

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCERS use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic Greenbelt Historic District

and/or common Old Greenbelt

2. Location

Just north of the intersections of the Baltimore-
street & number Washington Parkway, and the Capital Beltway not for publication

city, town Greenbelt vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state Maryland code 24 county Prince George's code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multipel public and private

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland 20870

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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ACREAGE AND BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Greenbelt Historic District covers 789.05 acres of land. The boundaries of this district are drawn so as to include those areas of the City of Greenbelt which directly relate to the establishment and expansion of the planned community between 1935 and 1941 when the district acquired significance and to exclude the more recently developed parcels and roadways while utilizing such lines of convenience as the city limits on the north; a major physical and visual barrier, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, on the east; and property lines on the south and west.

Included in the Greenbelt Historic District are three discontinuous parcels to the west of the district proper. These parcels, described below, are included in the district because of their historical linkage to the period when the district achieved significance but are made discontinuous by major highway systems and recent development between them and the district proper. The discontinuous parcels are:

Greenbelt Junior High School (33.86 acres)

Bounded by Breezewood Drive on the north, Edmonston Road on the east, Greenbelt Road on the south, and Beltway Plaza on the west, this school was completed in 1938 as part of the original construction of Greenbelt and was situated about a mile from the commercial center so that it would be equidistant from both Greenbelt and the town of Berwyn Heights to the west.

Greenbelt City Cemetary (3.1 acres)

Located north of Ivy Land (extended) to the west of Maryland Route 201 and surrounded completely by private land, this cemetary was formed around an existing burial plot.

Indian Springs (a city park, 3 acres)

Indian Springs is south of Greenbelt Lake and is bordered on the north by the highway ramp leading from Kenilworth Avenue northbound to the Capital Beltway (I-95) southbound. It is surrounded on the other three sides by private land currently under development. The three springs are on a hillside shaded by trees. The springs purportedly were a meeting place for local Indians, thus the name Indian Springs. Originally a part of Greenbelt Lake Park, the springs parcel was separated from the park by construction of the Capital Beltway.

In addition to structures and their immediate surroundings, the Greenbelt Historic District also includes numerous municipal parks scattered among the built areas, the Greenbelt Lake Park which was developed in 1938 and contains 62.1 acres, and four parcels of undeveloped land in the northeast section totally 174.9 acres which is all that remains of the original "green belt" that once completely surrounded the

7. Description

PG: 67-4

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Greenbelt is an incorporated city in Northern Prince George's County, Maryland. It is located at the intersection of I-95 (the Capital Beltway) and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

The town (city) charter was granted by the Maryland State Legislature in June, 1937, three months before the first residents moved in. Greenbelt was the first municipality in Maryland to have the council-manager form of government.

Originally conceived during the New Deal initiatives of the Roosevelt administration, the projects sought to create jobs as well as to demonstrate the applicability of certain garden-city planning techniques to a project designed for low-income residents. The late Rexford Guy Tugwell was the "father of Greenbelt" as director of the Resettlement Administration during the early years of the Roosevelt Presidency. Frederick Bigger was in charge of the planning staff for the green towns. Bigger "believed that each town should be a distinct experiment--that new ideas and new approaches should be given the maximum possible opportunity to develop."¹

Greenbelt's location along major roads, 13 miles from the nation's capital, has placed enormous pressures on the community to expand. Much of the original belt of green has given way to shopping centers, garden apartments, single family homes, and condominiums. The population of Greenbelt has grown from 3,000 in 1937 to 7,000 in 1950, to approximately 20,000 today.

THE PLANNING OF A GARDEN COMMUNITY

Before selecting the sites for the "greenbelt towns," the federal government conducted detailed studies of the social and economic growth, wages, labor practices, accessibility to employment, topography, fertility of soil, presence of wooded areas for parks and recreation, and availability of low-priced land.

The rolling farmland in the Washington suburbs ideally met all of these criteria. The building of historic Greenbelt took advantage of the natural topography in the form of a crescent-shaped plateau:

The town is formed in the shape of a graceful crescent set on a vast background of green. . . . the essential shape of the Greenbelt town plan was indicated by nature. Here, as in many other great plans, the planners' job was primarily to discover, not invent. . . . the planners of Greenbelt revealed the potentialities of the great curves as a beautiful place for good living.²

Houses encircle the center, where stores, the post office, and community building/school are located; the apartment buildings form an inner circle. At a lower level, in a natural bowl, is the athletic field and the re-

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DESCRIPTION, continued

center (the city's recreation department was the first established in Maryland).

The government initially constructed a total of 574 rowhouse units, 306 apartment units, and five detached homes built as experiments in pre-fabrication techniques. Ten houses were also built by a private developer in a small subdivision called "Parkbelt" located on Forest Way. The government purchased a total of 3,371 acres for the community and surrounding greenbelt.

In 1941 the federal government constructed 1,000 frame homes for workers engaged in the national defense effort. Greenbelt's "defense homes" were one of 43 such housing projects built throughout the United States to relieve the acute shortage of housing for persons engaged in war-time activities. The frame houses are located mainly to the north of the original planned community, and their interior design as well as the layout of the rows was intended to incorporate many of the plan features of the original homes. However, due to the need to construct housing quickly and at low cost, the defense homes are not as well constructed or as well planned as the original community.

The homes, arranged in superblocks to reduce the number of streets, sidewalks, and utility lines, are clustered in rows in housing "courts", set back from the main streets. From two to ten homes in a row were constructed, all with what is called a "garden side" and a "service side." The service side was planned for access to parking (most courts have off-street parking lots or garages), and for deliveries and garbage pick-up, while the garden side was designed to provide each family with a spacious and safe play and green area. Many homes face, on the garden side, common areas or small city parks. In some cases, the garden side faces woods.

Greenbelt's internal walkway system and pedestrian underpasses (the only ones to be constructed in the three greenbelt towns) are credited with separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Three pedestrian and underpasses cross Crescent Road and lead to the Commercial Center and the city's outstanding safety record is in part accredited to the use of these.

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ORIGINAL APARTMENTS

Constructed at the same time as the rest of Old Greenbelt were twelve three-story apartment buildings. Designed for small families and single persons, the apartments were built near the Center and offered easy access to Center mall services and activities. In summary, apartment construction was as follows:

<u>Buildings</u>		<u>Type</u>	<u>Units</u>
1	48 family	-- 3-story apartment	48
1	36 family	-- 3-story apartment	36
2	21 family	-- 3-story apartment	24
2	18 family	-- 3-story apartment	36
3	24 family	-- 3-story apartment	72
3	30 family	-- 3-story apartment	<u>90</u>

Total: 306

The apartment buildings were built in the same manner and used the same materials as the cinder block homes. Today, they are owned by private rental companies.

