public park walks or hedges.[38] Benches and tables were to be placed in the open grassy area bordering the hedges, and chairs could be placed near the house, on the terrace platform. On the service side, flowers were to be located up against the house in the area between doors. Additional beds were allowed, if they were planted not more than two feet wide, parallel and bordering the walks and hedges. Rock gardens were specifically not allowed. Residents were expected to tend to their own gardens, and were responsible for watering and cutting their own lawns.

In the public areas, shrubbery and trees were planted by the FSA. Landscaping was extensive. The original planting schedule, dated April 21, 1938, shows approximately 90 different species of plants to be planted or already extant in the community, with the number to be planted indicated. The list includes the Flowering Dogwood (175 of them in the original planned community), the Sweet Gum (79), Apple (82), White Oak (152), Common Locust (202), American Holly (112), Red Cedar (120), Slender Dentzia (139), Columnar Privet (225), Common Lilac (181), Highbush Blueberry (81), Pfitzer's Juniper (282), Mountain Laurel (446), Geranium Creeper (149), English Ivy (701), and Japanese Barberry (141). Climbing vines for buildings and rose bushes were specifically not ordered for the community.[39]

Today, the evidence of this extensive planting campaign is clear. There are multiple species of mature trees

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[34] "Preliminary Plans Showing Individual Lot Development, Greenbelt, Maryland," Resettlement Administration, September 17, 1936. Drawing housed at Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Rules and Regulations of the original town. Prince George's County Public Library, Greenbelt Branch, Tugwell Room, Vertical Files.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Planting Schedule for Greenbelt, April 21, 1938. Schedule housed at Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

and massed shrubs in the central areas. Some original hedging remains, especially in the central core area along the "backbone." All of the original foot paths remain, but additional paths have been laid by many owners intent on having a private walk, as opposed to sharing the common walk. Because of a lack of sufficient storage for gardening tools or bicycles, many residents have erected portable, prefabricated sheds on their property.

Parks and Playgrounds

Parks and playgrounds are an integral part of the physical plan of Greenbelt. In 1938, there were three large playgrounds for school-age kids and 13 play areas for preschool kids. More were added during the defense housing construction. The preschool lots had benches, slides, overhead bars, and sandboxes which were contained by fences and shrubbery. Today, the original superblocks and those that feature defense housing at the north end of town retain a majority of the playgrounds that existed in the 1930s and 1940s. There are also some original playgrounds along Ridge Road and at the eastern edges of town. Many of these playgrounds feature fairly old play equipment which postdates 1944, but may not be much later in age.[40] Northway Field off of Northway Road extended is a relatively recent conversion of the town's sanitary fill site.

RECREATIONAL

Lake Area

Greenbelt Lake is a 27-acre man-made lake with an earthen dam and concrete spillway. The lake area is surrounded on three sides by Buddy Attick Park, a City Park designated in the 1960s to honor one of Greenbelt's original citizens and first police officers. The Park contains a playground, a frame concession stand from the 1960s, picnic tables, and a trail around the lake.

Braden Field

This field is the heart of the recreational area and is original to the planned community. In 1938, there were the four tennis courts and, one year later, the three baseball/softball fields and football fields still in evidence today. The Youth Center, located between the pool and the fields, is a more recent addition.

GREENBELT LANDS

Woodland and Farmland

The remnants of the physical "greenbelt" in the NHL can be seen in the woodlands that surround the Lake and act as a buffer between housing subdivisions at the north end of Crescent Road, and in the private and City-owned parcels to the east of the housing and west of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

As for the very small rural community of seven farms, mentioned in a 1949 survey of Greenbelt, only one farmhouse remains along Edmonston Road. That house belongs to the Furrey family, which owned the property in 1935 when the government sought to acquire it. The family still owns it. A second remaining farm along Greenbelt Road was transformed long ago into the Greenbelt American Legion Post. This farmhouse has been heavily altered and no longer retains its integrity. (See Significance.)

Allotment Gardens

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[40] The date of the play equipment comes from comparison of playground location with a 1944 map prepared by the Greenbelt Nursery School contained in Clarence Stein's book, *Toward New Towns for America*.

In the early years, three hundred allotment gardens were located in five areas on the edge of town: 1) the Rapport property at the foot of Northway, 2) the Crabbe property east of D block,[41] 3) the Gruden site opposite C Block, 4) the Boyle property at today's American legion site, and 5) in the Water Tower area.[42] These gardens were envisioned to be the domain of housewives, who would supplement family meals with home-grown fruit and vegetables.[43] Each plot was 2500 square feet. During World War II, 350 people planted victory gardens at Greenbelt. Today, roughly 60 plots remain and are managed by the Greenbelt Garden Club, formed in 1948. Two of the original five areas designated for allotment gardens remain, each with two garden sections: 1) The Crabbe property accessed via Hamilton Place, and 2) the Gruden site, located behind Gardenway.

Noncontributing Buildings and Structures

NAME OF BUILDING	YEAR CONSTRUCTED
1. Greenbelt Community Church (2 bldgs.) 1 Hillside Road	1951
2. Mishkan Torah (The Jewish Community Center of Prince George County) 10 Ridge Road	1955
3. Mowatt Memorial United Methodist Church 40 Ridge Road	1955

[41] The Crabbe Tract, where Hamilton Place and Gardenway plots are located, was purchased after three years of litigation, according to Mary Lou Williamson, Ed., *Greenbelt, The History of a New Town*, page 36. According to records at the National Archives, the government laid water pipes there to permanently irrigate the garden plots. According to the Greenbelt Garden Club, these pipes don't appear to remain today.

[42] National Archives, Record Group 196, Records of the Public Housing Administration, Records of the Central Office.

[43] Resettlement Administration, *Greenbelt Towns*, September, 1936. (Brochure housed within National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 36C (Records of the Legal Division), Box 1.

4.	Greenbelt Plaza Apartments (4 bldgs.) 9 & 11 Parkway 51 & 53 Crescent Road	1959
5.	Concession Stand, Greenbelt Lake	1960s
6.	Youth Center	1961
7.	Greenbelt Fire Department 125 Crescent Road	1961
8.	Co-op Supermarket 121 Centerway	1962
9.	St. Hugh's Catholic Church (2 bldgs.) 135 & 145 Crescent Road	1963
10.	City of Greenbelt Offices 25 Crescent Road	1964 and 1978
11.	Professional Building 115 Centerway	1965
12.	Public Works Department Building and Open Garage (1 bldg/1 building) 25 Crescent Road	1969
13.	Greenbelt Public Library 11 Crescent Road	1970
14.	Greenbelt Homes Townhouses (5 bldgs.) 5 Laurel Hill Road & 65 Ridge Road	1970
15.	Green Ridge House Nursing Home 22 Ridge Road	1977
16.	Police Station 550 Crescent Road	c. 1990
17.	Greenbelt Elementary School 66 Ridge Road	1992
18.	Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center 101 Centerway	1992

TOTAL: 27 buildings and 1 structure = 28 Total

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X
Statewide:___ Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B__ C X D__

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D X E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 1, 3, 4

NHL Theme(s):
I. Peopling Places
4. Community and Neighborhood
II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
2. Reform Movements
III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
6. Political Ideas, Cultures, Theories

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development

Period(s) of Significance: 1935-1946

Significant Dates: 1935-38 and 1941-42

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder:
Walker, Hale J. (Chief Planner); Ellington, Douglas D. and Wadsworth, Reginald J. (Architects); Bursley, Harold (Engineer); Stein, Clarence (Consultant), Wright, Henry (Consultant), Augur, Tracy (Consultant).

NHL Comparative Categories:

XVI: Architecture
W: Regional and Urban Planning;
VII: Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939
H: The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1929-41;
XXXI: Social and Humanitarian Movements
A: Communitarianism and Utopianism;
XXX: American Ways of Life
H: Suburban Life.

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

SUMMARY

The 1935-46 development of Greenbelt, Maryland represents the first, government-sponsored, planned community in the United States built on "garden city" principles and embodies the regional planning principles and architectural ideals of the mid-1930s. In 1919, the Garden and Town Planning Association in England, in conjunction with Ebenezer Howard, adopted the following definition of the term "garden city: "A Garden City is a Town designed for healthy living and industry; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership or held in trust for the community." Three "greenbelt towns" were built by Roosevelt's New Deal government along garden city lines to respond to the Depression and a housing crisis in American cities. The town of Greenbelt, Maryland, the first, largest, and most complete of the three towns, was an attempt to build a large-scale, scientifically planned suburban community that would decentralize the population of Washington, D.C. The greenbelt towns were comprehensive in scope, featuring housing, commerce, schools, and recreation. Their architectural treatments varied depending on the town, but Greenbelt's was functional and modern, with the community buildings receiving a more conscious stylistic treatment. Today, the greenbelt towns remain one of the boldest examples of public housing on a community scale ever undertaken in this country. Their influence, along with that of the Tennessee Valley Authority, has been felt world-wide. Greenbelt's significance can be felt in the emergence of regional planning as a discipline; in the widespread construction of planned communities after the 1940s; in the "turning around" of the suburban house so that it features a service and garden side; and in the role of cooperatives in running communities across the country.

The greenbelt towns differed from other planned communities of the early twentieth century. Although Radburn, New Jersey is perhaps better known and was begun earlier, it was a non-federal project built on a larger scale as a town for the "Motor Age" and its architecture is not as superior as that at Greenbelt. The greenbelt towns also differed from other federally-sponsored planned communities. Arthurdale, West Virginia was developed to provide housing for the rural poor. Roosevelt, New Jersey was a self-contained town designed to relieve industrial unemployment by organizing the community around a garment factory. Many of the workers in the greenbelt towns were expected to commute to their jobs in the nearby metropolitan centers.

The planned community of Greenbelt meets the following National Historic Landmark Criteria:

Criterion 1: Association with broad patterns of national history:
1) Greenbelt, Maryland reflects the mass migration in the 1920s and 1930s of farmers from the countryside to the cities. The town of Greenbelt was designed as a direct response to this national dislocation by providing affordable housing in a suburban setting for the urban poor, inadequately housed in overcrowded cities.
2) Greenbelt, Maryland also reflects the pattern in the second quarter of the 20th century of large-scale government programs to help the poor and working class. The town represents the first large-scale effort by the federal government to construct permanent housing for people employed in non-defense-related occupations.

Criterion 3: Association with a great idea or ideal of the American people: Greenbelt, Maryland exhibits the American ideal of safe, healthy, affordable housing for all citizens, with special emphasis placed upon the role of a community in nurturing the country's children. The

greenbelt towns grew out of the 1930s belief that America's families needed open green environments for healthful living.

Criterion 4: Embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity: Greenbelt, Maryland represents the distinctive characteristics of a planned community along garden city lines. With its comprehensive plan and highly unified architecture, Greenbelt is a large-scale, scientifically and regionally planned geographic entity that was intended to incorporate residential, commercial, recreational, agricultural, and industrial zones. Greenbelt contains outstanding examples of the Art Deco and Streamlined Moderne styles, as well as references to traditional and modern European residential architecture.

Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries
The proposed National Historic Landmark district contains three cemeteries in which eligibility derives from age. The Hamilton, Turner, and Walker cemeteries predate the establishment of the town of Greenbelt, but were acquired as part of the government's town-building program. The Hamilton Cemetery was to become part of the greenbelt, The Turner Cemetery was designated for use as a city cemetery, and the Walker Cemetery was to remain in the hands of farming families.

The original planned community (1935-38) and its defense housing component (1941-42) possess a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. In addition to the early cemeteries which predate the government town, a few buildings constructed after 1942 but prior to 1946 also deserve inclusion in the NHL. Greenbelt, Maryland should be recognized under the following National Historic Landmark themes/subthemes: 1) Architecture/Regional and Urban Planning; 2) Political and Military Affairs/The Great Depression and the New Deal; 3) Social and Humanitarian Movements/Communitarianism and Utopianism; and 4) American Ways of Life/Suburban Life.

POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE GREENBELT TOWNS PROGRAM

In 1933, 15 million Americans were unemployed as a result of the Depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to office in that year offering a New Deal and the promise of recovery to a nation that was hungry, drifting, and pessimistic. A majority of those afflicted were the rural poor: sharecroppers, tenant and migrant farmers, and coal miners. Within the first hundred days of his administration in 1933, the President requested and Congress passed sweeping legislation to provide relief, including the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the National Industrial Recovery Act. The government also authorized the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The Land Program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and divisions within the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture were charged with reinvigorating the desperate economies of the farmer, "stranded worker"[1] and industrial laborer.

Two years later, politicians were arguing over how to best spend the government's resources to counter the Depression. Most favored moving men off the "dole," or "direct relief," and onto government-initiated work projects, i.e., "work relief". In April 1935, Congress agreed to give the President control over the bulk of the money appropriated for relief wages by passing Public Resolution No. 11, The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act. The Act authorized nearly five billion dollars for work relief. This broad national program to take people off the dole and put them to work

[1] This is the government term for workers whose means of employment was either substantially reduced or eliminated altogether. It was most often used to describe out-of-work coal miners.

was the largest single appropriation in American history. On April 30, 1935, under authority of Section 4 of the Act, the President created the Resettlement Administration (RA) through Executive Order No. 7027. He appointed Rexford Guy Tugwell, Undersecretary of Agriculture, to administer the RA. Tugwell's duties were laid out in Executive Order 7200 on September 26, 1935. The RA was to:

a) administer approved projects including resettlement of destitute or low-income families from rural and urban areas, including the establishment, maintenance, and operation, in such connection, of communities in rural and suburban areas;
b) initiate and administer a program of approved projects with respect to soil erosion, stream pollution, seacoast erosion, reforestation, and flood control;
c) make loans as authorized under said Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935 to finance the purchase of farm lands and necessary equipment by farmers, farm tenants, croppers, or farm laborers.

The RA was the consolidation of all of the government's relief programs having to do with land. It was Tugwell and President Roosevelt's idea to create the RA.[2] The President, however, received a bad report on Tugwell's plan for the agency, and agreed only to create the RA with emergency funds, as opposed to establishment through separate legislation. This lack of a Congressional mandate from the inception would haunt the RA and Tugwell personally throughout the next two years.

Once created, existing programs were transferred to the RA, including: 1) the Land Program and the Rural Rehabilitation Program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration; 2) the Subsistence Homesteads Division of the Department of the Interior; and 3) the Land Policy Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The RA continued the policies of providing all-rural homesteads to the farming poor (such as new and rehabilitated sharecroppers' farms in Pointsett County, Arkansas); homesteads for stranded workers (such as a hosiery mill and homes for former coal miners in Crossville, Tennessee); and industrial homesteads for poor people living near cities (such as the creation of a Jewish garment workers' factory and homes in Hightstown, New Jersey and subsistence homesteads for people employed part time in industry in Jasper, Alabama).

While the primary mission of the RA was to aid the rural poor, Tugwell saw rural and urban poverty as interconnected. Tugwell was a former agricultural economist at Columbia University, but his ideas for the resolution of the farming problems did not represent mainstream thinking. Unlike the President, Tugwell didn't adhere to the "back to the land" movement that saw salvation for rural and urban poor in the agricultural way of life. Tugwell had no inherent love for farming life, perceiving it as arduous, dreary, and bleak; an existence which often broke its victims. Neither did he believe in the commonly held wisdom that part-time industry combined with subsistence farming was the answer to unemployed workers and suffering farmers. Instead, Tugwell believed that people either must farm full-time or be employed in industry. He envisioned broad-scale changes in land use that would match the character of the land with the needs of people. He foresaw conversion of submarginal land to forestry and recreation, the intensive training of farmers by government experts, and the eradication of slums and replacement in their stead of satellite towns on city edges and public parks within city bounds. Through it all, he envisioned a widespread network of cooperatives (both rural and industrial) as a key component in the struggle for national solvency.

In developing his theories on land use, Tugwell had studied population statistics that showed that families in 1935 America were leaving the farm in droves due to the Depression and natural disasters like the Dust Bowl. In the city, they were taking shelter wherever possible; usually, in shoddy

[2] "The President and I between us invented the R.A." Quote from Tugwell's diary contained in *The Diary of Rexford G. Tugwell, The New Deal, 1932-1935*, edited by Michael Vincent Namorato (New York, Greenwood Press, 1992).

tenements. The congestion of the city thus mirrored the desertion of the countryside and posed severe problems of its own. Disease, crime, suffering, and economic loss were all attributed to the prevalence of the slum. "Slums," "tenements," and "congestion" were the evil breeding grounds of delinquency that appear over and over again in government literature. These conditions deprived children of their childhood, and sapped the national moral fiber. By 1936, 36% of the country's dwellings were in substandard condition. Images of unplumbed shacks in the shadow of steel company furnaces and decaying tenements in New York City became icons for the government's call for radical change.[3]

Paralleling its efforts to resuscitate desperate farmers, the federal government initiated a program of slum clearance. Slum clearance became government policy under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. It progressed very slowly, however, and dislocation from existing dwellings was often followed by a lack of new public housing. The business of constructing housing for the 63% of the population classified as low-income (an annual income of $1,500 or less) was deemed unprofitable, and was abandoned by the private sector. Not only were the very poor suffering, but the moderately poor were affected as well. The country was experiencing a severe housing shortage. In Washington, D.C., the typical federal government worker could not find suitable housing. His modest salary, which allowed only $30/month for housing, afforded a single furnished room and a shared bath to rent, regardless of family size.[4]

THE DIVISION OF SUBURBAN RESETTLEMENT AND THE GREENBELT TOWNS PROGRAM

Tugwell and Roosevelt embraced the idea of helping the inner city poor by constructing suburban communities that merged the best of the rural and industrial spheres. Tugwell organized the Division of Suburban Resettlement (DSR) as one of four program divisions within the RA. The Division was organized on May 1, 1935 to "provide work relief, increase employment and stimulate construction by promoting adequate suburban housing for low-income groups employed in industry."[5] Greenbelt towns, the name given to their proposed suburban communities because of their peripheral belt of farms and woodlands, would provide alternative housing opportunities *outside* city bounds. Greenbelt towns, developed on affordable open land outside major cities, would draw urban, low-income people out to them because of their healthful environments and available job opportunities. They would be characterized by productive use of land and by the "conveniences and cultural opportunities of a city with many advantages of life on the land."[6] In addition to the suburban town, local farmers would reside in the greenbelt portion of the town in rehabilitated or government-constructed farms. Their produce would have an immediate market in their suburban neighbors. Facilities available to both rural and suburban residents would include schools, swimming pools, libraries, and community centers.

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[3] See the American Institute of Planners film, *The City* (New York: Museum of Modern Art Film Library, 1939). Outline by Pare Lorentz. Commentary by Lewis Mumford.

[4] Brochure for Greenbelt (no official title or date) housed at the Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs, Lot 2207. Brochure includes article reprinted from *The Washington Post* detailing the lack of suitable housing for federal government workers.

[5] *Final Report of the Greenbelt Project of the Greenbelt Town Program, Volume I - Report on Technical Planning* (J.S. Lansill, Director, Division of Suburban Resettlement, Farm Security Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.). Housed at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 48 (Records of the Statistics Division), Box 2.

[6] Brochure entitled *Greenbelt Towns* (Resettlement Administration, September, 1936). Housed at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 36 C (Records of the Legal Division), Box 1.

In Tugwell's mind, there were to be 3,000 greenbelt towns, all built outside urban centers characterized by stable employment trends and all separated from one another by belts of green. The greenbelts of each town ultimately would join to form continuous permanent open spaces around cities, thus preventing the "string development," that was characterizing current growth.[7] The historic city centers would be rejuvenated as a result of these new towns since it would be free to accommodate reasonable growth in a responsible manner. Greenbelt towns were seen as the answer to congested, unsanitary slums; poor farming practices and inadequate markets; and mass-produced, bleak subdivisions being erected by private developers outside major cities.

The DSR's director, John Lansill, had been director of the Land Section of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The mission of the DSR was stated in a "Statement of Goals" published in a September 1936 brochure by the RA, entitled *Greenbelt Towns:*

> To obtain a large tract of land, and thus avoid the complications ordinarily due to diverse ownerships; in this tract to create a community, protected by an encircling green belt; the community to be designed primarily for families of modest income,[8] and arranged and managed so as to encourage a family and community life which will be better than they now enjoy, but which will not involve subjecting them to coercion or theoretical and untested discipline; the dwellings and the land upon which they are located to be held in one ownership, preferably a local agency to which the Federal Government will transfer title, and which agency will rent or lease the dwellings but will not sell them; a municipal government to be set up, in character with such governments now existing or possible in that region; coordination to be established, in relation to the local and State governments, so that there may be provided those public services of educational and other character which the community will require; and, finally, to accomplish these purposes in such a way that the community may be a taxpaying participant in the region, that extravagant outlays from the individual family income will not be a necessity, and that the rents will be suitable to families of modest income.
>
> To develop a land-use plan for the entire tract; to devise a system of rural economy coordinated with the land-use plan for the rural portions of the tract surrounding the suburban community; and to integrate both the physical plans and the economies of the rural area and the suburban community.[9]

The first step in the development of the greenbelt towns program was the selection of sites. The RA's Research Division developed a list of potential sites after studying 100 major cities. The RA's criteria in selecting cities for Greenbelt towns included: a record of steady, regular growth; sound economic foundations; diversity of industry; good wage levels and enlightened labor policies; an acute housing shortage; supply of relief labor; and availability of cheap land. Based on these criteria, 25 cities were suitable for the development of greenbelt towns outside their centers. From these 25, the list was ultimately narrowed to four due to budget and Congressional concerns. The four cities selected for sites included: Washington, D.C.; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Cincinnati, Ohio; and New Brunswick, New Jersey. The actual location of sites outside these cities depended on further criteria:

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[7] A term used in the 1930s to describe the linear development that followed road and rail lines. Also called "sprawl" in the 1930s.

[8] Within a year and a half of its formation, the RA's mission statement changed to reflect that its housing was not geared to the resettlement of "destitute" or "low-income" workers.

[9] Brochure *Greenbelt Towns* (Resettlement Administration, September, 1936). Text given under "Statement of Goals, A Demonstration in Suburban Planning, Basic Program."

the availability of cheap land, convenience to stable employment, suitable topography, fertile soil for gardening and farming in the greenbelt, and terrain suitable for development into parks and recreational areas. Greenbelt, Maryland remains the most complete of the Greenbelt towns. Its architecture and landscaping are far superior to the planned towns except for Radburn, New Jersey which was created on a far larger scale. In Greenbelt, entire community services remain intact, the town also governs itself and was the forerunner of the more advanced thinking of Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland. The miracle is that so much has survived at all.

THE ACQUISITION OF LAND AND BEGINNINGS OF CONSTRUCTION IN GREENBELT

Tugwell had initiated the government purchase of land in Berwyn, Maryland in the early spring of 1935, prior to the official creation of the RA. The Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Research Center, known as the Government Farm, was founded in 1910 in the area. Roads in the area were limited (the Baltimore-Washington Boulevard, or Route 1, being the main arterial), but there were plans for new ones. Rail and trolley existed in the vicinity. Tugwell thought the site ideal for a town to house Government Farm and other federal workers employed in Washington. The government already had large holdings in the area and the Department of Agriculture wanted to expand its acreage and provide housing.[10] As Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Tugwell recommended to John. S. Lansill, then Director of the Land Program at the Federal Emergency Relief Administration that the government purchase 15,000 acres of sub-marginal land adjacent to the Government Farm for the construction of a town.[11] Tugwell told the President of his idea of creating an entire town on the edge of the Government Farm and the President was enthusiastic. Once fertile tobacco land, the Berwyn soil was essentially depleted, but residents along the Edmonston and Branchville (now Greenbelt) Roads still carved out a living as truck, hog, and poultry farmers.

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration secretly began buying options in the area in March 1935. Local brokers worked in pairs and took out the options for the government, keeping the identity of the purchaser confidential. The Government Farm agreed to work cooperatively with other departments of the government on the prospect of a future town in its midst. The project was known at this time as "Maryland Special Project No.l.

