THE NEW DEAL IN THE SUBURBS:

THE GREENBELT TOWN

PROGRAM 1935-1952

DISSertation

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INTRODUCTION

In every age wealthy families have escaped the dangers and discomforts of the city by moving into the suburbs. But in 1898 an Englishman, Ebenezer Howard, gave the suburban trend a new direction. In a small book called The Peaceful Path to Real Reform he suggested that entirely new and complete towns be built on vacant or agricultural land surrounding a central city—each community limited in its physical size and population density and linked by transportation routes. The land in these "garden cities" would be owned mutually by the residents who would thereby control the use made of it by homeowners and factory owners. The unique feature of the garden city would be a belt of trees and fields surrounding and separating it from the next city. These green belts would

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not only serve as buffers between cities, but would encourage local civic pride.\(^2\)

In 1906 Letchworth, the first garden city, was opened outside London. It stimulated the interest of many nations including America. The Garden City Association of America was formed in the same year. Its President was a former New York state senator, Louis Childs, and its Vice President was the head of the Long Island Railroad, Ralph Peters. Other officers included Josiah Strong, who had visited Letchworth during construction in 1904, Henry Potter, Episcopal Bishop of New York, and Felix Adler of Columbia University.\(^3\) The Association selected five locations for the construction of garden cities and at one location, Farmingdale, Long Island, raised thirty per cent of the necessary capital in a few months. Unfortunately, the Panic of 1907 disrupted the Association's plans and no garden cities were ever built; but the Association continued to publish information on


city planning for a number of years. 4

During the First World War the need for housing defense workers in America became so great that the Federal Government was forced to build a number of housing projects which, while falling short of the size and totality of garden cities, provided excellent demonstrations of completely integrated designs for whole residential neighborhoods. Once the war ended, however, Congress rejected all proposals for continuing such projects, selling the towns quickly to private groups and washing its hands of any further interest in housing and community planning. 5

During the 1920's Clarence S. Stein, architect and housing advisor to the State of New York brought together a number of fellow architects and city planners with such men as Lewis Mumford, historian and social critic, author of The Tragedy of Waste, Benton McKay, a real estate developer—all who shared an interest in city and regional

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planning. Their organization, the Regional Planning Association of America, was one of the leading centers of planning ideas in America. The group was particularly interested in the dispersal of metropolitan population. They discussed and published various plans for decentralizing cities through the building of completely new towns in the countryside which would gradually reduce the choking congestion of factories, shops and slums in the huge cities.  

Alexander Bing actually began the construction of an entire suburban community in which all the residences, streets, parks, and utilities were carefully planned for convenience, safety and beauty. A limited dividend corporation was formed to finance the town. Unfortunately, the corporation could not raise enough money to build a garden city complete with its own industrial and commercial areas and Radburn, as the town was named, remained only a residential suburb. Ground was broken in 1928 on a 1,258 acre tract near Paterson, New Jersey. Again national financial panic interrupted the progress of a planned community but not until over three hundred residences had been completed.  

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7 The story of Radburn is reported in Clarence S. Stein, Towards New Towns for America (Cambridge, Mass.:
Clarence Stein, who with Henry Wright had designed Radburn, shared with Alexander Bing the disappointment of seeing it only partially built. Even more discouraging was the collapse of the entire home construction industry which meant that new experiments with housing and community building would be stalled for some time. The advent of the New Deal revived hopes for new experiments in housing and planning. It appeared that the leaders of the nation were prepared to regain control not only of the American economy but of the physical nation as well. Its cities would be rebuilt—their slums replaced by comfortable homes and parks. Its barren backlands would be reclaimed—eroded lands replanted and flooding rivers harnessed for productive uses. The Tennessee Valley Authority and the great urban projects of the Public Works Administration were the beginnings of such dreams.

Writing in the New York Times Magazine in the fall of 1933 Stein described his vision of America's new towns in his article "New Towns for the Needs of a New Age." They would be "bound together by common interests and
activities as in the New England Colonial Village." These new towns would be part of "a great regional or national plan" to decentralize our cities and develop an economy and a society that would be efficient and in harmony with the natural possibilities of each region. While he was greatly encouraged by the intent of the Federal Government to spend millions of dollars on housing and slum clearance, Stein warned against squandering the money "on piecemeal replacement of existing developments." He preferred to see funds "invested in building complete integrated communities planned and placed to meet the needs of today and tomorrow."

Twenty-four months after Stein's article appeared Rexford Tugwell and the Resettlement Administration were planning five new suburban towns. Ebenezer Howard's idea was receiving its first concrete test in the United States. His agricultural belt provided the name given the communities--greenbelt towns.

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CHAPTER I
ORIGINS OF THE RESettlement
ADMINISTRATION AND THE
SUBURBAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Legal authority and most of the funds for the
greenbelt towns came from the Emergency Relief Appropri­
ation Act of April 8, 1935. The idea for the towns was
Rexford Tugwell's. Tugwell, Undersecretary of Agriculture,
convinced Roosevelt that an independent agency should be
created which would combine the Subsistence Homesteads
Division of the Department of Interior, the Rural Rehab­
ilitation Division of the Federal Emergency Relief
Administration, and the Land Utilization Division, also
under the F.E.R.A. and the Land Policy Section of the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The only new
activity to be undertaken by the Resettlement Administration
as the new agency was named, was Tugwell's greenbelt
town program. 1

The purpose of the Resettlement Administration as
seen by Tugwell and its other officials was threefold.

1 Bernard Sternsher, Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal
(New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1964)
pp. 263-264. Russell Lord, The Wallaces of Iowa (Boston:
First, it was to provide immediate relief to rural areas through small loans, educational programs and technical aid. The Rural Rehabilitation Division had already made a start in these activities and those programs were expanded. Second, the Resettlement Administration was to execute a land reform program allowing rural families to move from unproductive land and resettle in more fertile areas—on individual farms or on cooperative farm communities. The unproductive lands which they left were to be used for some non-farming purpose. The Land Utilization Division had been purchasing unproductive land before it came under the Resettlement Administration, but had not developed a program for resettling those families whose land had been purchased. The Rural Rehabilitation Division had constructed a few small farm communities, but the Subsistence Homesteads Division, engaged exclusively in rural community building, had been far more active. Both programs achieved completeness when coordinated under the Resettlement Administration.

2The best published discussion of the origins of the Resettlement Administration with particular attention given to the community programs is Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 73-89, 93-145. A more detailed and comprehensive history of the Resettlement Administration by Sidney Baldwin will soon be published by the Duke University Press. The most concise statement of the R.A.'s goals is found in Rexford G. Tugwell, "Changing Acres," Current History, XLIV (September, 1936), 57-63. The entire problem of land use management in rural America was discussed by Tugwell in two public addresses given in 1933 and published as Chapters XIII and XVII of Rexford
Third, it was obvious to Tugwell that the basic rural problem was the increasing technological efficiency of farming which, each year, drove thousands of families out of agriculture. These unfortunate families could not be resettled in any substantial numbers on more productive land, because they would simply increase total farm output and further depress the market. Therefore, in spite of a temporary halt in the migration to urban areas; business would again pick up and the inevitable cityward trend will reappear. The rural family, forced by economic circumstances to seek a better living in the city, had usually joined other low income families in the urban slums. Slums, like the sub-marginal farms, persisted because no institution offered slum dwellers an alternative which they could afford. They paid a high proportion of their income for very low quality housing--tiny apartments unsafely crowded together because the land on which they stood was valuable and highly taxed. But in the countryside land was inexpensive and unencumbered by outmoded street patterns and buildings. A builder could construct a large number of homes plus all the facilities

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of urban neighborhoods on inexpensive suburban land. There would be room for trees, grass and sunlight—all available for the same rent paid in the city slums.

Tugwell, like Roosevelt, believed that resettling large numbers of slum dwellers in semi-agricultural communities was economically unfeasible. Future jobs would become available only in the urban areas. Tugwell did not believe that industry would ever move out to aggregations of willing workers. Therefore, the suburban fringe was obviously the only area where one could combine advantages of the country with the employment opportunities of the city. Ebenezer Howard had seen this

4In the early years of the New Deal Roosevelt saw more hope in the back-to-the-land movement than did Tugwell who later said that this "utopian notion out of the past... was an old weakness of both Eleanor and Franklin and was shared by Louis Howe." See Rexford G. Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1957), 158. Tugwell's opinion on the future of industrial decentralization is presented in Rexford G. Tugwell, "Cooperation and Resettlement," Current History XLV (February, 1937), 74.

years before when he located his garden cities within commuting distance of a large central city. However, when Howard's ideas for metropolitan planning were combined with the rural resettlement plans of the R.A., a broad program emerged that would "make America over."

The Plan to "make America over" was recalled by Will Alexander, Tugwell's Deputy Administrator and successor in his Oral History Memoir (Columbia Oral History Project, Columbia University), p. 386. The early visions of revolutionizing the land and community systems of America faded, but there is little doubt that Tugwell shared them with Alexander. Alexander may have taken the phrase "make America over" from Tugwell. It was the last line in a reformist poem Tugwell wrote in 1912 while an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and was widely reprinted in the 1930's. See Lord, The Wallaces of Iowa, p. 349. In 1937 Tugwell sent Roosevelt a copy of a speech on Mexican socialism and rural life. In an accompanying note he said to the President,

Will you look at this! I shall have to go to Mexico if I am ever to see the aims of the Resettlement Administration carried out. And do you see what Cardenas does to the big farmers like you who object to the confiscation of their estates? It is really too bad that the tenant bill (Bankhead Farm Tenancy Bill) as it passed allowed nothing for communal and cooperative activities.

Roosevelt replied,

Dear Senor Tugwello:

What a pity that the Yankees cannot improve the processes of their civilization by emulating our Mexican culture. As a jefe-politico, I am hoping that you will be sent as Mexican Ambassador to Washington when the time comes.

Tugwell to Roosevelt, August 26, 1937, Roosevelt to Tugwell August 29, 1937, Roosevelt Papers, Personal File, 564.
It is not surprising that Roosevelt approved both the coordination of the existing programs and the inauguration of a new program to build suburban towns. Whether the President ever read Clarence Stein's article in the New York Times is not known, but he did not need to read it. He was already familiar with and interested in city and regional planning. Alfred Bettman in his Presidential Address to the 1933 National Conference on City Planning, said that "the outstanding item" in America's city and regional planning was "a President who knows and cares about planning."7 Roosevelt himself had said in 1932 that as a young man he had listened to his uncle, Frederic Delano, discuss city planning with the giants of the field and had thereafter kept a vital interest not only in the "mere planning of a single city, but in the larger aspects of planning."8 He was quite aware of past mistakes in the physical planning of our existing structures and the need

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for imaginative solutions.

We go gaily into projects for putting up new buildings without realizing that there is a limit beyond which we are cutting off more than we are adding on. And this is true not only in the city, but in the suburbs and the country.

I am convinced that one of the greatest values of this total regional planning is the fact that it dures us to make experiments, for this country will remain progressive just so long as we are willing to make experiments.9

In his second Inaugural Address as Governor of New York, Roosevelt called attention to the failure of local government to meet the needs of the modern metropolis. He saw "the unparalleled growth of city populations" and the "birth of a new type of community known as the suburban area" creating a host of new requirements for highways, sewers, water and schools.10

In his Annual Message to the New York Legislature in January, 1931, he told them that the machinery of local government "is now obsolete" and recommended a Constitutional amendment allowing local governments greater freedom in adopting "modern forms of government."11

10Rosenman, I, p. 96
11Ibid., p. 108
As Governor of New York, Roosevelt was an outspoken critic of the slums and conceded that private philanthropy in the housing of the poor was a failure, but he did not suggest a specific solution. During the 1932 presidential campaign he followed a cautious policy in discussing public housing. He endorsed the construction of slum clearance projects for the poor but mainly as a means to alleviate unemployment. The Democratic Platform of 1932 approved a federal public works program for flood control and waterways, but made no mention of housing for the poor, urban decentralization or new towns.

Roosevelt did show concern for, what he told the 1931 Governor's conference was, "the dislocation of a proper balance between urban and rural life."

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12 See Roosevelt's address on housing conditions made in New York City February 28, 1930, in Rosenman, I, pp. 310-312.

13 See Roosevelt's radio address on unemployment and social welfare of October 13, 1932, in Rosenman, pp. 790-791.


In his Inaugural Address to the nation on March 4, 1933, he said "we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers." The word "balance" may be the most descriptive term not only for Roosevelt's idea of urban-rural relationships, but for the entire philosophy underlying the New Deal. Several historians have remarked on the desire of the New Dealers to strike a balance of power between the traditionally antithetical factions of the nation--urban and rural, management and labor, and inter-industrial competition. Roosevelt was concerned not only with the economic imbalance of society, but with the physical imbalance of people unnecessarily crowded into congested city slums and those in isolated or unproductive rural areas.

The President was not an advocate of the back-to-the-land movement. While he had a deep feeling for rural life and encouraged the "breaking down of artificial and unnecessary barriers between the rural and urban communities," he saw the futility of attempting to move large

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numbers of urbanites to rural farms. He thought the back-to-the-land question was too narrowly debated between the advocates of either strictly urban or strictly rural communities. He saw "a definite place for an intermediate type between the urban and rural, namely a rural-industrial group." Whether he was thinking specifically of a garden city or greenbelt type of community is not clear, but it is very likely that he was aware of them through his uncle or Thomas Adams, the Director of the Regional Plan of New York and former secretary of the British Garden City Association. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt must certainly have had some knowledge of the garden city movement and the work of the Regional Planning Association of America through her position as a board member of Alexander Biny's City Housing Corporation, the limited dividend company which built Radburn, New Jersey.

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19 Roosevelt, Looking Forward, pp. 56-57.

20 See the interesting Forward Roosevelt wrote in December, 1932, for Thomas Adams' Outline of Town and City Planning (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1935).

21 See the advertisement for the City Housing Corporation's Radburn project in The Survey, LIV (May 1, 1925), p. 54.
Eleanor Roosevelt was later to become one of the most valuable defenders of the greenbelt town program.

The Resettlement Administration itself was officially created by Executive Order 7027 on April 30, 1935. Subsequent executive orders transferred the land programs, rural rehabilitation programs, rural communities, and subsistence homesteads to the Resettlement Administration. Tugwell retained his post as Undersecretary of Agriculture, but under E.O. 7027 he also became the Administrator of the Resettlement Administration and responsible only to Roosevelt. Three of the R.A.'s four divisions were transfers from other agencies—Land Utilization, Rural Rehabilitation and Rural Resettlement. The fourth division was named the Suburban Resettlement Division. It’s task was the construction of the greenbelt towns under authority granted in Section (a) of E.O. 7027 which empowered the R.A. to:

Administer approved projects involving 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.

Tugwell was assisted in the overall Resettlement program and in the Suburban Division specifically by personnel transferred into the R.A. from the three existing

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23 Rosenman, IV, p. 143.
agencies and by others brought in from outside the
government. His Deputy Administrator, Will W. Alexander,
a Southern liberal, came to the R.A. from Dillard Univer-
sity, a Negro university which he had aided in establish-
ing. There were a number of Assistant Administrators,
but the most important assistant was Calvin B. Baldwin,
who had been an administrative assistant to Henry Wallace.
Baldwin handled most of the internal administration of
the Resettlement Administration including personnel
problems, a number of which arose in the Suburban Division
in 1935. First Alexander and then Baldwin were to
succeed Tugwell as administrators of the Resettlement
Administration.

The Suburban Division was headed by John S. Lansill,
the former chief of the Land Utilization Division of the
F.E.R.A. and an old friend of Tugwell. The two men met
at the Wharton School of Finance, but while Tugwell remained
in the academic profession, Lansill went to work on Wall
Street. When they met again in 1933 Lansill was indepen-
dently wealthy. Lansill had read about Tugwell's new role
as an advisor to the New Deal administration and stopped
to greet him in Washington before he and Mrs. Lansill sailed
for Europe. Tugwell was delighted to see his old friend
and immediately offered him the job of directing the
F.E.R.A.'s land program. Lansill demurred saying he did

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24 Interview with Calvin B. Baldwin, Greenwich, Connecticut, August 17, 1967.
not want a job with the government. As a Republican he was not sure he agreed with the New Deal program and he knew very little about land use planning. Tugwell and Harry Hopkins (who was Administrator of the F.E.R.A.) finally prevailed on him to take the job on a temporary basis. He remained in the government until the spring of 1938 and became an enthusiastic advocate of both the land utilization program and the suburban town program as well as an admirer of Roosevelt.25

Like Tugwell, John Lansill was strikingly handsome and well dressed; but his friendly Kentucky-bred manner and patience was in sharp contrast to Tugwell's brusque self-confidence—indeed arrogance—which so often infuriated friend and foe alike. Lansill was well suited to handle the administration of a project in which so many formerly self-employed and individualistic architects were forced to work out daily compromises with each other and with the Resettlement Administration. Controversies would often become so heated that Lansill would adjourn them to his home where—over potently refreshing mint juleps—compromises emerged.26

When Lansill became Chief of the Suburban Division he took with him two former assistants from the Land

26Ibid.
Utilization Division. Wallace Richards, Lansill's administrative assistant in the land program remained one of Lansill's closest advisors and became the coordinator of the first suburban project--Greenbelt, Maryland. The other assistant was Tilford E. Dudley who became Chief of the Land Acquisition Section of the Suburban Division. Dudley's experience in assembling large tracts of land for the government was to prove crucial to the entire suburban program.

In June, 1935, the Suburban Division established a Research Section to determine the location for the projects. Its director was Warren J. Vinton, a bright young economist from Columbia University and a sharp left-wing critic of the New Deal. Vinton remained in the field of public housing and later became chief of research for the Public Housing Administration. His opinions carried great weight in the Suburban Division and with the directors of the Resettlement Administration. 27

Tugwell granted the Suburban Division substantial freedom in the planning and construction of the greenbelt towns--freedom it would not have had if it had been placed (perhaps more logically) under Harold Ickes' P.W.A.

housing program. The chief disadvantage to the Suburban Division was its association with the less successful programs of the Resettlement Administration. From the inception of the R.A. its programs were controversial—as was everything which involved the name of Rexford Tugwell. He had a reputation as Roosevelt's most leftist advisor. During the 1936 campaign Tugwell was described as "a visible and personal link, as it were, between the Comintern in Moscow and the aspiring young reformers in Washington." When the press dubbed the greenbelt towns "Tugwelltowns" it was enough to convince many Americans of their sinister portent.

As a product of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 the R.A. embodied a number of imaginative solutions for unemployment relief. The Federal Writer's Project, the Federal Theater Project, the Federal Arts Project, and the National Youth Administration were but a few of the programs which were financed by this largest single peacetime appropriation in the history of the nation. The size of the appropriation—$4,880,000—and the wide discretionary powers given the Executive branch in its use—marked a turning point in the New Deal and in the traditional struggle between the two branches at

either end of Pennsylvania Avenue. During the debate on the Appropriation Act, Democratic Congressman James P. Buchanan, a House Conference Manager of the bill, said that at his request the Comptroller General had issued an opinion stating that the President was not bound to a strict interpretation of the types of projects he could authorize. The President could "adopt any otherwise lawful Federal projects he desired" with the work relief funds. Congressmen John W. Taber and Bertrand Snell, speaking for the Republican opposition, agreed with the Comptroller and though it all the more reason to scuttle the bill.

In September, 1935, the Resettlement Administration itself provided opponents with more ammunition. The President was asked to further widen the R.A.'s authority under E.O. 7027, the order originally creating the R.A. to initiate and administer soil erosion, stream pollution and several other types of projects, the words "and other useful projects" were added. Stanley Reed, Acting

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29Leuchtenburg, p. 125. See also Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, in U.S., Statutes at Large, IL, 115.


31The phrase was added to paragraph (b) of E.O. 7027 by E.O. 7200, September 26, 1935, Rosenman, IV, p.603.
Attorney General of the United States had himself questioned the "very broad" power granted by the additional phrase. He was told "informally" by the R.A. that the phrase was needed so that the agency could administer some projects for the white collar class which were not directly authorized by the original Executive Order 7027. There is no direct mention of the greenbelt towns, but they were the only white collar projects undertaken by the Resettlement Administration. It may have been thought that the authorization in paragraph (a) to build suburban projects for the "resettlement of destitute or low income families" would prohibit the R.A. from placing any higher income families in the greenbelt towns.32

The additional phrase did not pass unnoticed. Felix Bruner of the Washington Post pointed to it in the first of an extremely influential series of articles on the Resettlement Administration. He said that the unpublicized addition to E.O. 7027 gave Tugwell the power to "initiate and administer anything." Tugwell he warned, possessed almost every power "except the power to declare war."

32Letter from Acting Attorney General Stanley Reed to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 25, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 1568.
CHAPTER II
CONFLICTS IN THE FORMATION OF THE GREENBELT TOWN PROGRAM

The planning of the greenbelt towns began long before the official establishment of the Resettlement Administration on May 1, 1935. On February 24, Rexford Tugwell took John Lansill and Wallace Richards to the Beltsville, Maryland Agricultural Research Center. As they walked over the rolling fields adjacent to the Center, Tugwell explained for the first time his idea for the construction of a model community that could be built on this land. The town could house not only the employees in the expanding Research Center, but low income families from Washington's slums. He discussed the feasibility of Lansill's Land Utilization Division building such model towns outside a number of metropolitan areas. Tugwell concluded with a confidential offer to incorporate Lansill's Division into a new agency which he would soon suggest to the President, the agency that emerged three months later as the Resettlement Administration. The initial funds would come from the Emergency
Relief Appropriation Act then being debated in the Congress.¹

Lansill and Richards knew little about model suburban towns, but were enthusiastic. By March 12, the Land Utilization Division began taking options adjacent to the Agricultural Center for what they called Maryland Special Project No. 1. On April 2, Tugwell, Lansill and Richards met again to discuss the Beltsville project. Tugwell told them in confidence that the President had approved his idea for a Resettlement Administration authorized to build several suburban community projects. Tugwell had second thoughts on the desirability of building a large project so close to Washington where it would be under the daily scrutiny of the Washington press, the Congress, and all the other government agencies. Lansill agreed with Tugwell; but Wallace Richards thought this a minor disadvantage compared to the unique opportunity of establishing a housing laboratory in conjunction with the Agricultural Research Center. On April 5, Tugwell discussed the project again with the two men and gave his general approval for a

¹John S. Lansill Papers, from files in his personal possession, Lexington, Kentucky, hereafter cited as Lansill Papers, personal files.
housing development adjacent to Beltsville.²

Preliminary reports were prepared on all major aspects of a proposed model town program which they called "rurban housing."³ The projects would, according to Lansill and Richards, combine work relief for the unemployed, low-cost housing for the slum dweller, long-term community planning and subsistence farming. Thus even at this early date most of the essential features of the greenbelt town program were laid out. There was no specific mention of garden cities and while one of the purposes of long-term community planning was to "establish a more satisfactory relationship for the worker between home, community and work" there was no suggestion of including factories within the project.⁴

Richards further defined the proposed program as

an attempt to make housing a public utility and remove


³Memo from Wallace Richards to John Lansill, March 25, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.

⁴Draft report on future policies of the Division of Land Utilization from Wallace Richards to John Lansill, April 10, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
necessary shelter from speculative fields.\(^5\) He saw suburban public housing as an alternative to the P.W.A. slum clearance program which was slow, worked too great a hardship on slum dwellers being cleared, and was expensive for tenants when completed. The chief problem for the P.W.A., as everyone from the President on down knew, was land. Assembling many small parcels of urban land into a large tract was so costly that no adequate low-rent housing could be built on it without a large subsidy. Richards concluded that "rurban" housing projects should be built on inexpensive suburban land before any slums were cleared and rent for prices with which slum housing "would not be able to compete," thus correcting "a fundamental error in federal slum clearance."\(^6\)

While Lansill and Richards were deciding what kind of towns they wanted to build, Vinton's Research Section of the Suburban Division began to look for cities near which to build them. The most important criteria for

\(^5\)Memo from Wallace Richards to John Lansill, March 25, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.

\(^6\)Memo from Wallace Richards to John Lansill, April 11, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
selecting a city was its past and projected stability of employment. A study was made of over one hundred major cities to find those with the steadiest growth of population, employment and payrolls from 1900 to 1933. Primary consideration was given to a city that maintained, in addition to steady growth, enlightened labor policies, above average wage levels, a diversity of industry, and finally, a suitable site on its fringe for the construction of an entire new suburb.7 The preliminary survey resulted the recommendation of nineteen metropolitan areas: New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, Providence-Fall River, Bridgeport-New Haven, Youngstown, Worcester, Wheeling, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Buffalo and Los Angeles. On a secondary list were Baltimore, San Francisco, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.8

Further consideration by Vinton led to a major revision in the original group of cities. Los Angeles and San Francisco were dropped because they were too far from the R.A.'s offices in Washington. The program was going to be closely supervised and coordinated—the planners doing most of their work in Washington. Detroit


8Unsigned memo to John Lansill, April 12, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
was eliminated because it was too dependent on a single industry and was far from qualifying as a center of enlightened labor policies. A revised list was prepared in August. It proposed the construction of nine suburban towns. The cities of St. Louis, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Chicago were retained. Three new cities were added—New Brunswick, New Jersey, Dayton, Ohio, and Chattanooga, Tennessee.\footnote{Roosevelt Papers, O.P. 79. Also Tilford E. Dudley, Report of Land Section, Suburban Division, Resettlement Administration (manuscript copy in Wesleyan University Library, Middletown, Conn.).}

The three new cities were selected for reasons not altogether dependent on the original criteria. New Brunswick, New Jersey, was selected at the suggestion of Russell Black, a city planner from New Hope, Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware River from New Jersey. Vinton visited the New Brunswick area and found an excellent site midway between that city and the smaller industrial town of Bound Brook, New Jersey. He believed that the area would experience a rapid industrial expansion out from New York—an assumption which proved to be correct. Also, he convinced the R.A. administrators that it was important to demonstrate their suburban program in the New York metropolitan area since it was the center of the communications media and had the largest concentration of architects and city planners. Chattanooga, Tennessee was
selected in part because the R.A. wanted to construct one of its towns in the area of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The selection of Dayton, Ohio is less clear and Vinton does not recall why it was chosen. The first subsistence homesteads project to receive federal funds was located outside Dayton, but there is no evidence that this influenced the selection of that city for a suburban town.

It is curious, however, that both Beltsville, Maryland and Cincinnati, Ohio were under consideration for subsistence homesteads when that program was shifted to the Resettlement Administration. They were two of sixty four tentative subsistence homesteads projects transferred to the Suburban Division of the Resettlement Administration for further study. Greater Cincinnati Homesteads, as the one project was called, was never given serious consideration by the Suburban Division for subsistence homesteads. No site was ever selected nor any land optioned. Beltsville Homesteads, on the other hand, remained in the over all plans for Greenbelt until 1936,

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11 For a brief description of this project see Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 107-108.

12 "The Resettlement Administration and Its Work", Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 1568.
but it too was finally dropped. The only subsistence homestead project in which the Suburban Division played a major developmental role was Jersey Homesteads outside of Highstown, New Jersey. This highly publicized project for Jewish garment industry workers was initiated in 1934, but due to a disagreement between the R.A. the project sponsors, and the garment unions, construction was in abeyance when the Suburban Division took charge of the half completed site. The community became one of the nine towns to be financed with the Suburban Division appropriation, but was later separated from the Division's program and completed by the R.A.'s Construction Division.