THE COMMERCIAL CENTER

Central to the planned community is the Commercial Center. Located within one-half mile of the original dwellings, the Greenbelt Commercial Center is one of the oldest planned integrated shopping centers in the country. It is a neighborhood shopping center because its location off the main roads is unlikely to draw non-neighborhood business. Three parking lots and a service road along the front provide vehicular access to the Center. The Commercial Center is divided by an open air mall dominated by a mother and child statue sculpted in sandstone by Lenore Thomas of Accokeek, Maryland, for the Resettlement Administration. She also created the reliefs depicting scenes from the Preamble to the Constitution across the front wall of the Center Elementary School.

The Commercial Center consists of five buildings containing stores and offices. In earlier days, the city offices, and police and fire stations were also housed here. When the Center was opened in 1937, it was intended to offer residents complete shopping and service

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DESCRIPTION, continued

facilities, including a grocery store, dry cleaners, barber and beauty shops, bank, and post office. For the first few years, there was even a furniture store where residents could purchase specially made heavy-duty furniture; an entire house could be outfitted for \$300-\$400.

The buildings in the Commercial Center are now privately owned.

CENTER SCHOOL

The two-story community building (now Greenbelt Center Elementary School) was an integral part of the planned community, and first opened its doors in October 1937 with seven teachers and 24 students. The building is centrally located, within a half-mile of all the original homes, and can be reached directly by a system of paths and walkway--underpasses. Built as a combination school-community building, the facility contained 12 classrooms as well as a music room, arts and crafts workshop, home making room, health room, social room, and a large combined gymnasium-auditorium. Architecturally, Center School shares the simple functional design which dominates the planned community as a whole.

Until July 1, 1971, the building also housed a library, one of the most active in Prince George's County. Following much petitioning by Greenbelt citizens, a new library building was constructed by the County on land next to the school in 1971.

The building was owned by the government and loaned to the county as an elementary school. In 1948 the town leased it from the Public Housing Department for \$1 per year, and in turn received sufficient funds to operate it. In 1953 the building was dedicated by the government to the City of Greenbelt. In 1959 the Community Building was sold to the Prince George's County Board of Education for \$260,000.

In its early years, the Community Building housed the churches on Sunday and provided recreational facilities during the week. Local organizations met in the combination auditorium and gymnasium. Classrooms were used for adult education and vocational training in the evening.

It (the school) was to become one of our best-loved buildings, for it was here that all segments of the citizenry were to meet, discuss their mutual problems, worship, study and play.

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NORTH END ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The North End Elementary School was constructed to relieve the congestion in the Center School caused by the completion of the 1,000 frame "defense homes" in 1941-1942. Until the additional homes were constructed, the total number of children attending Center School averaged around 400. In 1943, after the new homes were constructed, attendance increased to 785 and the school had to go on double sessions. The two-story building features a simple design and contained ten classrooms, a kindergarten room, kitchen, infirmary, offices, and an auditorium.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Originally a junior-senior high school, the structure was begun in the spring of 1937 and completed some 10 months later at a cost of \$142,000. The school was designed to serve students from the town of Berwyn Heights, as well, and was placed on the western edge of Greenbelt, about 1.5 miles from Center Elementary School. A gravel footpath led from Greenbelt through the woods to the school. The path crossed Edmonston Road, the only road separating the school from original Greenbelt, by means of an underpass. This route was absolutely free from traffic hazards.

The building is basic in design due to a lack of funds at that time. It contains classrooms, a science room, typing room, study room, music room, and a lunch room, among others.

In 1949 the County Board of Education purchased the building and land. The last senior class was graduated in 1951; the school was then converted to a junior-high school.

GREENBELT LAKE

In 1935, before home construction began, the federal government began construction of Greenbelt Lake to cover 23 acres of swamp land. Located to the west of the original town, the project took 200 men a year to complete, at a total cost of \$75,000. The lake and its shore line are now a city park.

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The swamp was the most heavily wooded spot in the area, with trees averaging 100 feet in height and 30 inches in diameter. These were pulled out by the roots and the stump piles mounted up as high as houses. They burned for two months or more. Some of the logs were used in construction work; the rest were turned over to the county relief board.⁴

It took about one year for the lake to fill, although it is fed by two streams and innumerable springs along the banks. The overflow empties into a stream that flows to Indian Creek, a tributary of which flows into the Anacostia River, eventually reaching the Potomac.

On November 13, 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt placed the first fish into the lake. Since that time, it has been stocked by the State of Maryland. Several varieties of wild and domestic ducks also make their home at the lake.

Fishing and boating are premitted at the lake. It is also a popular place for joggers, walkers, bicyclists, and picknickers. The annual Fourth of July fireworks display attracts thousands of visitors, who site on the bank and watch the colorful sight. In winter, ice skating is a favorite past-time, if the weather has been cold enough.

INDIAN SPRINGS

South of Greenbelt Lake is Indian Springs. It used to be accessible by walking across the dam at the lake, and then following a woodland trail between clumps of mountain laurel and wild azalea. The three springs are in a large open clearing, shaded by tulip poplars. With construction of the Capital Beltway, the Springs became separated from the Lake Park.

Above Indian Springs is the Walker family burial ground. Isaac Walker was a colonel in the American Revolution and is buried here. His son, who was born here, Colonel Samuel Hamilton Walker, was a hero of the Texas Rangers in the Mexican-American War and is also noted for assisting Samuel Colt in the perfection of the Colt revolver.

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PARCELS 1, 2, 3 and 4

These are four parcels of land on the eastern fringe of the City, currently owned by private developers, which are part of the original "green belt" that once surrounded the city. The total acreages of the parcels are as follows:

Parcel 1		155.5 acres
City park land	42.30 acres	
Undeveloped private parcels	103.24 acres	
Undeveloped Prince George's County land	10.00 acres	
Parcel 2		81.0 acres
Prince George's County land	61.40 acres	
City land	9.95 acres	
Undeveloped private land	9.75 acres	
Parcel 3 - Undeveloped private land		2.9 acres
Parcel 4 - Undeveloped private land		7.4 acres

THE OPENING OF GREENBELT

In the 30s, the idea of a city protected from over-crowding, sprawling, and haphazard development built by the federal government for low-income people was attacked as "radical" and "socialistic". Indeed, after the towns were built, thousands of tourists flocked to them to gawk at the residents, who were depicted as being rigidly controlled because of the many rules and regulations imposed by the federal administrators.⁵

Tagged "Tugwelltowns" by the press and Congress, they were portrayed as part of a "sinister plot to impose foreign, socialist, or communist ways of life on the American people or at least they forced unwanted regimentation by being planned."⁶

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The first residents were carefully selected. They had to meet income requirements (\$800-\$2,200 annual), exhibit neat personal habits, present two references from previous landlords, undergo a physical examination, and demonstrate their need for rental housing in a new environment. One factor that eliminated many prospective residents was that the wives of employed husbands could not work. Attempts were made to reflect the religious ratio of Washington, D.C.: 63% Protestant, 30% Catholic, and 7% Jewish. One third were government employees.