When the President signed the Emergency Relief Act in April 1935 establishing the RA, the optioning for land in Berwyn was turned over to the Land Section of the DSR. In June 1935 the RA was authorized to purchase 12,000 acres at a price not to exceed $100/acre.[12] In July 1935, the Greenbelt project was submitted for approval as a work-relief project to the WPA. In September 1935, the funds for Greenbelt were approved by the President, with the stipulation that the project be approved by WPA as a work-relief project. It was approved that same month, but the WPA had issued a ruling that projects for the year must be started by end of the year or cancelled. At the same time, the District of Columbia was lodging 2500 transients on its relief rolls and lacked funding for their relief. Given the WPA's ultimatum, and recognizing that these transients provided the necessary work force for Greenbelt, the RA was forced to begin construction on Greenbelt even

[10] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I - Report on Technical Planning.*

[11] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*, Section VIII, "Summary Chronological History of the Greenbelt Project" by Wallace Richards, Farm Security Administration, February, 1938.

[12] Ibid.

before plans were completed.[13] In October 1935, the first laborers were transported to the project site. The President, under pressure to prove the efficiency of the program, instructed that the towns be completed by June 1936.[14]

The laborers' first task was to clear land for the lake at Greenbelt, since plans for the town had barely begun. By the end of October 1935, the government had optioned 32,571.87 acres for the Greenbelt project.[15] Some of the land was to be used for the greenbelt town, but most of it was to go toward additional holdings by the Government Farm. In November 1935, the RA took over the five D.C. government shelters housing the transients in order to supervise 1,000 workers on the project. The workers could work 88 hours a month and were paid $.50/hour with a deduction of $15 per month for room, board, laundry, and transportation. Wherever a man could be put to work in place of a machine, he was put to work. Trees were cleared with picks and shovels. When construction of the buildings began, hand shovels were used instead of heavy equipment to dig foundations. Tugwell was exasperated by the inefficiency of the tactic, which stressed relief work at the expense of schedule and budget. It wasn't until after the WPA men had started the damming of the area for the lake that Hale Walker, the chief town planner, and Harold Bursley, Principal Engineer, were even hired.

In November 1936, 11,138.67 acres were approved for purchase at a total cost of $1,083,180.40, or $97.26 per acre.[16] Farmhouses began to be torn down. The RA was proud of the fact that it did not have to evict anyone in the process of obtaining title, and that all former land owners were resettled in new homes. Today, the only indicators of the pre-1936 Greenbelt that remain are the 1869 Boyle farmhouse that became the Greenbelt Legion[17] and three family cemeteries. (See attached boundary map for location of cemeteries.)

In November 1936, a budget of 10 million dollars was approved for the entire Greenbelt project. For that amount, a town on 3,600 acres was to be built, with 6-8 miles of roads.[18] A planning staff was assembled for each of the four greenbelt towns; one for Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; Greendale, Wisconsin; and Greenbrook, New Jersey. Each team was comprised of a town planner, one or two architects, an engineer, and advisors. Due to overcrowded office conditions for government workers in Washington, the design teams set up shop in the elegant Walsh McLean Mansion on Massachusetts Avenue at Dupont Circle which had been loaned to the government for temporary use. In the setting of this opulent mansion, the planners felt they were "making the world

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[13] Lansill, *Final Report on the Greenbelt Project of the Greenbelt Town Program, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*, Section II, Appendix A: "Analysis of Total Expenditures for the Greenbelt project by the Suburban Resettlement Division, for the Twenty Months from November 1, 1935 through June 30, 1937." Clarence Stein also mentions that the "Hoovervilles left by the Bonus Army on the doorstep of Congress" provided a political reason for rushing forward with the greenbelt towns. See Clarence S. Stein, *Toward New Towns for America* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1957).

[14] Joseph L. Arnold, *The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-54* (Columbus, Ohio: University of Ohio Press, 1971).

[15] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*. See Wallace Richards's "Summary Chronology."

[16] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*. See Wallace Richards' "Summary Chronology."

[17] The Greenbelt Post of the American Legion received its charter in 1938 and signed a lease with the Farm Security Administration to use the Boyle farm, located on Greenbelt Road just east of the Beltway, on January 9, 1939. The post purchased the building from the government in 1949. Unfortunately, the integrity of this building has been compromised and it cannot be included within the proposed district.

[18] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning*. See Introductory Statement by Director Lansill.

over,"[19] and the greenbelt towns program became a consuming passion for those involved. In December 1935, after several months of work on the project, Tugwell penned the following letter to the President:

> My Dear Mr President,
>
> I am sorry that you have to be so far removed from the actual carrying out of the things you start. You would get enormous satisfaction out of seeing them grow. The most dramatic thing I've ever had to do with (sic) is this suburban town project that R.A. is carrying out. I have been staying very close to it. . . . The assembly of 30,000 acres of suburban real estate in 26 days from scratch is what the organization did; and the price is below appraised value. But the most interesting thing is to watch the town and site planners work. The top salary we can pay an architect or planner is $5600. In spite of that we have the best in the country and sometimes almost their whole staffs at work. They begin with our optioned land and on a plastic miniature begin to build up relationships between land and houses, sewers, water systems, the nearest city, the agriculture dominant there, etc. They list the preferences and prejudices of local people (whether they prefer porches (sic), basements, separate houses, etc). They study the transportation problem intensively. They have a look at the prospective tenants. And all this, with a great deal of sweat, gets itself on paper. . . . They work all hours, often all night, sometimes 36 hours at a stretch. But out of it there are gradually growing four complete communities of which I think you may be proud.[20]

Between June 1935 when the architects were hired and December 1935 when construction of the housing began, the planning team worked at a feverish pace. This pace continued until April 1936, when plans were reviewed by the White House.

The Greenbelt Planning Staff was composed of the following personnel:

Wallace Richards - Regional Coordinator
Douglas Ellington - Principal Architect
Reginald Wadsworth - Associate Principle Architect
Hale Walker - Town Planner
Harold Bursley - Engineering Designer
Tracy Augur and Henry Wright - Consultants, Town Planning
Clarence Stein and Henri Fouilhoux - Consultants, Design of Dwellings
Rural Electrification Administration - Consultants, Electrical
Sears and Kopfon - Consultants, Mechanical

Despite the national reputations of these men, nearly all of those employed as staff for the Greenbelt Planning and Land Acquisition teams had been unemployed or on relief at the time of hiring. Several of the members of the greenbelt towns' planning teams had met through the Regional Planning Association of America. Each of the four teams was given license to develop its town as it saw fit, according to the regional plan for the area, the distinct conditions of the site, and the answers from questionnaires distributed to the local populace. As a result, the greenbelt towns ultimately

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[19] Tugwell was quoted as saying he wanted to "make the world over," a statement that was used against him by the press and the legislature to indicate his "communist" tendencies. See Namorato, *Rexford G. Tugwell, a Bibliography* (New York: Praeger, 1988).

[20] Letter from Rex Tugwell (sic) to President Roosevelt, December, 1935. Housed at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park. See "President's Secretary File (PSF): Departmental Correspondence: Agriculture Department: Tugwell."

built share objectives, but exhibit pronounced differences in both plan and architectural execution. (Greenbrook, New Jersey was cancelled prior to construction due to a successful legal challenge based on the charge that the Emergency Relief Act of 1935 was unconstitutional.)

Planning for Greenbelt began with an analysis of the site in relation to the Maryland State Planning Commission's Regional Plan.[21] The RA planners studied Greenbelt's relationship to the triangular area of growth defined by Baltimore, Washington, and Annapolis. They studied transportation projects, land use forecasts, soil productivity guidelines, and recreational needs. They counted heavily on the proposed Baltimore-Washington Parkway, scheduled to have a portion of its right-of-way through the greenbelt of the proposed town. They were pleased with the prospect of this "townless highway,"[22] seeing it as pleasant transportation for the garden city dwellers.[23] In planning within this greater regional context, Greenbelt's planners envisioned other greenbelt towns "similarly placed. . . so that there will be a continuous Greenbelt for the Nation's Capital."[24]

The RA's questionnaires were distributed to several thousand people in each of the four selected regions. They posed questions to potential residents, such as the price of their current rent; the size of their current home; whether they owned an automobile, washing machine, or refrigerator; where breadwinners were employed and how they travelled to work; and what features they would like to see in a new home and community. Local labor organizations helped coordinate the distribution. With the information from the questionnaires, and the character of the land itself, the Greenbelt team began preparing a model for the town.

INSPIRATIONS FOR THE GREENBELT TOWNS

In addition to these practical analyses, earlier developments in planning influenced the shape and form that the greenbelt towns would take. Four specific models inspired the physical and financial form of the greenbelt towns: 1) Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities and other British planned communities 2) European public housing, 3) Radburn, New Jersey; and 4) to a lesser degree, "automobile suburbs," such as Shaker Heights, Ohio and the Country Club District of (Kansas City) Missouri.[25] In addition, several of the key planners and consultants on the greenbelt towns program

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[21] Hale Walker, Chief Planner for Greenbelt, had worked for the Maryland State Planning Commission since 1930. Prior to that, Mr. Walker had worked with Harvard's Reconstruction Unit, a group of architects, engineers, and economists who participated in the rebuilding of Europe after World War I. Walker stayed on in Europe after the War to work for French planner Jacques Greber planning small French villages. He then returned to Boston to work for a planning firm and teach at Harvard before joining the Maryland State Commission. (Obituary of Hale Walker, *Journal of Housing*, 24, August 1967, p. 365.)

[22] The term coined by Benton MacKaye for a highway surrounded by park land and unfettered by stops, shops, signage, etc. See Donald A. Krueckeberg, *The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections* (New York and London: Methuen), 1983.

[23] See *The City*, the film by the American Institute of Planners, for images of the role of parkways in garden cities. In depending on this proposed thoroughfare, however, Greenbelt's planners replicated a mistake made earlier at Radburn; the anticipation of a commutation network that would not be built for many years. See Note 42.

[24] Hale J. Walker, "Some Major Technical Problems Encountered in the Planning of Greenbelt, Maryland," *The Planners' Journal*, December, 1938.

[25] Some historians have also maintained that Le Corbusier's Ville Contemporaine of 1924 and Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City of 1934-1958 influenced the greenbelt towns. In the sense that both visions were based on the notion of decentralization, this is true, but there is no indication that the RA planners studied these models as directly as they did the other, actually built planned communities mentioned in the text. Tugwell reportedly found the skyscrapers of Le Corbusier's plan appealing and proposed them for Greenbelt, but Lansill dissuaded him from the idea. Frank Lloyd Wright also reportedly gave his model of Broadacre City to Lansill to study, but his reaction to it is not known. [See David Myhra:
"Rexford Guy Tugwell: Initiator of America's Greenbelt New Towns, 1935-36," in Donald A. Krueckeberg, Ed., *The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections* (New York and London: Methuen Press, 1983) for discussion of Le Corbusier and Joseph L. Arnold. *The New Deal in the Suburbs* for discussion of Wright.]

staff had worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in planning Norris, Tennessee.[26] Although not cited by the RA as a specific model, the lessons of Norris' development between 1933-35 would certainly have been applied to the greenbelt towns effort.

Ebenezer Howard and Garden City

The British sources for the greenbelt towns were the "garden cities" of Letchworth and Welwyn and "cottage estates" built by the London County Council.[27] The RA's September 1936 brochure, *Greenbelt Towns*, opens with images of Bournville and Welwyn City, England. The first locale, an 1895 company village founded by chocolate millionaire George Cadbury, is noted for its garden qualities, its administration by a village trust, and its single ownership of land. The second locale is identified as a model of scientific planning protected by a publicly owned belt of green. A third garden city, Nottingham, is pictured for its unusually large blocks and central parks. The garden city movement in England that eventually embraced all three of these towns was defined by one man.