The nine sites selected by the R.A. became the basis of Tugwell's first proposal for an allotment of funds from President Roosevelt. The cost of each town was estimated to be $7,550,000 for a total cost of $68,000,000. The money was to be allotted from the

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15 Letter from Administrator of Resettlement Administration to Comptroller General, October 9, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 and therefore Tugwell had to compete for it with Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes.

The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 was requested by Roosevelt in his Annual Message to Congress on January 4, 1935. Through this legislation his administration hoped to take all employable people off the relief rolls and put them to work on government projects. These projects would (1) be of permanent use to the nation, (2) provide an income to the worker greater than relief payments but below prevailing wages in private business, (3) use large numbers of laborers, (4) be self-liquidating or reasonably close to it, (5) as noncompetitive with private industry as possible, (6) planned so that relief laborers could be quickly put to work and speedily dismissed when private employment increased and (7) located in areas of the most severe unemployment.16

The guidelines were not all suitable to the green-belt towns, particularly guidelines four through seven. The towns could be self-liquidating if high enough rents were charged, but they would then be open only to middle class tenants and therefore compete with private builders

16Rosenman, IV, pp. 21-22.
and landlords. If the towns were to demonstrate the best in American city planning and architecture they could not be quickly thrown up to give people immediate employment, nor could they be built efficiently by relief laborers few of whom had the necessary skills. Also, the cities selected by the R.A. for the suburban towns were chosen because of their economic health whereas the relief projects were to be located in areas with the most serious unemployment problems.

The greenbelt towns shared much in common with Ickes' P.W.A. housing projects, but Ickes, suspicious of both Hopkins and Tugwell was not initially pleased with R.A.'s suburban housing program. In fact, Ickes succeeded in giving the greenbelt town program its first setback. On August 27, 1935 Tugwell proposed that the President allocate the funds necessary for the suburban towns, but Ickes blocked it in the President's Advisory Committee on Allotments noting in his diary, "It is extraordinary how duplicating agencies intending to do precisely the same thing keep bobbing up here like mushrooms after a rain."\(^{17}\) Knowing Ickes' jealousy for rivals the Suburban Division and the R.A. resolved to win him over. The opportunity presented itself most naturally in the Central Housing

Committee rather than the Advisory Allocations Committee. The Central Housing Committee was composed of representatives from all the federal agencies engaged in housing activities—the Resettlement Administration being represented by Tugwell, Lansill and Warren J. Vinton. Ickes was told that the R.A.'s Suburban Division wished only to build a limited number of demonstration projects. The Interior Secretary was convinced that these projects were not intended to challenge his position as the chief federal home builder and lent staff members and records freely to the Suburban Division.19

Harry Hopkins, first with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and then in 1935 with the Works Progress Administration, placed special emphasis on getting people to work quickly on small very flexible projects. Hopkins was not concerned about the Resettlement Administration duplicating the housing function of Ickes' P.W.A., but he wanted as much of the E.R.A.A. money as possible to be used speedily providing immediate jobs for the unemployed.20 A powerful ally of Hopkins was the Secretary


19 Interviews with John S. Lansill and C.B. Baldwin.

of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau. Morgenthau was never interested in Tugwell's greenbelt towns or any other resettlement projects. When Tugwell, as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, obtained a $67,000,000 allotment from the President for rural rehabilitation Morgenthau succeeded in taking it away from him telling Roosevelt that Tugwell hadn't even spent all of his previous allocations. Morgenthau believed that Hopkins' methods provided the best use for federal relief funds.

The crucial decision for the greenbelt town funds came on September 12, 1935. Roosevelt called together all the chief administrators of the relief and public works programs to meet with him at Hyde Park and decide on the allocations for the balance of the $4,880,000,000 relief appropriations. The conference was attended by Morgenthau, Hopkins, Ickes, Tugwell, Lee Pressman (Tugwell's General Counsel in the R.A.), Daniel Bell (the President's Budget Director) and several others. There is no record of the conference, but it seems clear that with approximately 1,500,060 employable people still on relief rolls Hopkins' quick-action projects were the

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22 Ickes, *Secret Diary*, I, pp. 436-437
obvious solution. Secretary Morgenthau urged that most of the funds go to Hopkins, which is the policy Roosevelt followed.\(^2\) Tugwell received a total of $126,500,000 for the Resettlement Administration and $31,000,000 of this amount was allotted to the greenbelt towns, with the implication that another $37,500,000 might be forthcoming at a later date. The President, that is, approved a construction program totalling $68,500,000 but allocated only $31,000,000 in September.\(^2\)

The failure of the Suburban Division to get the full $68,500,000 was a disappointment, because there was never certainty that Congress would ever again appropriate relief money or allow the President to use it for model suburban towns— or indeed as turned out—that the President himself would be willing to sink any more into the program. Far more serious, however, was the stipulations which the President attached to the allocation. First, the Suburban Division had to obtain permission from the Works Progress Administration to begin each town. The W.P.A. would ascertain whether the supply of relief labor

\(^2\)Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries, p. 245.

\(^2\)Franklin D. Roosevelt to Director, Bureau of Budget and Administrator of Rural Resettlement, September 12, 1935, and Daniel Bell to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 23, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 79.
in the area of each proposed project warranted the expenditure of relief funds. Second, the W.P.A. had to certify that each worker hired by the Suburban Division was on relief, unemployed or in need of a government job. Third, and most improbable, the land for the towns had to be purchased and construction begun by December 15, 1935; and the towns had to be completed by the end of fiscal 1935 (June 30, 1936).25 These stipulations—made out of the justifiable desire to give immediate employment to people in desperate need of work—greatly complicated, confused and ultimately crippled the suburban town program. Tugwell phoned Lansill's office from Hyde Park to tell him and his staff the good— and the bad—news concerning the allocation. Lansill explained the strings attached to the money and turned to Tilford Dudley saying, "Well Ted, it's all up to you now." Dudley remembers that nobody in the room was smiling. The task of assembling large tracts of land in ninety days seemed impossible. They didn't even begin

to discuss how plans for the towns would be ready for construction crews by December 15.  

The number of towns was cut from nine to five even though there still appeared some possibility of obtaining the full $68,500,000. Only those projects could be started at which some progress had been made in land optioning. The Beltsville site was already in the hands of the Resettlement Administration—the land having been purchased with unexpended funds from the old subsistence homesteads program. Likewise, the Hightstown site had been purchased by the Subsistence Homesteads Division prior to its transfer to the Resettlement Administration. Tilford Dudley's Land Section—charged with the responsibility of obtaining the other suburban sites—had begun work at four other locations (Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Bound Brook and St. Louis). It was clear that Dudley's task at these four sites was all he could handle and therefore the others were dropped. St. Louis was excluded

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26 Interviews with John S. Lansill and Tilford E. Dudley.

27 "Summarized History of Greenbelt Project," Lansill Papers, personal files.

28 Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, p. 263.
at the end of October when the land could not be purchased by December 15.  

While the Land Section furiously set to work collecting options at the project sites, the R.A. jostled and cajolled its way through the certifications and approvals necessary to obtain the funds. Any delay in the program could have resulted in the Suburban Division funds being transferred to a program that would employ people more quickly. On September 23 the President officially requested the $31,000,000 by Allocation Memo No. 551. However, the allocation was appended by a memo from Budget Director Bell stating that he was advised by the W.P.A. that no supply of relief labor existed in the Beltsville, Maryland area, the Bound Brook, New Jersey area or the Chattanooga area and that it was doubtful if a sufficient supply existed at any of the other sites. Nevertheless, Corrington Gill, Assistant Administrator of the W.P.A., certified the Beltsville project on September 30 and the rest of them on October 18.  

29 Dudley, Report of Land Section.  

30 Allocation request by Franklin D. Roosevelt to Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, September 23, 1935, and Bell to Roosevelt, September 23, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 79.  

The first hurdle for the Suburban Division to surmount was a formidable one—Comptroller General MoCarl. MoCarl was the chief of the General Accounting Office which had been created by Congress in 1921 to oversee executive allocations. MoCarl performed his duties diligently and was approached with great care by the R.A. for fear that he would not allow funds from the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act to be used for building greenbelt towns. Before any funds were transferred the top R.A. and Suburban Division officials went personally to MoCarl to explain the suburban projects to him which flattered the Comptroller considerably. On October 9, Lee Pressman and Wallace Richards officially requested approval of the fund transfer from Comptroller MoCarl for the purpose of executing suburban projects at nine locations. The Comptroller General said he would approve the funds under the authority of Section 1, paragraph (b) of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. However, he questioned the large number of projects and whether they could be defined as "rural rehabilitation." Tugwell answered that on the nine approved locations only three or four would be selected for actual use. Thus the R.A. could "prevent any group of speculators in any one place from attempting to hold up the Administration for exorbitant prices for the land."

32Interview with C.B. Baldwin.
The projects would derive part of their income from "agricultural work performed within the community" thereby satisfying the rural rehabilitation requirement. McCarl approved the fund transfer on October 10. The next day, October 11, the suburban town program was to be announced to the press and a few men were to begin clearing the site at Greenbelt.

Late in the day on the 10th, Lansill received a call from District of Columbia Commissioner George Allen. Allen, as Chief of the District W.P.A., was sending 800 transient laborers to Greenbelt the next day and another 700 the day after. The President himself had thought this was a good way to rid the capital city of 1500 unemployed and somewhat undesirable men--leftovers from the bonus marchers, unemployed men who had drifted into the capital and local unemployed, homeless men. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order transferring all the transients in the District of Columbia to the Resettlement Administration by November 1. Allen was quoted

\[^33\] Letter from the Administrator of the Resettlement Administration to Comptroller General, October 9, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.

\[^34\] Notes from Lansill Papers, personal files.

\[^35\] Interview with Warren J. Vinton.
as saying that this action solved "the greatest single
relief problem which the District government faces." The local press regarded it as a coup for the District
government and an important step in the national adminis-
tration's program to move unemployed persons from relief
rolls to useful work projects. One can only imagine
the consternation of the Suburban Division officials.

The construction at Greenbelt was begun on October
12, but the Greenbelt planners were not ready with blue-
prints so the entire labor force was put to work creating
a lake. The lake was of marginal utility to the plans
for Greenbelt and began to devour large amounts of money
before a single foundation was laid. The press release
announcing the commencement of the Beltsville project
and the suburban town program—issued on October 11,
said that Beltsville would be built "with efficiency,
economy and speed;" but the emphasis was obviously on speed

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37 Washington Herald, October 12, 1935 and Washington
Post, October 11, 1935.

38 Interview with Warren J. Vinton, Washington Post
at the cost of both efficiency and economy. At Greenbelt the planners were at least well under way, but the other projects were still far from the drawing board stage as the Suburban Division had not even completed hiring of planning directors or draftsmen. C.B. Baldwin later summarized his feelings at the time, "I was scared to death."

The unexpected addition to the Beltsville labor force underscored the necessity for an acceleration of the program. A speed-up in planning, however, appeared unlikely because a major conflict within the Suburban Division reached its climax at this same time. The planning staff, assembled in the summer of 1935, divided its attention between the Beltsville and Hightstown projects since the government already owned the land and could begin construction immediately. The Chief of the Planning Section was Thomas Hibben, an engineer. He turned the planning of Hightstown and Beltsville over to his Engineering Section which was under the direction of another

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40 Administrative Personnel Record, Lansill Papers personal files.

41 Interview with C.B. Baldwin.

42 Wadsworth, Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project, February, 1938, Lansill Papers, official files.
engineer, Frank Schmitt. The houses and other buildings were planned by architects in an Architectural Section. Engineers were employed to plan the towns because Lansill, C.B. Baldwin and even Tugwell did not have sufficient confidence in professional town planners, whom they regarded as impractical and utopian.

The engineers, however, produced an undistinguished plan for Hightstown and a plan for Beltsville that was expensive and clumsy. It called for sixty miles of streets laid out in a geometric pattern. Fortunately, Lansill asked Tracy Augur, the Chief Town Planner for the T.V.A., to give his advice on the plans being prepared by the engineers. Augur had been a member of the Regional Planning Association of America in the 1920's and was thoroughly familiar with the garden city idea. He was dismayed with the work of the Engineering Section. The engineers were reluctant to show anyone their drawings, but in late July or early August Augur and Warren Vinton were able to spirit a copy of the Beltsville plan out of the Engineers' office and show it to Lansill, Baldwin and...

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43 Administrative Personnel Record, Lansill Papers, personal files.

44 Interview with C.B. Baldwin.

45 The final plan for Greenbelt reduced the streets to six miles. See Rexford G. Tugwell, "Magical Greenbelt is Rising; Model Maryland Community," Work: A Journal of Progress, October, 1936, p. 4.
Tugwell. They urged the three administrators to turn the job over to professional planners. A similar opinion was expressed by the architects of Radburn, Henry Wright and Clarence Stein, and also by Frederick Bigger—all three were friends of Augur in the Regional Planning Association. The great English town planner and architect of Hempstead Garden Suburb, Sir Raymond Unwin, went to the R.A. offices in August to discuss the program and added his approval of a change. The result of all this advice was to convince Tugwell and the other R.A. officials that a basic reorganization should be made. All the engineers should be replaced with town planners—a separate team for each town. The suburban town planning should also be completely separated from the subsistence homesteads program.

Thomas Hibben was transferred on August 16, to Tugwell's office as advisor on engineering problems for


the entire Resettlement Administration—thus removing him from the Suburban Division. Frank Schmitt, and his staff in the Suburban Division Engineering Section, were reorganized as a separate Construction Division and took no further part in the planning of the suburban towns.  

The two architects who directed the Architectural Section were gradually eased out. During October and November almost every one of the original planning officials had either been transferred or fired.  

Hibben's replacement was Frederick Bigger, the associate of Stein and Wright. He took over direction of the planning on October 4, one week before construction began at Greenbelt.  

In his capacity as Chief of 

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48 The Construction Division, officially separated from the Suburban Division on December 1, 1935, completed the planning and construction of the Hightstown project. It also completed the construction of twenty two other former subsistence homesteads. The funds for this work came from a $7,000,000 allocation made specifically for this purpose. See U.S., Resettlement Administration, Weekly Progress Report No. 16, October 5, 1935, pp. 16-17, Weekly Progress Report No. 21, November 9, 1935, p. 6, and Weekly Progress Report No. 22, November 16, 1935, p. 1.

49 Administrative Personnel Record, Lansill Papers, personal files.

50 Ibid.
Planning for the Suburban Division, Bigger became the key figure in the new planning program. He wielded great authority because he was a senior administrator with technical training in architecture and town planning. He was slight of build and quiet. Certainly he had none of Tugwell's dashing brilliance nor Lansill's savoir faire. He did possess a detailed working knowledge of every aspect of architectural planning combined with a shrewd administrative ability and great patience. He and Lansill worked extremely well together and are the two men most responsible for executing the greenbelt town program. While Tugwell deserves the credit for originating the program, that remains his most significant contribution. Any discussion of the towns should mention all three names equally. Frederick Bigger was the one responsible for all the key policy statements and basic decisions concerning the planning of the towns.

Bigger, along with John Nolan of the Harvard City Planning School, selected all the new planners and architects. Nolan advocated garden cities and was in close contact with British planners such as Ebenezer Howard, Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker. 51

51 In 1925, John Nolan introduced Ebenezer Howard to President Calvin Coolidge. Nolan, serving as President of the National Conference on City Planning, was host to Howard, Unwin, Parker and many other European planners at the 1925 International Town, City and Regional Planning Conference which was meeting in Washington, D.C. See The American City, XXXII (June, 1925), p. 634.
The R.A. had the pick of the best planners and architects in America—this group was one of the hardest hit of all professions during the depression. Architectural work declined eighty-six per cent between 1928 and 1932 and construction had increased little by 1935. The chief members of each planning group were as follows:

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<td>Wallace Richards</td>
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<td>Douglas D. Ellington</td>
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<td>Henry Wright</td>
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<td>Allan F. Kamstra</td>
<td>Town Planner</td>
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<td>Albert Mayer</td>
<td>Principal Architect</td>
<td>Principal Architect</td>
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<td>Henry S. Churchill</td>
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<td>William A. Strong</td>
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<td>Roland A. Wank</td>
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<td>G. Frank Cordner</td>
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<td>Engineering Designer</td>
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<td>William G. Powell</td>
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52 Architectural Record, LXXIV (July, 1933), p. 57.
The directors were assisted by a staff of over four hundred people. The size of the staff was large because of the speed with which plans had to be prepared. This, of course, further increased the ultimate costs of the towns.\textsuperscript{54}

The planning staffs and supporting personnel moved into their offices at the end of July. They were housed in the 54-room Evelyn Walsh-McLean mansion at 2020 Massachusetts Avenue. Built by the copper king Thomas Walsh, the house had been a center of Washington social life for over thirty years. The offices became a curiosity to visitors who joked about the clattering of typewriters in rococo bathrooms and architectural conferences in converted bedrooms. The main ballroom was crammed with drawing tables over which long-necked drawing lights bobbed like a fleet of sailboats on a sea of

\textsuperscript{54}Suburban Division Planning Staff, "Reasons for Excessive Costs in Developing the Program," October 20, 1936, Lansill Papers, personal files.
blueprints. The general picture of shirt-sleeved engineers working under high baroque ceilings reminds one very much of the "realist school" of Soviet painters depicting the engineers of the new society at work in the former palaces of the Czars.

As a matter of fact, the planners of the greenbelt towns were hardly to be compared with either Soviet or American revolutionaries. While some American planners looked longingly at the Soviet Union's engineered society, the same was not true of the average American architect who was generally a white Anglo-Saxon conservative. The great majority of the architects and engineers who directed the greenbelt town program were Republicans. Their enthusiasm was not solely philanthropic, it was also sparked by the technical challenge of the program. Lansill remembers that several of the chief architects and town planners remarked to him that while they could make far more money in private practice when prosperity returned,


they would remain in the Suburban Division forever if they could continue planning more greenbelt towns. They were inspired by a program which became the most significant American experiment with garden city building the nation had ever seen. Will Alexander says, "They were sure this Resettlement Administration was going to revolutionize things." Marquis Childs recalled the enthusiasm of the planners who kept the lights burning far into the night at the MacLean mansion. "They thought they were planning a new world."  

58Interview with John S. Lansill.  
CHAPTER III

LAND ACQUISITION

Ted (Tilford) Dudley and I have been moving through the country preparing to buy land in the grand manner. In Cincinnati I laid out a tract of some 20,000 acres...We will stop back on Wednesday and narrow down the area. I'm delighted with the good results we are getting, but I find a good deal of initial difficulty in getting cooperation. The country has been run to death with project planning followed by nothing thereafter, and the people are sick of it.1

So wrote Warren Vinton in August 1935 from the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago. The deadline stipulated by the President greatly increased the chance that the greenbelt town projects too would become another New Deal plan that died aborning. While the Land Section had begun operations at each of the five project sites, only at Beltsville, Maryland had substantial progress been made.

The Land Section of the Suburban Division played only a small role in the acquisition of land for Greenbelt, Maryland, because most of it had been optioned by the Land Utilization Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Subsistence Homesteads

1Warren Vinton to John G. Lansill, August 5, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
Division of the Interior Department. The Suburban Division of the Resettlement Administration inherited the previously optioned land and added to these properties until a total of 12,189 acres had been purchased by September, 1935. Most of this land was ultimately transferred to the Agricultural Research Center. The Resettlement Administration retained 3,371 acres which were purchased at a cost of $556,632.15, or an average price of $165.00 per acre. The R.A. advertised a land cost figure of $91.00 per acre and this has


3 There are conflicting reports on this figure. The figure of 12,345 acres is given in the U.S. Resettlement Administration, Weekly Progress Report No. 80, May 20, 1937. R.J. Wadsworth, one of the architects of Greenbelt gives a figure of 13,044 acres in his Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project, February, 1938, Lansill Papers, official files. The figure accepted by this author is 12,189 acres cited by John S. Lansill in his Final Report on the Greenbelt Town Program, June, 1938, Lansill Papers, official files. The Introduction to this Report was reprinted as an Introduction to George A. Warner, Greenbelt: The Cooperative Community (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), pp. 13-21.

4 A small portion of this money ($22,625.68) came from funds allocated under the Subsistence Homesteads Program of the Interior Department under Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. See U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittees of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on the Agriculture Department Appropriation Bill for 1942, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, Pt. 2, pp. 118-119. The $556,632.15 cost of the 3,371 acres at Greenbelt cited by the House Subcommittee is in substantial agreement with the figure of $556,464.12 published by the Farm Security Administration in its Final Report of Project Costs: Greenbelt, Maryland, National Archives, Record Group 96, p. 10.
been accepted by scholars who failed to note that the figure was an average of the entire 12,189 acres rather than the portion of this tract which the R.A. retained as the site for Greenbelt.

The prospects of purchasing enough land for the other four towns at a reasonable price appeared dim. The Land Section staff was very small considering the fact that it was responsible for the purchase of thousands of acres of land scattered across a thousand miles of the nation. Only seven full time negotiators were available to cover the five sites. These men were aided by a small staff of clerical workers and professional land appraisers. Tilford Dudley attempted to build a larger staff of negotiators and appraisers by raiding the Farm Credit Administration; but the F.C.A. complained to Tugwell and Dudley was forced to use only the few he had. This necessitated the use of private

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6 U.S., Farm Security Administration, Progress Report No. 103, April, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 96, p. 27.

7 Dudley, Report of Land Section.

8 Unsigned memo to Tilford Dudley, October 5, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 96 (General Correspondence).
real estate firms to negotiate the options. While this had certain advantages, it placed a great responsibility on people whose only interest in the greenbelt town program was a financial reward. The government negotiators were compelled to act as a reserve force for these local firms. The Washington staff, aided by the use of a TVA airplane, attempted to be everywhere at once.

Dudley in particular spent most of his nights sleeping on railroad trains or in the airplane as he shuttled back and forth between Washington and the five project sites.9

In St. Louis, the reluctance of the local real estate agency to act promptly contributed to the failure of the entire project. Dudley believes that this firm—the largest in St. Louis at the time—was not in need of extra work and therefore gave honest but leisurely service. By November when the acquisition programs at the other sites were nearly completed, the St. Louis firm had hardly begun. Dudley decided to hire another firm and continued optioning through his own negotiators, but precious time was lost. A second agency was found late in November, but it was not until January that it completed the optioning program. By that time the R.A. officials decided that sufficient funds were not available for the St. Louis project, anyway, and it was abandoned.

9Interview with Tilford E. Dudley.
The loss of this project was not a severe blow to the Suburban Program, for no work had been done on town planning and the $24,438.11 consumed in obtaining options and clearing the titles comprised only .08% of the Suburban Division's allotment.10

In Cincinnati the R.A. was extremely fortunate in securing the services of the Walter Schmidt Real Estate Company. It was the largest in Cincinnati and Schmidt was a national figure in the real estate business as an officer and later president of the National Association of Real Estate Boards. Schmidt had publically opposed the federal housing program, but was tactfully approached by Dudley and several other R.A. officials who explained the entire concept of the greenbelt town project to him emphasizing its experimental and limited nature. Schmidt accepted the commission and a week after the funds came through from Hyde Park, twelve of his negotiators were in the field collecting options.11

Two smaller real estate firms were selected in Milwaukee but what they lacked in size they compensated for in diligence. The agents began work on August 29, but on September 18 Tugwell informed Dudley that the project was about to be canceled. The R.A. had decided

10 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
11 Brice Martin, Analysis of Cincinnati Land Acquisition, February 8, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.
that Milwaukee's needs for low rent housing were not as severe as those in most other cities especially since the P.W.A. had begun a housing project there.\textsuperscript{12} Also, the R.A. did not wish to appear to be competing with Secretary Ickes' program. In the middle of October, however, the decision was reversed, and there was very little time left to gather the options. The local agents, aided by as many negotiators as the Washington office could spare "worked with a white heat of intensity."\textsuperscript{13} The agents labored round the clock to take options, clear titles and complete the many other steps in assembling land for the federal government. They spent from early morning until late evening in the field seven days a week, coming back to the office where another staff collated the material during the night.\textsuperscript{14} The optioning was supposed to have been completed by November 20, but Dudley got a five day extension. The last option was taken on the 25th whereupon Dudley

\textsuperscript{12}Parklawn, the P.W.A. project in Milwaukee is described in Michael W. Straus and Talbot Wegg, \textit{Housing Comes of Age} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 212.

\textsuperscript{13}W.L. Mellette, Analysis of Milwaukee Land Acquisition, November 1, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.

\textsuperscript{14}Interview with Tilford E. Dudley.
gathered up all the options along with the appraisals, title records and other information and rushed by train to Washington where they were presented to Tugwell and Lansill who gave approval the following day.  

The land optioning, in all cases, had to be kept secret, for as Dudley and other federal land purchasers had found, "land owners take a special delight in holding their government up for high prices." The Housing Division of the P.W.A. was forced to give up major projects in St. Louis and Chicago during 1935 because land prices skyrocketed when news of the plans reached the public. Nor could the Land Section force the sale of land. Condemnation proceedings would take too long and had not been sustained by the federal courts.

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15 Mellette, Analysis of Milwaukee Land Acquisition, November 1, 1937, Lansill Papers personal files.

16 Dudley, Report of Land Section.


18 The attempt of the P.W.A. to condemn land in Louisville, Kentucky for one of its housing projects was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in U.S. v. Certain Lands in City of Louisville, 78 F (U.S.) 684 (1936). For background of this case see New York Times, March 6, 1936.
The real estate agents in Cincinnati were making repaid progress when the Cincinnati Inquirer came out on October 2, with a premature announcement of the Resettlement Administration project. The leak had occurred in Washington and the Land Section was naturally furious, but the negotiators were told to discount the story and tell everyone "it was simply another rumor...and that they did not know anything except that they were working for the Schmidt Company and under orders from their superiors." The newspaper was not able to follow up with further information and options continued to flow into the Schmidt offices. At the same time R.A. officials began to inform key figures in the Cincinnati area to line up their support when the project would be officially announced.

The site originally selected included land belonging to a number of stubborn German farmers and days went by before they were convinced to sell. The R.A. in Washington told the negotiators that if optioning could not be completed by October 15, the project might have to be given up. One individual named Muehlenhard proved

19 Cincinnati Inquirer, October 2, 1935.
20 Martin, Analysis of Cincinnati Land Acquisition, February 8, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.
unshaking in his desire to keep his land. When Harold Gelnaw, the Land Section's "high pressure ace," was flown in from Milwaukee to convince Muehlenhard, he was chased from the property with a three foot corn knife. Finally, Dudley was able to induce the man to visit the Schmidt Company offices where the full story of the project was presented to him. He was first exhorted to help the children of the slums through which the R.A. had driven him on the way to the office. Later he was threatened with condemnation proceedings. After five hours the exhausted man signed an option and handed it to an equally exhausted staff which quickly gathered this and the other options and caught a train for Washington. They were due to report the next morning, October 17, on the completion of the optioning program.

In Washington the entire project plan was reviewed and it was decided to shift the tract slightly to the south which entailed further optioning. By the time the agents were back in the field news of the project was well known in the area. An attorney for the Cincinnati Building and Loan League had even been meeting with land owners urging them not to sell out to the federal

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21 John S. Lansill, Notes on Greenbelt Town Project, Lansill Papers, personal files.