Five families moved in on opening day. One year later, all 885 dwellings were occupied. By the end of 1937 Greenbelt was the second largest municipality in Prince George's County. By 1941 it was the largest. Today Greenbelt ranks third.

The residents thought of themselves as pioneers. The following article appeared in the first issue of the Cooperator (Greenbelt's weekly newspaper, begun in 1937, and still being published by a volunteer staff under the banner The Greenbelt News Review).

We did not arrive in Greenbelt after long, tiresome miles by covered wagon; nor did we find this place by chance. We were not the first to gaze upon this spot of ground; nor did we cut down trees in order to build homes. Nor is it necessary to clear the land to plant our crops that we may quench our thirst.

Yes, we are pioneers--of a new way of living. We are the sculptors of a new way of living. We are the sculptors handling the soft, yielding clay of a new community. What form shall we mold of it?

This project has given most of us an opportunity we'd never anticipated. We are in the process of creating homes! Our families and our children will live under laws of our own making. Only in our fondest and most youthful dreams have we imagined such a chance. What will we make of it?

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Let us make good laws--wise laws, and not too many of them. Let us keep ourselves, our community, our city government, our ideals, as clean as our new, windswept roofs. Let us continue ourselves and the management of our Greenbelt in such a way as to deserve the pride with which all America will be looking on.⁷

As strangers to each other in a completely new environment, new social patterns and group emerged. Greenbelt is unique in that it is the only one of the three "green" towns to have preserved the established cooperative concepts, enterprises, and organizations. Greenbelt Consumer Services, one of the largest consumer cooperatives on the east coast, developed here. It operated bus lines and a variety of stores in the shopping mall. Today GCS has consolidated to include food, furniture, and a gas station. A cooperative nursery school and the housing cooperative symbolize the Greenbelt philosophy for community living begun by those "pioneers".

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

When the new towns were built, architecture was secondary to the concept of a planned community. Each of the new towns had its own set of architects and planners. Hale Walker, Harold Bursley, and Reginald Wadsworth designed Greenbelt and were among those who reacted negatively to the ornamentation of the styles of the 30s. Walker, Bursley, and Wadsworth designed buildings in what was then called "New Tradition" and now is labeled the "International Style" of Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus.

The original masonry or block units are flat-roofed cinderblock homes, painted white with window sash and bands of brick between windows painted green.

The brick veneer homes have gable roofs laid with slate; soon after construction, these were also painted white with green trim. For many years, no other colors were permitted. Green and white still represent the city and are the colors of the city's flag.

The interiors of the block homes are furred inside the masonry and insulated with plaster board covered with aluminium foil on the outer surface and plastered on the inner. Floor construction is of rein-

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forced concrete on which asphalt tile is laid with mastic. The roof is covered with four-ply roofing laid in pitch and surfaced with slag or gravel. Windows are steel casements with wood doors and trim.

The brick homes are constructed of brick veneer with diagonal sheathing and rock wool insulation between the studs. The tenor is finished with plaster on metal lath. The lower floor is reinforced concrete slab, while upper floors are of wood. The concrete floor is covered with asphalt tile. Thin layers of slate are laid over wood sheathing to form the roof. Shrubbery, particularly private hedges, were part of each home's landscape design.

A typical brick or block home has a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor, and 2-3 bedrooms upstairs. There are 16 one-bedroom homes, called honeymoon cottages, on the first floor ends of some masonry rows. Twenty-two masonry homes have finished basements. Some of these have asbestos shingles covering the masonry surface.

The "defense" homes were built with one, two, or three bedrooms. Kitchens face the service side while living rooms face woods or parks. Asbestos shingles cover the exterior of the homes. Wood flooring and dry wall were used in the interiors and wood frame push-up windows throughout. Because of the speed with which they were constructed during World War II and the lack of materials and funds committed to the project, the frame units have galvanized steel piping instead of the copper used in the masonry, and lack the sound insulation and landscaping features of the original homes.

One bedroom frame homes are located on the first and second floor ends of some buildings; eight buildings are completely composed of one-bedroom units on each of the two floors, with 8 to 12 units in a row. In addition 104 units of two-story apartments were constructed.

The Greenbelt Historic District contains approximately 360 buildings of which nearly 90% date from the 1935-1941 period when the district achieved its major significance.

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EXPERIMENTAL HOUSES

As an experiment in prefabricated housing, the Suburban Division of the Resettlement Administration included in Greenbelt five experimental freestanding houses, which were located in the northern area of the city.

These houses demonstrated certain possibilities of using plywood as a structural material. The dead weight was greatly reduced, and there were fewer parts involved, since the basic construction unit was a large plywood panel, constructed earlier and brought to the site whole. The plywood was glued to the studs and joists to form simple boxlike structural units in which the plywood provides most of the strength and stiffness.

All five units are one-story, two-bedroom structures with sample plans indicated below. They were constructed on an area of about 40,000 square feet for a total cost of \$6,600 or an average cost of \$1,320 per house. They contain the following total area measurements:

<u>House</u>	<u>Total Area (Sq. Ft.)</u>
A	994
B	994
C	999
D	658
E	716

A WORD ON REHABILITATION

Because the original housing is now 42 years old and the remainder is 38 years old, Greenbelt Homes, Inc., the owner of most of the residential property, is now in the planning stages for a comprehensive rehabilitation program. First priority in this program is directed towards energy conservation as these houses and their heating systems are energy inefficient. Greater use of electrical appliances over the past 40 years and advanced age has resulted in the need for considerable electrical wiring work to be done. A thorough examination of wooden structures is required to determine the extent of damage from age, rot, termites, etc. To do this, the exterior asbestos shingle siding needs to be removed.

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In undertaking rehabilitation, the cooperative is ever mindful of the need to achieve results that will assure the continuation of these buildings as moderate priced houses. Thus, consideration is being given to ways and means of reducing maintenance costs as well as replacing deteriorated or inadequate fixtures and structural sections.

While most rehabilitation work will be within the buildings, new windows and exterior siding are being considered for many of the buildings. New window units will have built-in storm windows and provide tight seals.

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FOOTNOTES

1

Clarence Stein, Toward New Towns for America (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1957), p. 120.

2

Ibid., p. 127.

3

Henry Churchill, "America's Towns Planning Begins," The New Republic, June 12, 1936.

4

Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, 1937-1962 (Brochure prepared under the auspices of the Silver Anniversary Committee, from material provided by the Greenbelt News Review, and other local government organizations), p. 42.

5

Joseph Arnold, The New Deal in the Suburbs, A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-1954. Ohio State University Press. 1971. pp.196-197.