Born in London in 1850 and trained in short-hand as a young man, Ebenezer Howard was responsible for leading the garden city movement in England. As a young man, Howard was diagnosed with bad lungs. In 1871, he traveled to the United States with two friends to partake of good air and farming. They took up 160 acres in Howard County, Nebraska (the County name is coincidental). He was an inept farmer and moved on to Chicago, where he worked briefly as a shorthand writer. He returned to London in 1876, where he became an expert court and press reporter. He also took to inventing things in his spare time. Howard was given to reading progressive books, such as Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1881) and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1889), and to contemplating alternative religious theories and lifestyles. He became fascinated with the notion of reforming London's overcrowding by removing its inhabitants to the countryside.

He wrote a book on his theory, titled *A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, published in 1898, in which he laid out his prescription for urban ills. Howard returned to America at least once or twice between 1876 and 1898, and historians speculate that he must have toured other parts of the country, including Garden City, Long Island.[28] Garden City, Long Island, was a community started in 1869 on 8,000 acres of land and connected to New York City by rail. Developed by department store owner Alexander T. Stewart, it was noted for its introduction of greenery along its streets and its use of gardens throughout the plan.

Howard's solution to London's overcrowding was a network of satellite towns. In his book, he named his imaginary first town, "Garden City." Its draw was its incorporation of the advantages of town and country. As such, it was a new, third "magnet" for settlement; the other two being simply the town, or the country. Howard's third magnet was not a utopia, but a self-sufficient, working community built upon opportunities for employment and leisure. His Garden City had the following elements: 1) it would be a marriage of town and country; 2) have limited size (1,000 acres); 3) be of limited population (32,000 people); 4) provide affordable housing; 5) provide a healthful

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[26] Tracy Augur, consultant to the Resettlement Administration on Greenbelt, was chief town planner for the TVA and responsible for the plan of Norris, Tennessee. Roland Wank, architect at the TVA, was one of the architects on the Greenhills project. Jacob Crane, Norris' chief regional planner, was one of the planners for Greendale. Earle Draper, TVA's head of regional and community planning, was the Resettlement Administration's Policy Formulation Director. See Jan Cigliano, "Norris, Tennessee: America's Forgotten TVA New Town." M.A. Thesis, George Washington University, 1982.

[27] Brochure *Greenbelt Towns* (Resettlement Administration, September, 1936).

[28] The Long Island suburb is the first known use of the term "garden city." See C.B. Purdhom, *The Building of Satellite Towns: A Contribution to the Study of Town Development and Regional Planning* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1925, 1949).

environment; 6) contain industry, agriculture, and commerce in predefined areas; 7) feature a surrounding greenbelt to contain growth (5,000 acres); 8) be entrusted to public ownership; and 9) have municipal governance.

Upon the publication of his book, Howard and followers formed the Garden City Association in 1899 to raise funds to construct an actual garden city. First Garden City, Limited, a subsidiary of the Garden City Association, financed and built Letchworth, the first garden city planned to Howard's principles, in 1903-04. It was located 34 miles outside of London. Planned by architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin on 4566 acres for 35,000 people, Letchworth was larger than Howard's ideal, but still reflected most of his principles. Individual and connected dwellings in a traditional English style were constructed in a park-like center of town, while surrounding farms in a 3,000-acre greenbelt protected the community from the pressure of development. Residents lived according to cooperative housing principles. Several of the town's quadrangles included "Feminist flats" (units devoid of a kitchen) and a single large kitchen and dining room where residents shared cooking tasks and congregated for meals.[29] Within roughly a decade the town had 30 industries to provide employment for residents. Unfortunately, undercapitalization of the project made its housing too costly for those Howard sought to serve, and this was its most noticeable failure.

The second English garden city, Welwyn, was built 16 miles outside of London in 1919. Welwyn Garden City was developed on 2400 acres for 40,000 residents. It was a refinement on Letchworth in areas of civic design and architectural harmony.[30] A subsidy from the British government also made it more affordable than Letchworth. While the majority of residents worked in London, a significant minority found work in the factories that were located on the edges of the town. Like Letchworth, at the center was a formal park and on the periphery, the characteristic greenbelt. Also like Letchworth, the city was run with cooperatives. Howard, who had lived at Letchworth from 1905 to 1920, moved to Welwyn in 1921 and resided there until his death in 1928.

John Lansill would later claim that the Greenbelt plan owed few direct debts to Howard,[31] but the parallels -- whether conscious or not -- are inescapable, including: 1) a marriage of town and country, 2) a distinct population, 3) distinct acreage, 4) affordability, 5) healthfulness, 6) provision for industry and agriculture, 7) a greenbelt, 8) single ownership, 9) cooperatives, and 10) municipal governance.

European Public Housing

In addition to looking at Britain, the RA planners looked to Europe. Following the First World War, the governments of Britain and the Continent responded to a severe housing shortage by erecting public housing communities. Between 1919 and 1936, 4.5 million homes had been built by British and European governments. The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland all had extensive public housing campaigns where good -- and often contemporary -- designs were applied to large-scale housing projects for the poor. Images of these communities appeared in the RA's 1936 *Greenbelt Towns* brochure. The DSR looked specifically to the suburbs of Praunheim and Roemkerstadt, near

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[29] Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985.

[30] F.J. Osborn in his preface to *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*.

[31] Myrha, "Rexford Guy Tugwell: Initiator of America's Greenbelt New Towns, 1935-36" in Donald A. Krueckeberg, Ed., *The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections* (New York and London: Methuen Press, 1983).

Frankfort; the land policies of Berlin; and to the re-housing program of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Hilversum, and the Hague for inspiration.[32]

In planning Greenbelt, the RA looked to these examples to demonstrate that governments could erect and administer large-scale, affordable housing complexes successfully. In referencing these examples, John Lansill, Director of the Suburban Division, stated: "All are communities, planned from the land up, integrated into the regional picture, built by the State, owned by the municipality, lived in by the people."[33]

The Regional Planning Association of America: Sunnyside Gardens, New York and Radburn, New Jersey

In an effort to tackle America's corresponding housing crisis after the First World War, a group of architects, planners, economists, and theorists in New York City formed the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) in 1923. The group's mission was to improve peoples' lives through comprehensive regional planning and, particularly, to decentralize overpressured urban populations. The founding members included Lewis Mumford, a social critic; Clarence Stein, an architect and planner; Henry Wright, an landscape architect and planner; Benton MacKaye, a forest economist; Frederick Bigger, a planner; Frederick Ackerman, an architect; Catherine Bauer, a housing expert; Tracy Augur, a planner; and Stuart Chase, an economist. Several members of the group had met through their affiliation with the U.S. Shipping Board. The members began holding discussions over lunch or dinner two or three times a week. They were particularly inspired by Howard's garden cities, Parker and Unwin's British "New Towns," the American government's successful efforts to provide housing during World War I,[34] and the theories of decentralization espoused by Mumford as a disciple of Patrick Geddes.[35]

The RPAA believed regional planning had to respond to population trends and the advent of electricity, radio, and most importantly, the automobile. The challenge as the RPAA saw it was to reinvent the social order so that living, working, and leisure could coexist in one community. In order to accomplish this, the RPAA believed communities must be developed from scratch. It recognized that cheap land bought in the open countryside was critical to making housing affordable. The RPAA also

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[32] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning.*

[33] Ibid.

[34] Both for financial and planning reasons, the RPAA looked to wartime housing erected by the government during the First World War. Two government agencies constructed wartime housing: the United States Shipping Board's Emergency Fleet Corporation and the United States Housing Corporation. The Emergency Fleet Corporation provided permanent housing for the 384,000 workers employed in the ship-building industry. Between March of 1918 and January of 1919, the Board produced 26 community projects across the nation totaling over 9,000 units of permanent housing. The projects anticipated later American garden city models in their use of curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs, attached houses, and interior parks. The United States Housing Corporation was formed in September, 1919 to provide additional housing for those employed in wartime industries. It too built permanent housing of a variety, including single family homes, duplexes, lodging houses, rental houses, and community buildings. Its communities featured regional vernacular architecture and made use of local materials.

[35] Mumford was the American counterpart and a disciple of Patrick Geddes, a Scottish botanist and social theorist who developed the "valley section" theory. According to Geddes, the "Paleotechnic" order resulted from man tieing river cities to the railroad and drawing people in from the hills to work in the unhealthy, coal-powered valleys. The "Neotechnic" order would deflate the city by using the new power of electricity, radio, and the automobile to move people out of the dirtied cities back into the hills. Mumford added the "Biotechnic" order to this scenario to describe the new ideal of a regional whole comprised of decentralized garden cities where the individual and the community were in balance.

sought to avoid areas subjected to zoning, which was restrictive in nature, at that time inclined to segregation of functions and gridiron plans.

The RPAA desperately believed that government should play a leading role in providing affordable housing,[36] but the American political psyche was still averse to the notion. Clarence Stein and Henry Wright thus accepted Alexander Bing's offer to provide a model community. Bing was an office building and apartment house developer who formed a limited dividend company called the City Housing Corporation (CHC) to construct affordable housing. For their first project, the CHC selected a site close at hand, in Queens, New York and in 1924 the development of Sunnyside Gardens commenced. Stein and Wright sought to test their RPAA ideas in a setting where the residents of the future community were assured of finding a job close by. In essence, the RPAA's first effort was to develop a garden *suburb* instead of a garden *city*.

Sunnyside Gardens was started with one major disadvantage - the site had already been subjected to speculation and the city grid. Given this handicap, Stein and Wright managed to create a ten-block community there with 72% of the acreage devoted to interior park land and lawns. They did so by making dwellings broader and shorter, thus leaving the interior of the lots free. They combined different types of housing, and built cooperative apartments in order to satisfy a diverse population. Sunnyside Gardens was ultimately not available to low-income residents, but the garden city elements of its design calling for light, air, open space, and recreation proved successful.

Nine years later, Stein, Wright, and the CHC attempted a second experiment. They selected a site 16 miles away from New York City in Fairlawn, New Jersey, to construct a garden city. The area was open agricultural land, with only one major road running through it and no zoning restrictions. This New Jersey farmland became the stage for the "Radburn Idea," as it would come to be called in planning circles.[37]

It was an idea predicated on the existence of the automobile. Struck by the dangers of the automobile in urban environments, Stein and Wright created a community that accepted the automobile while assuring safety for its residents, particularly children. The key to the Radburn Idea was the use of different roads for different functions: parkways to connect Radburn to other garden city communities; through roads to link various neighborhoods within the community itself; motor roads to define "superblocks" which contained the housing; and narrow service roads, or "cul-de-sacs," to provide access to the housing for street inhabitants. Housing was clustered so that roads were minimized and park space maximized. The other key innovation of the Radburn Idea was the turning of the traditional house inside out so that kitchen and garage faced the motor entrance and living room and porch faced a communal garden. Laced throughout the garden side were foot ways. Pedestrian underpasses provided safe passage for the children and residents through a common park area so they didn't have to cross motor ways at grade.[38]

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[36] The *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* was a forum for RPAA ideas. In 1917, Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the *Journal* sent architect Frederick Ackerman to England to report on government-sponsored wartime housing. Ackerman observed and wrote about an enormous munitions plant and its surrounding community, designed by Raymond Unwin, and was awe-struck by its comprehensiveness and quality. His articles summarized the RPAA position that governments could construct whole communities.

[37] Clarence S. Stein, *Toward New Towns for America.*

[38] The pedestrian underpass was the logical evolution of the overpasses and underpasses used by Frederick Law Olmsted to separate pedestrian from horse-drawn traffic in Central Park. Clarence Stein credits this traffic innovation at Central Park as the major forerunner of the Radburn Plan. See Stein, *Toward New Towns for America.*

Radburn was the first application of the "neighborhood unit" theory developed by Clarence Perry.[39] A neighborhood unit was a limited geographic area based on the enrollment of the local elementary school. The elementary school, therefore, was the nucleus by which all development followed. Each neighborhood unit was physically confined to an area of ½ mile around the school and protected from major arterials. Radburn was to have three neighborhood units, each containing between 7500 to 10,000 people so that the entire completed town would house 25,000. Each neighborhood unit also would feature a shopping center.