22 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
government. The effect of this action was to raise the price of the properties remaining to be optioned.

Tugwell thought the prices were too high and ordered the negotiators to begin taking options to the north, thus playing one group of property owners off against the other. By the time this game was finished the R.A. had options on 11,860 acres, which stretched for several miles along the edge of the Mill Creek Valley in Hamilton County.²³

On December 3, 1935, Tugwell, Lansill, Dudley, Vinton and the chief planners for Greenhills met to decide where to locate the town. Vinton said that the southern-most site was the best because it was closer to the factories in the valley where many of the residents would be employed and closer as well to Cincinnati. The further away the town was, the higher the transportation cost would be. Tugwell overruled him, however, saying that the land prices in the southern section were too high. The northern location was chosen.²⁴ Premature publicity and lack of local cooperation, then, did not destroy the Cincinnati project, but forced the R.A. to build on a less advantageous site.

²³ Martin, Analysis of Cincinnati Land Acquisition, February 8, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.
²⁴ Ibid. Alas, this northern tract did not include the Muehenhard property.
In Milwaukee the R.A. had taken the extra precaution of keeping its identity hidden from the real estate agents during the early weeks of land optioning. Information was, however, again inadvertently leaked by the federal government. In early December a group of R.A. officials checked into a leading hotel in Milwaukee and "stupidly...talked in the lobby and in the open rooms about the Milwaukee project." Fortunately the optioning was almost completed but the first reaction of the press and public was one of scepticism and suspicion. This reaction could have had serious consequences had the R.A. not previously established a close relationship with the city and county officials. Immediately after the site had been selected Warren Vinton and Tilford Dudley explained the entire program to Milwaukee's Socialist Mayor Daniel W. Hoan and several other local officials. They were pleased with the willingness of

25 Frank H. Osterlind to R.G. Tugwell, n.d. (received by R.G.T. December 12, 1935), Records of the Office of the Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Administration, Washington, D.C., Drawer 536. These records contain some of the working papers of members of the Suburban Resettlement Division, the Legal Division of the R.A. and the Management Division of the Public Housing Administration, the agency to which the greenbelt towns were transferred in 1942. These records were located in a government warehouse in Washington, but have been removed to the National Archives where they are awaiting cataloging. They will be cited hereafter as R.O.A., H.H.F.A.
the Resettlement Administrators to seek their support. More importantly, they were enthusiastic about the project itself. Therefore, when the official announcement of the project was made on December 15, 1935 Mayor Hoan, U.S. Congressman Raymond J. Cannon, and a host of other Milwaukee area officials gave it their approval. Harold Gelnaw, who headed the Milwaukee land acquisition program, told reporters that the R.A. received better cooperation in Milwaukee than in any other city. He may still have been thinking of his encounter with the knife wielding Mr. Muehlenhard.

Some apprehensions persisted, particularly among the real estate groups and the building and loan companies, but an attempt was made to win even their support. On January 2, 1936 Lansill, Vinton, Jacob Crane (one of the chief architects) and several others went to Milwaukee and explained the project to these two groups. Not everyone was convinced by the R.A. officials. There were continual reports that some of the building and loan groups and other individuals were about to seek court action to block the project, but no case was ever

presented. The building and loan people may have been restrained from their action by the continued "solemn backing" of the local political leaders and pressure that these leaders may have exerted against them.  

Rexford Tugwell was anxious to have the greenbelt towns demonstrate "the advantage of locating in suburban areas where land prices are lower." He also hoped that the public would compare the slum clearance projects--built on higher priced land--with the spacious greenbelt towns. He was, therefore, most anxious to buy land at the lowest possible price and in this regard the land acquisition program was an unquestionable success.

Land prices at the three towns bore a direct relation to the distance of the tract from the central city. The land at Greenbelt, located approximately twelve miles from downtown Washington, was $165.00 per acre.

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30 The R.A. was informed who the opposition leaders were and how pressure might be brought against them through city, county, state and federal agencies. It was even suggested that the Internal Revenue Service might check their past income tax forms. See Frank H. Osterlind to Victor Rotnem, General Counsel's Office, Resettlement Administration, (received by V.R. January 16, 1936), R.O.A., H.H.F.A., Drawer 535.


The land for Greenhills, Ohio (5,930 acres) lay approximately four and one half miles from Cincinnati and was purchased for an average price of $268.58 per acre. The 3,410 acre tract for Greendale, Wisconsin, was located only three miles southwest of Milwaukee and thus the most expensive—$372.50. At Greenhills and Greendale the purchase price was below the value estimated by independent appraisers who set the Greenhills land at $268.58 per acre and the Greendale land at $412.52. Most striking of all was the

33 The figure given by Dudley, Report of Land Section, conflicts slightly with that given in Lansill, Final Report on the Greenbelt Town Program, June, 1938, Lansill Papers, official files, in which it is stated that 5,931 acres were purchased. The appropriations bill for 1942 states that 5,944 acres were purchased for a total price of $1,619,528.00 which is $272.48 per acre, see U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on the Agriculture Department Appropriations Bill for 1942, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, Pt. 2, pp. 118-119.

34 The figure of 3,410 acres is taken from Lansill, Final Report... Lansill Papers, official files. A figure of 3,491 acres is cited in Dudley, Report of Land Section. A figure of 3,403 acres is cited in U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings...77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941 Pt. 2 pp. 118-119. The Community Manager of Greendale stated that the tract was 3,400 acres, see Walter E. Kroening, The Story of Greendale, April, 1944 (mimeographed copy in possession of the author).


36 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
contrast between the land prices paid by the R.A. and the P.W.A. The P.W.A. at this time was paying an average of $.44 per square foot for their slum real estate which amounts to a cost of $19,166.40 per acre.\(^{37}\)

In contrast to the land acquisition programs at Greenbelt, Greenhills and Greendale, the attempt to purchase land for Greenbrook, to be located outside of New Brunswick, New Jersey, ended in failure after a long bitter fight. This was a tragic loss. The Greenbrook planning staff was the most distinguished team of architects assembled by the R.A. and the town most closely resembled the classic garden city. The story of Greenbrook reveals a small but highly interesting episode in the history of the New Deal and in the development of public attitudes towards a host of political, social and economic questions connected with the government's housing program. Therefore, it will be discussed in some detail.

Official operations began at New Brunswick on September 16th. From the start the R.A. officials found Somerset County a difficult area in which to work. Theodore Pellens, the project supervisor, arrived in New Brunswick on the afternoon of the 16th, but could not find anyone willing to rent an automobile. Dudley arrived

\(^{37}\)Strauss and Wegg, *Housing Comes of Age*, p. 96.
on the evening train and both men set out to find a car which would take them to Bound Brook and the project site. At 2 a.m. they succeeded in renting an ancient auto which had to be pushed downhill to get started. The next morning they drove around the project site located about three miles outside the small community of Bound Brook--and then drove back into the town to select a real estate broker. They found that one broker, a Mr. Fetterly, was currently the Republican candidate for Mayor of Bound Brook. The second broker was a prominent Democrat. The third, a Republican, was Thomas D. Van Syckel, apparently the only broker giving his full attention to business. Van Syckel was checked for his honesty and general reputation in the community before being approached with the project plans. Van Syckel liked the idea and, as time went on, developed an intense interest in the greenbelt town concept. He argued the R.A.'s case with as much sincerity and fervor as any of the project planners. Although he and the R.A. occasionally disagreed there was no one so despondent over the failure of the project. Possibly, he regretted the loss of an opportunity, not only to make money, but to play a major role in a great enterprise—to make a lasting contribution to his

38 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
community and the nation. 39

The negotiators hired by Van Syckel did not all share his zeal, but the money earned was sufficient to keep most of them active in the field late into each evening. The R.A. concealed the true purpose of the optioning as was the practice at the other sites. This was more difficult at Bound Brook since the Township of Franklin, in which the project was to be built, had no property map and the R.A. was forced to construct an ownership map from the tax rolls. This raised the suspicion of the Township Tax Assessor, C.I. Van Cleef, who began to inquire about the sharp increase of optioning. Van Cleef himself owned a large farm in the township and was approached in early October by Van Syckel and Pellens. It is not clear whether Van Cleef knew the reasons for the optioning, but he realized that whoever was buying land had a great deal of money. When approached again by Van Syckel and Dudley, he offered to sell for twice the value of his land saying that "his cooperation was worth much more than the difference in price and that he could give a great deal of valuable help to the buyer if won over to the proper side." 40 When the R.A. men refused to buy at Van Cleef's price he began persuading fellow landowners not to sign options.

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39 Interview with Tilford E. Dudley.
40 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
At the same time the negotiators found that landowners had recently signed options with another firm. It became clear that Mr. Fetterly's office, conveniently located across the street from Van Syckel, had noticed feverish activity in his competitor's business and began digging for information. Somehow Fetterly was able to learn the whole story from the Washington office of the R.A. and even obtained a copy of the government's option form. He followed the R.A. negotiators until he discovered the general area of the town site. Then, moving ahead of the Van Syckel agents, he collected the options hoping to force the government to pay a handsome price or even to include him in the entire operation. Ultimately the R.A. was compelled to buy his options on key tracts. The episode did not threaten the project's secrecy because Fetterly hoped to use his knowledge for his own advantage. 41

A more serious problem was the purchase of 500 acres on an estate belonging to John W. Mettler, President of the Interwoven Stocking Company. He was wealthy, politically powerful in the state of New Jersey, and a conservative Republican. Mettler was approached with caution by Dudley and Pellens who interpreted their plans to him and solicited his land and his support. Dudley

41 Ibid. Also Lansill, "Notes on Greenbelt Town Program," Lansill Papers, personal files.
reported that Mettler "was coldly hostile, suspicious, and noncommittal." He asked for time to have his land assessed and think over the proposal.

The negotiators left the Mettler tract alone for the time and concentrated on the rest of the project site. They found that many small tracts were owned by recent immigrants who had built up a modest truck farming industry, but who were subsisting on low market prices. Many of them clung tenaciously to their little plots. The negotiators hired interpreters and spent long hours explaining the advantages of selling the land. Another group which balked at selling its land included local citizens whose families had owned the same land since colonial days and resented both the intrusion of the immigrants and the federal government.

Near the end of October the R.A. realized that Mettler was stealthily moving against them. The local office began receiving calls from a real estate firm connected with Mettler. Next, one of the most prominent negotiators, Mr. Van Voorhees, said he would have to cease collecting options until after the November election in which he was running for re-election to the Somerset County Board of Freeholders. On October 24,

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42 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
43 Interview with Tilford E. Dudley.
44 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
the Franklin Township Committee held an emergency meeting--its members having learned the whole story of the Resettlement Administration project. The New Brunswick Daily Home News broke the secret the following day, reporting also that the Township Committee planned a protest. R.A. negotiators were caught unprepared and refused to make any statement. They deliberately brushed aside all the stories as mere rumors just as the Cincinnati group had done at the beginning of the month. This proved a poor policy as the rumors grew faster in the absence of specific information from the R.A.

On October 28, Franklin Township Attorney Clarkson Cramner telephoned the R.A. office in Bound Brook to notify them that in the evening a public meeting would be held at a local school to consider the project and that he, as chairman, wanted a government spokesman there to answer questions. The local R.A. people were taken unawares. They called Washington and Lansill promised to send Isaac McBride, one of the R.A.'s most effective representatives. The meeting indicated that emotions were greatly aroused in Somerset County. The tone of the audience was described as "running a rout so stormy as to be only a step removed

45 The Daily Home News (New Brunswick, New Jersey), October 25, 1935.
Questions were asked about who was going to live in the new town, how it would pay taxes and what the effect would be on local property values. One local resident, hearing that the project was for low income families registered his disapproval saying "we don't want the scum of the earth brought in here."\textsuperscript{47} The Resettlement Administration was castigated by state Representative Charles A. Eaton who said, "The Federal Government has no more right to come into this township and cram this proposition down its throat than has the government of Germany."\textsuperscript{48} McBride answered questions as well as he could, but was forced to hedge on the point of taxation. He tried to assure the audience that however the project was planned, the community would not be compelled to supply services to it without deriving an equal income from it. He summarized by saying,

I simply am asking you as intelligent people to withhold your judgment and not proceed to condemn this project without knowing what you are condemning. Nobody is coercing you. This is a free country. Not one of you has to sell his property unless he wants to sell it...the government is not going to resort to condemnation.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46}Somerset Messenger Gazette, October 29, 1935.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48}Trenton Times, October 29, 1935.
\textsuperscript{49}Somerset Messenger Gazette, October 29, 1935.
Before the meeting ended it was voted to send a five man committee to talk with the R.A. in Washington. Later, Cramner appointed five additional members—including Mettler—to what came to be called the Committee of Ten.  

The meeting was followed by a barrage of newspaper editorials on the project. The small *Somerset Messenger Gazette* asked its readers what the effect would be of erecting numerous "cheap houses" and filling them with "recent slum dwellers." Fortunately, the New Brunswick *Daily Home News*, the largest local paper, criticized the secretiveness of the R.A., but reserved judgement on the project itself. The R.A. officials admitted that the *Daily Home News* presented the news "with complete fairness throughout the controversy."  

On November 1, the Somerset County Board of Freeholders voted to condemn the project because the federal property it would withdraw from the tax rolls would decrease local revenues and increase service costs sharply. In addition the Board was "without definite information as to plans, purposes and scope of this project." Two days later the R.A. officials announced that the tax

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50 *Trenton Evening Times*, November 14, 1935.
52 *Summary History of Greenbrook Project, Lansill Papers, official files.*
problem would be solved by the transferral of the property to private hands as soon as the town was completed. This did not satisfy the *Daily Home News* nor many of the local residents. The newspaper expressed the opinion of "many substantial Republicans" who believed the whole project was "the product of a deep laid plot to turn this staunchly Republican township and the equally staunchly Republican county of which it is a part, Democratic at the crucial 1936 election." Bishop Alma White of the Somerset Pillar of Fire Church reported that "divine inspiration" had called her back from London, England in time to fight the Resettlement Administration's attempt to buy land which her church held on the proposed project site. Dudley and the R.A. concluded that it was not God who was directing the attack on the project, but John W. Mettler.

Mettler's position was published in a long interview for the November 17 issue of the New Brunswick *Sunday Times* (the Sunday edition of the *Daily Home News*). He said that the town would require more services than collectable taxes could support, that it was located too far from surrounding factories, and that it covered 6,000 to 8,000 acres while the entire city of New

\[54\text{Ibid.},\text{November 2, 1935.}\]

\[55\text{Ibid.},\text{November 6, 1936; letter to author from Arthur K. White, Bishop and President of the Pillar of Fire, October 26, 1964.}\]
Brunswick covered only 2,500. His "greatest objection", however, was allegedly to the architectural style which he said "will undoubtedly be used—the pre-fabricated cement-type box-shaped house or the multiple-family packing-box type house without cellars and with flat roofs." He thought it "hopeless" to expect the "Colonial style house to be built in the project which, of course, would make it a very different proposition. No person would object to the right kind of houses which would bring a more desirable class of people than can be expected to occupy the pre-fabricated, flat roof, slab-type house."  

There was no suggestion that his opposition stemmed from his political views, but Mrs. Mettler remembers that the fundamental objection of her husband was that the project was sponsored by the New Deal. She also recalled that he was afraid the proposed project would be similar to the one already under construction in Hightstown, New Jersey.

For whatever reasons, Mettler remained an implacable foe of the Suburban Division and his position on the Committee of Ten was preeminent. The Committee spent November 6 in Washington where they talked with Lansill, Vinton and Bigger who described the project, and promised

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56 The Sunday Times, November 17, 1935.

57 Interview with Mrs. John W. Mettler, Bound Brook, New Jersey, October 9, 1964.
that future tax problems would be solved in a manner satisfactory to all. The R.A.'s efforts were in vain, for at a second meeting of 1,000 residents on November 13, 1935, the Committee reported 8-2 against the project. The R.A. campaigned to win local support while pressing the optioning. Albert Mayer, one of the Greenbrook architects wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* describing the greenbelt town program with special emphasis on Greenbrook. Further contact with Mettler showed him willing to end his opposition if the town could be moved farther from his property—even offering the assistance of a real estate agent to secure the new options. The possibility of shifting the site was considered. Dudley conferred with Albert Mayer and Henry Wright who agreed it could be shifted somewhat, but not as far as Mettler suggested. The next week was spent hounding the owners of the few remaining tracts needed and continuing the campaign for support. On November 21, the R.A. held a meeting of nearly 100 "interested Franklin Township residents" who

58 *Trenton Times*, November 14, 1935.
61 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
voted 85-16 to support the R.A. after hearing a talk by Fred W. Ehrich, chairman of the New Jersey State Housing Authority. He affirmed that the new town would pay local taxes, be constructed in a "conventional style of architecture" and pay union wages to all those employed to build it.  

By November 27 the Land Section discovered it had optioned enough land to begin construction. Tugwell approved the acceptance of options and clearance of titles for purchase. On December 5, the Daily Home News was finally able to publish sketches of Greenbrook along with a detailed description of the development of the garden cities and the precise type of housing, streets, and other facilities to be built. This was followed by an announcement that construction would soon begin. The Daily Home News now urged that Somerset County unemployed be given priority for the new jobs. Local businessmen approved as over one hundred employees moved into the area to begin construction.

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62 The Record (Kingston, New Jersey), November 22, 1935; Daily Home News, November 22, 1935.
63 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
64 Daily Home News, December 5, 1936.
65 Ibid., December 6, 1935.
Two days later the opposition asked the Federal District Court in Newark to issue an injunction restraining the R.A. from continuing their project. The action was undertaken on behalf of the Franklin Township Committee, the School Board and four property owners, one of whom was C.I. Van Cleef. They were represented by Merritt Lane of Newark, who was a prominent Republican and one of the organizers of the Liberty League. The Bill of Complaints charged that the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935 was unconstitutional, that the Executive Order creating the R.A. was also unconstitutional and the entire action was an unlawful invasion of state's rights.

This added a new and dangerous dimension to the struggle. The R.A. might win overwhelmingly local support only to be defeated in the courts. The fact that the project had just been endorsed by the Building Trades Councils of Somerset, Middlesex and Union Counties was overshadowed by the news from Newark. On December 12, the Franklin Township Committee was petitioned to withdraw from the case. On December 17, the Bound Brook Town Council endorsed the project after learning that

69 Ibid., December 12, 1935.
the R.A. intended to build a new grade school and possibly a high school.70 Other local residents applied for homes in Greenbrook.71

Dudley took over as Director of the Bound Brook project in order to exert more pressure on Mettler, the local Republican machine and opponents of the project. Mass meetings were held. A former option collector, Van Voorhees, became a leading heckler at these meetings. Dudley accused Freeholder Voorhees of being "evasive, weaseling and squirming" and of making "statements which reveal a gross ignorance of the facts."72

On December 22, Attorney Merritt Lane presented the case of the Franklin Township Committee before District Judge Clark in Newark. He noted that an R.A. pamphlet, printed upside down, was proof of an error "typical of the government," which caused Justice Clark to remark that Lane showed "a certain lack of patriotism." Lane heartily agreed. Judge Clark decided that the plaintiffs were in the wrong court and should take the case to the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia where the injunction would be filed against the officers of

70Ibid., December 18, 1935.
71Somerset Messenger Gazette, December 20, 1935.
the R.A. instead of the local officials in Bound Brook.73 This was done and the case was taken over from Lane by none other than Dean Acheson, who sought to enjoin Lansill, Tugwell, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Comptroller General J.R. MoCarl.74 The struggle was now not only a local political fight but a national legal contest with strong political undertones. The District of Columbia Supreme Court dismissed the injunction on January 3. Acheson appealed and was granted a temporary injunction, which was not even modified to allow the R.A. to accept land options which were expiring.75 The case was argued on February 12 but the decision was not rendered until May 18. Lansill recalls the "superb" case presented by Acheson and the poor case presented by Lee Pressman's lawyers, Ralph S. Boyd and Allan Jones (Pressman did not even attend the trial). He surmised that the government would be permanently enjoined.76


74 Transcript of Record, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, October Term, 1935, No. 6619, Township of Franklin et.al. v. Rexford G. Tugwell et.al.

75 Summarized History of the Bound Brook Project, Lansill Papers, official files.

76 Interview with John S. Lansill.
Meanwhile the local conflict moved into high gear with the R.A. launching "an intensified program of education" in the county with speeches, posters, articles and pictures describing the project and its benefits to the local communities. The R.A. stressed the many additions to the facilities of Franklin Township: the schools, roads, parks and of course the houses—"A Garden Home You Can Call Your Own", as the title of an R.A. Pamphlet announced. To the residents of the surrounding townships and counties the R.A. held out the promise of immediate "rush business" for the local construction firms and thousands of jobs for the unemployed. The town itself would bring a long term increase in trade with the future residents of Greenbrook.

The Somerset County Board of Freeholders remained opposed to the project with two Republicans consistently outvoting Frank J. Schubert, the lone Democrat. A poll of Franklin Township tax payers was suggested and Mettler at first agreed. The questionnaires were printed. Then, at the last moment he backed down saying the poll would...

77 Dudley, Report of Land Section.

78 "A Suburban Housing Project in Franklin Township: A Garden Home You Can Call Your Own; U.S. Resettlement Administration handbill, n.d. (Copy in possession of author.)

have no "legal standing."\(^{80}\) The R.A. took its own poll which showed seventy-five per cent favoring the project, fifteen per cent opposed and ten per cent having no opinion.\(^{81}\) Slowly, local support emerged. On January 20, they mayor and Town Council of Plainfield endorsed the project.\(^{82}\) On February 17, the Franklin Township School Board withdrew as a plaintiff from the court case.\(^{83}\) On the 25th a petition with 700 signatures was presented to the Franklin Township Committee asking that it withdraw from the suit and endorse the project.\(^{84}\)

The day after the petition was presented to them the three members of the Committee were scheduled to meet with R.A. officials in Washington. Frederick Bascom, the chairman, refused to go, but the other two, Conrad Ioke and John Amsler went accompanied by Clarkson Cramner, the Township's attorney. They spent the afternoon with Lansill, Calrence I. Blau, the Acting General Counsel for the R.A., and Major John O. Walker, Chief of the Management Section. Lansill reassured them that the R.A. was currently drawing up papers to divest itself

\(^{80}\)Ibid. January 3, 1936.  
\(^{81}\)Dudley, Report of Land Section.  
\(^{82}\)Piscataway Chronicle, January 23, 1936.  
\(^{83}\)Daily Home News, February 19, 1936.  
\(^{84}\)Ibid., February 25, 1936.
of ownership as soon as the towns were completed. Blau added that this had already been done for Greenbelt. When questioned about the bill introduced by Senator Bankhead providing for payment-in-lieu of taxes by the R.A. projects, Blau replied that this would only apply to the R.A. projects in Atlanta. Apparently, the Committee members feared the Bound Brook project would become tied up and lay uncompleted as seemed to be the case in Hightstown. They wanted a written statement that Greenbrook would be completed by the R.A. Lansill replied that the would gladly sign such a statement saying, "I'll give almost anything to get this through." Tugwell also wrote a letter to the Committee assuring them that the project would not only be completed, but that upon completion, "the Federal Government will divest itself of ownership so that the property embraced within the project will be subject to the same burden of taxation as all the other property within the state of New Jersey."86

Convinced of the R.A.'s sincerity on the tax question the Committee members withdrew from the litigation

85 Transcript of Conference in Lansill's Office, February 26, 1936, Lansill Papers, official files.
86 U.S., Resettlement Administration, Press release for publication March 3, 1936, Yale University Library.
by a two to one vote. However, the five property owners announced through their attorney, Wendell Forbes, that they would continue the suit. On March 7, attorney Merritt Lane presented an affidavit to Justice Joseph L. Bodine of the New Jersey Supreme Court from C.I. Van Cleef stating that Mr. Amsler had voted in favor of the project because he had been offered a seventy-five dollar a week job on it. This caused Justice Bodine to issue a temporary restraining order forbidding the Franklin Township Committee to withdraw from the suit against the R.A. In a preliminary hearing, Amsler denied the charge. Furthermore, Conrad Icke, the other Committee member who voted to withdraw from the suit, testified that on the night before he and Amsler went to Washington, he was visited by Van Cleef and approximately twenty other men who warned him not to go. One of these Matthew Suydam (also one of the five property owners in the suit), told Icke, "You got no business to go—it won't be worth while coming back if you do." On the other hand, the hearing also revealed that the paper on which the 700 pro-project signatures were signed bore the watermark of the U.S. Government indicating that the R.A. was giving direct aid to its local advocates.

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87 Daily Home News

88 Daily Home News, March 4, 7, 9, 12 and 15, 1936; Summarized History of Bound Brook Project, Lansill Papers, official files.
charged that the attempted bribery of Amsler was only one of the Government's irregular activities which included taking options under false pretences, misrepresenting the project to the community and issuing unclear and inconsistent statements. "Inconsistencies run right through the statements of the government," said Lane, "and the fact is the government doesn't know what it is doing."\(^{89}\)

On March 11, the day before the bribery hearings began New Jersey's Senator W. Warren Barbour introduced a resolution to investigate the entire program of the Resettlement Administration. It would authorize the establishment of a special committee, financed with a $25,000 budget and empowered to subpoena witnesses. A resulting report would indicate,

1) the nature and extent of all expenditures made or proposed to be made by such Administration, 2) the nature and extent of projects undertaken by it, and the advisability of undertaking future projects, 3) the effect of each such project on State and local taxation and on local real estate values, 4) the extent to which such projects have benefitted and will benefit labor, and 5) the circumstances relating to the securing of persons as tenants or purchasers in connection with such projects, and the effect on such persons of becoming such tenants or purchasers.\(^{90}\)

In a statement to the press Barbour said the general purpose of the investigation would be to determine if the


\(^{90}\)U.S., Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2d Sess, 1936. LXXX, Part 6, 6194.
R.A. was doing a good job and should be supported or if it was "heading for a dead-end smash-up and should be stopped before the wreck occurs." He also urged immediate investigation of the bribery charge leveled against the R.A. The resolution failed, but was reintroduced without the investigative machinery making it merely a Senate request for information. While discussing his second resolution Barbour specifically attacked the two R.A. projects in New Jersey. He characterized the Hightstown project as "a chaotic mudhole with a few tin houses to glorify the money that has been spent." Concerning Greenbrook he conceded that the pamphlet "paints a fine picture of the future development" but considering "the failure of the other project at Hightstown" he had little confidence in the success of Greenbrook. He also quoted from a series of articles in the Washington Post by Felix Bruner which were highly critical of the Resettlement Administration and the community projects.

Comparison of the Greenbrook and Hightstown projects was damaging not only because of the real errors


93 The articles were written for the Washington Post by Felix Bruner under the general title "Castles in the Air" and appeared in the Post beginning on February 24,
made at Hightstown, but because its particular character subjected it to vicious attacks in the press. The Philadelphia Inquirer, for example, published an article on the project entitled, Tugwell Hands Out $1,800,000 for N.J. Commune. The community was described as a "model of a Russian Soviet Commune...for the immigration of two hundred Jewish needleworkers...headed by a Russian-born little Stalin who will be running their 'co-operative' full blast not fifty miles from the birthplace of American Democracy." On May 8, the day after this article appeared, the Senate approved Barbour's resolution by a voice vote.