6

Ibid., p. 197.

7

Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, p. 12

8. Significance

PG: 67-4

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1935-1941 **Builder/Architect** Reginald J. Wadsworth and Douglas D. Ellington, principal architects
Harold Bursley, engineering designer

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

The Greenbelt Historic District is the original developed section of the City of Greenbelt which was established and expanded between 1935 and 1941 as one of three "green towns" founded by the United States government under the New Deal as an attempt to solve social and economic problems confronting the nation. The three towns are Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio (near Cincinnati); and Greendale, Wisconsin (near Milwaukee). A fourth community, Greenbrook, New Jersey, never passed the planning stage. Greenbelt differs from the other "green towns" in that the predominate type of building originally erected is the multi-storied apartment house whereas the duplex is the predominate type originally used in the other communities. Of the three towns, Greenbelt is the only one to still retain many of the original features such as the buildings and sections of the surrounding "greenbelt." Greenbelt also continues the concept of community responsibility as the majority of the housing is owned by a cooperative.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The idea of a planned "green town" can be traced to the late 19th century in Great Britain when Ebenezer Howard detailed such planning ideas in a book entitled Garden Cities of Tomorrow published in 1898. Howard presented the idea of a "garden town" surrounded by large open spaces maintained by the residents. Two such cities were built in England in the early twentieth century. In the United States a private developer began construction in 1928 of Radburn, New Jersey, a garden town outside New York City, but the Great Depression halted construction in the early 1930s. Radburn was considered at the time to be the model American "green town."

Although it smothered Radburn, the Depression was, in many ways, responsible for the creation of the New Deal efforts that built Greenbelt and the other "green towns" in the late 1930s. In 1935 the director of the Rural Resettlement Administration, later the Division of Farm Security in the Department of Agriculture, was the late Rexford Guy Tugwell, a disciple of Howard's garden city philosophy. He convinced President Roosevelt that the basic planning concepts of the green town were valid and plans were laid for four "green towns" as a method of combatting unemployment and to move low-income families out of overcrowded urban areas while keeping them close to opportunities in the city.

See continuation sheet number 14

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Greenbelt
Prince George's County
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 14

HISTORY, Continued

Of the three towns that were finally built, Greenbelt carried out the Radburn idea more than the other two. Low and moderate income families predominated. The rowhouse residents formed a housing cooperative (an idea not before employed in green towns) in 1953 when the federal government divested itself of its housing interests. That cooperative thrives today, as do many of the ancillary cooperative institutions, including the newspaper, nursery school, garden club, baby-sitting club, and Greenbelt Consumer Services, which runs the large grocery store in the Center.

Approximately 40 of the original residents still live in Greenbelt. Many children, grandchildren, and other relatives of original settlers chose to make Greenbelt their home.

Greenbelt has successfully demonstrated the neighborhood concept radiating into a garden city. Two recently completed planned communities-- Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland-- have expanded on the successful elements of Greenbelt.

Because Greenbelt was planned as a viable, living community, it should change with the times and not become solely a representative of a former time. However, those planning concepts which made Greenbelt significant when it was first built and which remain viable today should be preserved for the future. These planning concepts include:

- * Moderate priced housing in a garden or park setting;
- * Cluster housing;
- * Superblocks with interior green space;
- * Interior sidewalk system which crosses under major streets to underpasses;
- * A central core of commercial, civic, recreational, athletic, and park facilities;
- * A surrounding belt of open space.

NOTE: Further history can be found in the description.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Greenbelt Historic District
Prince George's County
Maryland

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE 16

ACREAGE AND BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION conintued

city. These undeveloped parcels, known as Parcels 1, 2, 3, and 4 and privately owned, are considered as part of the district because they reflect their original purpose of being a natural buffer zone encircling the community.

PHOTOGRAPH EXPLANATORY NOTE

The photographs submitted as part of the documentation for this application, though varied in date with some more than four years in age, do visually represent the Greenbelt Historic District as it appears as of the date of this application.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Greenbelt Historic District
Prince George's County
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE

17

SECTION 9: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arnold, Joseph. The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-1954. Ohio State University Press, 1971.

Churchill, Henry. "America's Towns Planning Begins," The New Republic, June 12, 1936.

Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, 1937-1962)brochure prepared under the auspices of the Silver Anniversary Committee from material provided by the Greenbelt News Review and other local organizations)

Stein, Clarence. Toward New Towns for America. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1957.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Greenbelt Historic District
Prince George's County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 18

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

BELTSVILLE QUADRANGLE

Greenbelt Historic District

- D. 18/335610/4318530
- E. 18/337210/4319840

Greenbelt Cemetery

- A. 18/336100/4319340
- B. 18/336060/4319200
- C. 18/335940/4319270
- D. 18/335990/4319390

Greenbelt Junior High School

- D. 18/335160/4318360

LANHAM QUADRANGLE--No UTM point(s)

LAUREL QUADRANGLE

Greenbelt Historic District

- A. 18/338910/4319830
- B. 18/338320/4318300

WASHINGTON EAST QUADRANGLE

Greenbelt Historic District

- C. 18/337300/4317770

Greenbelt Junior High School

- A. 18/335440/4318220
- B. 18/335310/4317860
- C. 18/334900/4317960

City Park

- A. 18/336120/4318200
- B. 18/335820/4318190
- C. 18/335890/4318390

9. Major Bibliographical References

PG:67-4

see continuation page 17

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 789.05 acres
 Quadrangle name Washington East, Beltsville, Lanham and Laurel Quadrangle Maps Quadrangle scale 1:24000
 UMT References (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #18.)

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
	Zone	Easting		Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting		Zone	Easting
C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	F	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
G	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	H	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the Greenbelt Historic District are indicated by the wide red line drawn on the accompanying maps labeled "City of Greenbelt/Prince George's County/ Maryland" drawn to a scale of 1"=500' and prepared in 1964 and revised in 1980.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

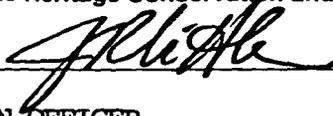
name/title Thomas Hauenstein
 organization City of Greenbelt date November 1979
 street & number 25 Crescent Road telephone (301) 474-8000
 city or town Greenbelt state Maryland 20770

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature  date 5-29-80
 title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 date
 Keeper of the National Register
 Attest: date
 Chief of Registration

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The town was planned in the 1930's as the first government-sponsored, planned community. Houses are built in rows, perpendicular to the streets, with several houses in each block. Most house units are two bays, either the doorway or the entire front covered by a canopy or porch. The yards are large, with parking lots between the yards of parallel blocks. They are built of frame, block and brick, or brick. The brick and block and brick houses have alternate projecting courses of brick running as bands between the windows and turning the corners to give a horizontal emphasis. A similar motif is used on one church; the corners have bands running the height of the building, suggesting quoining blocks.