Radburn was not a true garden city along Howard's principles, primarily for four reasons: 1) the greenbelt itself was forfeited early on because of land costs, so there was no integrated agricultural economy; 2) although Stein and Wright planned for industry and for the employment of workers in nearby Paterson mills, industries never came to the area and Paterson's silk industry died;[40] 3) the town was not publicly owned, and 4) it was not affordable to lower income brackets. Despite these failures, Radburn still represented "America's first scientifically planned garden town" and was viewed as such by the DSR planners.[41] Unfortunately for Stein, Wright, and Bing, the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Depression sharply curtailed the progress of Radburn. Only two superblocks were ever built. The CHC declared bankruptcy in 1934, convincing its planners once and for all that privately developed new towns were too vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market.

From Radburn, the RA planners took several key planning premises, including: 1) superblocks; 2) different types of streets for different usage; 3) pedestrian underpasses; 4) the neighborhood unit principle with the elementary school/community building as its key; and 5) the turning of houses inside out with a service and garden side.

The Automobile Suburbs

Evolving more from picturesque suburbs of the 19th century than from Howard's garden city principles, the "automobile suburbs" of the 1920s and 1930s like Shaker Heights, Ohio and the Country Club district of Kansas City, Missouri nonetheless provided lessons for the RA. These upscale suburbs were never conceived as separate towns, per se, but rather as bedroom communities dependent upon a nearby city for employment. They were unparalleled examples of planned communities, however, and the DSR planners studied several of their plan elements in designing Greenbelt, including: 1) the use of irregular street plans, 2) the restriction of cars to certain types of roads, 3) preservation of natural parks, and 4) integral commercial facilities with off-street parking.[42]

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[39] Perry was with the Russell Sage Foundation and authored the 1929 plan, "Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, Volume VII." The neighborhood unit theory had the following elements: 1) school as focus, with the community limited by elementary school population; 2) neighborhood bounded by arterial roads which carry through traffic around it; 3) 10% open space/recreation; 4) education and service grouped around a common; 5) local shopping district located on the periphery and linked to a neighboring one; and 6) each neighborhood served by a street system to facilitate internal circulation and discourage through traffic.

[40] Stein and Wright banked on the opening of the George Washington Memorial Bridge to New York City to provide a direct link to employment and to stimulate the flow of industry across the river towards Radburn. The GW Bridge did not open until 1931, causing Stein to reflect in his book *Toward New Towns for America* that infrastructure had to be in place - not just planned - for garden cities to be truly self-sufficient.

[41] Brochure *Greenbelt Towns* (Resettlement Administration, September 1936).

[42] Myhra, "Rexford Guy Tugwell: Initiator of America's Greenbelt New Towns, 1935-36" in Krueckeberg.

THE GREENBELT TOWN PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan and Zone Plan for the Corporate Limits of Greenbelt (1937)

From the beginning, the original planners of Greenbelt worked to lay the groundwork for expansion of the town. In 1937, they published a Comprehensive Town Plan of Greenbelt and Environs as well as a Zone Plan for Area within Corporate Limits to guide the long-term growth of the garden city.[43] **(See Figure 2.)** The plan was to be implemented either by "private agencies, by cooperatives, or by governmental agencies, or by combinations of these types of enterprise."[44] The Zone Plan revealed that the completed town of Greenbelt would not be restricted to group houses. Instead, the Plan identified zones for single family rural residences, single family suburban residences, group houses, multi-family houses, businesses, light industry, heavy industry, a cemetery, schools, and parks. These uses were to be divided amongst three town "cells," or "units"[45] that would be built over time. Roughly 3500 acres had been set aside for the first town cell, and nearly 7,000 acres set aside for two additional cells to house 3,000 more families each[46].

The planned community of Greenbelt today is the partial fulfillment of the first town unit or cell. While awaiting funds for the additional cells, the southern part of the tract would be used for a county recreation center and that to the north as experimental ground for the Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Department.[47] The remaining 8,000-odd acres of land acquired by the RA but not devoted to the town project were returned to the Government Farm for its permanent use.[48] (The Greenbelt planners even developed preliminary plans for future research laboratories and administrative buildings for the Government Farm.)

All planning by the DSR was done with future expansion in mind, including the laying of trunk sewer and water lines to accommodate 2,000 residents and the projection of a 20% road increase for a 50% population increase. While not identifying the three cells clearly, the Zone Plan does indicate seven areas for building expansion. These expansion zones were separated from one another by parks. The Zone Plan also indicates two "sub-shopping centers" for the town, one at its northern border with the Government Farm and one near Edmonston and Greenbelt roads. Eight areas are designated for use as farmland in the Plan, including some scheduled for implementation as part of the first town unit. The largest of these farm areas was the huge holding south of Greenbelt Road, which consists today of all of

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[43] There are several documents that, taken together, describe the 1937 Comprehensive Town Plan and the Zone Plan. First is a "Preliminary Zone Plan," dated August, 1937, which is a colored pencil sketch. The "Zone Plan" itself is a finalized, blackline drawing dated November 1, 1937. Other information on the Comprehensive Plan comes from Lansill, *Final Report of the Greenbelt Project of the Greenbelt Town Program, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning.*

[44] Jacob Crane, "Greendale - The General Plan," *The Planners' Journal*, Vol. 4, March-April 1938.

[45] Hale J. Walker, "Some Major Technical Problems Encountered in the Planning of Greenbelt, Maryland," *The Planners' Journal*. Four town units were mentioned in the government's final report of the same year. See Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Technical Planning.*

[46] Lansill, *Final Report*, *Volume I, Technical Planning*. This is one example of a set of acreage figures projected for the ultimate land use in the town. Different sections within the FSA's *Final Report* contradict each other on numbers, revealing that the plans changed several times.

[47] Walker and Lansill.

[48] Again, acreage figures vary depending on the source. This figure comes from Wallace Richards' "Summary Chronological History" contained within the *Final Report.*

Greenbelt National Park and the area known as East Greenbelt. All of the farmland specified in the 1937 Zone Plan was to feature single- family residences with one family to every five acres.

The 1937 Zone Plan also shows the Turner Family cemetery on Edmonston Road slated for use as a city cemetery, another school adjacent to the sub-shopping center near Edmonston and Greenbelt Roads, light industry in the area west of Edmonston Road surrounding the cemetery (today's Capitol Office Park), and heavy industry bordering the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to the northwest All land in between zones was to be devoted to parks.

The Plan for the First Town Unit (1935-1937)

The plan for the first town unit (old Greenbelt today) itself went through a series of changes in the early planning days. At first, 3,746 acres were to be divided amongst 1996 acres for the suburban town and 1750 acres for a farming community north of the Government Farm known as the Rossville Rural Development. The suburban town was to feature 1,000 housing units for whites, 250 units for African-Americans, and 50 working farms.[49] The planners predicted its suburban residents would either work for the Government Farm or commute to Washington to work for the federal government. Though not described in any detail in government reports, the Rossville Rural Development likely was to have been a subsistence community for African Americans, since the area along Gross and Odell Roads known as "Rossville" was an historically African American community.[50]

The government plan for the first town unit was modified repeatedly over time, especially once construction started early on in the process and unskilled labor took its toll. The African-American housing within the suburban town and the Rossville Rural Development project were both dropped.[51] The number of planned units overall was decreased from 1000 to 885. (A second appropriation was supposed to fund an additional 2,000 homes in the first town, which appear on the plan as the unshaded building footprints.) The number of group houses was reduced and that of multiple-unit dwellings (apartment houses) increased. Garages were pared back from 1,000 to 500, and parking spaces in parking courts supplied instead. Industry was dropped prior to the publication of the first town unit plan, but was intended to be added to the town when funds allowed.[52]

The ultimate plan for the first town unit that finally took shape took its cues from the topography. **(See Figure 3.)** A crescent-shaped plan emerged based on the existence of a ridge in that shape and a gentle valley to its west. The planners decided on group housing based on information from the questionnaires, labor availability (skilled versus unskilled) and limited funding. The great concern given to the co-existence of people and automobiles and for the primacy of the pedestrian resulted in

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[49] Lansill, *Final Report, Volume I, Technical Planning.*

[50] Rossville, located north of Greenbelt in the area near Odell, Gross, and Old Muirkirk Roads, is a historic site that has been surveyed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County, Historic Preservation Section.

[51] It is not clear from the record when the housing for African-Americans was dropped. Also, the Rossville Rural Housing project was never built.

[52] Greenbelt's original plan may not have featured industry because Tugwell didn't believe in principle that industry would follow people to the countryside. [See Michael V. Namorato, Rexford G. Tugwell, A Biography (New York: Praeger, 1988).] In a 1937 section of the *Final Report*, the FSA planners did recommend that light industry be located west of the sewage treatment plan. The following industries were considered appropriate employers: a milk distribution station; bottling works; carpet, rug, or bag cleaning works; dyeing and cleaning works; stone yards or monument works; coal, coke, or wood yards; carting, express, and storage; contractors' plants or storage yards; lumber yards; or laundries. The planners also suggested that land on both sides of the B & O Railroad tracks be set aside for heavy industry. This area was considered ideal, since noxious fumes would bypass the town itself.

a road and path system at Greenbelt reminiscent of that at Radburn.

In the valley to the west of the plateau on the central axis of the crescent, the planners located a town common and a recreation area, imparting it with the significance of the historical American town common. A stream that ran through the area on axis provided the opportunity for a 27-acre man-made lake. The original recreational facilities of the common included tennis courts and plans for baseball diamonds. An extensive trail system along the outskirts of the town - through the town forest and around the lake was planned but not fully implemented. A Rural High School was planned for the corner of Edmonston and Greenbelt Roads, and was built by a private contractor in 1936. It was designed in two stages to correlate with an insufficient original budget.

Surrounding the suburban core was the greenbelt, designed as a multi-purpose area of open space supporting recreation, allotment gardens, natural woodlands, and full-time farming. The farming component of the greenbelt was intrinsic to the principles of Howard's garden city and was explicitly stated in the Greenbelt Towns brochure as part of the DSR's mission. In the first town unit plan, 50 full-time farmers were to be located along Edmonston and Branchville roads in new, modern farmhouses built and leased by the government or in renovated rural dwellings.[53] In addition, a market was to be located at the corner of the Edmonston and Branchville (now Greenbelt) roads so that farmers could sell their produce to Greenbelt residents. A cooperative dairy, a wayside market, rural filling station, and canning plant also were planned. In the end, the farming component projected as part of the first town unit was abandoned due to a lack of funds. Only seven existing farms were rehabilitated.[54]

Up to 5,000 men per day were transported from Washington and Baltimore by special trains to the Branchville railroad stop and then carried by truck to the project site. Inefficiencies in construction and procurement process delays led to cost overruns. Measures had to be taken to make the project work. With construction well along, Roosevelt visited the project site on November 13, 1936, and was, reportedly, very impressed by what he saw. At the time, however, press reports of the towns were consistently inflammatory and negative. Labeling them "Tugwell Towns," the press drew images of the towns as bloated bureaucratic follies set up as Soviet-like communes. Five days after the President's visit, on November 18, Tugwell resigned, amidst rumors of the RA's absorption into the Department of Agriculture. He would claim in his writings that his resignation resulted from the difficulty of the 1936 re-election (where he had served as Roosevelt's "whipping boy")[55], not directly from RA troubles, and that the President had requested he leave.

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[53] These greenbelt farms were different from those of the Rossville Rural Development which had been dropped from the plans. Each of the farmsteads was to have an outdoor living area near the house, a service area, an orchard of mixed trees, an area for small fruits and vegetables, and fields for crop vegetables. The buildings on the property were to include a house, garage, root-cellar, tool-house, and a poultry house and run for 30-40 hens.

[54] Seven farms are mentioned in a government appraisal of the completed project. See "Survey Preliminary to the Appraisal of Greenbelt, Maryland, Md-6 and MD-18111," Prepared by Benjamin H. McCulloch, John M. Hudgins, and George W. Kelly, June 1, 1949. Housed at the National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Entry 48 (Records of the Statistics Division), Box 1.