Ten days later, on May 18, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia handed down a sweeping decision which not only forbade the Bound Brook project, but assailed the very foundation of the New Deal. Acheson's Bill of Complaint accused the project on two major counts...first, that it was unnecessary as opportunities for employment in the township were sufficient, and second, that it was detrimental to the local community by introducing "industrial workers of low

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1936. They were widely reprinted as, for example, in the Daily Home News beginning March 13, 1936. They will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

94 Philadelphia Inquirer, May 7, 1936.

95 U.S., Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2d Sess., 1936, LXXX, Part 6, 6894.
income from congested areas" into an area where "the bulk of the population is...rural in character."

Further, the township would lose one fourth of its taxable land while the new town would increase public service costs but not contribute sufficiently to defray them. Local autonomy would be affected and "since 1735 the Township has protected and fostered the interests of its inhabitants in the security of its lands, property and persons and in the development and character of the community." The R.A.'s town would cause this protection and control to be "virtually destroyed" and "the whole character of the community may and will be changed contrary to the wishes of the inhabitants and solely in accordance with the wishes of the officers of the United States." The Complaint stated that one of the five property owners who rented a house on her land would suffer a depression of rental value. Finally, the Complaint said the project was illegal because it was financed with funds from the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 and administered by an agency financed with funds from this act. The Act, it continues, "is an effort to delegate to the President legislative power in contravention of Article I, Sec. 9, Clause 7; and Article II, Sec. 1 of the Constitution of the United States." These Articles outline the powers granted to the Congress and to the President. The contention of the
five Franklin Township Appellants was that the E.R.A.A. of 1935 granted legislative powers to the President which he in turn granted, through a series of Executive Orders, to the Resettlement Administration and other agencies receiving funds from it.96

The three to two decision of the Court was delivered by Associate Justice Van Orsdel. First, the Court made it clear that if the State of New Jersey undertook the Bound Brook project the Township government could not maintain its suit in the courts, but that the five property owners could do so even if the state government were financing and administering the project. Since the U.S. Government was the agent, however, both the property owners and the Township Government had a right to bring suit. Second, turning to the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, the Court declared that in this case it was "a clearly unconstitutional delegation of legislative power" to the President and the R.A. The Court found nothing in the terms of the Act which would give the President guidelines for legal uses of the funds. It left him, in fact, "virtually unfettered" as to how the money should be spent, and was an example of what

96 Transcript of Record, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, October Term, 1935, No. 6619, The Township of Franklin, et.al. v. Rexford G. Tugwell, Administrator of Resettlement Administration et. al., Appeal from the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.
Supreme Court Justice Cardozo had called "delegation running riot" in the Schechter Case of May, 1935, which declared the N.R.A. unconstitutional. The Court was fearful of such powers in the hands of the President and his agents as were granted by the E.R.A.A. "without path or program" to circumscribe his actions.

Obviously, if the President were so disposed, he could use the entire sum appropriated in building houses exclusively for our colored population, or on the other hand, he could just as well exclude that portion of the population from any benefits whatever...The houses for which this vast sum of money is to be spent may be rented or sold, at a profit or at a loss. They may be constructed in cities where there is no demand, or in the country to create and build a new city in its entirety. Indeed, they may be built and left unoccupied; and while, as a practical matter, this may be said to be a mere fancy, the principle is none the less involved, for that principle demands that in the appropriation of the public moneys the congressional mandate shall include a reasonable limitation on the discretion of the executive in their use...

The fundamental question involved is the total lack of constitutional power on the part of Congress to put into operation through legislation a project such as is here contemplated; and this can be ascertained, not from any possible determination of fact, but from the very terms of the statute itself.

The two dissenting Justices, Groner and Stephens, agreed that a permanent injunction should be granted to halt the Bound Brook project, but thought that the decision concerning the unconstitutionality of the entire Emergency

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Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 was unnecessary and should not have been attempted until the facts of the case were more fully presented. Thus the entire court shared the opinion that a permanent injunction should be issued and the dissenters were not flatly ruling out future concurrence with the majority concerning the E.R.A.A. 99

Reaction was swift but confused. Tilford Dudley in Bound Brook confidently predicted that the government would appeal to the Supreme Court "right away," while in Washington Attorney General Homer S. Cummings issued a statement that in his opinion the decision affected only the single project in New Jersey. He did not mention an appeal to the Supreme Court. 100 President Roosevelt told his press conference that same day that while he had not read the decision he agreed that it applied to Bound Brook only. He too remained silent on the question of an appeal. 101 The next day both Tugwell and Solicitor General Stanley Reed issued statements saying they agreed with Cummings and that while there were no immediate plans to appeal, no final decision had been made. 102

99 Ibid.
100 Daily Home News, May 19, 1936.
101 "Press Conferences", Vol 7, p. 261, Roosevelt Papers, O.F.
Resettlement officials, on the advice of Cummings, decided not to appeal the case fearing that further litigation might halt all the projects, which, they believed, could be completed without going to court. Since the object of the Relief Appropriation was to employ workers as quickly as possible the Resettlement officials were forced to announce "the suspension, if not the abandonment of further efforts" at Bound Brook. The offices were closed, the employees dismissed, the options allowed to lapse. "The project was dead," commented Tilford Dudley in June. Tragedy was added to the heartbreak of the project planners when Henry Wright, chief architect and planner of Greenbrook, died suddenly on July 9, knowing that his last and most ambitious attempt to house the underprivileged in a beautiful community had been destroyed.

Opponents of the Bound Brook project, the R.A., and the New Deal were naturally pleased with the court decision and the abandonment of Greenbrook. Frederick

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104 Letter from Eugene Agger (Special Assistant to Tugwell) to Elmer B. Boyed, publisher of the Daily Home News in Daily Home News, May 22, 1936 and; Interview with Eugene Agger.

105 Dudley, Report of Land Section.
Bascom, one of the five plaintiffs, commented on how fortunate those residents were who gave options to the government because "the next few years will certainly bring increased values for land in Franklin Township", and added, "this is the logical way for the township to develop." 106

The Milwaukee Journal believed the decision was a blow to the constitutionality of any federal housing program and asked its readers if they really wanted a "sweeping and largely arbitrary authority over the housing of people." 107 The Washington Post believed the decision "a powerful indictment of the sloppy legislative habits into which Congress has fallen" which allows the executive branch to engage in such "vast experimental projects." 108 Similar views were expressed by the St. Louis Star-Times and the Baltimore Sun. 109

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat and the New York Times thought the entire question should be taken to the Supreme Court. 110 The Albany Evening Press questioned

109 St. Louis Star-Times, May 20, 1936; Baltimore Sun, May 21, 1936.
the narrow application of the decision which canceled only one R.A. project and left the agency and its appropriation untouched. "If the government does not respect the spirit of the law, how can it expect its citizens to do so?"^111 The National Association of Real Estate Boards was pleased with the court action because "it sets a precedent which will bring a flock of similar suits" on all public housing projects including those of the P.W.A. However, passage of any broad housing bill would not be to the advantage of real estate agencies.^112 The *Harvard Law Review* disagreed with the decision. Not only would the project be a legal delegation of Congressional power, but the greenbelt towns would be an enormous aid to the well being of the nation and could only be financed by the federal government.^113

In Milwaukee a group of building and loan firms announced plans to file suit in the Federal District Court to halt both the P.W.A. and the R.A. housing projects in Milwaukee County. Fortunately for the R.A. the land was already in its possession and therefore, by the terms of


the Bound Brook decision, was immune to injunctions on any count save the constitutional one. The Milwaukee group actually filed a suit in late August, 1936, but the case was never argued.

During the summer and fall of that election year, anti-New Deal papers pointed to the Bound Brook episode as an example of the sinister and bungling New Deal housing efforts. The New York Sun believed the project had been impractical and (failing to note the court decision) declared that Greenbrook had "collapsed of its own weight." Again, on October 2, the Sun decried the secret efforts of the federal government to ruin "a high class productive farming area" with a "low cost housing slum clearance project," and championed local residents who formed a "militant opposition" which ultimately destroyed the plan.

The real story shows how a small group of local political officeholders, real estate dealers, and residents

114 This was the opinion of the Department of Agriculture's Legal Staff as stated in a memo from Irving J. Levy (Assistant General Counsel) to Monroe Oppenheimer (Acting General Counsel of the Resettlement Administration) May 21, 1936, R.O.A., H.H.F.A., Drawer 528.


116 The Sun (New York), July 11, 1936, and October 2, 1936.
in combination with a wealthy and politically powerful landowner were able to prevent a project, which by the Spring of 1936, was favored by a majority of the local citizens. On May 18, the day of the court decision, Tilford Dudley published the results of a survey conducted by the R.A. which showed 75% of the 2,390 people polled approved of the project.\textsuperscript{117} This poll is corroborated by the 200 vote majority President Roosevelt received in Franklin Township in November, 1936.\textsuperscript{118} The loss of what many Suburban Division officials regarded as the best greenbelt town, did not, however, destroy or alter the plans for the other three. Lansill considered the Suburban Division lucky that it survived the struggle at all and was relieved to turn his attention away from New Jersey and focus on Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117}Daily Home News, May 18, 1936.
\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., July 4, 1937.
\textsuperscript{119}Interview with John S. Lansill.
CHAPTER IV
PLANNING OF THE GREENBELT TOWNS

The decision of the Resettlement Administration to build complete garden suburbs rather than housing projects greatly complicated the task of the Suburban Division. In the face of many limitations—early deadlines, reduced funds, relief labor and federal red tape—the Division could have met its primary responsibility by merely constructing a large number of simple dwellings. However, the enthusiasm of the staff centered around the new idea of pre-planning complete suburban communities containing a full range of the same physical facilities found in the typical American town. It was hoped that the combination of inexpensive land and attractive buildings designed for mass production would demonstrate that whole communities could be profitably built for moderate income families. That was the goal of the Suburban Division.¹

Under the direction of Thomas Hibben a report was drawn up on August 1, 1935 cataloging a long list of

facilities which were to be constructed and administered as "public utilities." All streets, sidewalks, bridges, and underpasses were to be planned with the aim of segregating pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Comprehensive water, gas and electrical systems were suggested including water reservoirs, gas storage tanks and electrical power plants. Housing units were to vary in size and design. A wide variety of non-residential buildings was suggested including schools, administration buildings, offices, warehouses, markets, hospitals, fire and police stations, auditoriums, fairgrounds, stores, and "industrial buildings" for "production" and for "processing and handling of agricultural and other commodities." Other facilities could be parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, fish ponds, game conservation areas, airports, gardens, forest preserves, and farms. While not stated in the policy paper, it seems clear that these lists were only to serve as indicators of the possibilities open to the planning staff rather than actual specifications. The chief contributions of Frederick Bigger and his new staff of architects were to establish more clearly the objectives of the towns and to improve the quality of the planning. Shortly after he became planning head, Frederick Bigger described the

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2 Policies of the Division of Suburban Resettlement, August 1, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.
purposes of the greenbelt town program.

The principal objective of this Division of Suburban Resettlement, so far as it concerns the four major projects now being planned, is as follows:

(a) To secure 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 for families of predominantly modest income, and arranged and administered (managed) so as to encourage that kind of 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 corporate entity to which the Federal Government will transfer title, and which entity or corporation 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 tax paying 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.

(b) To develop a land use plan for the entire tract; to devise, under the direction of the Administrator, 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.3

The freedom given the greenbelt town planners is almost unique in the history of public housing in America. In the 1950's Clarence S. Stein, contrasted this freedom with the restrictions placed on subsequent public housing architects. He concluded that drab plans are bound to result when "the essential abilities of architects--imagination, invention and ingenuity--are dried up and negated."4 However, numerous unsolicited suggestions were offered the greenbelt planners on how they should proceed.

Frank Lloyd Wright presented John Lansill with his model of Broadacre City and suggested that the Resettlement Administration scrap its plans, add $70,000,000 to its $30,000,000 allocation and allow Wright to construct "the finest city in the world."5 The great architect further stipulated that there must be no interference with his direction of the project. Lansill does not believe Wright was serious about the suggestion since

3Statement of General Policies and Objectives of Suburban Resettlement Administration, October 1, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files. This statement also appears in U.S., Resettlement Administration, Greenbelt Towns, p. 1

4Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 120.

5Interview with John S. Lansill.
the conditions he demanded were obviously beyond reason. Had Wright been willing to work within the liberal guidelines imposed on the rest of the planning teams, the R.A. would have considered Broadacre City. As it was, he reacted to Lansill's rejection with a denunciation of all public and private housing in America and never again communicated with the Suburban Division.  

A more obscure architect, Edgar Chambless, suggested his plan for urban America. He called it "roadtown". The idea came to him in 1893 as he sat penniless on a hill overlooking Los Angeles trying to understand why his savings, invested in railroad stocks, had disappeared in the crash. He envisioned an extension of the row house idea--stretching for hundreds of miles through the countryside with three levels of subways linking the homes, factories and stores. Roadtown, said Chambless, "will be a line of city through the country...It will give the suburbanite all that he seeks in the country and all that he regrets to leave in town."  

Chambless sent letters and telegrams to Roosevelt, Wallace, Tugwell, and many other New Deal officials. He even received some

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6Ibid.


8Telegram from Chambless to Roosevelt, September 22, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 503.
support from the National Grange. Some time in late 1935 or early 1936 he explained his idea to Lawrence Hewes, one of Tugwell's special assistants. Hewes looked at the drawings but never considered the project seriously. Chambless was equally unsuccessful in his attempt to interest the New York World's Fair Committee. In the last week of June, 1936, he committed suicide in his small furnished room on East Forty-ninth Street in New York.

President and Mrs. Roosevelt were also deeply interested in the towns, but were not able to follow the planning closely enough to suggest major changes. The President reviewed the plans for Greenbelt, Maryland on April 30, 1936, but no changes were made by him. Mrs. Roosevelt visited Greenbelt, Maryland several times with Mrs. Henry Morgenthau. She hoped to convince the Secretary of the Treasury, through his wife, that the

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9 L.J. Taber, Master of the National Grange, to Louis M. Howe, July 26, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 503.


12 Summarized History of Greenbelt Project, Lansill Papers, official files.

greenbelt towns were not as bad as he thought they were."\textsuperscript{14} Morgenthau, after all, had "broad control over the financing of the projects."\textsuperscript{15} Mrs. Roosevelt also visited Greendale, Wisconsin in November, 1936, and criticized the residential architects for locating the basement laundry next to the coal bin.\textsuperscript{16} John Lansill was diligent in keeping other R.A. officials away from the planning offices and project sites where they would occasionally arrive and begin issuing orders.\textsuperscript{17} Tugwell was too busy to give serious attention to the physical planning of the towns although he kept informed on their progress.\textsuperscript{18}

Beyond the guidelines established in October, 1935, Frederick Bigger imposed none of his own ideas on the planning staff—which was commendable as he was the only senior administrator with technical competence in architecture and city planning. Albert Mayer, an advisor to the Suburban Division in 1935-1936, and one of the architects of Greenbrook, New Jersey, said that Bigger

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Interview with Warren J. Vinton.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{New York Times}, May 2, 1935.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Milwaukee Sentinel}, November 14, 1936.
\item \textsuperscript{17} John S. Lansill to W.W. Alexander, October 14, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 96, and Interview with John S. Lansill.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Interview with Albert Mayer, New York, N.Y., October 5, 1964.
\end{itemize}
served primarily as an advisor and coordinator. A separate staff was assigned to each town and worked independently of the other town planning staffs. This was necessary since each town site was different in topography, population, economy and legal structure. Each planning staff had three departments: town planning, architecture, and engineering. There were sub­sections within each department such as a school planning section, an electrical and heating section, a utilities section and a landscaping section. Special sections rendered drawings and scale models, made detailed records and conducted field research. The planning staff was headed by one or two men designated as Chief Town Planner, Chief Architect, or Chief Engineer but the group was collectively responsible for the whole project. All four staffs had a regional coordinator whose responsibility was to keep the planning staffs and the R.A. administrators informed.

A number of the people involved in the planning have remarked on the high degree of dedication and cooperation among the planners, most of whom had never worked on a project calling for daily teamwork and

19 Ibid.

20 "Project Planning Organization, "Memorandum No. 1 October 18, 1935, Lansill to Technical Principals, Lansill Papers, official files."
compromise.  Hale Walker, the Town Planner of Greenbelt said he had never seen a more cooperative group of people. "Everyone seemed to recognize that the problem was town building. Interdepartmental criticism was freely given and taken in good spirit."

For example, if the heating section decided to use coal for fuel instead of oil it would necessitate changes in the house plans to allow for a coal bin and a change in the site plan and street plan to allow coal trucks to deliver directly into the coal bin. The planning staffs worked with almost every department of the government. In his annual report, Lansill expressed gratitude to twenty eight federal agencies, technical associations, corporations and foundations for their cooperation. There is no evidence to support a claim of rivalry between the four staffs as reported in the New York Sun. Conflicts which might have arisen over pay scales were minimized by C.B. Baldwin who asked John A. Overholt of the Civil

21 Interviews with John S. Lansill, Tracy Augur, Albert Mayer, and Warren Vinton.


24 The Sun (New York), July 11, 1936.
Service Commission to draw up classifications and pay scales for all jobs in the R.A. The Resettlement Administration was not under Civil Service but Baldwin found it more desirable and equitable to follow Overholt's recommendations than to involve himself and other R.A. officers in salary disputes.  

The most serious design problems resulted from a lack of experience in the construction of low cost towns. Few architects had designed low cost homes. Few members of the American Institute of Planners were trained in town planning. Most were engineers or landscape architects. "Some of the early studies," commented Clarence Stein, "looked as though they were meant for the Westchester villas of young bankers."  

Information about the needs, desires and financial limitations of low income groups was badly needed to determine proper distribution of funds among the four towns. Initially it was assumed that a total of 5,000 housing units would be constructed with the $31,000,000 

25 Interview with C.B. Baldwin.  
27 Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 120.  
allocation. By February, 1936 when the four planning teams met with Lansill, Bigger and Budget Director Reid Diggs to decide on a "definite" allocation for each town, the total number of housing units was reduced to 3,500 as follows:

- Greenbelt, Maryland: 1,000 units -- $6,950,000
- Greenhills, Ohio: 1,000 units -- $8,750,000
- Greendale, Wisconsin: 750 units -- $7,050,000
- Greenbrook, New Jersey: 750 units -- $7,150,000

Most of the planners felt this was not enough money. Roland Wank said they had a chance of reaching their goal "if nothing unforeseen arises, but I must say that it would be an unforeseen circumstance if nothing unforeseen occurs." 

It was decided to proceed with the intention of constructing the highest quality facilities consistent with a "reasonable first cost." The alternative would have been to construct inexpensive facilities of inferior

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31 Minutes of Project Principals Conference on Allocations, February 7, 1936, Lansill Papers, personal files.
quality. As Tugwell explained to the Regional Planning Commission of Hamilton County, Ohio, in 1936,

It is our belief that the highest standard of construction are essential to genuinely low-cost building...We are asking ourselves most searchingly not "what is the first cost?" but rather; "what do the forty-year costs add up to?"

The planners hoped the towns would provide a yardstick against which architects and builders could measure similar projects. For this reason detailed technical and cost reports were filed in the Suburban Division Library. They represented the most comprehensive record of planning techniques ever made in America. The whole program was a "model cities" experiment in the 1930's.

Fortunately the Suburban Division had acquired large enough tracts of land to allow the planners great latitude in blocking out the towns. The tracts were well beyond built-up urban areas so few roads or structures hindered the development of comprehensive town plans. The only pre-existing physical factor in planning the town layouts was the topography of each tract. At Greenbelt,

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33 Tugwell, Address to the Regional Planning Commission of Hamilton County, Ohio.

34 Unfortunately there is no complete set of reports and recommendations remaining since the disappearance of the Suburban Division Files. The largest collection is in the Lansill Papers, official files.
Hale Walker laid out a sweeping crescent-shaped town along a beautifully wooded ridge with the open end of the crescent facing prevailing summer breezes. Greenhills was built along the crest of a number of small ridges cut by ravines and resulted in a somewhat irregular town pattern. It is situated high above the "grimy but busy" Mill Creek valley affording its residents a spectacular view of the countryside.

Justin Hartzog, the chief planner, said one emerged from the smog in the valley "to burst suddenly out into sunlight and take a deep breath from the upper strata."

Greendale is laid out on very gently rolling land, but the tract is cut by Dale Creek, which runs through its very center and empties into the Root River which flows along the western edge. The two courses meet at the southern end of the town. Instead of using Dale Creek as a convenient drainage ditch, it was incorporated into the town plan as a lovely park.

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37Ibid.
38For a brief discussion on the preservation of streams in subdivisions see Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 140-141.
have been built on almost flat terrain. The chief problem in planning the town would have been a branch line of the Pennsylvania Railroad which ran through the southern edge of the tract and was to have been the center of an industrial park. 39

The planners had to determine the ultimate size of each town. The basic question was how large a community must be to support adequate public and commercial facilities, amortize the mortgage, and still retain a sense of "community". Clarence Stein was asked to prepare several studies one of which explored the financial aspects of this question. He said that if the average resident had an annual income of $1,250, the towns would each require a minimum population of 4,000 to pay for maintenance and administration alone, excluding amortization of the mortgage. Each of the 4,000 residents would cost the town $79.09 per year or $316.36 for a family of four. If the breadwinner's income was $1,250 he would have to pay twenty-five per cent of it in rent to cover this cost. Stein believed twenty-five per cent was too high for families in this income group. However, if the population was

increased the maintenance cost per person would decline so that a town of 7,000 would require $72.02 per person. The dilemma presented by Stein's report was serious. Unless each of the four towns had slightly over 1000 housing units (research at Greenhills indicated the average family size of potential residents to be approximately 3.7 persons), the towns could not afford to maintain services; but 4,000 units were more than the Suburban Division could afford. The solution was to build as many units as possible and plan for the construction of the remaining number of units in the future. In the spring of 1936 the Suburban Division reported that all four towns were planned for populations of between 4,000 and 6,000 families. With continued cutbacks in the number of units, the whole question of the ultimate size became somewhat academic and no clear plans were made for the projected development of the towns with the exception of Greendale. Hartzog spoke of a town of 7,000 people at Greenhills, while the planners

40 Stein, "Report on Operation-Maintenance Costs at Suburban Resettlement Communities," National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308, December 5, 1935.

41 Summary Information Reports for Greenbelt, Greenhills, Greenbrook and Greendale, Lansill Papers, personal files.
of Greenbrook envisioned a total population of 15,000 to 20,000 residents. Greendale's staff set its final number at 12,000. No definite proposal was made for the ultimate size of Greenbelt although Hale Walker mentioned a population of 30,000.\textsuperscript{42}

Low residential density was considered desirable for all the towns. In the residential area of Greendale there were approximately five families per acre. At Greenhills there were 8.5 families per acre and at Greenbelt four families per acre.\textsuperscript{43} There is no comparison between the population densities of the Greenbelt towns and any urban housing projects undertaken by the federal government. The P.W.A. projects, built on land costing anywhere from $50,000 to $350,000 per acre, included as many as eighty-two housing units per acre as in the Harlem River Houses of New York.\textsuperscript{44}

The unique planning feature of the greenbelt towns was, of course, the greenbelt. Its purpose was to \textsuperscript{42}Hartzog, The Planners' Journal, IV (January-February, 1938), 31; Mayer, The American City, LI (May, 1936), 60; "Ultimate Development of Area," Reports and Recommendations, Greendale, Wisconsin, Prepared by Greendale Planning Staff, Book I, p. 3 (in Public Housing Administration Library, Washington, D.C.); and Walker, The Planners' Journal, IV (March-April, 1938), 35.

\textsuperscript{43}Summary Information Reports...

\textsuperscript{44}Report on W.P.A. Housing Division Projects, September, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.
separate the town from surrounding built-up areas, to provide a land reserve for expansion of the community to its pre-determined limit, and to provide a rural environment for the townspeople. The rural use of the greenbelt was given more attention in Resettlement Administration publications and reports than by the planning staffs who generally looked on the greenbelt as an open space buffer area and land reserve. It may be that its possibilities for agricultural use were publicized to satisfy the Comptroller that the towns were in part a rural rehabilitation project and entitled to funds from the Emergency Relief Appropriation. The land at Greenbelt was unsuitable for profitable farming and the planners of Greenhills and Greenbrook gave little attention to agricultural uses of the greenbelt. At Greendale, however, Elbert Peets and Jacob Crane made a detailed recommendation for the creation of what was actually a collective farm on the greenbelt with all the farmers employed on a salary basis with a share in the

45 Letter from Administrator of Resettlement Administration to Comptroller General, October 9, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.

46 Comments on Town Planning by Russell Black, Tracy Augur and Henry Wright, Greenbrook Project Book, (copy in possession of Albert Mayer, New York, New York.)
profits. Both Bigger and Lansill liked the idea, but it was not executed. The planners remodeled some existing farms on the greenbelt and leased them to tenants. All of the towns did make use of an idea advocated by perspective residents—to plan individual flower and vegetable gardens on the greenbelt. An overwhelming majority of families questioned indicated such a desire. Allotment gardens were planned which could be rented for a small annual fee. The gardens became particularly important during World War II when fresh vegetables were difficult to obtain.

The question of the most suitable width for the greenbelt was given careful attention by Tracy Augur. He thought it ought to be at least half a mile wide except where some other physical barrier such as a ravine would make crossing the greenbelt equally difficult. This would direct "the daily contacts of its citizens inward toward the center rather than outward into nearby developments." Augur expanded his ideas,

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47 Elbert Peets and Jacob Crane, "Program for Agricultural Planning at Greendale, "Reports and Recommendations, Greendale, Wisconsin, Book II, and memo from Lansil, September 2, 1936, attached to above.

48 Greenhills Project Book, Lansill Papers, official files.

49 Memo from Tracy Augur to Frederick Bigger, January 21, 1936, Lansill Papers, personal files.
the width of the protective belt should be such that persons living at the edge of the community will not be tempted to walk across it to shopping facilities which may spring up in the surrounding territory, but will instead find it more convenient to go to their own shopping centers within the community. It should be wide enough and open enough in character that persons crossing it by automobile will distinctly realize that they have left one community and entered another. It should be so wide that private subdividers of adjoining land can not make a plausible demand that their tracts be connected with the water and sewer lines and streets of the community. It should be so wide that it would form a natural boundary between school districts so that there would be no temptation to place part of the new community in the same school district with unorganized areas outside.\textsuperscript{50}

This is an interesting proposal for countering urban sprawl. It is unfortunate that none of the greenbelt towns will be able to test the idea. All of them have lost most of their greenbelts.

Initially both Greenbrook and Greendale were to have industrial sites for private corporations. Greenbrook was an obvious choice for a major industrial park. This had been one of the reasons for selecting the site and the subsequent growth of industry in the Bound Brook New Brunswick area indicates the accuracy of that judgment.\textsuperscript{51} After the Greenbrook project was abandoned, the possibility of establishing a ten acre industrial

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51}Interviews with Warren J. Vinton, Albert Mayer and John S. Lansill.
park at Greendale was investigated and rejected. First, no money was available to assist the industries in moving to Greendale and they would not relocate without help. Second, in most of the local factories, half the employees were earning less than the proposed minimum income ($1200) needed for residence in Greendale. However, an area was reserved for future light industry. In 1962 a small (fifty two acres) industrial park was initiated and another 100 acres have since been proposed for industrial use. The inclusion of industry in the original towns might have solved the commuting problem and broadened the town tax base.