The town is planned with a small business district to serve local residents. There is a large park (with a lake) that meanders through the town and is accessible from many points.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 15th Century
- 16th Century
- 17th Century
- 18th Century
- 19th Century
- 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1930-1950'S

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Town was the first planned community developed by the U.S. Government to provide adequate, reasonably priced housing for lower- and middle income families.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Empty box for Major Bibliographical References.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

Acreage Justification:

Large empty box for Acreage Justification.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Christopher Owens, Park Historian

ORGANIZATION: MNCPPC

DATE: 25 Oct 74

STREET AND NUMBER:
8787 Georgia Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Silver Spring

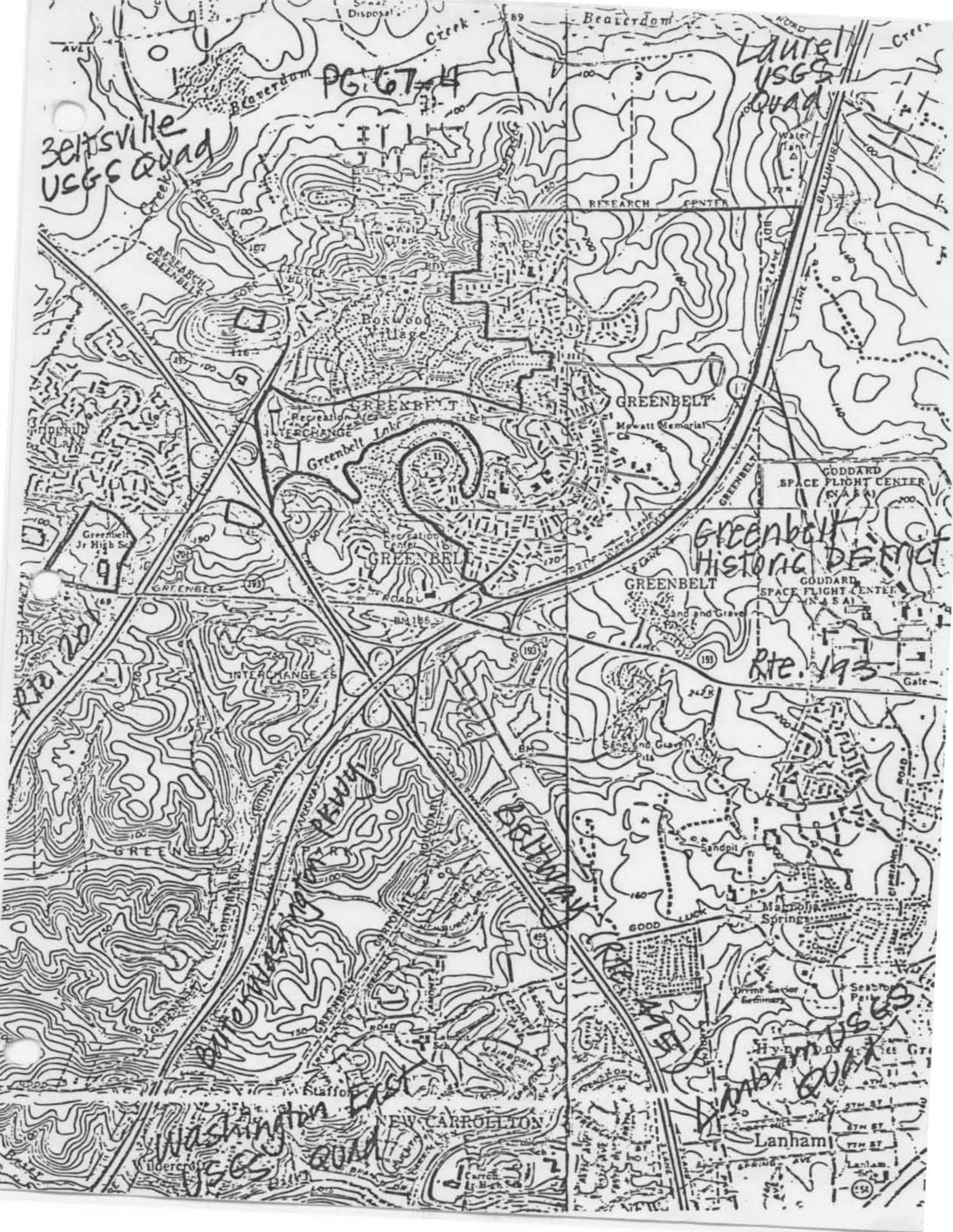
STATE: Maryland

12. State Liaison Officer Review: (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:

National State Local

Signature _____



PG 67-4

3015ville
USGS Quad

Laurel
USGS
Quad

Greenbelt
Historic District

Rte. 193

Washington
USGS
Quad

Hyattsville
USGS
Quad





PG: 67-4
Greenbelt
Historic
District

GODDARD
SPACE FLIGHT CENTER
(NASA)
LAURENCE
LANHAM

GODDARD
SPACE FLIGHT CENTER
(NASA)

Hynesore
168 Gre
F

LANHAM

6TH ST
5TH ST
7TH ST



NAME GREEN BELT, Md HOUSING

PG:67-4

LOCATION GREEN BELT Rd

FACADE S

PHOTO TAKEN 10/25/74 MDWVER



NAME GREENBELT, Md.

PG:67-4

LOCATION GREENBELT, Rd. GREENBELT, Md.