[55] Michael Vincent Namorato, Ed., *The Diary of Rexford G. Tugwell, the New Deal, 1932-35* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

On January 1, 1937, the RA was ordered to operate as a separate unit of the Department of Agriculture under direction of the Secretary of Agriculture.[56] In September 1937, the RA was replaced in name by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), an agency established by the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act to solve land problems associated with farm tenancy. At the time it was dissolved, the RA was in the process of building its three greenbelt towns, had planned but not finished 84 resettlement projects, and had completed 38 resettlement communities. The greenbelt towns program staff was transferred to the FSA, and continued its work completing the three towns. Tugwell's Deputy Director, Will W. Alexander, became head of the FSA. The greenbelt towns program continued, although with quickly draining funds.

The first town unit that took shape in the fall of 1937 included 574 group houses (at seven families per acre), 306 multi-unit residences in 12 buildings (at 16 families per acre), 5 detached experimental houses of plywood construction, and seven renovated farmhouses. Two-thousand, one-hundred acres had been devoted to recreation, allotment gardens, and farms and 250 acres to the housing development.[57] The total cost for the construction of Greenbelt was figured at $13,394,400.

Soon thereafter, Congress decided that the federal government should no longer be in the business of building the greenbelt towns, and the FSA looked to the private sector to build housing on vacant land set aside for additional town units. Only one development was ever privately constructed in Greenbelt during the government's ownership; that of the General Houses of Chicago's Parkbelt Homes on Forestway Road, built in 1938.

SELECTION OF TENANTS

On September 2, 1937, the government began accepting applications for residence in Greenbelt. Criteria for residency was based on 1) income, 2) good health, 3) size of family, 4) reliability in matters of finance, 5) clean living habits, and 6) indication of community spirit. A prospective tenant's salary could be no more than $1440 if single, and $2200 if a member of a family of six. Ironically, the income restrictions are what kept the employees at the Government Farm out of Greenbelt, since they made too much money to qualify.[58] Greenbelt's planners believed that the prospective residents' characters were as important to the project's success as were the functionality of the plan or durability of the buildings. During an interview at a prospective resident's home, government staff questioned applicants as to whether or not they were inclined to participate in cooperative endeavors. Wives were not permitted to work, but were expected, instead, to stay home and care for the children. The government aimed to select a cross-section of population that matched the religious makeup of the region, but early plans to integrate the community racially were dropped at an unknown date. When the first group of tenants had been selected, they represented Washington's religious and labor demographics: 30% Catholic, 63% Protestant, 7% Jewish and a 70% government, 30% non-government workers. The average tenant was 29 years old. He/she paid between $18-25 per month for a Greenbelt apartment, and between $28 and $41/month for a house. Tenants were assigned to a dwelling on the basis of the number of family members.

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[56] Tugwell always desired that the RA would one day be folded back into the Department of Agriculture. See Namorato, The *Diary of Rexford G. Tugwell, the New Deal, 1932-35*

[57] "Greenbelt Towns," *Architectural Record*, LXXX, September, 1936.

[58] A letter from the Department of Agriculture Research Center to Mr. C.B. Baldwin, Administrator of the FSA, in September 1938 states that 44 employees of the Research Center would desire to live in Greenbelt if the income restrictions were eliminated. [National Archives, Record Group 16 (Records of the Department of Agriculture), Box 2784.]

THE CHARACTER OF THE COMPLETED TOWN

When the first residents moved in on September 30, 1937, the town of Greenbelt had most of its housing units, a commercial center complete with a grocery store, barber shop, beauty shop, drugstore, and filling station; a community building/school; a fire station and auto repair; a lake stocked with fish, a small recreation pavilion; many well-equipped playgrounds, and tennis courts. There were three family cemeteries, seven farms along the Edmonston/Branchville intersection, and 300 allotment gardens. Electricity was purchased from Potomac Electric Power Company and water from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. By the time all of the units were filled in 1938, the town's population had reached 3,000 persons.

In keeping with Howard's philosophy for garden cities, the government set up a municipal entity to run the town. The Town of Greenbelt was created in June 1937 as the first Council-Town Manager form of government in the state. Because of the concern that the town be a taxpaying entity, the government had passed The Bankhead Black Agreement in May 1936, allowing it to pay "sums in lieu of taxes" to support community needs. Those sums, combined with personal property taxes and funds from the sale of water to the federal government and electricity to the tenants provided the town with income necessary for its operation. The town's responsibilities included roads, drives, parking areas, storm and sanitary sewers, waste disposal, water supply and distribution, electrical distribution, street lighting, and fire alarm.

The Town Manager was responsible for running the town according to "Rules and Regulations" that were attached to each resident's lease. The Rules were an instant source of derision in the press. Those restricting the hanging of laundry outdoors to certain times and the prohibition against pets drew the sharpest attacks. Despite minor grumbling, most residents recognized that the rules contributed to the cleanliness, health, and safety of their model community, and they felt honored to participate in their administration. The tenants saw themselves, in fact, as "pioneers."[59] They recognized they were creating an entire community from scratch and saw it as a challenge unique in modern history.

The first order of business for the federal government was to find an entity to run the community's stores. The government recognized it would be a conflict of interest if it were to run the stores, so it attempted to entice private industry to the job. With no takers, the government sought alternatives and was fortunate to find a partner in Edward Filene. On September 2, 1937, Filene signed a deal with the FSA to run the stores. Filene had made his fortune in the department store business in Boston using nontraditional marketing and personnel strategies. He believed that increased capital and wealth were attributable to cooperative principles, and established the Consumer Distribution Corporation (CDC) in Boston to assist in the formation of small cooperatives. The CDC issued a loan of $50,000 at 5% interest to establish Greenbelt Consumer Services (GCS), a subsidiary that would assume the commercial center's leases and run the businesses along cooperative principles. CDC would handle the major cooperative matters and GCS, the day-to-day organization of the stores until such time as the residents could assume its responsibilities. If this did not occur by December 31, 1939, the businesses would be put up for private sale.

Tugwell had been an ardent believer in cooperative endeavors. Cooperatives had been used in RA communities for farms, pastures, dairies, wood lots, greenhouses, quarries, poultry, hogs, cattle breeding, lime crushing, canneries, restaurants, hospitals, garages, and filling stations. The principles of the cooperative, known as the Rochdale principles after a group of London weavers who established

[59] This is the term used in the first issue in 1937 of *The Cooperator* by Mary Van Cleve, who wrote a poem titled "We Pioneers."

their own cooperatives in 1840, were: one member, one vote; limited interest on capital; and any net surplus returned as patronage rebate in proportion to amount spent after reserves set aside.

The citizens of Greenbelt rose to the task of creating cooperatives to sustain the town. Residents formed a citizens association, a kindergarten, a dramatic group, a camera club, an athletic club, a garden club, and other affiliations. Besides the citizens association, the most important cooperatives were the newspaper, credit union, and health association. The *Greenbelt Cooperator*, the town's local weekly penned by a volunteer Journalistic Club, was first printed on November 24, 1937. In 1941, the Greenbelt Cooperative Publishing Association was chartered in Maryland to run the paper. The paper exists today as the *Greenbelt News Review* and for almost sixty years has reported the philosophies, struggles, and victories of the Greenbelt community. The early residents formed the Greenbelt Federal Credit Union in December 1937, which also still operates today. The Greenbelt Health Association was formed in January 1938 along the lines of contemporary HMOs. The Health Association staff worked out of 32 Ridge Road from 1938 until 1950, when the Center closed. A small town hospital was opened in 1939 in converted residences at Ridge and Gardenway but closed in 1942 after continually operating at a loss.

The community also ran the elementary school along unconventional lines. Unlike traditional curriculum-based education, schoolteachers at Greenbelt adhered to the "progressive" model. Learning was accomplished not by rote memory, but by the undertaking of projects incorporating the various disciplines: reading, writing, math, history, etc. Always intensely interested in the education of their children, the residents also formed the first kindergarten in Prince George's County. The students even formed a cooperative of their own, dubbed the "gumdrop co-op," by which they could purchase candy and school supplies from one another.

By December 29, 1939, in time for the deadline established by the CDC, the citizens had successfully formed their own cooperative to run the commercial center.[60] All of these intense organizational efforts were being watched by a fascinated planning profession, an angry Congress, an antagonistic and skeptical media, and a proud Federal government. The President and Mrs. Roosevelt applauded the town. The first lady, in particular, made numerous visits to Greenbelt in its early years to show her support for the venture. The government knew it was making history and the RA, FSA, and Office of War Information (OWI) all sent photographers to Greenbelt to capture the spirit of enterprise that had taken hold in the government-built community.

In the early years, only two issues stood out as problems for the young community: transportation and income restrictions. For all the science that went into planning the community, transportation issues were never adequately resolved and the residents suffered accordingly. Government attempts to offer direct bus service from Greenbelt to Washington were frustrated several times, and many had to depend on multiple modes of public transportation to get to work, or formed carpools with neighbors. The income restrictions that made the town suitable for "moderate-income" people, also caused residents great frustration. Once a family's income exceeded the upper limit by 25%, they were sent an eviction notice. This process was seen as penalizing those who were successful in their jobs, and had the unforeseen effect of removing some of the town's brightest, most dedicated residents. This situation wouldn't be fully rectified until 1942, when the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) assumed responsibility for the community from the FSA, and instituted a policy of rent based on income.

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[60] Today, the supermarket is still owned by its members, the Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative, which purchased the store from Greenbelt Consumer Services in 1984. It is the only store in the commercial center that remains cooperatively run.

THE WAR YEARS

On October 14, 1940, Congress passed the Lanham Act, which provided funds for the construction of housing and minimal support services for civilian war workers through the construction of housing developments. The housing that resulted at Greenbelt was constructed by the FSA for the Federal Works Agency's Division of Defense Housing. Greenbelt's defense housing project, known as MD-18111, was planned by Pierre Ghent and Associates, Land Planning and Housing Consultants.

Between 1941 and 1942, 1,000 units of defense housing went up in Greenbelt for families of certain grades of enlisted men and civilians employed by Army and Navy Departments, and for employees of industry engaged in the production of defense materials. Family annual income could be no higher than $2600. The defense housing was located primarily on the northern and eastern outskirts of the original Greenbelt community; mostly on the east and north sides of Ridge Road. Although it resembled original Greenbelt in its group housing format, there were key differences from the original Greenbelt construction: 1) all units were wood framed, with asbestos cement shingling; 2) the units had no garages and parking courts were much closer to the service entrances of the houses; 3) there were no pedestrian paths in the new development; 4) there were no underpasses to protect children from automobiles, especially underneath Ridge Road; and 5) landscaping was only minimal with sod on the garden side not planted until August 1942 and planned hedges not implemented. The first residents moved in December 1941.

The community was initially administered by the Federal Public Housing Authority, but was transferred in February 1942 to the newly created National Housing Agency, established as the agency responsible for managing the FSA-built defense housing. Also in 1942, the greenbelt towns were transferred from the FSA to the Federal Public Housing Authority. For several years, therefore, Greenbelt was administered by two different federal agencies.

The Town of Greenbelt was substantially changed by the introduction of these new families and by the war. The community center/school could no longer accommodate all the children. The problem was initially resolved by operating double shifts in the existing two schools. The co-op grocery store was considered too far away from residents living at the north end of town, so the GCS converted the units at 3-E through 3-H Laurel Hill to a small, north end store in January 1943. Many families now had two working parents, so day care facilities were formed. Finally, in July 1944, the government authorized money for a second, north end elementary school and the planned addition to the Rural High School. In August 1944, three new maintenance buildings were erected behind 36 Court of Ridge Road (now Hamilton Place) for the expanded crew of workers necessary to maintain the grounds, boilers, plumbing, etc. A one-story addition at the west end of the commercial center was built to house the expanded town administrative offices.