The concept of community living was reinforced by the layout of streets and walks. At Greenbrook and Greenbelt curvilinear streets form "super blocks" which were intended to provide a physical basis for the development of neighborhoods. This represented the influence of the 20th century urban sociologist Clarence Arthur Perry who called these blocks the basic components

53Greendale Woman's Club, Greendale...thru 25 years...1938-1963 (Prepared by the Greendale Woman's Club for Greendale's 25th Anniversary), p. 10.
of "neighborhood units." The super block is much larger than the typical gridiron block including fourteen to eighteen acres at Greenbelt and nine to thirty acres at Greenbrook. The homes face the center of the block in which a large common play area is provided. The streets at Greenhills, running along the crests of the ridges, form a kind of natural superblock. The homes again face inward. The superblock also lowered construction costs. At Greenbelt it was calculated to have reduced by thirty per cent the cost of streets, sidewalks and utility lines which would have been built for an equal number of homes laid out in the traditional gridiron block pattern.

Greendale planners rejected the super block as well as curvilinear streets. Elbert Peets, the town planner, was attracted to the traditional architectural


56 Fulmer, "Superblock vs. Gridiron," The American City, LV (July, 1940), 72-73.
styles, particularly that of Colonial Williamsburg which had opened shortly before he was hired by the Suburban Division. Peets said it "was not quite an accident that in its skeleton organization the plan of Greendale is much like the plan of Williamsburg." 57

Careful attention was given to traffic safety in planning the streets and walkways. In each town the street system was constructed so that traffic would not be able to use residential streets for passing through the community, but would travel around it on an artificial highway. A major arterial highway was planned to cut through the center of Greenhills, but the R.A. convinced the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission to relocate it outside the town. 58 At Greendale most residential streets ended in cul-de-sacs. Traffic circulation streets were kept at a minimum and intersections were designed to give drivers wide vision of approaching vehicles and pedestrians. All residents could reach the town center by crossing only one traffic circulation street. Everyone could reach a park or


58 Report on Street and Road System, Greenhills Project Book, Lansill Papers, official files.
playground without crossing a single street. Pedestrian underpasses were planned where walkways crossed major traffic streets. The Greenbelt planners designed many of them but the expense was too great and only a small number were constructed. The other town plans, perhaps because of the cost at Greenbelt, did not include underpasses.

The focal point of each community is the town center. It was agreed that the center should be "more than the usual commercial store center--rather a gathering place and part of the cultural life of the town." Questionnaires sent to local residents helped determine the facilities included in each center. Families in the Washington, D.C. area expressed strong preferences for a library, a swimming pool and a community hall. In the Milwaukee area (where in 1936 there was a tavern for every 300 persons) citizens wanted a tavern along with the library and community hall. Standard shops and


62 Washington Post, February 18, 1936; "Report on Business Center," Reports and Recommendations, Greendale, Wisconsin, Book II. Several of the questionnaires are in the National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308.
stores such as groceries, drug stores, variety shops, beauty parlors and gasoline stations were planned in every town. Greenbelt and Greendale each had a theater. Greenbelt was to have had a small inn to house guests of the town or the Agricultural Research Center. It would have contained a tap room and a 150-seat dining room overlooking the lake for community group dinners.\(^{63}\)

Naturally local fire, police and administration offices were located in the town center. One main building was used for the school by day, a meeting place in the evening, and a church on Sunday. All the town plans had areas set aside for independent church structures though none were built until the 1950's.\(^{64}\)

The schools were planned on the basis of studies made of local systems and costs. The Suburban Division considered it unwise to ask local county school districts in the project areas to provide educational facilities for the sudden influx of children. Therefore, each town was planned to provide twelve grades of instruction for its children. At Greenbelt planners arranged with


Prince Georges County officials to construct the high school independent from the grade school-community center. It would become a regional consolidated high school. Greenhills' high school consolidated five small rural districts and undoubtedly improved the level of secondary education for the area. Greendale's school was intended to be used for all twelve grades but it was too small and the high school students attended school outside the town. 65

The Suburban Division hoped to demonstrate the economy of installing all utilities at the same time. On the other hand, local utility companies hoped to charge high rates for their services thus offsetting the original savings. The town of Greenhills, for example, began negotiations in May, 1936 with the city of Cincinnati for the purchase of water, but the city wanted twenty four cents per thousand cubic feet. The Greenhills planners considered this far too expensive noting that water was sold within the city for only sixteen cents. The R.A.

65 L. Livingston Blair, "Schools in Greenbelt Towns," Lansill Papers, official files; Research on Schools for Projects, prepared by the Research Division, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308; City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, 1937-1962, (Brochure prepared under the auspices of the Silver Anniversary Committee, from material provided by the Greenbelt News Review, with the assistance of local organizations), pp. 27-28; Cincinnati Post, April 2, 1940; and This is Greendale (brochure privately published, (1948)), p. 15.
began negotiating with Hamilton County for the right to drill wells in the Mill Creek Valley. Options were taken on well sites and test wells were drilled. At the last minute, however, the Board of County Commissioner refused to issue the permits apparently due to fears of industries in the valley and neighboring towns that the wells would lower the water table—a possibility the planners denied. In May, 1937, a tripartite agreement between the city of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, and the R.A. allowed water to be supplied through a federally financed water main, but the cost in time and money was great. 66 Fewer utilities would have been purchased from local companies if the Suburban Division had been able to afford independent services. In the spring of 1936 the Suburban Division planners discussed building an electrical generating plant at Greenbelt thereby creating an "all electric" community with rates comparable to the

TVA rates, but the Potomac Electric Power Company provided electricity at a good wholesale rate. The fact that the three towns were all electric (lighting, cooking and hot water) was coincidental as a separate consideration was made for each town. Greenhills would have used gas had it not been offered a lower rate on electricity. Had Greenbrook been built it would have used gas. 67

The continued reduction in the number of homes to be constructed at each of the towns obviously complicated the task of planning utilities. The result was that utilities were laid for many more housing units than were actually constructed. At Greendale all the streets, walks, water and sewer lines were laid for a town of 1,200 families; but the final construction budget allowed only 572 homes to be completed. Utilities at Greenhills were built to serve 1,000 units of housing while only 676 were built. Greenbelt built utilities for 2,000 homes and constructed only 890. Some of the major trunk sewer and water lines were built with a

67 U.S., Resettlement Administration, Weekly Progress Report No. 45, April, 1936, p. 6; Churchill, Chapt. IV, pp. 32-34.
capacity to handle even larger populations. Heating systems for each town caused much debate between planners and engineers. Essentially, the question was whether to install individual heating systems or build central systems making it a public utility. Studies of the installation and operating costs of five different heating systems indicated that central systems were less costly. Other factors, however, complicated the issue. The proponents of individual heating systems argued that 1) the tenant would have more independence and could save money by using less heat, 2) the tenant could burn lower grades of coal or even wood (in a coal-fueled system), 3) operation of the individual system would cost only time to the tenant but a management would have to employ operators which would raise rents, and 4) the cost of laying heating pipes to a large number of small units or to units spread out for a great distance from the heat source would be too expensive. Advocates of central heating answered that 1) underheating of one unit of a multi-family dwelling would rob neighboring units of heat through the walls, 2) the use of low grade coal or wood would ruin the equipment whereas professional

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maintenance of central equipment would result in fewer repairs and greater savings to the tenants in the long run, 3) central heating would allow the use of oil furnaces which could become a cheaper fuel as was already seen in Washington, D.C. and Bound Brook, New Jersey, 4) paternalism would be no more threatening than in centrally heated private apartment buildings and is a problem created by management not the physical plant and, 5) in coal-fueled housing central heating would eliminate the extra cost of ash collection and free the site planner from the limitations imposed by individual coal delivery. Each planning staff made its own decision on the heating system and only Greendale provided individual coal furnaces for the tenants. 69

The most important feature of any community is its homes—they usually represent the most valuable physical property in the town (overwhelmingly so in residential suburbs) and are the buildings in which most of the family living is done. The planning of the homes for the greenbelt towns reveals the only clear disagreement among the planning teams. An attempt was made to formulate a general policy for home planning in October, 1935 when the three staffs from the Greenbelt, Greenhills and Greenbrook projects (no staff for Greendale had been selected at

69Churchill, Chapt. IV, pp. 48-54.
this time) met with the Suburban Division directors and special advisors Henry Wright, Clarence Stein and Catherine Bauer. It was decided to go on the assumption that "they were planning a long term investment for a perpetual entrepreneur" which would justify "increased capital investment if it produces lowered maintenance and operation costs." They also agreed that while one or two types of dwellings might appear to be superior, each community should have a variety of plans and the architects should be allowed "to indulge somewhat (but not too much) in experiments as to type plan." Finally, every effort should be made to determine what type of housing was preferred by potential residents.

Each staff sent out questionnaires to potential residents concerning their living accommodations at the time and what facilities, rooms, home arrangements (i.e. detached, row, or apartment homes) they would prefer. At least two staffs sent field researchers out to gain more detailed knowledge which was supplemented by census information on family size and composition prepared by

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70 Memo from Frederick Bigger, October 23, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.

71 Ibid.

72 Housing Questionnaire prepared for the Resettlement Administration, National Archives, Record Group 96.
the Research Section. Results of the questionnaires revealed striking differences in housing preferences of would-be residents. In the Washington area only thirty-two per cent desired a detached house while sixty-eight per cent in the Cincinnati area and seventy-four per cent in the Milwaukee area indicated that desire. Only in Washington did more families (forty-five per cent) choose a row house over a detached house. Also in Washington, twenty-two per cent wanted apartments while almost no one did in either Cincinnati or Milwaukee.

Field research at Cincinnati indicated a close relationship between income and housing preference. The poorer families assumed that a detached house was out of the question for them even in a government project built for moderate and low incomes. They generally picked row houses which were certainly better than the overcrowded apartments in which they lived.

Most planners agreed that row houses were the only type of dwellings economically feasible for moderate incomes. Henry Churchill's statement that the majority's

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73Memo from Frederick Bigger, October 23, 1935, Lansill Papers, personal files.


desire for a detached house "is a sentimental idea much to recommend it" reflects more than a pure cost analysis and it also represents the thinking of the Greenbrook, Greenhills, and Greenbelt staffs. At Greendale, however, Elbert Peets disagreed. He felt that a detached house was far superior to a row house which had been accepted by "sophisticated planners, largely on the English precedent." He thought each house should stand apart with its own fenced yard around it. It was hoped a useful cost comparison could be made between the detached houses at Greendale and the row house units at the other projects, but the task became impossible and only a rough estimate can be made of per unit costs. Greendale's detached houses at $10,814 per unit compare favorably with Greenhill's row houses at $10,872 per unit and were not a great deal more than Greenbelt's row houses and apartments at $9,909 per unit. Ultimately

76Churchill, Chapt. IV, p. 36.
77Peets in Hegemann, p. 410.
78The unit cost figures are determined by dividing the total expenditure at each project for housing by the number of units constructed. The figures are based on what the author believes are the most authoritative, those given by the Farm Security Administration to the Cooley Committee in 1943, see U.S., Congress, House, Select Committee of the Committee on Agriculture, Hearings to Investigate the Activities of the Farm Security Administration, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1942-1943, pp. 1118-1119.
the Greendale staff had to be content with only 274
detached houses and 298 multi-family units completed the
town. Greendale remains the only public housing pro-
gram which built the detached houses most Americans
apparently prefer.

One of Clarence Stein's studies for the Suburban
Division indicated that seventy per cent of the tenants
would have automobiles. A similar study by the Research
Section for Greenhills showed that ninety per cent would
have them. Some planners thought both figures were much
too high.79 Ironically all three greenbelt towns today
suffer from the large number and increased size of
automobiles; though less so than most other American
towns built before the Second World War. Only Greendale
and Greenbrook attempted to plan for a sizeable number of
individual garages. At Greendale, Peets designed the
house, driveway and garage so the resident has complete
privacy going between his car and home. In this respect,
he concisely tied the home and the outer world together
with the automobile and most accurately anticipated the
home building trend of the future.80

79 Stein, "Report on Operation-Maintenance Costs."
Lowenthal, "Report on Characteristics...in Cincinnati"
and Fulmer, Greenbelt, p. 14.

80 Peets in Hegemann, p. 413.
The homes in each town were designed in a wide variety of floor plans. The number of rooms planned for each of the living units was determined by the Research Section's analysis of family size and composition in each project locality. As originally planned the majority of units in each project were to have two or three bedrooms. Only Greenbelt with thirty-five per cent of its units containing one bedroom planned to accommodate as many single persons and older couples as corresponded to their population in the local area. Greenbrook, Greenhills and Greendale planned a small number of four bedroom units approximating the number of families in the locality needing such rooms. The house designs, therefore, prescribed that the greenbelt towns

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81 Greenhills has thirty-three different interior designs, Greenbrook was to have had nineteen, Greendale has seventeen and Greenbelt thirteen. The only extensive collection of house plans are found in the project books of the four towns and in other papers of the Lansill official files. The best published selection of house plans and exterior elevations is found in "Comparative Architectural Details in the Greenbelt Housing," American Architect and Architecture, CIL (October, 1936), pp. 20-36.

82 The figures for the towns are as follows: Greenbelt--sixty-five per cent, Greenbrook--seventy-five per cent, Greenhills--seventy-eight per cent and Greendale--eighty-one per cent. See Churchill, Chapt. IV, pp. 37-39.

83 Ibid.
would be populated primarily by young families with one or two children.

Experiments were made combining the dining and living rooms and also in planning the living room for use as a bedroom at night. At Greenbrook field researchers found that local residents treated the living room as a "parlor" using it only on special occasions. One house plan placed the stairway to the second floor in the living room in an attempt to force more use of this room. Windows were situated to give maximum light and air circulation. In this last respect the relationship of one building to another was as important as proper placing of windows. Scale models of each project enabled the architects to see more accurately the relationship of each building and each room and each window to its surroundings. The use of scale models was still new and the use of the "heliodon"—a light positioned to show the shadow pattern for any time of the day over a contour model of the site with its trees and buildings—was just being tested by Henry Wright at Columbia University.


The Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration under the direction of Adrian Dormbush employed artists to design furniture for the tenants and sculptured pieces for each of the town centers. The furniture was produced under contract by private companies. It could be purchased at cost by any tenant of the greenbelt towns through the Treasury Department. It was made of oak and an entire house could be furnished for $300 to $400. Like the housing at Greenbelt and Greenhills it was functional and very sturdy. The furniture was well received in both trade and popular journals. The home furnishing edition of Retailing praised the R.A. for its high quality inexpensive designs and also for allowing private firms to manufacture it. House Beautiful was even more enthusiastic in a short paragraph lauding the designs as splendid examples of the functional theory of art.

87 "Cooperative Corners: Greenbelt, Maryland," Literary Digest, CXXIV (October 16, 1937), p. 16.
There is a welcome absence of "gingerbread" so often found on inexpensive furniture and used primarily to cover up structural defects. The beauty of the Resettlement furniture is not the self-conscious "arty" type, but functional and therefore living and real. Its freshness and simplicity have grown out of the very limitations imposed upon the designers. 89

The statuary designed for the three town centers is indicative of the Resettlement Administration's desire to create towns in the pattern of the traditional small town for there is hardly a community in the nation without at least one statue. The pieces were designed by the Special Skills Division and executed by artists obtained through the W.P.A. The results range from an attractive group of figures cut by Alonzo Hauser for Greendale to a ponderous statue of a mother and child by Lenore Thomas in Greenbelt's central plaza. 90 Greenhills never received its statues. The W.P.A. sculptor, Seth Velsey, began cutting four figures out of twenty tons of rock in the yard of a Dayton, Ohio stone company and had completed two of the figures by May, 1942 when the W.P.A. fired him. In April, 1948, the stone company wrote the Greenhills town manager asking for six years storage fees on the stones.

89 "Low Cost Furniture," House Beautiful, LXXIX (April, 1937), pp. 131-133, (the article is accompanied by photographs).

The request was sent to the Comptroller's Office in Washington but nothing was done about it. Greenhills has not yet received its statuary.

With all the thought and debate that went into the greenbelt towns the exterior design of the buildings is generally disappointing. Henry Churchill, an advisor to the Suburban Division and vigorous supporter of the program admitted that the exteriors were "competent and undistinguished." At Greenbelt one of the architects said "there was no conscious effort to follow any set precedent in the design of the buildings," and if one had to label the style it could be called "functional" or "contemporary." Greenbelt's row houses and apartments look like solidly built boxes pierced with windows and their appearance is redeemed only by their placement in the landscape. The units at Greenhills are similar except for an unsuccessful attempt to hide the box-like skeletons with several types of exterior trim. One explanation for the cinder block flat roofed buildings

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92 Churchill, Chapt. IV, p. 45.

93 Fulmer, "Greenbelt Architecture," Greenbelt Cooperator, December 1, 1937.
at Greenbelt was that more complex structures would require more skilled labor than could be drawn from the relief rolls. Greenbelt's architecture is an example of what the designers of the 1930's regarded as the "New Tradition" (now called the International Style) in architecture—a reaction against the ornamentation and sentimental traditionalism of Victorian styles which held their own in the United States through the 1920's. In Europe the Bauhaus architects created "functional" buildings of which the Greenbelt and Greenhills structures are but poor reflections. The harsh conclusion of two eminent architectural historians is that the level of all the New Deal architecture "was almost as low as the level of its painting and considerably less amusing."

That conclusion is certainly not true of Greendale which, from an aesthetic point of view, is the most interesting greenbelt town. Elbert Peets was the only

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94 Fulmer, "Why Some Greenbelt Houses Have Flat Roofs," Greenbelt Cooperator, January 5, 1938.


96 Burchard and Bush-Brown, p. 399.
planner to unashamedly concern himself with "civic art."
In 1922 Peets had collaborated with architectural historian Werner Hegemann on *The American Vitruvius: An Architect's Handbook of Civic Art*. They hoped to emphasize the "art" side of architecture and city planning because they felt the profession was "drifting too strongly in the directions of engineering and applied sociology."97 American colonial traditions provided the inspiration for Greendale's architecture. Peets seemed to take literally the injunctions of men like Stein, Churchill and Mayer to recreate the closeness of the colonial village. Greendale's houses are set in the American colonial and European village pattern—close to the street with small fenced yards on the side and rear. While all the towns are green and spacious only Greendale has charm and atmosphere. As the towns grow older the homes at Greenbelt and Greenhills will require more modern facing materials whereas the houses at Greendale will look more authentic with each new coat of paint. Greenbelt and Greenhills are recognizable as institutional type structures while Greendale, even with row houses, looks like a collection of individual homes which happened to grow together into a lovely village.

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No description of the towns can equal a short stroll through them. While better materials, more efficient shopping centers, and better house plans have since been developed, community planning—the integration of all these elements—was not seriously attempted again in America until the 1960's. The planners of the greenbelt towns showed remarkable imagination and thoroughness in the face of great pressures. Tugwell, Lansill and Bigger had the courage to act on Daniel Burnham's directive to "make no little plans."98 Possibly the best tribute to the greenbelt town planners came from the National Association of Real Estate Board's Confidential Weekly Letter which, between its denunciation of all government housing programs, praised the three towns for their "excellent design."99


99National Association of Real Estate Boards, Confidential Weekly Letter, August 30, 1937.
CHAPTER V
CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWNS

Construction began even before the creation of the Construction Division which was organized on December 1, 1935. It had previously been under the direct control of the Suburban Division.\(^1\) The commencement of work at Greenbelt started "a spectacular race between the architects and the construction engineers...Plans were rushed to the blueprinters almost before the last lines were drawn—in order to keep ahead of the surveyors and steam shovels."\(^2\) Since the entire greenbelt program was geared to the employment of relief workers the hiring schedule set the pace for the entire program—if drawings or materials failed to arrive when the hiring schedule called for the employment of several hundred workers, the men were given make-work projects absorbing thousands of dollars each day.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Wadsworth, Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project, Lansill Papers, official files.

\(^2\)Fulmer, *Greenbelt*, p. 17.

\(^3\)Wadsworth, Summary Description.
George E. Allen, the District of Columbia W.P.A. Administrator, turned the first spade of dirt at Greenbelt on October 12, 1935 and told reporters that the project solved "the greatest single relief problem which the District Government faces." The problem was indeed great. The District housed approximately 1500 transient men at five locations. The men were unskilled, diseased and hopeless. There was constant "fighting, drinking, gambling, and dope peddling in the transient lodges." Conditions were worse for the several hundred Negroes who were housed and fed separately in a warehouse at 12th and N Streets.

The Suburban Division took over the transient lodges and began to move the able-bodied men out to Greenbelt. A number were suffering from venereal diseases and were shipped to Fort Eustis, Virginia for treatment. Over 600 of the men were unable to perform manual labor, but there is no record of whether the Suburban Division continued to house them or sent them back to another relief agency. To pay for lodging and meals the other

4Washington Star, October 12, 1935.
5Greenbelt Labor, Lansill Papers, personal files.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.
900 were employed 136 hours per month instead of the usual 88 hours. However, the cost of room and board was considerably more than the extra 48 hours of labor. A remarkable improvement was observed in the morale of the transients. Most of the violence and disorganization in the lodges disappeared. The Negro lodge underwent a renaissance. The men formed their own policing system and lodge council. They organized sports teams, purchased equipment for the lodge and even put on a vaudeville show. It was estimated that the transients were at least seventy-five per cent as efficient as regular wage workers—far more than the Suburban Division expected. Some of the men worked only until their first paycheck and then disappeared, but most stayed with the project until its completion.\(^8\) At Greenbelt the transients began work two weeks before road and street plans were available. They were first used to clear trees and excavate the site for a man-made lake. They continued to be used primarily for pick and shovel work. This may have been why a proposal for a C.C.C. camp at Greenbelt was dismissed.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Memo from Wallace Richards to Lansill, April 6, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files; and Fulmer, p. 16.

While there was no group comparable to the D.C. transients in the Cincinnati or Milwaukee areas, there were substantial numbers of unemployed men who were hired before they were needed. Greenhills along with Greendale was begun in December. The Greenhills planners didn't even receive the topographical survey of the site until December 30 and thus were not able to submit any road plans until the end of January. The plans were further revised after a field study at the site and construction on the first streets and residential units did not begin until March, 1936. From the inception of construction on December 15, until early March, between 100-200 laborers were employed each day but there was very little useful work for them to perform. 10 At Greendale between eighty and one hundred men were employed through the winter, but little could be accomplished because the original topographical survey (made through tenfoot snow drifts) proved to be inaccurate and streets could not be redrawn and staked out until late April. 11


Once blueprints reached the field the R.A. substantially increased the number of employees. From March, 1936 to November, 1938 the payrolls for the three projects never fell below 3,000. During the six peak months of 1936-1937 over 8,000 were employed. A total of over 13,000 people worked at Greenbelt making it one of the largest single projects built during the New Deal.  

Employment policies of the Suburban Division were determined primarily by C. B. Baldwin, who was an Assistant Administrator of the R.A. However, he was required by the President's original allocation letter to obtain written approval from the Works Progress Administration affirming that there was a sufficient number of unemployed laborers on relief to warrant funding of the project from the emergency relief appropriations. The W.P.A. also had to consent, in each instance, to the hiring of laborers from outside the relief group.  

12 The employment totals can be located in U.S., Farm Security Administration, Progress Report No. 103, April, 1938, p. 27. The Greenbelt figure is in U.S., Resettlement Administration, Monthly Progress Report No. 49, September, 1936, p. 31 (The Monthly Progress Reports replaced the Weekly Progress Reports but consecutive numbering was continued.) The 13,000 figure is in a memo from Wallace Richards to Lansill, April 6, 1937, Lansill Papers, personal files.  

13 Letter from Roosevelt to Tugwell, September 23, 1935 and quoted in U.S., Resettlement Administration, Weekly Progress Report, No. 18, October 19, 1935; and Interview with C.B. Baldwin.
Approval to begin the projects was quickly obtained, but the hiring of non-relief labor caused some conflict between the R.A. and the W.P.A. Harry Hopkins was interested in employing as many relief workers as possible so efficient use of labor was of little interest to him. The R.A. hoped that 90 per cent of its laborers could be taken from the relief group, but this proved to be impossible. Therefore, whenever the R.A. found it necessary to hire skilled labor from outside the relief group, the W.P.A. would approve only on the condition that a larger number of unskilled relief workers be hired at the same time. The unemployed men were willingly taken on, but R.A. officials regretted that there was often little productive work for them to do, particularly in the latter stages of construction.14

As construction progressed more skilled labor was needed and the Suburban Division was forced to seek it from local labor markets. At Greenbelt, for example, only forty-five of the 1,000 laborers were non-relief workers in November, 1935. In May, 1936 the R.A. hired 650 skilled workers from the non-relief group.15 By February, 1937 forty per cent of the 2,000 laborers were drawn from outside the relief rolls, and rose to sixty per cent by June, 1937.

14 Summary Information Reports; and Interview with C.B. Baldwin.

15 Baltimore Sun, May 6, 1936.
While detailed figures are not as complete for the other two towns, the same approximate ratio had been reached by the summer of 1937. The R.A. was forced to undermine its preferential policy for relief laborers for two reasons. First, the R.A. refused to use unskilled men to do skilled union jobs and rapidly absorbed all the local union construction workers on relief, leaving no alternative but to seek non-relief union men. Second, training unskilled workers to perform complex jobs would have increased costs and risked the building of inferior facilities. The priority goal was to reduce future maintenance and replacement costs by building high quality structures in the beginning. For these reasons, the Greenhills community building and most of the utilities were built under competitive private contracts. In the case of the community building the contractor substantially underbid the R.A.'s own Construction Division. The community building at Greendale was also built under

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17 General Historical Analysis: Greenhills Project.
private contract, but the installation of utilities was done by R.A. laborers. The construction of the Greenbelt water system was accomplished by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission under a special contract.

Local labor practices regarding job classifications were adopted. All hourly wage rates followed prevailing local pay scales for each trade. Wage rates varied considerably at the three projects. At Greenbelt skilled laborers earned as much as $1.75 per hour while at Greenhills the maximum was $1.37. Unskilled workers classified as "common laborers" received sixty-nine cents per hour at Greendale and at Greenbelt they received fifty-one cents (which later rose to fifty-seven cents). The R.A.'s work rules and wage policy were heartily endorsed by organized labor. The unions had failed to

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18 Kroening and Dieter, Civil Engineering (February, 1938), p. 94.

19 U.S., Resettlement Administration, Press Release, June 4, 1936 (located in Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.).