FACADE SW

PHOTO TAKEN 10/25/74 M DWYER



1) GREENBELT HISTORIC DISTRICT

2) PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

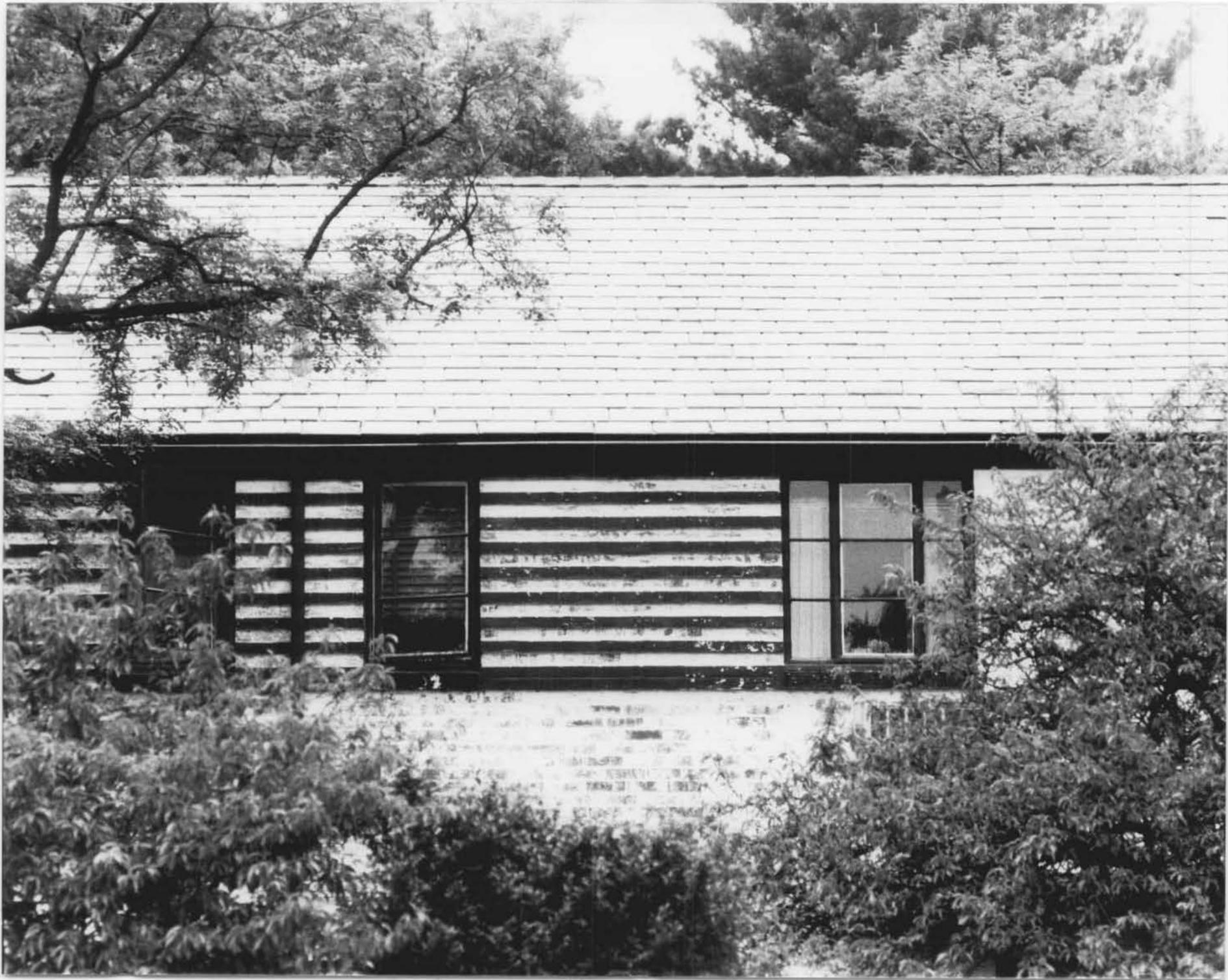
3) DON VOLK

4) ~~GREENBELT~~
MAY, 1967

5) 12-V RIDGE ROAD, GREENBELT, MARYLAND

6) VIEW OF CENTER MILL

PE:67-4



- 1) GREENBELT HISTORIC DISTRICT
- 2) PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
- 3) DON VOLK
- 4) AUGUST, 1978
- 5) 12-N RIDGE ROAD, GREENBELT, MARYLAND
- 6) WINDOW DETAIL, BRICK HOME

PG:6]-4

JULY 78



PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE

1) GREENBELT HISTORIC DISTRICT

2) PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

3) DON VOLK

4) AUGUST, 1978

5) 12-V RIDGE ROAD

6) FRIEZE ON FRONT OF CENTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PG: 67-4

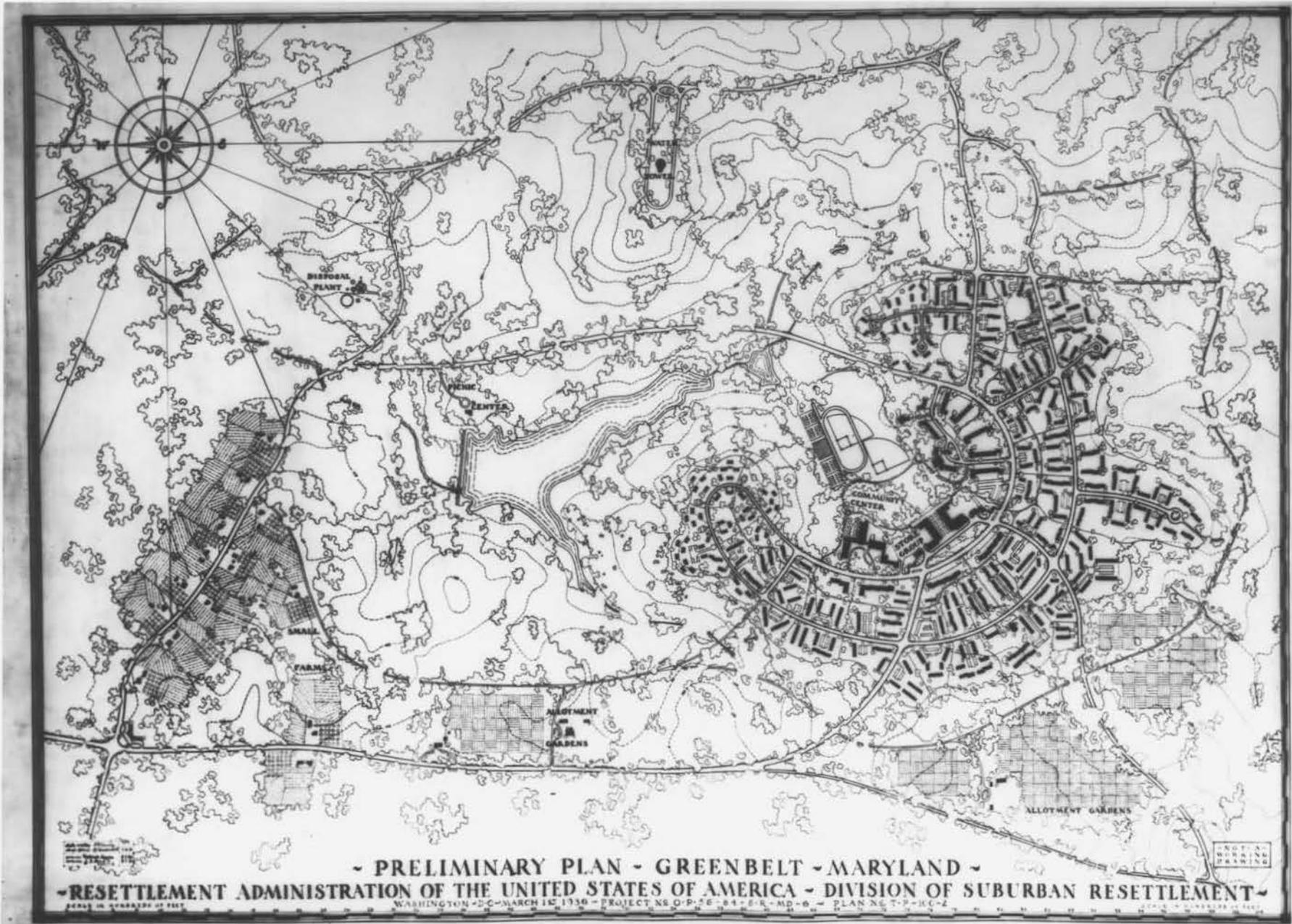
**GREENBELT
ELEMENTARY**



- 1) GREENBELT HISTORIC DISTRICT
- 2) PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
- 3) DON VOLK
- 4) JULY, 1978
- 5) 12-V RIDGE ROAD, GREENBELT, MARYLAND
- 6) GREENBELT CENTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PG: 67-4