Perhaps the toughest problem during the war years was the overall turnover in population caused by the reassignment of government and military workers and the loss of men to the draft and voluntary service. Also in the 1950s, McCarthy era tactics resulted in the investigation of several Greenbelt citizens for alleged subversive activities. A staunch political debate focused on the motivation behind cooperatives and the people behind Greenbelt's cooperatives appeared before Congressional subcommittees on charges of communism and monopolistic practices.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

After the war, domestic battles replaced foreign as matters of greatest concern. Beginning in 1946, the majority of town residents tried to fight the location of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway 100 feet from its doors, despite the original planners' perception of it as a welcome mode of transportation. Planning continued, with the National Park Service acquiring land for Greenbelt Park

in 1950 as part of the process of providing a greensward for the Parkway.[61] Greenbelt residents were unsuccessful in their effort to block or move the parkway farther from their border, and the B-W Parkway that was ultimately completed in 1954 was built through a portion of the greenbelt. In 1964, the "belt freeway" was constructed around the circumference of Washington, bisecting Greenbelt in a northwest/southeast direction. This highway destroyed the "Indian Springs" that had been an important part of early residents' recreational life, with its spring, ancient trees, and an Indian cemetery. Although Greenbelt was more accessible as a result of these two major thoroughfares, the character of the area was distinctly changed.

DISPOSITION OF THE TOWN

From the beginning of the greenbelt town program in 1936, the government planned to divest itself of greenbelt towns upon completion of their construction. It hoped to turn the towns over to public housing authorities or other local bodies that would administer them as planned communities. Due to cost overruns and the related reduction of units, the greenbelt towns as constructed were not self-supporting entities at rental rates of 20% of income, as had been planned. The government realized it couldn't sell the communities right away because local housing corporations would be forced to raise rents to pay for them. Such an increase would run contrary both to stipulations guiding the use of Emergency Relief Act funds and to the publicized goals of the RA.

Instead, the federal government offered to lease the town to a nonprofit housing authority in August 1940, but the lease never materialized because of the War and the emergency housing situation. A second effort to lease to a homeowners cooperative succeeded in 1941, but the co-op was unable to secure financing and procure building materials within the two years specified so the lease expired.[62] In 1944, the federal government began holding discussions with the City of Greenbelt over the sale of the town, but the war disrupted the initiative. Three years later, Congress created the Public Housing Administration (PHA) to replace the FPHA, which had been running the greenbelt towns since 1942. Congress authorized the government to procure land surveys to start the process of selling the greenbelt towns and to provide insured mortgages on their sale with a maximum interest of 4 percent and maturity date of not more than 25 years. There was a problem, however, in the selling of the towns to a local housing authority, since the government was precluded from selling to anyone but the highest bidder. Selling to the highest bidder would have had the effect of practically guaranteeing the towns' susceptibility to unscrupulous development.

In 1947 and 1948, the PHA hired Hale Walker, Greenbelt's original planner, along with Harold Heller, to submit a comprehensive town plan and zoning map for Greenbelt, as a vision to guide the sale price and continued development of the town. This plan was to make provision for adding over 8,000 families to Greenbelt. Walker used his 1937 Zone Plan as a starting point, adding in the defense housing and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, a planning certainty. In the 1948 plan, zones dedicated in 1937 to group housing were altered to zones for single-family residential. The area south of Greenbelt Road, reserved in 1937 for agriculture, was dedicated in the 1948 plan to two large residential subdivisions and an 18-hole golf course. In general, the 1948 plan showed a dramatic reduction in greenbelt lands -- specifically agriculture -- and an increase in single-family construction, when compared with the 1937 Zone Plan.

A small group of residents formed the Greenbelt Mutual Home Owners Corporation in 1947 to prepare for the possible sale of the town. In May 1949, the 81st Congress passed HR 2440 Public

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[61] National Park Service, "Greenbelt Park, Official Map and Guide."

[62] George A. Warner, *Greenbelt: The Cooperative Community: An Experience in Democratic Living* (New York, Exposition Press, 1954).

Law 65, H.R. 2440, allowing for the federal government's sale of the greenbelt towns to non-profit groups with at least 50% veterans members. Within two years, Greenbelt citizens reorganized their home ownership corporation into the Greenbelt Veterans Housing Corporation (GVHC). Meanwhile, a government-sponsored appraisal of Greenbelt undertaken in 1949 indicated that 2,546 acres of vacant land were up for disposition.[63] The report mentioned a government plan to break up the town into 78 parcels for sale, each parcel having water, sewer, and garages. Defense housing was to be broken up into 25 parcels. The appraisal report recommended such an approach since it would do away with the "unhealthy" cooperative structure and replace it with large numbers of fee owners. This recommendation was contrary to the original planners' intentions, expressed by Will W. Alexander, Administrator of the FSA in a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace in February 1938: "The existence of individual ownership, whether complete or substantial, at the project, would seriously interfere with the plans for preserving the Greenbelt communities as "model communities."[64]

At the request of the Greenbelt Interfaith Committee, the PHA first advertised for sale and then sold six vacant parcels, five of which were successfully purchased by the community's religious organizations, including the Mowatt Memorial Methodist Church, St. Hugh's, the Jewish Community Center, the Lutheran Church, and the Community Church. These lots were along Crescent and Ridge Roads. The rest of the town was offered for sale at a fixed price of $8,522,350. The buyer was required to place 10 percent down with the remainder payable at 4 percent interest over 25 years.

Negotiations between the government and GVHC were initiated, but were derailed temporarily by the Korean War, since the government had the option to provide emergency housing at Greenbelt. In 1952, work on the sale proceeded.[65] In order to reduce the asking price for GVHC, the government removed 850+ acres of undeveloped land (a large section of the greenbelt), 300+ apartment units, the commercial buildings, recreational facilities, and public utilities from the initial sale. To contribute to GVHC's down payment on the properties, interested residents paid a down payment of 10% of the value of their units, which assured them the right of perpetual use of their homes. GVHC still fell short of the 10% down payment, so the Farm Bureau Insurance Company (now Nationwide) loaned it the balance with a payback period of ten years. In December 1952,[66] GVHC successfully purchased 1580 units of Greenbelt's housing (both RA and defense housing) and 240 acres of developed land for $6,285,450. Shortly thereafter, in 1953, it purchased 709 acres of vacant land for $670,219.[67]

The government continued to dismantle its investment at Greenbelt. The prefabricated homes on Woodland Way were sold to the original developer, Parkbelt Homes. The housing not bought by GVHC was sold to various private developers in April 1953, and 800-plus acres of vacant land were

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[63] McCulloch, "Survey Preliminary to the Appraisal of Greenbelt, Maryland."

[64] Letter from Will Alexander to Secretary Wallace, February 5, 1938. Housed at National Archives, Record Group 16 (Records of the Department of Agriculture), Correspondence Files of the Secretary of Agriculture, Box 2784.

[65] The key legal mastermind behind the acquisition of land by the GVHC and, later, the improvement of vacant land by the Greenbelt Land Improvement Company, was David L. Krooth, a lawyer, who had been Chief Counsel for the War Housing Administration.

[66] Some sources cite January, 1953, as the purchase date. This date is taken from Warner.

[67] Numbers of units and acreage purchased are reported slightly differently in different sources. These numbers are taken from Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976).

sold to developers in August 1954.[68] The power system was sold to PEPCO. The water distribution system, community building, swimming pool, lake area and grounds, athletic fields, and small playgrounds were dedicated to the city.[69] The original sewage disposal plant was demolished. In the southern portion of the tract, 1,362 acres was sold to the National Park Service for $1 to make a National Park. In October 1954, the commercial center and two adjoining vacant parcels were sold to a developer. In all, the government lost money. The total sale price of the town was approximately 53% of its original cost to build.

Immediately after its purchase, GVHC established the Greenbelt Land Improvement Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary, to hold and plan for the development of the 700-odd vacant acres. The Corporation hired the Foundation for Cooperative Housing to undertake a financial development and Master Plan for its vacant land. The plan was spearheaded by Roger Willcox, a city planner who had worked as Clarence Stein's assistant on Kitimat, a new town in British Columbia. Willcox wrote the 1955 Master Plan for FCH Company, Inc., a subsidiary of the Foundation, and obtained input from Stein, Whittlesey, and Albert Mayer.[70]

Unaware of Hale Walker's 1948 master plan, Willcox was charged with providing a cooperative housing scheme for the development of GVHC's 709-acres of vacant land. The demand for detached housing had grown even stronger since 1948, so FCH started with two single-family cooperative subdivisions, the 65-lot Lakeside and 21-lot Woodland Hills. For the rest of the vacant land, it laid out mostly single-family subdivisions, but also included some group housing. All new housing was supposed to adhere to "Principles of Development" cited in the 1955 Master Plan, namely: 1) that all houses face inward toward park areas and views, 2) that shopping facilities front on landscaped pedestrian malls, 3) that roads be differentiated by use, and 4) that pedestrian walkways be separated from throughways. As a result of these principles, all living rooms in the Woodland Hills subdivision face parks and service sides face the street. At Lakeside, the planners did what they could with a constrained site, therefore cul-de-sacs are employed and lead to trails around the Lake, but they fan off the main through road, which is centrally located.

Despite the success of these two small developments, the demand for cooperative housing in the area in 1956 was not great enough to produce the revenue required by GVHC to pay back its loan to the Farm Bureau Insurance Corporation. Thus, GVHC decided to sell the 709 acres of vacant land, minus the land already devoted to Lakeside and Woodland Homes, to Warner-Kanter Development Company.[71] The other subdivisions that today surround the original core, therefore, were built as private developments. Despite this change in ownership, many of these subdivisions picked up on the "Principles of Development" highlighted on the 1955 Plan.

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[68] "Announcement of Sale of Shopping Center, Greenbelt Maryland." Government Advertisement. Housed at National Archives, Record Group 196 (Records of the Public Housing Administration), Real Estate Branch, Legal Division.

[69] George A. Warner, *Greenbelt: The Cooperative Community: An Experience in Democratic Living.*

[70] Master Plan for Vacant Land Areas, Greenbelt, Maryland, Prepared by FCH Company Inc. for Greenbelt Veteran Housing Corporation, April 29, 1955. (Drawing located at Greenbelt Homes, Inc.)

[71] Information on reasons for sale comes from Roger Willcox, CEO of FCH Company, Inc., who managed and planned the use of the vacant land for GVHC. His analysis is confirmed by Albert Mayer, of Mayer and Whittlesey, who also advised on the 1955 plans.
(Willcox spoke to the author by phone. Mayer's comments are recorded in "Greenbelt Towns Revisited," a series of three articles in the *Journal of Housing*, January - March, 1967.) The taxes paid on the vacant land, usually cited as the primary reason for the sale, appear to have been a less significant factor than general market conditions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the developers who had purchased the remaining 800+ acres of vacant land from the federal government back in the 1950s pressed for higher density residential and commercial zoning and were successful in their efforts. The result of these zoning decisions can be seen mostly in the stretch along Greenbelt Road and in East Greenbelt where higher density housing and large-scale commercial and office buildings have been permitted. Much of the City of Greenbelt today, therefore, shows the influence of speculative development.

Professor of the History of Urban Planning at Cornell, Dr. K.C. Parsons has commented:

> Clarence Stein made important contributions to the Greenbelt Towns and particularly to the design and preservation of Greenbelt, Maryland. Working as an RA consultant, he contributed concepts, solutions to problems, and strategic ideas as a framework for their tasks. In General, Greenbelt Maryland, designers drew on his adaptation to North American needs of Howard's Garden City principles as seen in the plans for Sunnyside, Radburn, and Valley Stream. They extended these concepts the plan of this Greenbelt town.
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> In practice, Stein transferred his concepts directly to the RA designers in memoranda prepared for Lansill and in his design review sessions with town design teams in the last three months of 1935. Clearly he had much more influence on Greenbelt, Maryland, than on the other towns. There, the design incorporated all the elements of the 'Radburn idea...' Greenbelt, Maryland remains the best preserved of the three Greenbelt Towns. Greenhills, Ohio, lost much of its greenbelt and was subsequently expanded in a manner much like its suburban surroundings. Greendale, Wisconsin, fared better by its use of an expansion plan prepared by Elbert Peets, one of its original designers, but it, too, lost most of its original greenbelt. [72]

Despite these changes to the RA plan for the additional town units, the original core is extremely intact, and is still managed according to the cooperative and municipal principles laid out in 1937. Greenbelt Homes, Inc., the successor to GVHC since 1957, owns 1600 homes and 250 acres of land in the heart of Greenbelt. Its subsidiary, the Greenbelt Development Corporation, manages two apartment buildings, 52 garages, and four freestanding homes and 25 town houses it built in the late 1960s and early 1970s on vacant land. The Co-op Supermarket is still run along cooperative principles, as is the local paper (*The Greenbelt News Review*), the garden club, and the nursery school.