21 U.S., Farm Security Administration, Final Report of Project Costs Including Analysis of Actual Construction Costs from Inception of Project to June 30, 1938, August 30 1939, National Archives, Record Group 16 (mimeographed); and Washington Star, September 7, 1936; and Milwaukee Journal, September 17, 1936.

obtain a mandatory prevailing wage policy for federal relief projects. 23 In sharp contrast, the Federal Housing Administration did not require union work rules or prevailing wages on F.H.A. financed construction, and W.P.A. projects in Prince Georges County paid far below the rate at Greenbelt. 24 The W.P.A.'s "security wage" was below the R.A.'s wage at every level of skill. Unskilled laborers at Greenbelt made $44.88 per month compared to $35.00 a month for the W.P.A. unskilled laborer. Also, all R.A. laborers worked only 88 hours per month for their wage while W.P.A. laborer worked 130 hours. R.A. skilled laborers who drew the highest hourly rate ($1.75) made $154.00 per month compared to $52.00 for the skilled W.P.A. laborer. 25

In spite of the R.A.'s beneficient policies the wages for unskilled laborers were low considering that


24 "Reasons for Excessive Costs in Developing Program" (memo approved by Suburban Division Planning Staff), October, 1936, Lansill Papers, official files.

the men were only allowed to work eighty-eight hours per month so that more individuals could be employed. If the Resettlement project was the only source of income for the laborers and they were only able to work eighty-eight hours per month, only those who earned $1.15 per hour could meet the $1200 minimum income requirement for residency in the very towns which the government labelled "low income" housing. There is evidence to indicate that some of the laborers secretly took outside work to supplement their $700-$800 annual income. The average annual income of skilled laborers working on the greenbelt towns was estimated by an R.A. labor relations official to be almost $1,900.

Naturally, local politicians were eager to obtain what they considered their fair share of the jobs for their unemployed constituents. Senator Tydings protested to Tugwell that not enough Maryland laborers were being used at Greenbelt. A rumor that the Greenhills, Ohio project might be abandoned brought immediate and strong

26 "Reasons for Excessive Costs..."


response from a host of Cincinnati and Hamilton County officials.\textsuperscript{29} There was also the danger with so large a program that unscrupulous R.A. officials would use their positions to political or private advantage. Only one case of political pressure was discovered. The Assistant Superintendent of the Greenhills Construction Division was soliciting funds and forcing employees to attend local Democratic Party meetings. The individual was immediately dismissed.\textsuperscript{30} At Greenbelt a truck driver was fired for "loan sharking" and, in a more serious case, the Supervisor of Labor Management at Greenbelt withheld paychecks from 500 employees until they paid personal debts to him or to several stores in Washington which allegedly hired him to collect bills. Both individuals were investigated by the Justice Department.\textsuperscript{31} These appear to be the only cases of graft connected with the greenbelt towns. No other charges appear in the existing

\textsuperscript{29}Cincinnati Inquirer, June 6, 1936.

\textsuperscript{30}New York Times, October 10, 1936 and October 16, 1936. Hewes recalls the man in question rushing into his office "in a towering rage" saying, "I was only trying to help Roosevelt! Why should you get mad?", in Hewes, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{31}U.S., Department of Justice, Report (Files on George R. Hackett and Charles Meredith), R.O.A., H.H.F. A., Drawer 528.
government records or in the local press.

To give more men jobs hand labor was often preferred over machines. When relief laborers at Greenbelt were forced to use shovels instead of bulldozers Tugwell reportedly infuriated Roosevelt by suggesting the President might like them to use spoons.32 Even horse-drawn wagons were used for hauling at the Greendale site.33 R.A. officials and particularly the planners felt some frustration watching their funds drain away. John Lansill however accepted it philosophically noting that the funds were, after all, allocated primarily to make jobs.34

Provision of transportation for the worker put a further strain on the budget. Men working at Greenbelt were bussed from Washington and Baltimore. But when their numbers increased special trains took them to Branchville Maryland where trucks picked them up for the last two miles of the journey. The cost of the trains was sixty


33 Milwaukee Journal, April 4, 1937.

34 Lansill, Final Report on the Greenbelt Town Program.
cents per man per day. At Greenhills the Cincinnati Street Railway Company lodged a formal protest to the Ohio Public Utilities Commission complaining that the R.A. was transporting people from Cincinnati without a license and illegally competing with the C.S.R. At Greendale a spur rail line was built into the project site over which men and materials arrived from Milwaukee. Again, in contrast to the R.A., the W.P.A. did not provide for the transportation of its employees to its projects.

Impending deadlines necessitated the purchase of materials before planning was completed. It was impossible to estimate correct quantities accurately but to wait for blueprints would have left hundreds of laborers without work. The engineering section's unfamiliarity with procedures resulted in delivery of some items that were wrong in size and quantity. Orders were processed for

35 Memo from Wallace Richards to Lansill, n.d., Lansill Papers, official files; and U.S., Resettlement Administration, Press Release, May 12, 1936 (located in Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.).


37 Kroening and Dieter, Civil Engineering (February 1938), p. 94.

38 Howard, p. 204.
through a "ponderous" federal purchasing system designed for longer-term projects. The Procurement Division of the Treasury Department had to advertise for bids on each item—a process that usually took four weeks. Often separate bids on component parts of the same item were accepted and the parts were found to be slightly unmatched. Some companies bid so low as to be unable to deliver the goods. Other firms found that government building contracts were not as profitable as private ones in 1936-1937 when the price of construction materials was rising. Notwithstanding, the quality of materials was "the best money could buy." No experimentation was done with materials but the concrete and cinder block structures in the three towns will last a century or two.

In the winter and spring of 1935-1936 even the weather conspired against the construction of the towns.

39 Lansill, Final Report on Greenbelt Town Program.

40 "Reasons for Excessive Costs..."


43 Tugwell, Address to the Regional Planning Commission of Hamilton County, Ohio. Officials at all three towns told the author the structures would last at least 100 years—several believed they would stand much longer.
Progress was slowed at Greenbelt by "one of the worst winters in Washington's history." In January and February frost penetrated to a depth of fourteen inches delaying the digging of foundations and the pouring of cement. Nevertheless, the R.A. kept all its 1,122 workers on the payroll. Several hundred men were employed at Greenhills, Ohio clearing the site; but deep snow and below-zero weather greatly reduced their efficiency. During several weeks in February no work at all could be done in surveying and clearing the site at Greendale, Wisconsin because the snow stood eight to ten feet deep. It took several days to clear even a single road into the project. No workers were laid off during the stoppage. In March the weather broke at Greenbelt. The ice turned to water and heavy rain fell. The roads to the project became impassable and 250 men were put to work trying to improve them.

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44 Baltimore Sun, March 31, 1936.
summer Greenbelt made great progress and after a year of work, 838 dwelling units were underway and over half were under roofs. At Greendale and Greenhills work was proceeding rapidly, but no units had been roofed. The winter of 1936-1937 was not particularly cold but very heavy rains fell. At Greenbelt the rain delayed delivery of materials though interior work continued. All work stopped at Greehills in mid-January 1937 while the 2,000 workers and their equipment help clean up the city of Cincinnati after the disastrous flood in the Ohio and Miami River valleys. The project site, located on high ground, was not inundated by the flood but there was no electric power, water nor adequate transportation. 47

The towns were finally completed—Greenbelt in the fall of 1937, Greenhills and Greendale in June, 1938—three years after the organization of the Resettlement Administration. 48

47 U.S., Resettlement Administration, Weekly Progress Report No. 72, January 27, 1937; General Historical Analysis: Greenhills Project; and U.S., Resettlement Administration, Press Release, January 25, 1937 (located in Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.).

48 The original construction schedule called for the completion of Greenbelt in December, 1936 while the other three towns were to be ready for occupancy by February, 1937. See the Summary Information Reports for Greenbelt, Greenhills, Greendale and Greenbrook.
The relief function of the greenbelt town program ended in June, 1938. Altogether it had provided jobs for 20,000-30,000 men. However, the cost to the R.A. was high. At Greenbelt (for which the only detailed figures are available), labor costs comprised 67.8 per cent of land development and construction compared to the average thirty to forty-five per cent in private industry.

In February, 1936 the total costs were estimated at $29,900,000 but that figure was subject to drastic revision. Prediction of labor costs was hampered by the force account system of hiring which required direct hiring of

\[^{49}\text{Wallace Richards estimated that 13,000 people were employed at Greenbelt. The other two towns each maintained payrolls two-thirds the size of Greenbelt's and did so for approximately the same number of months as Greenbelt. Therefore, it can be assumed that approximately 8,500 people were employed at each of the other two towns making a grand total of 30,000. Richard's estimate however, may be inaccurate. During the period of peak employment (October, 1935 to January, 1938) an average of approximately 5,000 people were working on the three towns each month. To achieve the total figure of 30,000, each job had to turn over six times. No records of job turnover have survived nor have the actual payroll records. The R.A. Weekly and Monthly Progress Reports give only the total number of men at work on each town at the end of each month.}\]

\[^{50}\text{The Greenbelt figure is from U.S., Farm Security Administration, Final Report of Project Costs... The figure for private industry is from U.S., National Resources Planning Board, Housing: The Continuing Problem (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), p. 38.}\]
day laborers instead of letting contracts for the job to be done. During the spring of 1936 when construction began on a large scale planners were able for the first time to project fairly accurate total cost figures. They were compelled to reduce the total number of dwellings for each town. Consequently, by June, 1936 Greenbelt was to have 1,300 units, Greenhills—1,000 units, and Greendale and Greenbrook—750 apiece. The number of units was further decreased until the final figures were substantially lower than planned: Greenbelt contained 885 units plus five farm houses (547 row houses in tow story units, 306 units in four story apartment buildings, and five prefabricated detached houses); Greendale contained 572 units plus sixty-five farm houses (274 detached houses, ninety semi-detached houses, and 208 units in two story row houses); Greenhills contained 676 units plus fifty-six farm houses (152 apartments, 500 units in two story row houses, and twenty-four detached houses).

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fact for the planners and architects was that only forty per cent of the dwelling units envisioned in the fall of 1935 were actually constructed. Not only had many hours of planning been wasted, but all original calculations for stores, schools and other facilities were undone by a severely decreased population. The cost of operating schools and commercial establishments would be extremely high if the standards set for the larger towns were retained. Even with the elimination of Greenbrook and 1,400 from the other three towns, the total development cost was over $36,000,000.

Since much of the criticism levelled at the greenbelt towns was based on the high costs, an explanation of how these figures were calculated is helpful. The federal government published confusing and, at times, conflicting cost figures. For example, at Greenbelt the most detailed cost figures are listed in the Farm Security Administration's Final Report of Project Costs: Greenbelt, Maryland and set the total cost of the project at $14,016,270.61. However, that figure includes two items outside the cost of the town itself—"Farm Improvements" which amounted to $30,172.04 and was not computed in the R.A.'s per-unit cost of the Greenbelt dwellings, and $122,309.33 for household furniture which was sold to the residents. Deducting those two items
lowers the total cost of Greenbelt to $13,863,789.24. 54

In 1940 the Farm Security Administration listed Greenbelt's total development cost at $13,394,006.00. 55 Yet again, in 1943 during the Cooley Committee hearings on the R.A. and F.S.A., the cost was cited as $13,701,817.00. 56

As for cost per unit, the F.S.A. Final Report adds the cost of house construction ($7,361,269.35) to overhead ($624,476.68) for a total of $7,985,746.03 or $8,972.00 per unit. 57 The F.S.A. pamphlet of 1940 and the figures given to the Cooley Committee in 1943 cite $8,819,732.66 as the total cost of Greenbelt housing which is $9,909.00 per unit. 58 This last is the figure Tugwell accepted as the cost per unit at Greenbelt. 59

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56 U.S., Congress, House, Select Committee of the House Committee on Agriculture, Hearing to Investigate the Activities of the Farm Security Administration 1942-1943, 78th Cong., 1st Sess, 1943, pp. 1118-1119. (Hereafter cited as Cooley Committee Hearings.).


58 Cooley Committee Hearings, pp.1118-1119; U.S., Farm Security Administration, "Greenbelt Communities", p. 10.

59 Tugwell, The New Republic, XC (February 17, 1937), p. 42. Neither Tugwell or any other R.A. official published an estimate of the excess cost arising from the
Another way of computing the unit cost would be to divide the total project cost (houses, roads, community buildings, schools, rural lands etc.) by the 890 units constructed—a per unit cost of approximately $15,000 if the $13,701,817.00 total cost is used. Figures on the other two towns, based on the Cooley Committee hearings, are $11,860,627.00 total for Greenhills ($8,012,917.00 for housing or $10,872.00 per unit) and $10,638,465.00 total for Greendale ($6,601,376.00 for housing or $10,314.00 per unit). The cost of the three greenbelt towns together amounted to $36,200,909.00. The number of housing units of the three towns combined is only one-seventh of the total number built by the R.A. and F.S.A. However, the total cost of the three towns comprised slightly over one-third of the $104,895,624.00 expended by the two agencies on all 193 of their communities.  

inefficiency of the relief labor used at Greenbelt. The New York Times however, quoted an unnamed R.A. official who said it increased the cost by $4,902,000. See New York Times, October 10, 1937

60 Cooley Committee Hearings, pp. 1118-1119.

CHAPTER VI
THE FEDERAL LANDLORD

Contrary to its original intention, the Resettlement Administration retained ownership of the greenbelt towns. This arrangement greatly encumbered the towns' political, economic and social institutions and ultimately jeopardized the entire program. The R.A. stated that it did not intend the greenbelt communities to be "federal islands", but rather "normal American communities in which every person has his full share of both duties and privileges."¹ From Tugwell down officials stated that the federal government would divest itself of ownership after the towns were completed.

When the construction of each demonstration is completed, the entire property will be conveyed by the Federal Government to a nonprofit corporation or local housing authority. Thereafter, the only function of the Federal Government will be to see that restrictions to preserve the original character of the development are carried out...Each community will be a tax paying participant in the region.²

¹U.S., Resettlement Administration, Greenbelt Towns, pp. 30-31.
²U.S., Resettlement Administration, First Annual Report, p. 44.
But preservation of the original character of the towns seemed difficult to insure once they were transferred to private ownership and local political control. In part, R.A. officials decided by default to keep the towns under federal ownership. They procrastinated and debated on this and many other matters until it was too late to do anything else.

Will Alexander states that there was considerable disagreement on the question of turning the towns over to a private housing corporation. He suspected that a group of people surrounding Lee Pressman, the General Counsel, had little faith in the system of private ownership and were able to postpone the question and keep the R.A. from making any clear-cut disposition plan. "Our difficulty," says Alexander, "was that we just couldn't make up our mind. It was generally assumed that sometime we would, but we never got it done." 3 This, Alexander later said, was a serious error, because even though he, Tugwell and C.B. Baldwin believed the greenbelt towns would be better maintained with the land in public hands, "the belief in the desirability of land ownership as a sound policy is

so deeply engraved in our people that when you go against it, you can't maintain any such policy as that in Congress." Alexander was correct in his suspicion.

Both Pressman and Baldwin opposed the transfer of the greenbelt towns to private ownership and these two men were closer to Tugwell and to the Suburban Division than was Alexander. However, they could not seriously advocate federal retention of the towns until a legal device was found by which the residents could be taxed and operate a government within the state structures while the town remained federally owned.5

On October 20, 1935, Lee Pressman, recommended that the Greenbelt, Maryland project "should be entrusted to local controls...the forms of community organization should be adapted to the normal conditions present in like communities in the vicinity."6 To maintain the garden city concept of single ownership, the land and structures should be deeded to "some corporate entity created under the laws of Maryland."7 If the project

5 Interview with C.B. Baldwin.
7 Ibid.
remained under direct federal ownership not only would the state and local governments be unable to tax it, but Greenbelt citizens would "not be entitled to the ordinary rights and privileges of state citizenship." In view of the charges then being made by local citizens in Prince Georges County, Maryland (Greenbelt) and Somerset County, New Jersey (Greenbrook) that the Resettlement towns would destroy the tax base, some action had to be taken. The R.A.'s early press releases and other publications indicated the towns would become normal tax paying communities. In December, 1935, Tugwell decided to transfer ownership of the towns to the people living in them. Residents would be citizens of the state, pay all state and local taxes and retire their mortgage with the R.A. from rent payments to their own privately controlled housing authority. It was contemplated that the housing authority would sign a contract whereby the R.A. would administer the projects "for a term of years."  

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8 Ibid.

9 U.S., Resettlement Administration, Interim Report, pp. 24-25. The housing authority would be an independent public corporation with power to operate the project as well as finance and construct further additions. See National Association of Housing Officials, Housing Officials Yearbook, 1937 (Chicago: The National Association of Housing Officials) p. 160.

10 Clarence I. Blau to Lansill, December 30, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308.
However, further analysis showed this plan to be financially unfeasible. Stein's report on operation-maintenance costs was based on a projected income level averaging $1,250 and indicated that the towns would have to have at least 1,000 units simply to pay maintenance costs. Mortgage payments were not included in this study. Another report on operating expenses submitted in February by Wallace Richards was also based on a town of 1,000 units. It projected operating costs at $353,663 which was very close to the actual expense at Greenbelt during its early years. Added to this amount, however, was an annual charge of $105,000 towards amortization of the mortgage. The mortgage was for $7,000,000 (the estimated total cost of Greenbelt) to be paid over sixty-seven years at one and a half per cent interest.\(^\text{11}\)

Simply to meet operating costs, the average income of the tenants would have to be above $1,250 unless they paid more than twenty per cent of their income for housing.

As the total cost of Greenbelt rose, the planners tried to increase the number of units. In July, 1936, Greenbelt was raised from 1,000 to 1,300 units, but this was cut back the next month to 1,250.\(^\text{12}\) Sometime during the fall

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\(^\text{11}\) Stein, "Report on Operation-Maintenance Costs at Suburban Resettlement Communities,"; Memo from Wallace Richards to Lansill, February 18, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 98.

\(^\text{12}\) U.S., Resettlement Administration, Monthly
it was reduced again to the 885 units which were then under construction. This put Greenbelt below Stein's figure for minimum pay-as-you-go services, not to speak of Greenhills with only 672 units and Greendale with 572.

The R.A. was caught in a dilemma. If the towns were transferred to a private housing corporation rents would have to exceed the amount low or moderate income families could afford. This would not only contradict all the announced intentions of the Resettlement Administration, but might be an illegal use of the project funds under the executive order directing the R.A. to resettle "destitute or low income families." On the other hand if the R.A. were to sell the towns at a price the residents could afford, the result would amount to a gigantic subsidy for a very small number of people.

The third alternative was for the R.A. to retain ownership of the towns.

The Bankhead-Black Act (49 Stat. 2035, 40 U.S.C. 431) of June 29, 1936 made federal retention of the towns practicable. The Act held that federal ownership of resettlement project property did not "deprive any State of political subdivision thereof of its civil and criminal jurisdiction in and over such property, or...

\[1^{3}\text{E.O. 7027 cited in Rosenman, IV, p. 144.}\]
impair the civil rights under the local law of the tenants or inhabitants on such property." The Resettlement Administration was additionally authorized to negotiate with local taxing units "for the payment by the United States of sums in lieu of taxes...based upon the cost of the public or municipal services to be supplied." Payments were to be taken from receipts derived from operation of the projects.\textsuperscript{14}

Although the hearings were primarily concerned with the rural property held by the R.A., the greenbelt towns were mentioned briefly in regard to selling them when completed. Deputy Administrator W.W. Alexander affirmed that this was the plan.\textsuperscript{15} The issue became confused when Representative Carl Vinson, appearing on behalf of William Bankhead, said the bill was intended to cover only those projects which were "strictly farming" and suggested a separate bill be introduced for the towns. Fortunately, R.A. officials had solicited the aid of Representative John McCormack, Chairman of the Committee, who ignored Vinson's suggestion.\textsuperscript{16} McCormack

\textsuperscript{14}U.S., Statutes at Large, XL, Part 1, pp. 2035-2036.

\textsuperscript{15}U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings on H.R. 12876, Payments in Lieu of Taxes on Resettlement Projects, 74th Cong., 2d Sess., 1936, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{16}Interview with Warren J. Vinton.
made clear, however, that the Act would only provide a temporary solution for the towns "until the whole matter is given further consideration." Pressman agreed.

McCormack then asked for a further definition of the taxation problem and Pressman replied,

With respect to the housing problem, particularly in suburban resettlement projects, if we do not make some arrangement with respect to our taxing problem we are undoubtedly going to be combatted by every single local taxing unit through lawsuits, local comment and local prejudice, and what not; and it is very difficult to estimate just what kind of a situation we are going to have if we do not satisfy the local governmental units and the people in those local communities...(At Greenhills) They have asked us what arrangements we are going to make before the year is over. In fact, they must be made within the next month, because they are fixing their tax rate; they want to know what arrangements we will make to reimburse that school district, for the extra expenses to be imposed on the other members living in the school district, because of the large school facilities required for the youngsters that we will bring into that community. Our answer has been that we simply cannot tell. We have no way of arranging it...The indication is that probably they will start a lawsuit to enjoin us from going on with our project. That is the situation in every one of the other communities where we are acquiring land. The problem is exactly the same. It comes up first in connection with school districts and school facilities. Undoubtedly it will come up in connection with all the other taxing units which cover the properties that we are acquiring, and all of the other community services.18

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Although the R.A.'s First Annual Report, submitted over four months after the passage of the Bankhead-Black Act, reiterated the intention of transferring ownership of the towns the administrators were not fully committed.19

In January, 1937, Lansill inquired what legal problems would be involved "if Greenbelt is operated eventually by the Federal Government instead of being leased to a local corporation."20 Neither possibility—leasing or directly operating the towns—had been mentioned to the congressional committee or otherwise publicized. Nevertheless, the Solicitor of the Department of Agriculture replied to Lansill that the Bankhead-Black Act would allow the Resettlement Administration to become landlord of Greenbelt.21 Such action would still enable the community to be incorporated and have a regular town government.22

Lansill's inquiries regarding Greenbelt were very likely occasioned by the difficulties encountered in

19U.S., Resettlement Administration, First Annual Report, p. 44.


22Ibid.
arranging the transfer of Greenbelt to a private housing authority. The major legal problem was the necessity of obtaining enabling legislation in the Maryland Assembly for the establishment of a Greenbelt Housing Authority and a municipal charter. Prince George's County political leaders headed by State Senator Lansdale Sasscer had at first opposed the entire town. They were concerned about the taxes the town would pay, about the color of the residents, and whether they would become a burden on the county relief rolls. After meeting with R.A. officials in October, 1935, however, Sasscer gave the town his endorsement. Meeting again in March, 1936, the R.A. officials and the leaders from Prince George's County agreed on a municipal charter, but could not agree on a housing authority. It was decided to wait on both issues until the next session of the Maryland Legislature in 1937 when "these matters could be given more thought."

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23 *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, October 17, 1935.

24 *Washington Post*, October 17, October 18, 1935.


In April, 1937, the Prince George's County legislators introduced bills in the Maryland Assembly to incorporate Greenbelt and establish a housing authority. The charter of incorporation (House Bill No. 395) was passed by the Assembly. It had been jointly agreed upon by Prince George's County leaders and the Legal Division of the R.A. The charter, one of the most modern in the state, provided for the first town manager in Maryland history.27 In establishing a housing authority, the Maryland Senate, under the leadership of Sasscer, refused to cooperate with the R.A. On April 3, 1937, the Senate passed a general housing authority enabling bill for Maryland municipalities but specifically excluded Greenbelt from establishing an authority under the Act.28 Two days later the Senate passed the Greenbelt Charter but amended it at the suggestion of Sasscer to allow the establishment of "no other housing authority than the one allowed in House Bill No. 155."29 House Bill No. 155 regulated fireworks in Prince George's County, but attached to it was a rider establishing the Greenbelt Housing Authority! The Authority was given sweeping powers. It could lease

28 Ibid., pp. 1456-1457.
29 Ibid., p. 1456.
and determine the rents on all housing, repair the structures, and construct new ones. It could not only acquire new property, but "sell, lease, exchange, transfer, assign, mortgage, pledge or otherwise dispose of such real or personal property or any interest therein." It would run all public services "without the necessity for any franchise from the Town of Greenbelt." In sum, the Authority controlled Greenbelt.

The foregoing power would be exercised by a Board of Governors composed of the Chairman of the Prince George's County Board of Commissioners, the Chairman of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the Chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from Prince George's County, the President of the University of Maryland, the Mayor of the Town of Greenbelt, one resident of Prince George's County to be selected by the County Board of Commissioners, one resident of Greenbelt to be elected by the other residents, and one person to be appointed by the federal agency administering the interest of the federal government at Greenbelt. The unsatisfactory nature of the Board is obvious. First, the residents of Greenbelt were allowed only two out of the nine votes and

30Ibid., p. 1457.

31Ibid.
even with the allowance for a quorum of four, the residents could never comprise a majority. The interest of the federal government was hardly protected with only one vote on the board. Who would control Greenbelt? It is difficult to believe that all the members would be able to regularly attend Board Meetings. The largest bloc of votes would be in the hands of the Prince George's County Board of Commissioners which was itself represented by its Chairman and which appointed two other members. The fireworks bill with its amendment passed the Maryland Senate unanimously on the evening of April 5, 1937—the last day of the session.32

As late as March 30, 1937, Monroe Oppenheimer told the Solicitor of the Department of Agriculture that legislation was pending in the Maryland Assembly to incorporate the Town of Greenbelt and "to establish a Greenbelt Housing Authority to which the project could be conveyed or leased or to which various phases of the administration of the project could be entrusted on a cooperative basis."33 The day after the fireworks bill passed, Oppenheimer wrote to White:

32Ibid., pp. 1551-1556.

passed Oppenheimer wrote to Solicitor White saying that the version passed by the General Assembly "was never agreed to by the Resettlement Administration", and was passed "despite the opposition of the Resettlement Administration." Unfortunately, there is no record of the R.A.'s proposal for the Greenbelt Housing Authority, but Oppenheimer closed his letter saying that the R.A. officials "feel that the constitution of the Authority is so obnoxious to them that they will probably never avail themselves of this legislation." Faced with the opening of Greenbelt to residents in the fall, the R.A. gave up further attempts to transfer the towns to private ownership. The final arrangement at Greenbelt set the policy for the other two towns.

The planners of Greendale, believed that the town was too small to be self-sustaining and should, therefore, not be incorporated as an independent community. It should be merged, along with the other Milwaukee suburbs, into "one metropolitan city." The Legal

34 Letter from Oppenheimer to Solicitor White, April 6, 1937, R.O.A., H.H.F.A.

35 Ibid.

Division of the R.A. thought it best to leave the choice of independence or annexation up to the future residents of Greendale. The Research Section of the Suburban Division never considered the possibility of annexation and recommended only that Greendale be incorporated as a separate village and not come under the jurisdiction of the neighboring town of Greenfield because local officials feared they would "be dominated by new electors added as a result of the development of the Milwaukee project." By October, 1936, the R.A. had definitely decided to incorporate Greendale as an independent municipality with a Village Council-Manager government.

The establishment of a Greendale Housing Authority to which the federal government could transfer title was recommended by the Legal Division in December, 1935. Wisconsin housing corporation laws already in existence

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37 Clarence I. Blau to Lansill, December 30, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308.


allowed this action, but the R.A. took no further
movements in that direction. Soon after the residents
of Greendale moved into the town in 1938 the Farm Sec-
urity Administration petitioned the State Circuit
Court of Milwaukee for a charter of incorporation. It
was submitted to a referendum and passed 312-142. The
charter was filed with the Office of the Registrar of
Deeds in Milwaukee on November 1, 1938, and on that day
the project became an independent municipality known
as the Village of Greendale.41

The incorporation of the Greenhills, Ohio project
was no problem for the Resettlement Administration
because Ohio law provided for municipalities with
extremely broad powers. The Legal Division of the R.A.
examined the possibility of deeding the project to a
housing authority in Cincinnati, but there is no evidence
that such a plan was ever given detailed consideration.42
Greenhills was incorporated in the fall of 1939 with the
same mayor-council-manager type of municipal government
instituted at Greenbelt, Maryland.43

40 Blau to Lansill, December 30, 1935, National
Archives, Record Group 96.

41 "Incorporation File: Greendale," R.O.A., H.H.
F.A., Drawer 535.