JULY 1978



~ PRELIMINARY PLAN - GREENBELT - MARYLAND ~
 - RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - DIVISION OF SUBURBAN RESETTLEMENT -
WASHINGTON - D.C. - MARCH 12, 1939 - PROJECT NO. O.P.-26-84-E-R-MD-6 - PLAN NO. T-2-100-2

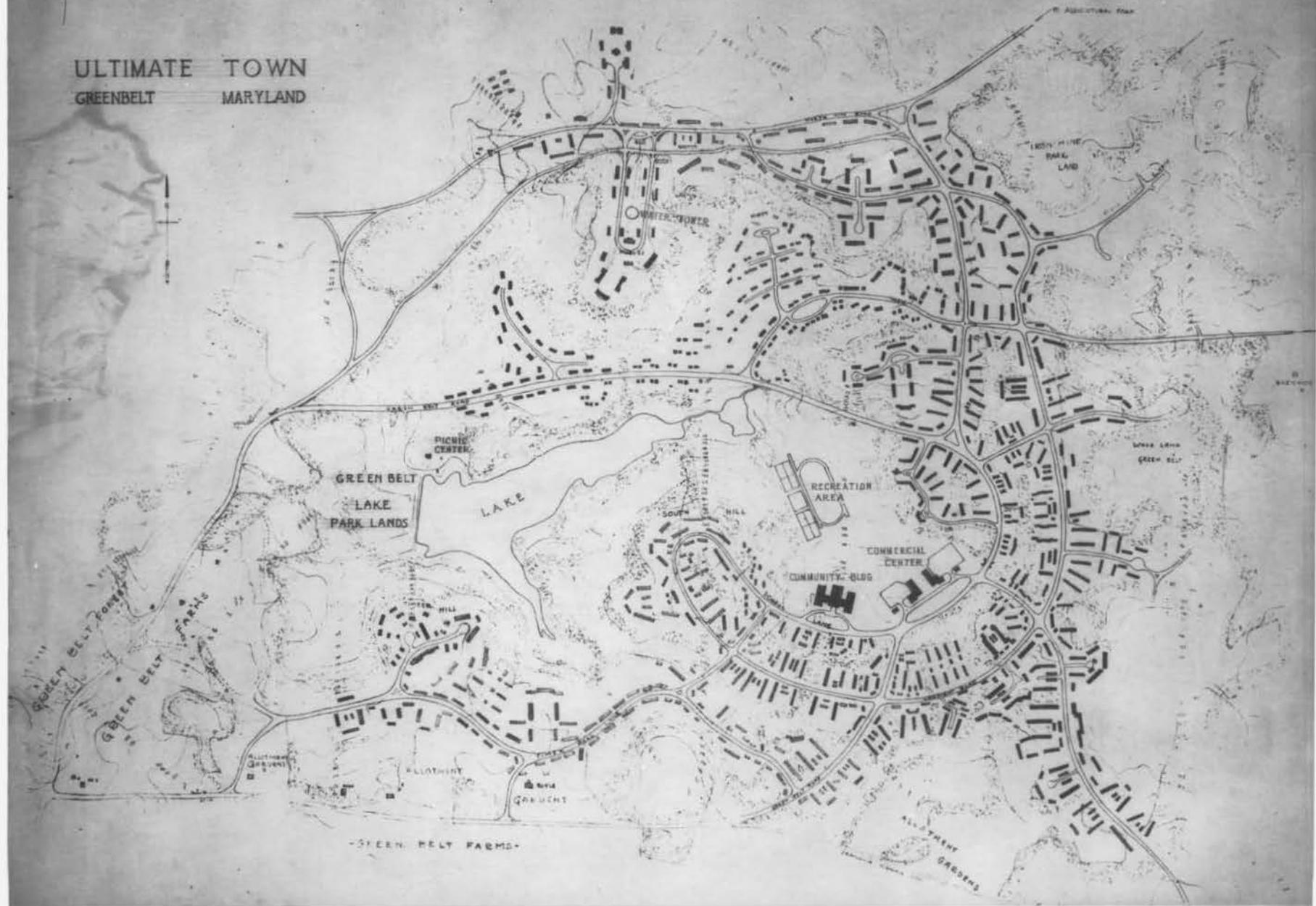
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ULTIMATE TOWN
GREENBELT MARYLAND



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GREENBELT MARYLAND
RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF SUBURBAN RESETTLEMENT

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PG 67-4

Image # 7



What they could get

Government Clerks Can't Have Homes

What they wanted



...if we could find an inexpensive cottage in a decent neighborhood with a yard out

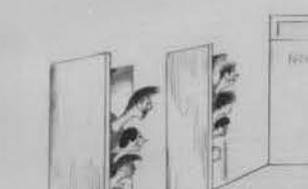
...or a cozy little apartment on a sunlit court where children could play

61%

OF ALL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES IN WASHINGTON EARN LESS THAN \$2000 A YEAR

Buying 70 percent of those for rent, these employees should be able to find adequate modern housing for their families at the following figures:

- \$16.88 monthly for those earning \$1000 a year
- \$20.00 monthly for those earning \$1200 a year
- \$22.22 monthly for those earning \$1400 a year
- \$26.66 monthly for those earning \$1600 a year
- \$30.00 monthly for those earning \$1800 a year
- \$33.33 monthly for those earning \$2000 a year



by
One of Them.

There are no homes within the reach of the average Government clerk in Washington. After days of weary search, I know this to be true. The budget reports say you may spend one-fifth of your income for rent. For me and my husband that means \$50 a month and there are plenty of clerks in the same boat, some something like 60 per cent of the Federal employees in the District who live on \$2,000 a year. If by any chance you've looked the jangling of moment accommodations for all these and specially equipped apartments to produce 15 children, your problem is just as tough as mine. But let me tell you what happened to me when I tried to find a home for my family in Washington.

I began by seeking a house, because I thought it was so much better for the children to have a yard to play in and avoid the walking to live in a very modest neighborhood quite a way out if we could find an inexpensive little cottage. What, you couldn't see I couldn't have had such a thing? The answer, who runs the home-reading department of a local newspaper, will tell you the true situation. For small places renting at \$40 to \$45 a month, and in two months' time all others were able to locate in one cottage for \$250, with no outside party.