GREENBELT'S LEGACY

The RA was determined that the greenbelt towns "provide examples of carefully planned communities of stimulating interest and demonstrational value to both public agencies and private enterprise."[73] Greenbelt's legacy as a demonstrational project can be measured in three ways: 1) by comparing the town's character today with the RA's initial objectives, 2) by studying the town's influence in the field of cooperatives, and 3) by charting the town's influence on land use planning in the non-profit, private, and public sectors both at home and abroad.

Regarding the first measurement, Greenbelt succeeded in carrying out the RA's objectives by accomplishing the following: 1) its construction created thousands of jobs for unemployed workers;

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[72] Parsons, K.C. "Clarence Stein and the Greenbelt Towns." *American Planning Association Journal*, Spring, 1990. p. 178

[73] *Final Report, Volume I, Report on Technical Planning.* Summary of Project Objectives.

2) its housing was available to people of "modest income," especially government workers;[74] 3) its environment was beneficial to family and community life; 4) its dwellings were held in one ownership and rented, but not sold, to residents; 5) its administration was run by a municipality set up for that purpose; and 6) public services, such as education, were made possible. Greenbelt failed, however, in carrying out the following objectives: 1) the town lacked a rural development component and thus failed to marry rural and urban economies; and 2) RA policy makers failed to provide a financial or legislative mechanism to ensure the long-term protection of the greenbelt. Greenbelt's failure to combine rural and industrial livelihoods is arguably its greatest shortcoming, but its success at fostering a better life for working families is unquestionable.

Regarding the second measurement, Greenbelt's legacy as a community built upon cooperative principles is tangible today. Visitors from around the world still visit Greenbelt frequently, brought over primarily by the United States Agency for International Development to learn about administering cooperative housing within the context of a local municipality. Many of these visitors are from Eastern Europe, studying Greenbelt as a model for privatization of public housing.[75] Greenbelt Consumer Services went on to become one of the largest purchasing and consumer cooperatives in the country, creating very successful spin offs such as Scan Furniture and additional grocery stores.

Bridging the second and third measurements, Greenbelt has had a far-reaching and direct impact on non-profit housing corporations building cooperative housing in this country. Many communities sponsored by Trustees of the Foundation for Cooperative Housing were derived from the Greenbelt and Radburn models. These communities feature service and access roads located on the outer edges of the community, superblocks filling the heart of the community, and houses turned inward towards central parks. Three such examples are the communities built around the country by the Reynolds Aluminum Service Corporation of Virginia: Parade Park in Kansas City and its sister developments, River Park in Southwest Washington, D.C., and Parktown in Cincinnati, Ohio. These communities made use of aluminum as a building material but also applied the Greenbelt/Radburn planning principles of service courts and living rooms facing common land. Other examples include the South Olden/Hamilton Apartments south of Trenton, New Jersey and the Riverside Braemar community in Riverside, California.[76]

The impact of Greenbelt and Radburn also were felt abroad, specifically on the New Town of Kitimat in British Columbia, planned by Stein and Willcox (in charge of operational aspects of the town) and Mayer and Whittlesey (in charge of the physical plan for the town). This community was built in 1953 by the Aluminum Company of Canada for its employees[77]. Other new towns influenced by concepts popularized at Greenbelt and Radburn include Vallingy in Stockholm, Chandigarh in East Punjab India, and many of the English new towns built after 1946.[78]

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[74] City of Greenbelt, *Greenbelt is 50, 1937-87: Looking Back.* Although not a statistical sample, this book of oral histories of original and early Greenbelt residents reveals that people came to Greenbelt both from small apartments and "light housekeeping" rooms in the city, as well as from small homes outside the city (places like Hyattsville and Takoma Park). The oral histories also show that a fair number of early residents worked for the RA, FSA, or PHA in constructing or managing Greenbelt.

[75] This exchange brings history full circle. In the 1920s and 1930s, the RPAA and RA looked to Europe as a model for public housing. In the 1990s, Europe looks to the United States as a model for privatizing that public housing stock.

[76] These examples were provided by Roger Willcox, CEO of the FCH Company, Inc., subsidiary of the Foundation for Cooperative Housing, and are but a few of many such examples.

[77] Both Mayer and Whittlesey had consulted on the Greenbelt project over several years.

[78] Telephone interview with Roger Willcox, February, 1996. Also, Stein, *Toward New Towns for America.*

For new towns in the United States, Greenbelt's impact may have been hindered by the deluge of bad press on the greenbelt towns project, coupled with the Congressional perception of the towns as socialist engineering. Thus, the developers of Columbia and Reston looked primarily to Europe, and, in the case of Reston, to the privately developed Radburn as models.[79] Nonetheless, the incidence of planners working on these new towns who had gotten their start at Greenbelt or with government planning agencies certainly suggests that garden city principles were applied. The Master Plan for Reston was produced by Whittlesey and Conklin, the former being one of the original draughtsman on the Greenbelt project[80] and the consultant on the 1955 FCH Master Plan for Greenbelt. Likewise the professionals involved in the planning of Columbia were highly familiar with government's project at Greenbelt, since both Morton Hoppenfeld and William Findley worked at the National Capital Planning Commission prior to joining the Rouse Company.[81]

The impact of Greenbelt upon land use planners working for the United States federal government was largely affected by larger political forces. The broad scale of the work undertaken by the RA and FSA at Greenbelt was not duplicated in the same way in the years that followed. Between 1935 and 1937, court and congressional challenges forced the federal government to remove itself as direct sponsor of housing projects, awarding the projects instead to local housing authorities. Also after 1937, public housing was increasingly tied to slum clearance, as opposed to rural resettlement, and public housing was built in the cities, not the suburbs. By the 1950s, the Korean War, hostile business interests, and an unsympathetic public led to decreased appropriations for public housing. Within 12 years time, Greenbelt's landscaped superblocks of two- and three-story group homes were no longer the aesthetic or sociological model, replaced instead by Le Corbusier's stark skyscrapers and vast open courtyards.[82]

In general land use terms, what Radburn, Greenbelt, Kitimat, Chandigarh, Reston, and Columbia all share is not so much a physical plan, but a regional planning philosophy with decentralization as its goal, and a scientific approach to the building of communities. All of these communities have their origins in planners (whether publicly or privately employed) who thought broadly, worked on a large scale, and started from scratch. In these planned communities, land was purchased outside urban centers, zoning hurdles were cleared, opportunities were created for leisure and work, the elementary school served as the basis for neighborhood development, commercial facilities were within walking distance, housing was affordable (to some degree), and the spirit of democracy was embraced as the essential component of town life.

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[79] Robert E. Simon, Sr., the father of the developer of Reston, sat on the Board of Directors of Radburn. Robert E. Simon, Jr. told the author in a telephone interview that Radburn had been a model for Reston.

[80] Information from Roger Willcox. He knew of Whittlesey's direct involvement in the 1930s and thought that Whittlesey had been Division of Suburban Resettlement Staff.

[81] Telephone interview with Scott Ditch, former Vice President and Communications Director of the Rouse Company, February 1996.

[82] Today, as we witness the demolition in cities across the country of the unsuccessful public housing skyscrapers built in the 1950s and 1960s, the trend is back to townhouses and walk-up apartments that are considered more human. In addition, a minimum of space within a site's interior is typically devoted to public use.

Chronology of Major Land Transfers and Development

1935	Resettlement Administration (RA) acquires between 12,000 and 17,000 acres for a greenbelt town and additional land for the Government Farm (different sources within the Federal government give varying amounts on the exact acreage purchased).
1935	RA transfers roughly 8,000 acres to the Government Farm.
1935-38	RA (and, after 1937, the Farm Security Administration or FSA) build the core town of Greenbelt.
1941-42	FSA (for the Federal Works Agency) constructs "defense housing" on the outskirts of the original town.
1942	Management of original Greenbelt transferred from the FSA to the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA). Management of defense housing transferred to the National Housing Agency (NHA).
1947	All Greenbelt housing transferred to the Public Housing Administration (PHA).
1947	Greenbelt Veterans Housing Corporation established as a homeowners' cooperative.
1952-53	PHA sells core of town to GVHC. Sale includes 240 acres of housing (including original and defense homes) and 709 acres of vacant land (in the area immediately surrounding the homes).
1954	1. PHA donates parks and recreational areas to City of Greenbelt 2. PHA sells off remaining acreage of original acquired land to various private developers. 3. PHA transfers 1,362 acres of land in south Greenbelt to National Park Service for national park. 4. PHA sells Greenbelt commercial center to private developer. 5. Baltimore-Washington Parkway completed, eating up much of original acreage acquired by the RA.
1955-58	First new subdivisions added to Greenbelt: Lakeside and Woodland Homes.
1956	GVHC sells off most of 700 vacant acres to private developers due to soft market.
1964	Beltway constructed, further eating up original acreage for the town.
1964-1990s	Private development takes place in areas surrounding original town

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Telephone Interviews

Robert E. Simon, Jr. (February 8, 1996)
Scott Ditch (February 8, 1996)
Roger Willcox (February 16, 1996)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
X Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
X Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
(Greenbelt Center School Only)
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
X Local Government (PG County Library, Greenbelt Branch, Tugwell Room)
X University (University of Maryland, McKeldin Library)
X Other (Specify Repository): (Greenbelt Homes, Inc.)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 756.8

UTM References:

Parcel 1: Zone Easting Northing

A	18	336180	4319940
B	18	338760	4319880
C	18	338700	4317650
D	18	336180	4317730
E	18	336020	4318780

Parcel 2: Zone Easting Northing

A	18	334870	4318390
B	18	335410	4318390
C	18	335410	4317790
D	18	334870	4317790

Parcel 3: Zone Easting Northing

A	18	336000	4319290

Parcel 4: Zone Easting Northing

A	18	335950	4318300

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the Greenbelt, Maryland National Historic Landmark District are shown on the accompanying map entitled, "Boundary Map: Greenbelt, Maryland National Historic Landmark." The NHL is composed of four discontiguous properties. "Parcel 1" is 721.5 acres and is the core planned community built by the RA between 1935-38, and also includes a family cemetery (pre-1935), defense housing built by the FSA in 1941-42, and maintenance buildings built by the Public Housing Authority (PHA) in 1944. "Parcel 2" is 30.9 acres and is the old Rural High School (now the Greenbelt Middle School) planned and designed by the government for the community. "Parcel 3" is 3.1 acres and is the Turner Family Cemetery (now the Greenbelt City Cemetery) identified in early government plans as the future city cemetery. "Parcel 4" is 1.3 acres and is the Walker Family Cemetery/Indian Springs Park, which was retained as an historical/recreational point of interest in the planned community.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are drawn to include those significant features within the City of Greenbelt which reflect the establishment and expansion of the planned community between 1935 and 1946 and to exclude more recently developed parcels. The boundaries utilize lines of convenience such as the City limits to the north; important early roads integral to the community plan; the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, a major physical and visual barrier on the east; and property lines on the south and west. The NHL has the same boundaries as the existing National Register Historic District with two exceptions; the inclusion of the remainder of the Crescent Road right-of-way between Parkway and Kenilworth Avenue, and the exclusion of a concentrated collection of recently building, single-family houses fronting Ridge and Research Roads at the north end of the community. Four discontiguous parcels are necessary to illustrate the significance of the NHL: the first is the planned community itself,

the second is the rural high school property designated specifically for the town, and the two others represent cemeteries from the pre-development, agricultural era of Greenbelt. One was converted to the city's cemetery, and both were retained as points of interest for the new residents of the planned community.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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