42 Memo from Blau to Lansill, February 10, 1937,

43 U.S., Federal Public Housing Authority, "Green-
The three communities did have municipal charters and the tenants could establish their own governments. All the R.A. administrators agreed that these should be chartered independently of the federal government. However, they would be necessarily subordinate to the landlord--the Resettlement Administration--which would maintain its own staff of administrators in each community.
CHAPTER VII
TENANT SELECTION

Every community is judged not only by its buildings and landscape, but by the residents—individually and as a society. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of the social and political planning of the greenbelt towns was the selection of the people who would live in them. The planners were certain they had created an outstanding physical environment, but none could accurately predict what would happen when hundreds of families were thrown together in the new communities. Would the residents like the town? Would they get along with each other, with the residents in neighboring towns, and with the federal government?

Families were selected with great care after extensive investigation. The Resettlement Administration took few risks in this process. There is no evidence that the R.A. considered housing a true cross section of moderate or low income families or that the need for better living conditions constituted the sole basis for selection. The choice of tenants was made from a very large number of applicants. Over 5,700 families applied for the 885 homes in Greenbelt, 2,700 for the 676 homes.
in Greenhills and over 3,000 for the 572 homes in Greendale.¹ Frank H. Osterlinder, the R.A.'s regional attorney in the Milwaukee area, wrote, "It is interesting and pitiful to see the large number of applications of citizens who are desirous of becoming occupants of these government homes."² Reports on living conditions of several of the families admitted to Greendale give some indication of the need for better housing and neighborhoods;

Young couple, one child: Present housing one room, serves as living room, bedroom and dining room. Poorly heated. Entrance on alley. Landlord will not allow the child to play in yard...

Couple, one child: Now pay 43 per cent of $1,650 income for rent. Will pay 25 per cent at Greendale.

Childless couple: Now live in one furnished room and makeshift kitchen partitioned off in attic. Kerosene stove. Entrance through landlord's living room. Share bathroom with two other families.


The actual letters of application also reveal the plight of those families seeking entrance to the green-


belt towns as evidenced in the following:

We are a young married couple with no children, as yet, but are looking forward to Greenbelt to solve that privilege, as we have not, heretofore, felt that the high rent here in Washington gave us the right to have a child on our modest income.

The expenses for my little girl's last two operations have handicapped me so that it is next to impossible to make ends meet and I simply must have a decent, clean and healthy place for these youngsters which I cannot find in or around Washington for the amount of money I can afford to pay...My need is desperate from the financial standpoint and also for my children's health sake. My salary being only $1,440 out of which I have $21 a month to pay for old hospital and doctor's bill...This you can readily see leaves me a very limited income to cover the little girl's care, rent, food, transportation and clothes.

I have looked for a place that we can afford until I am about on my last legs, and my husband told me something that scared me last night, too,—he said they told him when he filled out the questionnaire for Greenbelt that they didn't want "movers". Now, we don't want to be movers; it isn't in our blood to be. My husband was reared in the home his grandfather homesteaded in Kansas and I lived all my life in the same home in Tuscaloosa County in Alabama. My mother was reared in the same home her grandmother was and my grandfather's people were all home owners too. I'd almost think I was in heaven to live in a place like Greenbelt where my little boy could get in the sunshine in safety.

There's lots of things I'd like to write you about, Mrs. Roosevelt, such as why I didn't like you when I first came to Washington and why I do after getting my bearings here, and how proud my brother and I are of our first vote cast for a president in 1932, especially he who designed and directed the building of the bridge in Tennessee Valley and later saw his president ride over that bridge and how I like your column and read it always and how
wonderful the thinking people of the South think your husband is, and just lots of things, but I'll not this time...3

It was initially announced that only families of "low income" would be selected as residents of the greenbelt towns.4 This was defined by the government as $1,000-$1,999 income per year. Those who earned $2,000-$2,500 were defined as the "middle income" group, while those earning below $1,000 were labelled the "relief group."5 Greenbrook, New Jersey, was planned with a goal to house families of 4.4 persons with an average annual income of $1,200, but included units for families with incomes as low as $1,000. Yet no way was found of cutting the physical facilities and maintenance costs to the point where families of 4.4 persons with $1,000 incomes could be housed. They would have had to pay more than twenty-two and one-half per cent of their budget for rent (the percentage judged to be maximum for

3The reports from Greendale were printed in the Milwaukee Journal, April 17, 1938; the letters are excerpts from those written by applicants for Greenbelt and are in the Lansill Papers, personal files.


5For a discussion of New Deal income group definitions see Carol Aronovici and Elizabeth McCalmont, Catching Up With Housing (Newark, N.J.: Beneficial Management Corporation, 1936), pp. 22-26. The position of the R.A. is confused by the Interim Report which stated that
housing excluding utility costs), or the government would have had to subsidize their rent.\(^6\) Clarence Stein's studies for the R.A. were based on an average family size of 4 persons with an average annual income of $1,250.\(^7\)

By the fall of 1936 the R.A. had to change the income range of prospective families to $1,200-$2,000 and began to call the future tenants "moderate income" families.\(^8\) Actually the income and rental schedules were sliding ones depending on family size:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one person</td>
<td>$800-$1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two persons</td>
<td>$900-$1,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three &quot;</td>
<td>$1,000-$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four &quot;</td>
<td>$1,100-$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five &quot;</td>
<td>$1,200-$2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six &quot;</td>
<td>$1,300-$2,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

both the subsistence homesteads and suburban projects "are intended for low-income workers, $1,600 per year is normally taken as the upper limit." U.S., Resettlement Administration, Interim Report, p. 23.

\(^6\)Memo from Henry Wright to Frederick Bigger, December 16, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 308.


As of June 30, 1938 the average annual income for families in the three towns was: Greenbelt - $1,560, Greenhills - $1,771, and Greendale - $1,624. The rent schedule was based on the assumption by the R. A. that each family should pay twenty-five per cent of its income for rent and utilities charges (heat, water and electricity or gas). Therefore the actual shelter rent on a one and a half room apartment was $18.00 but with the added charges for utilities the monthly rent was $21.00. Because of this there appeared conflicting reports of the rent schedules in various publications. The original rent schedule, including the utility costs was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Housing</th>
<th>Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 room apartment</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &quot; row house</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>34.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1/2 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>39.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 1/2 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1/2 &quot; single house</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


11 Memo from Robert C. McManus to John S. Lansill, March 28, 1936, Lansill Papers, official files.

12 There was also a schedule for utility charges—the charge increasing with the size of the unit. See Fulmer, *Greenbelt*, p. 43.

13 Hall, Part I, pp. 5-6.
It is ironic that almost as many families were probably too poor to enter the greenbelt towns as were too wealthy. Tugwell himself said that the majority of American city dwellers in 1936 earned less than $1,200 per year. On the other hand the rents at Greenbelt averaged $31.23 for all units while the District of Columbia Public Utilities Commission stated that there were "few houses fit for human habitation" in the District for under $35.00. Rents in the greenbelt towns were approximately the same as P.W.A. housing project rents. The average rent (including utilities) in the P.W.A. projects was $7.50 per room. At Greenbelt the four and five room row houses (which are the most common) averaged $7.32 per room. Rents at the other towns were slightly different. At Greenhills


15 Baltimore Sun, June 5, 1936.


17 The figure is an average of the $7.75 per room rent in the four room unit and the $6.90 per room rent in the five room unit.
rents ranged from $18.00 to $42.00 and averaged $27.62.

The range at Greendale was from $19.00 to $36.00 since it contained no six room units as did the other two towns. Average rent at Greendale was $26.16 until 1939 when the Farm Security Administration lowered it to $27.95 to compensate for a drop in wages and employment in the Milwaukee area.

More elusive than the income criteria were the other standards designed to preclude families which might detract from the development of a wholesome, solid and stable community. The first week after the announcement of the greenbelt town program, the R.A. reassured the doubting Senator Sasscer concerning the future residents. It was confirmed that they would be "chosen not from the relief rolls, but from among the low income workers in the Washington and Prince George's County area whose record proves them to be citizens of character and reliability." Again in March, 1936, Wallace Richard's was asked by a reporter about the fears of Prince George's County residents that Greenbelt would be populated with undesirable slum dwellers. "Prince

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19 Greendale Review, March 11, 1939.

20 Baltimore Sun, October 17, 1935.
George's County needn't worry," said Richards, "about a disreputable community. The Resettlement Administration will take no chances on the experiment failing because of being peopled by shiftless people."\(^2\) John O. Walker, Chief of the R.A.'s Management Division, stated in the *Interim Report* that, in the interest of low cost maintenance, families would be selected to insure long term occupancy. The families would need not only "economic security, but a reasonable, though adequate, educational and social development."\(^2\) Walker stated elsewhere that families were excluded which posed "any exceptional social problems."\(^2\) In short, the policy of the Family Selection Section of the Management Division was "to make sure, before any family is accepted, that it will fit into the proposed community with benefit both to itself and to the community."\(^2\)

Each family filed an application form giving family size, income, present housing facilities, and other information which allowed the Family Selection

\(^2\) *Washington Star*, March 18, 1936.


\(^2\) *U.S., Resettlement Administration, First Annual Report*, p. 64.
Section to screen out those not meeting general requirements. Unfortunately, no copies of the form have survived to provide us with the bases on which 3,400 of 5,700 applicants to Greenbelt were eliminated. Many applicants were rejected because their income was over the maximum allowable. One Greenbelt official said that "quite a few" had incomes over $5,000. Families accepted for investigation were subsequently interviewed by a five man Family Selection Committee. Following this a social worker visited each family in its home and filled out a "rating sheet". (See pages 187-188 for a reproduction of this sheet.) A credit check was made and references from two landlords were reviewed. Finally, a physical examination was required for each family.

If the need of the applying family was desperate its financial stability might not count so high on the application. Some of these families and others were favored because of their attitudes towards community life in general and towards the greenbelt towns in particular.

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25 The most complete discussion of family selection for Greenbelt, Maryland is contained in Larson, "Educational Activities of the Federally Planned Community...", pp. 27-30.

26 Fulmer, Greenbelt, p. 18.
At Greenbelt, in fact, some whose credit was on the borderline were admitted because of their interest in the greenbelt experiment and because of the inadequacy of their other housing facilities. Of all the "community participation" requirements, the one eliminating the most applicants prohibited wives of employed husbands to work. In the Washington area one third of all families were ineligible for consideration because of this rule. Undoubtedly a number of these families would have dropped below the $1,000 annual income requirement if the wife stopped working. This regulation later caused some conflict between the greenbelt town residents and the government.

Some effort was made to reflect the diversity of the metropolitan population within the income limitations, of course. Greenbelt, in the first years, attempted to retain a religious ratio of 30 per cent Roman Catholic, 7 per cent Jewish and 63 per cent Protestant, the same as the District of Columbia in the 1930 census. It was considered desirable to have one-third of the families employed outside the federal government.

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28Larson, Master's thesis, pp. 29-30; Fulmer, Ibid., p. 18-19; and William Form, "The Sociology of a White Collar Suburb, Greenbelt, Maryland" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1944), pp. 61, 64.
I. NEED FOR PROJECT

Physical Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEIGHBORHOOD</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>FAIR</th>
<th>POOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONDITION OF STRUCTURE</td>
<td>SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING- Moderately and in Good Repair</td>
<td>HOUSE IN NEED OF MINOR REPAIRS- Reasonably Well Constructed</td>
<td>HOUSE POORLY CONSTRUCTED- PUNCHED AND IN NEED OF MAJOR REPAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VENTILATION AND LIGHTING</td>
<td>WELL VENTILATED-NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING ADEQUATE</td>
<td>HEATING IRREGULAR OR INADEQUATE-HEATING FACILITIES POOR</td>
<td>ONE OR MORE ROOMS POORLY LIGHTED- NO CROSS VENTILATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEATING</td>
<td>WELL HEATED WITH CENTRAL FURNACE</td>
<td>HEATING IRREGULAR OR INADEQUATE-HEATING FACILITIES POOR</td>
<td>HEATING IRREGULAR AND INADEQUATE-HEALTH HAZARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANITATION</td>
<td>VERY GOOD</td>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td>FAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEQUACY OF SIZE</td>
<td>SPACIOUS</td>
<td>ADEQUATE</td>
<td>CROWDED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME AND FAMILY SIZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INCOME AND RENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Need

| EFFECT ON FAMILY'S ATTITUDES | SLIGHT SOCIAL NEED-PRESENT HOUSING BETTER THAN FAMILY'S STANDARD | FAMILY NOT DISCONTENTED-ABILITY TO PROFIT BY THE PROJECT IS DOUBTFUL | FAMILY DISSATISFIED WITH PRESENT HOUSING-WOULD PROFIT BY SOCIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE PROJECT | FAMILY NOTES LOG NECESITY OF PRESENT HOUSING-NEED SOCIAL ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY PROJECT |

II. ABILITY TO USE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE AND HABIT TOWARD FINANCES</th>
<th>HEAVILY IN DEBT- NO CONCERED ABOUT PAYMENT</th>
<th>SMALL DEBT- UNCONCERED</th>
<th>HEAVILY IN DEBT BUT MAKING EFFORT TO PAY</th>
<th>SMALL DEBT- CONSISTENT DEBT</th>
<th>NO DEBT- SAVINGS</th>
<th>NO DEBT- WAS SAVINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESENT JOB STATUS</td>
<td>JOB UNCERTAIN- NO PROSPECTS</td>
<td>JOB TEMPORARY OR SEASONAL- NO PROSPECTS</td>
<td>JOB UNCERTAIN BUT HAS OTHER PROSPECTS HERE</td>
<td>JOB TEMPORARY OR SEASONAL DUE TO NATURE OF TRADE- HAS OTHER PROSPECTS HERE</td>
<td>JOB PERMANENT OR LONG TIME PROSPECTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAME: [Last Middle First]

SCORE: [Blank]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK RECORD</th>
<th>1. LONG PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>2. CHANGES JOBS FREQUENTLY-RETURNOUS</th>
<th>3. CHANGES JOBS FREQUENTLY DUE TO NATURE OF TRADE</th>
<th>4. RECORD OF CONTINUOUS UNEMPLOYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARE OF PROPERTY</td>
<td>1. TOTAL DISREGARD OF PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS</td>
<td>2. CARELESS OF PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS</td>
<td>3. TAKES CARE OF PROPERTY GENERALLY, BUT IS UNRELIABLE</td>
<td>4. TAKES EXCELLENT CARE OF PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS IN FRAY AND CLEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STABILITY OF RESIDENCE</td>
<td>1. HAS MOVED FREQUENTLY, AND PERMANENT RESIDENCE AT THE PROJECT IS DOUBTFUL</td>
<td>2. HAS MOVED FREQUENTLY TO BETTER HOUSING CONDITIONS-LIKELY TO BECOME PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THE PROJECT</td>
<td>3. HAS TENDED TO RESTRICT RESIDENCE AND LIIKELY TO BECOME PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THE PROJECT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. COMMUNITY FACTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT</th>
<th>1. LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT AND NO EVIDENCE OF ABILITY TO ADJUST</th>
<th>2. FAIR UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT-SOME EVIDENCE OF ABILITY TO ADJUST</th>
<th>3. FAIR UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT-EVIDENCE OF ABILITY TO ADJUST-INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>4. GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT-ABILITY TO ADJUST-DEFINITE INTEREST IN PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>1. RECORD OF PARTICIPATION IN AN ORGANIZATION LIKELY TO CONFLICT WITH PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>2. RECORD OF PARTICIPATION IN A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE ORGANIZATION BUT NO RECORD OF PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVITIES AT THE PROJECT</td>
<td>3. RECORD OF CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY IN A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE ORGANIZATION (EOT)</td>
<td>4. RECORD OF ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION, BUT WILL PROBABLY PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY AT THE PROJECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOBBIES, TALENTS, GARDENING EXPERIENCE, ETC.</td>
<td>1. REQUIRED VS. INTERESTS WHICH MIGHT DETRACT FROM WELFARE OF COMMUNITY</td>
<td>2. NO HOBBIES, TALENTS, OR SPECIAL ABILITIES</td>
<td>3. HOBBIES, TALENTS, ETC., WHICH WILL NOT CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY-INTERESTED IN GARDENING</td>
<td>4. HOBBIES, ETC., WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY-INTERESTED IN GARDENING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRE FOR PROJECT</td>
<td>1. INSUFFICIENT FOR ONE PARENT ONLY</td>
<td>2. ALL MEMBERS OF FAMILY REASONABLY INTERESTED IN MOVING TO THE PROJECT</td>
<td>3. ALL MEMBERS OF FAMILY WISH TO MOVE TO THE PROJECT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY INTEGRATION</td>
<td>1. QUESTIONABLE FAMILY LIFE AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES</td>
<td>2. EVIDENCE OF LACK OF FAMILY SOLIDARITY OR EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN FAMILY</td>
<td>3. WELL INTEGRATED FAMILY-OCCUPATIONAL, HOBBIES, LOYAL TO SELF-RESPECTING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CREDIT RATING: ____________________________

TOTAL RATING: ____________________________

RATED BY ____________________________ DATE ____________________________

RECOMMENDATION: ____________________________

APPROVED: ____________________________

HEALTH FACTORS: ____________________________

SOCIAL FACTORS: ____________________________
Selection was made without regard to political affiliations or views. There were no charges that politics influenced the choice of residents. All three towns embraced citizens with political philosophies from socialism to laissez faire capitalism. Each of the towns soon had both Republican and Democratic Clubs, although the latter outnumbered the former in the early years. This may reflect the previous local party affiliations of families in the moderate income strata.

The selectivity of the R.A. may overshadow this effort to assimilate diverse elements in the towns, but Carlton F. Sharpe later recalled that the residents of Greenhills were "a pretty good cross section of the moderate income group despite the screening process."

The most inflexible rule excluded Negro applicants.

In June, 1936, during the early planning stages of Greenbelt, Maryland (while it was still under the direction of the Subsistence Homesteads Division), the plan called for "a separate development area, the Rossville Rural

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29 In the presidential election of 1940, for example, Greendale's citizens cast 871 votes for Roosevelt, 196 for Wilke, 33 for Norman Thomas, and 3 for the Communist candidate, Earl Browder. Greendale Review, November 12, 1940.

30 Letter to the author from Carlton F. Sharpe, October 22, 1964. Sharpe was the first Community Manager of Greenhills, Ohio.
Rural Development, which will be for Negro families."\(^{31}\)

It was to have included 800 acres—almost one-third of the entire Greenbelt tract which was then planned for 2,796 acres.\(^{32}\) However, when the Greenbelt, Maryland project was officially announced in October, 1935, eight months before the Rossville Development was planned, Will Alexander admitted "that there is little likelihood that any of the houses will be rented to colored tenants."\(^{33}\) Actually, several Negro families lived on Greenbelt's farms, but they numbered only fourteen and played no part in the life of the community.\(^{34}\) Cedric Larson, who studied the tenant selection policies and interviewed its directors, explained in 1938 that "Negroes were not admitted as residents, since they have their own low cost housing project in Northeast Washington...called Langston Terrace."\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) U.S., Resettlement Administration, "Project Description Book: 1937, National Archives, Record Group 96.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Washington Post, October 12, 1935.

\(^{34}\) Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 63, 217.

This discrimination on the part of the Suburban Division is nowhere explained in the existing records of the Resettlement Administration, but it probably deferred to the local communities adjacent to the towns and to the prevailing views of Congress on integrated public housing. Local residents as well as the powerful State Senator Sasscer, it will be recalled, had strongly objected to the possible inclusion of Negro residents at Greenbelt. There was no mandatory policy for federal housing projects to separate the races. In fact, Langston Terrace in Washington, built by the P.W.A., had a few white residents and the P.W.A. project in Milwaukee, Parklawn, had both white and Negro residents in 1938. Still, these two were among only ten of the forty-nine P.W.A. housing projects that were racially integrated by 1938. The inequity of this racial policy is immeasurable. In the opinion of Edith Elmer Wood, in an Interior Department study, the worst slums of Washington, Baltimore, Cincinnati and Milwaukee were Negro slums.

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36 *Baltimore Sun*, October 15, October 16, 1935.


It is not known how many applied and were rejected by the Suburban Division but there was interest on the part of the Negro community in the suburban town program. A group in Toledo, Ohio asked the R.A. about having a suburban community built outside Toledo, yet there is no record of any motion in that direction by the Planning Section.  

The racial exclusiveness of the greenbelt towns stands in contrast to the general program of the Resettlement Administration. Tugwell, for example, told the R.A.'s Regional Director in Illinois and Missouri to see that Negroes were given an equal opportunity to receive aid from the R.A. Will Alexander's long career on behalf of Negro advancement speaks for itself, but apparently neither man intervened in this program. C.B. Galdwin later regretted the segregation in the towns but added that at the time there was no support for integration and they were involved in controversy enough. Neither the N.A.A.C.P. nor any other Negro group protested the segregation. The R.A.'s statement

39Letter from Warren J. Vinton to Raymond C. Smith, Director of Region No. 3, August 10, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 229.

40Letter from Rexford G. Tugwell to R.C. Smith, Director of Region No. 3, March 10, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 229.

41Interview with C.B. Baldwin.
in its Report to the Senate that the employees constructing the greenbelt towns "are prospective occupants", must have rung with familiar hollowness to the many Negroes who helped build those towns. 42

The Resettlement Administration sought to insure the general success of the greenbelt towns, both as social and physical experiments, by rigorously excluding those whose backgrounds might create problems and inevitable bad publicity. But in so doing, it turned its back on any serious attempt to experiment with the significance of community housing for a genuine cross section of destitute and low income families. The exclusion of Negroes from the only suburban towns built in the history of the public housing program is tragically in line with the history of Negro exclusion from suburban America. The boldness of physical planning is hardly matched by the boldness—or even the equity of social planning.

CHAPTER VIII
OPPOSITION TO THE TOWNS

Opponents of the greebelt towns objected to three major aspects of the program. First, it put the federal government in unnecessary competition with private enterprise, second, it was part of a broad trend towards socialistic regimentation disguised as "cooperative planning". Added to these was a refusal to accept the fact that one-third of the nation was ill housed. Herbert Hoover, who opposed all public housing, said flatly that it was "statistically false". Many local officials when presented with a New Deal housing plan, declared they had no need of help since all their citizens were adequately sheltered. Such was the case with the City Council of Winston-Salem, North Carolina where the P.W.A. wanted to build a project. Similar views were expressed by some citizens in Bound Brook, New Jersey. The Cincinnati Enquirer, referring to Greenhills, implied

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2 Straus and Wegg, p. 61.

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that the Suburban Division would have to make a real

Many who believed that a large number of Americans were inadequately housed felt that private industry could and should do the job. This was the position of the National Association of Real Estate Boards and the Building and Loan League which opposed all public housing programs until 1937. A writer in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce magazine stated that ill-housed citizens deserved their fate in most cases.

Some are satisfied with their condition. They are doing nothing to improve it. Others do not have sufficient means to live as well as they would like. Initiative spurs them to better their condition. Others are engaged in wishful waiting.

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3 Cincinnati Enquirer, January 12, 1936.

4 George Morris, "$16,000 Homes for $2,000 Incomes! Greenbelt, Maryland," Nation's Business, XXVI (January, 1938), p. 21. Earlier, however, a Special Committee on Housing of the National Chamber of Commerce recognized the necessity of subsidizing the shelter of the lowest income group, but suggested it be done through rent subsidies paid by local relief agencies rather than through the construction of public housing. See the New York Times, February 1, 1936. Nor did the N.A.R.E.B. oppose all types of government aid to the housing industry. It helped draft legislation creating the Federal Housing Administration in 1933-1934 and endorsed a program of federal information collection and dissemination. See the New York Times, June 14, 1936. The direct construction and management of public housing was opposed by several groups in addition to the Chamber of Commerce and N.A.R.E.B. See Robert M. Fisher, Twenty Years of Public Housing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 21; McDonnell, The Wagner Housing Act Bronez, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 191-198, 267-275.
Hugo Parth, one of the leading directors of the Milwaukee Real Estate Board, objected to Greendale and Parklawn (the P.W.A. project) on the grounds that the low rents would impede a recovery of the private home building industry. This recovery could only happen when "renters get squeezed hard." Parth further argued that Greendale did not serve the really low income groups, which, amazingly, he admitted did exist and did need publicly subsidized housing. Greenbelt, too, was accused of being "merely a smoke screen to conceal a reckless venture in a field of construction that should be left to private industry." The R.A. was even reproached for competing unfairly with private industry for the profits to be made from the $800-$1,440 income group.

The United States Building and Loan League did back a plan to build planned communities—a plan that depended on private industry. It was a proposal made by the Committee for Economic Recovery (a business group) to form forty housing companies, each to raise at least $1,000,000 through public stock sales, which would build several planned communities at moderate cost. Unfortunately

5 Milwaukee Journal, March 1, 1936.
6 Washington Post, October 23, 1935.
7 Ibid.
no group ever got far enough to sell stock and the proposal was abandoned. 8

Herbert U. Nelson, chief spokesman for the N.A.R.E.B., represented the view that the towns were impractical and of little value. Testifying before a Senate Committee in 1936, Nelson said, "We have had a number of demonstration projects erected and are somewhat at a loss to know what has been demonstrated." 9

After returning from Europe in the fall of 1937, Nelson declared "our subdivisions with their wide streets, generous lots and complete municipal improvements are far in advance of anything that is known in these countries." 10 Admitting that Europe "has its garden cities here and there, as, for example, Letchworth and Welwyn" which were built as a single unit "in a roomy fashion", Nelson concluded that "the idea of planning houses by neighborhoods, as well as community planning on a large scale, is stronger in the United States than

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10 N.A.R.E.B., ...Letter, September 21, 1936.
is the case in any other country."

A more revealing comment on the thinking of the N.A.R.E.B. is seen in its response to the regional planning reports of the National Resources Committee. The N.A.R.E.B. Confidential Weekly Letter represents the extent to which planning was advocated.

The real unit of community life is the neighborhood. Until we learn how to plan the neighborhood, the planning that might be undertaken for cities, regions, states and the nation would appear to have a weak foundation. The average good citizen can comprehend the logic and purpose of neighborhood plans, because they come within the scope of his daily experience. They are concrete, not abstract.

The N.A.R.E.B. was, of course, the servant of its thousands of members, most of whom dealt only with single houses or very small developments, and could not easily move very far in advance of them. The days of the Levitts, Rouses and other large scale private builders lay ahead. It was only at their 1930 convention that the N.A.R.E.B. supported, for the first time, a policy of planning entire neighborhoods, or "subdivisions" as they were called. Business Week labelled this a "Drastic Change in Residential Development."