I didn't want anything like that, so naturally I looked myself into town in a very little apartment that might have something of a yard or a children's playground. None of them do. Yes, some of them, but not for the price we can pay. But I didn't know that to begin with, so I looked for the Washington section, where I'd read there are some better apartments built around courts. There are and they are delightful. The building agent is a picture of what a home should be. The buildings are neat and they have a vacant lot so that there is fresh air and sunlight. I fell better as soon as I saw them. Of course, the rent was a bit more than we should pay—\$50 to \$55 a month—but I was willing to pay. We just won't have that work done at the deadline and I'll get along another week without a home.

So, with visions of empty children playing in a sunlit court I searched the courts in the second time to interview the resident manager. He wasn't quite as enthusiastic as I expected when I told him I wanted to rent one of his apartments. He was sorry, but there were no vacancies. Yes, there was a waiting list, but there couldn't be any one getting on ahead of it, because there were only 26 apartments and the list already contained over 300 names.

Followed a series of broken-up steps and down steps. During the process I looked at apartments renting for \$30 without heat and hot water, watching one free after another out of our budget until all we had left were two buildings, "hot" and "rent." But I couldn't give up, for it was always "no vacancies."

Finally, I decided to go straight to a firm dealing in rentals. I went to see her, but to no avail, and made the discovery that rentals of \$30 a month aren't even saved on their list. Very sorry, I inquired how one day's apartment rental of this figure. "I don't think you'll find many," was the answer. "I don't know of one myself. But maybe the newspapers—"

Ah, yes! I bought a newspaper. Not so many listed after all. The news contained most of them. "Adverts aren't circulated every day, but we can see the newspaper before they are printed. The apartment houses know that apartments are needed to "sell" early." But, I must find some solution. I phoned the manager listed in the law regarding ads that seemed to have possibilities, only to find they had sold. Then I sought the lady in charge of a newspaper home-reading department.

She took my name and address and started forwarding through lists of apartments. I contacted the price and she stopped. "Nothing like that in Washington," I insisted, there must be something and continued in making myself her particular problem. She gave me street numbers. I went forth equipped with lists, but didn't come back that way because I had been viewing a succession of unoccupied rooms opened through cheap window houses and apartment apartments. I had been viewing window-houses rooms, containing a plain gas stove and the doubtful privilege of using the "shared bathroom" on another floor, and had been viewing actual homes where they wouldn't credit anything but the average and limited rent.

Finally, I was convinced. Washington can't be like this, but it is. There are no decent two-room apartments for rent at \$30 a month. They were right, all of them. I was in a quandary to take advice. "Phone, lady, where do Government clerks live?" She brightens. "This is something she can deal with."

"They don't," she explains. "In private homes on 15 per cent rent you can rent a room in a house and get out. Lots of 'em do. How about a room and bathroom out far from Massachusetts avenue. That's a good neighborhood—"

The lady was correct, dependable. It was a good neighborhood, and it was a nice, large room. It needed to be for the time my husband, my children and I were isolated. Of course, it had the drawbacks, but what a relief to be settled. Settled! To see practically settled!

All we needed to make the complete was the letter from our parents saying they were looking forward to visiting us in our new home. That's a point. Shall we return the letter stating "vacancies at this address" or should we explain that it is an old Washington custom for us to return home to look in our room? That we have to withdraw from the neighborhood because the children are sleeping in our only room and that we're too exhausted to get ready to go into the hall so that the light won't wake the baby, and besides, this gives us a chance good from which we can watch for an opportunity to get into the bathroom.

When our husband had of those were just two ladies to share our bath with us, she explained to mention that they would each be responsible amount of laundry work whenever our husband wanted to share.

I can laugh about the way we live—sometimes. But when I think of the thousands of decent intelligent people—men, women, and of the only dirty houses like which they stand around, I don't feel like laughing. Don't there seem human indignity?

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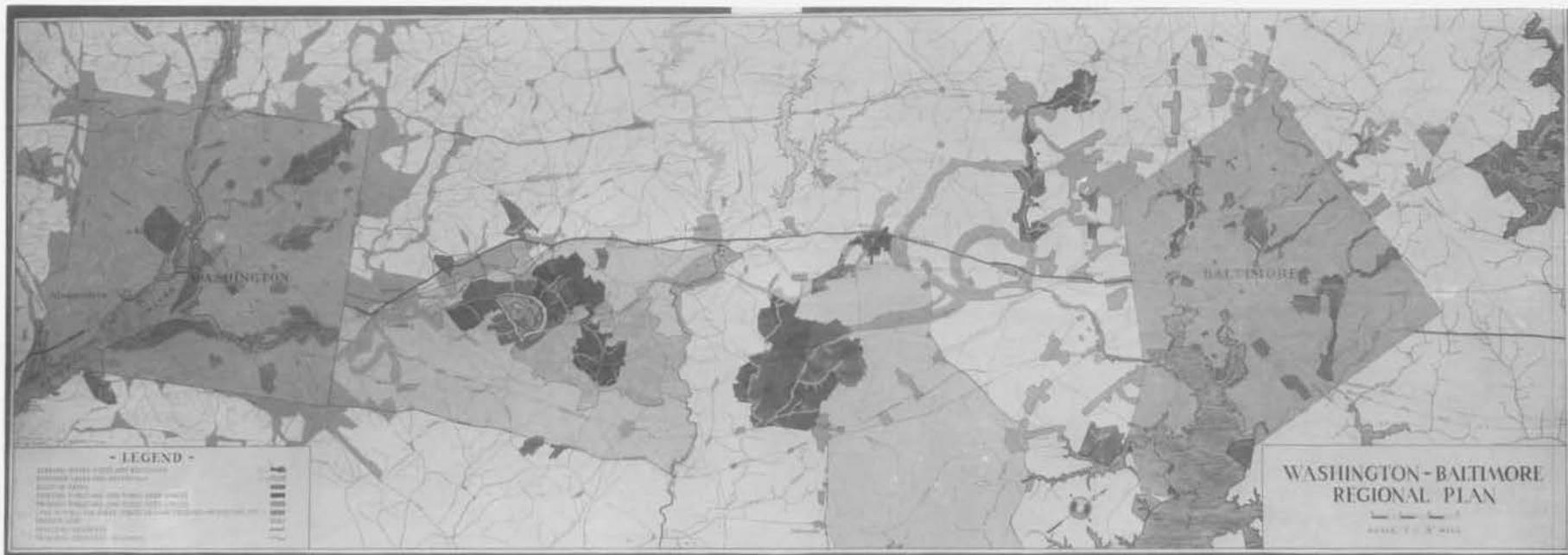
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