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12 N.A.R.E.B., ...Letter, May 2, 1938.
The greenbelt town program appeared to utopian for serious consideration—if, indeed, it was understood at all by those who wrote or commented on it. Even in 1960 the architect Carl Feiss wrote that the phrase "new towns" is meaningless to most of us, or it is considered part of Cloud Nine, or it is simply misunderstood."¹⁴ Felix Bruner's series of articles in the Washington Post on the Resettlement Administration were entitled "Utopia Unlimited."¹⁵ Gordon Ames Brown, in a similar series used the word "utopian" to describe the towns, and T.A. Huntley, in another article, compared Tugwell to Bellamy, Howard, Moore and Plato who all "dreamed of a better order, of a world made over."¹⁶ The architects and planners were ridiculed along with Tugwell. Nation's Business reported sarcastically that to plan the towns "Men of Vision were called in—Social Engineers, Planners, Builders, outriders of the March of Progress."¹⁷ The N.A.R.E.B. said Greenbelt cost $10,000

per unit because "dream boys" were building "a little Utopia of their own." 18

The cost of the greenbelt towns! No aspect of the suburban town program caused more confusion or was more consistently misinterpreted. As was mentioned earlier, the cost cannot be satisfactorily computed. The first official figures released by the government on the final cost of any of the towns were those for Greenbelt, Maryland, given in June, 1937, by the General Accounting Office in response to a request by Senator Byrd. The cost was slightly over $14,000,000 which meant, by the Senator's count, $16,182 per unit. On the fourth of July, Byrd said resettlement spending was approaching a national scandal for its "sinful and absurd waste... Every Congressman and Senator in Washington should visit Tugwelltown and see where more than $14,000,000 of public money has been spent." 19 The final report of project costs at Greenbelt was published August 30, 1937, and set the total cost at $14,016,270.61.

18 N.A.R.E.B., ...Letter, September 7, 1937.
Greenbelt or furniture sold to the residents. Newsweek interpreted the total figure as the cost of housing Greenbelt's families. Time, calling Greenbelt the "most spectacular" of all the R.A.'s "grandiose ventures", said it was also a fitting monument to the R.A. because it cost $14,227,000, although, later in the article, the cost of relief labor was deducted and the cost of the towns was reduced to $8,500,000.

The most complete breakdown of costs was given by Nation's Business which stated that the R.A. deducted $4,902,000 for inefficient relief labor, $643,000 for excess land, and $284,000 for leftover materials which brought the unit cost down from $16,000 to $9,600. When the cost of the Community Center, school, streets, lake and recreational areas was deducted the unit cost fell to $5,423. The article, however, was titled "$16,000 Homes for $2,000 Incomes: Greenbelt, Maryland." Thus, the


Nation's Business, XXVI (January, 1938), pp. 21-22.
national news magazines, while noting the relief nature of the project, generally judged the cost of Greenbelt as though it had been built by a private developer. Even some architects of low cost housing criticized the cost of the towns. Corwin Wilson, writing in the progressive journal Shelter in 1938, called Greenbelt's cost an "extravagance" which was "slyly shunted onto the backs of Montana and Texas farmers by ambidextrous accountants in order to prettify the stage set for a few hundred families."^24

While some of the Suburban Division planners believed the towns could be financed as self-liquidating projects, Tugwell was never so sanguine. As far back as February, 1936, he said,

Let me frankly admit there may be some element of subsidy if we are to maintain building and maintenance standards and keep rents down...Of course, subsidies for workers' homes are no new thing in our American economy, though we have generally preferred not to recognize them as such. Housing for low income groups is not paying its way in America today...The lowest-cost housing areas in large cities pay in taxation scarcely one-fourth the cost of essential services which their inhabitants receive from the municipalities. This is a form of hidden subsidy of which we do not avail ourselves in Resettlement communities.

It may be that there will turn out to be an element of subsidy in our charges. But it will be an open one, not a hidden one; and I, for myself, shall not pretend to like it in any instance...I do not believe in throwing the poor a basket of groceries; I do not believe in keeping them in subsidized poorhouses. I am, however, a realist...for now either wages are too low or monopolized materials and processes are held at too high a price.

The degree of subsidy was not apparent then, but few people outside the R.A. were prepared to defend the cost figures. One year later, Tugwell wrote that until there was mass production of houses with prefabricated sections there would never be any really low cost housing in America. Walter H. Blucher, Director of the American Society of Planning Officials, rejoined that criticism of the cost of the towns was foolish because anything built with relief labor was expensive. Likewise, Edith Elmer Wood concluded that the high cost "proves only that relief labor is expensive."

Along with allegations that the towns were unnecessary, impractical and expensive, the argument was

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25 Tugwell, Address to the Regional Planning Commission of Hamilton County, Ohio, pp. 12-14.
made that they were part of a sinister plan to impose foreign, socialist, or communist ways of life on the American people, or, at least that they forced unwanted regimentation by being planned. Alber Mayer understated the case when he said that "the impression has gotten around that they are in some vague way radical." In this respect, the towns suffered heavily from their association with the New Deal and Rexford Tugwell, and were often tagged "Tugwelltowns" in the press and in Congress.

29 Using quotation marks around the word "planning" was the most common way writers in the 1930's indicated the sinister portent of government planning. See, for example, Warren Bishop "A Yardstick for Housing," Nation's Business, XXIV (April, 1936) p. 29.


31 Duncan Aikman, "Tugwelltown: The Story of Greenbelt, the Government's New Socialized Community," Current History, XLIV (August, 1936), pp. 96-101; Nation's Business, XXVI (November, 1938), p. 13; and "Plan Federal 'Tugwelltown' on Tract at Hale's Corners," Milwaukee Journal, December 4, 1935. Tugwell did not like his name used to identify the towns and asked the Suburban Division to give them proper names. The staff found the name Greenbelt expressive of the town's most unique feature, but it sounded somewhat artificial. A search was made by Wallace Richards for local names, but no suitable ones could be found and therefore Greenbelt was decided upon. (Interview with Wallace Richards in the Washington Star, March 18, 1936.) After another search of all towns in the United States beginning with "green" the other three towns were given this same prefix. (The list of towns with the prefix "green" is found in Lansill Papers, personal files.) The names first appear in the R.A.'s Weekly Progress Report No. 40, March 28, 1936.
Tugwell's popularity with the public and with Congress was, as several historians have noted, less than cordial. During the 1936 campaign, he was often labelled a communist mastermind who, like Lenin, would soon dispose of his Kerensky (Roosevelt). While few credited Senator Davis' accusation that Tugwell was really a communist, many Congressmen complained about the R.A.'s supposed plans for "shifting people around from where they are to where Dr. Tugwell thinks they ought to be." Some newspapers added to these fears by entitling articles such as "First Communist Town in U.S. Nears Completion" and "Tugwell Abolishes Private Property." One landlord, contacted by the Suburban Division for a reference on a prospective Greenbelt resident, refused to give out any information saying he would not participate in projects which were "un-American and tend to Communism."


33 The most complete discussion of the literature naming Tugwell a communist mastermind is found in Sternsher, pp. 348-355.

34 Davis' comment was made in an address to a Republican rally, New York Times, October 4, 1936. Representative Woodruff's comment is from the U.S., Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2d Sess., 1936, LXXX, Part 8, 6111.


36 Fulmer, Greenbelt, p. 19.
The fact that the towns had drawn on intellectual theories and European designs made them suspect. Bruner warned that the R.A.'s housing program was, "like all things Tugwellian...far different from accepted ideas—at least far from those accepted in America." The New York Sun found the architectural style of Greenbelt un-American and wondered why the Cape Cod or Nantucket style cottage was not used. "But the Tugwell outfit wanted nothing in the American Tradition. They found their inspiration in Europe and the Near East and the result was a collection of houses that look like hideous barracks." Bruner deprecated the towns, writing that Greenbelt houses would surround a "campus" and that "there is always something collegiate about Tugwell schemes." An article called "The Sweetheart of the Regimenters: Dr. Tugwell Makes America Over", traced the "fantastic" ideas behind the Tugwell programs to the fact that "the Sweetheart of the Regimenters was seventeen years a pedagogue."

Fear of regimentation and coercion on the part of the government was easily exploited. Nation's Business was convinced that tenants would be treated like inmates

38 New York Sun, July 11, 1936.
in a poorhouse. "Much emphasis is placed on the 'spirit of cooperation'. The assistant manager, like Professor Tugwell, went to Russia to observe the Great Experiment and learn new ways of dealing with individualists and dissenters.\(^41\) An interview with Greenbelt's Town Manager, Roy Braden, revealed that the government would "hold a whip hand over society", and that the R.A. would "invite" (the paper put the word in quotation marks) residents to form a citizen's association in an attempt to "socialize" (also in quotation marks) them.\(^42\) When the R.A. announced that residents of the towns would not be permitted to have dogs, there was a storm of protest. The New York Times sympathized editorially with prospective residents who would be forced to give up their pets and suggested that "before it plans any more Utopias, perhaps the government would do well to draft a bit of human nature into the blueprints."\(^43\) Every new rule in the towns was reported, often in headlines;

"Greenbelt Bans Display of Wash After 4 P.M. And On Sundays --Private Mutterings of 'Regimentation' Are Heard As New

\(^41\) Fred Thornhill and Fred DeArmond, "Another Social Experiment Goes Sour," Nation's Business, XXVIII (October, 1940), p. 109. Mr. Thornhill was a former resident of Greenbelt who was reported to have been overwhelmingly defeated for the town council in an election and was refused another important position in the town Cooperative. See Greenbelt Cooperator, October 17, 1940.

\(^42\) Washington Star, September 14, 1936.

\(^43\) New York Times, November 15, 1937.
Rules Go Into Effect—Tricycles Regulated.\textsuperscript{44} This type of press coverage exemplified what Nathan Straus, first Administrator of Public Housing, called a double standard of judging public and private housing. Editorials seldom rise to the support of tenants forced to give up pets to move into private housing; few articles condemn landlords who regiment their tenants through more detailed and arbitrary regulations than were imposed on the Greenbelt residents.\textsuperscript{45}

Another ominous possibility raised by the greenbelt town program was the prospect of the government resettling Negroes in the suburbs. This was, of course, speculation since the announced policy of the R.A. was to exclude them from the towns, but there seems little doubt that it was on the minds of a number of people. Alva Johnston, a conservative critic of Tugwell and the New Deal, wrote,

> Among the largest Tugwell towns is the Greenhills project near Cincinnati and the Berwyn project near Washington, D.C. There is a large Negro population in both cities. There is a constitutional question whether the government, no matter what incorporation tricks it employs, can exclude Negroes from these communities.\textsuperscript{46}

The N.A.R.E.B. never publicly expressed concern over the greenbelt town program opening suburban areas to Negroes,

\textsuperscript{44}Washington Star, March 30, 1938.


\textsuperscript{46}Alva Johnston, "Tugwell, the President's Idea Man," \textit{Saturday Evening Post}, CCIX (August 1, 1936), p. 73.
but its members were continually informed on the attempts of Negroes to move into white suburban areas. In the highly publicized attempt of Joshua Cockburn, a West Indian Negro, to move into a $20,000 home purchased in Westchester County, New York, in an area restricted to whites, the N.A.R.E.B. stated that if the court decided in favor of Cockburn, "the results would be serious to many protected neighborhoods." The resistance of suburban communities and fringe areas of cities to the outward movement of Negroes hardly needs documentation. Nathan Straus, in the early 1950's, stated that fear of Negro migration had set white suburbanites against any dispersion of public housing from the old slum districts. Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield have detailed the continual policy of the Chicago Housing Authority program to keep public housing with its Negro residents, out of all middle class white areas of the city.

The Resettlement Administration carefully followed press accounts of the projects, attempting to counter the hostile ones with a stream of press releases and illustrated

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47 N.A.R.E.B., ...Letter, February 23, 1937.

48 Straus, pp. 141-142.

pamphlets. A Legal Division report warned that most newspaper coverage would be unfavorable and therefore the government literature would "serve to combat any unfounded attacks." Nevertheless, most Americans learned about the towns through confusing newspaper and magazine reports. There was an inability, for instance, to recognize that the towns were complete communities as distinguished from ordinary housing developments. On June 11, 1936, eight months after the Greenbelt, Maryland plans had been announced, the Washington Post used "Greenbelt, Maryland" as the dateline for an article, and Lansill noted beside it—"This is the first recognition given in the dateline of Greenbelt as a town." The Evening Star, in September of the same year, was still referring to Greenbelt as the "Berwyn Housing Project", Berwyn being the closest town to Greenbelt.

Some who were enthusiastic while studying the plans of the towns, were disillusioned at their first sight of the actual construction area. At Greendale, reporters

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50 Newspaper clippings were passed around to the R.A. officials and then kept in a large notebook, two of which are retained at the National Archives, Record Group 96. For a brief description of the information activities of the R.A. see U.S., Resettlement Administration, First Annual Report, pp. 97-98.


52 Lansill Papers, personal files.

53 Washington Star, September 13, 1936.
found "streets that go nowhere, front yards in the back, back yards in the front, little space between the houses ...hilly land left ungraded and a hundred and one other things never before seen." The editors of the Cincinnati Times-Star toured Greenhills in October, 1937. What they had thought was a "nice idea" dismayed them. "For instead of the comely, rustic little village we had thought of, we saw the once beautiful countryside desecrated, and on its tortured surface a confused jumble of box-like shacks, looking for all the world like an ill-designed army barracks."

Newspapers favorable to the New Deal public housing programs found it difficult to separate the greenbelt program from the subsistence homesteads program. The St. Louis Star-Times inaccurately described the towns as "garden homesteads on the fringes of industrial communities where workers can have decent low-cost housing with an acre or two of land on which to raise their own food." The Milwaukee Journal breaking, for the first time, the news of a resettlement project in the Milwaukee area, said that Milwaukee's "Tugwelltown" would follow the pattern of the subsistence homesteads--providing land for each family to raise food "and keep a goat or cow or pig."

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54 Milwaukee Journal, August 16, 1936.
55 Cincinnati Star-Times, October 4, 1937.
56 St. Louis Star-Times, May 14, 1936.
It is ironic that the greenbelt towns should have suffered from a confusion with the subsistence homesteads for the advocates of the towns were some of the severest critics of the subsistence homesteads. Beginning with Ebenezer Howard the garden city movement was urban centered; aimed at fostering a better urban environment including within it the open spaces and vegetation of the countryside. The essential factor in the agricultural belt or greenbelt was not that it preserve farms and fields, but that it remain open land. In the United States, Josiah Strong, one of the earliest supporters of the garden city movement, had been a most outspoken opponent of the back-to-the-land movement.58

Albert Mayer, one of the architects of Greenbrook, thought the subsistence homesteads program was utterly foolish, being based on a "misapplication of the real meaning of decentralization with overtones of sentimentalism and nostalgia."59 Catherine Bauer, whose 1934 study, Modern Housing, was a standard reference for public housing administrators, said that subsistence homesteads were certainly not modern housing. She feared that these defeatist "schemes", would create "a new American peasantry with a standard of living and an outlook for the future probably


about equal to that obtainable in the Balkan rural regions."

Rexford Tugwell was certainly the most widely quoted spokesman for the Resettlement Administration. He based the suburban resettlement program on studies of population movements in the United States which indicated that both the countryside and central city were losing population to suburban areas. Suburban resettlement "accepted a trend instead of trying to reverse it." He suggested that the towns could demonstrate the value of building entire communities on inexpensive land according to a fixed plan. Planning could prevent overcrowding within the town and encroachments from without. Slum clearance could not begin to provide adequate space for homes and recreation. While Tugwell admitted that the towns would not be less expensive than slum housing, he believed that slum dwellers would strain to meet the slightly higher rents and would find, under improved conditions, the incentive to work

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60 Catherine Bauer, Modern Housing (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 251. One effect of this criticism was that the R.A. Management Division changed the names of these projects from subsistence homesteads to "part-time farming homesteads". U.S., Resettlement Administration, First Annual Report, p. 66.


62 This idea was expressed in Tugwell's first public statement on the towns in his NBC Radio Address, December 2, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, O.F. 1568.
harder for what they had. The cities, Tugwell argued, would fight to retain the residents by opposing the suburban towns, but the Resettlement Administration had shown how well the federal government could do the job. "There ought to be 3,000 such projects rather than three," he concluded.

Several new ideas inherent in the program interested professional planners. Unfortunately, this interest was generally limited to discussion in professional journals with specialized circulations. The Architectural Record stated that the comprehensive nature of the town plans "are commencing a new chapter in American town planning and community architecture." The article hoped one result of the program would be knowledge of exact initial costs and maintenance expenses for a whole town, since a typical American community could not be so measured, and the information could be of tremendous value to planners. Walter Blucher agreed with critics that some aspects of the plans could be improved, but they nevertheless "show to Americans for the first time how communities providing for adequate

63 Tugwell, Address to the Regional Planning Commission of Hamilton County, Ohio, p. 11.
66 Ibid., p. 218.
living can be constructed according to a plan."\(^67\) Blucher optimistically wrote, "We laugh at the early models of the Ford, but I believe it is fair to say that the first attempts in a new form of city building in America are much more advanced than was the first Ford."\(^68\)

The towns also attracted attention in professional planning journals outside the United States.\(^69\) Richard L. Reiss, Vice Chairman of Welwyn Garden City, stated that the greenbelt towns were a valuable contribution to rational urban decentralization and called particular attention to the significance of the federal role in the construction of the towns in a nation "where the prejudice against any form of public enterprise which appears to conflict with ordinary business, is still very strong."\(^70\) He was surprised that "these projects should have been started at

\(^67\)American Society of Planning Officials, Newsletter, III (October, 1937), p. 81.


From a British point of view he saw the program as a first step towards publicly directed regional planning. Not all American planners and housing experts agreed with this assessment but the program did provide a concrete example for those advocating a radically new type of decentralized public housing.

The most vivid and beautiful presentation of the greenbelt towns is Pare Lorentz's film "The City" which was shown at the New York World's Fair in 1939 and later throughout the nation. Lorentz, who had directed "The Plough that Broke the Plains" for the federal government, engaged Aaron Copland to write the musical background and Lewis Mumford to write the script. The film was financed by a $50,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation through the American Institute of Planners. It portrays the city's dirt, smoke, noise, confusion and demoralizing slums. Only a temporary escape can be found in the drab monotony of jerry-built residential neighborhoods because creeping blight soon reduces them to slums. Greenbelt, Maryland is shown in all its grassy splendor as the decentralized city of the future. "The City" was universally praised in the press, but Time magazine alleged the film lost impact by using Greenbelt as an example of the future.

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71 Ibid.
city since the town was financially impractical.\footnote{The City, \textit{Time}, XXXIII (June 5, 1939), pp. 66-67.}  

The most extensive discussion of decentralized public housing occurred during a symposium at the Annual Meeting of the American Institute of Planners in January, 1939. Harland Bartholomew, one of the nation's leading authorities on urban planning, presented the case for downtown locations contending that "American cities are not congested."\footnote{The entire discussion was printed under the title, "Planning Considerations in the Location of Housing Projects," \textit{The Planners' Journal}, V (March-June, 1939), p. 33.} He believed that extension of public services to fringe and suburban developments would in the long run prove more expensive than building in the central city even with its higher land costs. Also, downtown residents do not expend their time and money commuting. He concluded that the decentralized city was "a beautiful idea, but like all such theories is largely if not wholly impractical and unsound."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 34.}

Clarence Stein spoke for the new town advocates. He asserted that construction of adequate housing projects in existing cities was almost impossible due to archaic street patterns, high land costs, and obsolete municipal laws. Adequate housing could only be provided in "complete
new neighborhoods knit together by a new pattern of streets and open spaces.\textsuperscript{76} He presented statistics to show that raw land could be improved with all utilities as was done at the greenbelt towns for less money than it cost to build a number of the housing projects in New York City. He closed saying that new towns could not be built in the old cities primarily because of the "high but false value placed on land by unrealized hopes for expansion."\textsuperscript{77} The only hope for new towns within cities would be for these values to fall to their "use value" and "either the real estate owners or the entire community will have to pay for it."\textsuperscript{78}

Bartholomew answered that while he agreed on the need to develop neighborhood patterns he still believed that decentralizing cities "into isolated sectors is a theoretical ideal but a practical impossibility." and that such an occurrence would be both foolish and expensive for urban America.\textsuperscript{79} In the general discussion that followed it was apparent that most of the speakers doubted the usefulness of new towns. Even Roland Wank, one of the architects of Greenhills, said he hoped suburban towns would not wipe urban agglomerations off the map because

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., p. 42.
it takes a certain size city to support many functions of civilization. Frederick L. Ackerman agreed with Bartholomew that suburban new towns were a form of "escapism" from the problems of the central city. Arthur Comey feared that building entire towns would result in their becoming obsolete in a few years and thus very expensive to remodel to new conditions. 80

While a number of planners and housing experts did agree that some form of decentralization was needed, few saw the greenbelt program solving that need. Mabel L. Walker, whose Urban Blight and Slums was published in 1938, devoted a chapter to the subject "Siphoning Off Slum Population," but gave only passing comment to the greenbelt towns and did not foresee them as a solution. 81

The Committee on Urbanism of the National Resources Committee endorsed the greenbelt idea without ever mentioning the towns by name, but it was not a major focus of their report. Frederic Delano, Chairman of the National Resources Planning Board's Central Housing Committee, recommended privately a program of federally financed purchases of large tracts for the purpose of "planning

80 Ibid., pp. 43-44.


82 Committee on Urbanism of the National Resources Committee, Our Cities: Their Role in the National Economy (Washington: Government Printing Office, June, 1937), pp. 48, 76.
communities or large scale neighborhoods." However, when he restated his view in *The American City* in January, 1937, he said:

The municipality, usually through a Housing Authority, might properly purchase entire neighborhoods in blighted areas or perhaps in suburban or undeveloped territory...Sometimes slum conditions can be made tolerable by draining off part of the population through...the purchase of convenient outlying land...The orderly development of residential neighborhoods, of adequate size to guarantee their stability, would thus be possible on cheap land.*

Apparently Delano chose to discuss only neighborhood developments rather than community developments with internal governments and institutions. This difference, is crucial to the whole garden city and greenbelt town concept. Richard Fernbach explained it in regard to Greendale,

The vision of the Greendale planners extended far beyond the mere physical plan of the town. It recognized government housing as more than the provision of shelter--it is the creation of communities in which democratic processes of living can best be developed.*

The only other aspect of the greenbelt town program that interested professional planners and administrators

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83 Confidential memo from Frederic Delano to members of the Central Housing Committee, September 16, 1936, Lansill Papers, personal files. (Photostatic copy in possession of author).


was the purchase of excess land around the site of each town. The acquisition of such large amounts of vacant land was, it will be remembered, somewhat of an accident when the Suburban Division discovered after the land purchases were made, that money was not available to build towns as large as originally contemplated. However, the opportunity was presented to experiment with the holding of what was called "urban land reserves." The cities of Europe had been purchasing undeveloped land for future expansion since the start of the 20th century. Raymond Unwin had suggested a similar policy to Americans as early as 1914 and it had been recommended in 1935 by the Committee on Research in Urban Land Policies of the National Conference on Planning. 86 Jacob Crane was a member of this committee and when he became one of the chief planners of Greendale he was able to present a concrete example of urban land reserves using Greendale's tract for detailed analysis. 87 The resulting report urged the purchase of urban land reserves but met with little comment and no action. 88

The American Society of Planning Officials numbered

87John S. Lansill and Jacob Crane, "Metropolitan Land Reserves as Illustrated by Greendale, Wisconsin," The American City, LII (July, 1937), pp. 55-58.
88Committee on Urbanism..., Our Cities..., p. 76.
only ninety-one members in 1938. They were not united in support of the new towns and their influence was circumscribed by public indifference or suspicion towards their profession. The National Association of Real Estate Boards maintained that twenty-years of city planning had had no beneficial effect on cities and further,

Until city planners have shown more wisdom and foresight than they have to date, any demands on their part, whether voiced through the National Resources Board or through their associations, for a further extension of city planning functions and powers should be received with considerable caution and scepticism. 89

America's city councilmen agreed with the N.A.R.E.B. by refusing city planners money or authority. A 1936 survey found that of 933 city and county planning commissions only sixty-four had annual budgets over $1,500. The other 869 could not employ full-time planners, much less give them projects to plan. 90 Planning commissions were run by part time amateurs who were not taken seriously by municipal officials. 91

Another deterrent to public enthusiasm for the greenbelt towns was lack of interest on the part of public housing groups such as the National Association of Housing Officials, the National Public Housing Conference and the

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90 Robert A. Walker, "Is the City Planning Commission Meeting Today's Problems?" The American City, LV (December, 1940), p. 68.

91 Ibid., p. 69.
Labor Housing Conference. Members of these groups together with leading figures in the public housing movement met in Baltimore in October, 1935, and issued a report called A Housing Program for the United States, which became the basis of the Wagner Housing Act of 1937. That Act prohibited the establishment of housing projects with their own legal governments and police powers. Judging by the difficulties incurred in passing the Act at all, the inclusion of powers to construct new towns might very well have blocked the entire piece of legislation. Senator Byrd, a leading opponent to the bill, attacked it for opening yet another door to federal construction of costly housing projects.

What assurance has the Senator Wagner that the same extravagances which existed under the Resettlement Administration at Tugwelltown, when that unit was built as a low cost housing unit, will not continue? At Tugwelltown the unit cost was $16,000 per unit. What guaranty can the Senator give that the same extravagances will not appear in connection with the program under his bill?

Intimation of this kind of attitude was noted in the Baltimore report which stated that the building of complete new towns "involves much more than housing," and could not be done by the federal government in the immediate future.

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further it stated that while the concept was a good one, "the provision of adequate housing cannot wait until the satellite type of development is generally adopted."

Organized labor supported the greenbelt town program both locally and nationally. The building trades councils and other A.F. of L. affiliated unions in the town locations passed resolutions supporting the projects both as work relief and housing programs. The Trade Unionist published an enthusiastic article on the greenbelt towns emphasizing that moderate income families could purchase low cost homes because of the savings resulting from "bulk purchase and large scale cooperation." However,


95 A complete list of these resolutions is found in the Summary Information Reports for Greenbelt, Greenbrook, Greendale and Greenhills, Lansill Papers, personal files. A partial list including selected quotations from endorsement letters, is found in U.S., Resettlement Administration, Resettlement Administration Program: In Response to Senate Resolution No. 295, p. 21. Local newspapers did not always print news of labor unions which passed resolutions supporting the projects, but some that did include the New Brunswick Daily Home News, December 11, 1935 and the Cincinnati Enquirer, January 24, 1936 (which placed the endorsement of Greenhills by the Cincinnati Building Trades Council on page five while the condemnations of the project by the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce appeared the same day on page one). Support by the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council and the Milwaukee Building and Loan Council was read into the U.S., Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2d Sess., 1936, LXXX, Part 6, 8090, by Senator LaFollette.

96 The American Federation of Labor, The Trade Unionist, June 6, 1936.
the A.F. of L. devoted its primary efforts to the housing program as suggested in the Wagner Act and merely endorsed a resolution supporting the greenbelt town program.\(^{97}\)

Labor's view was that while understanding the advantages of garden cities, a slum clearance program presented fewer problems.\(^{98}\)

President Roosevelt championed the towns as a demonstration of what American communities should be doing but did not suggest that the government would finance any more such projects.\(^{99}\) Will Alexander remembers Roosevelt's visit to Greenbelt vividly.

F.D.R.'s first trip away from the White House after his election in '36 was to Greenbelt. He was very excited about it and had wanted to go earlier but was too busy with the campaign, but soon after he called the office and said he wanted to see it. There was a crowd of 6,000-7,000 around the White House gate and people lined the streets all the way to Greenbelt. F.D.R. asked, "What are all these people doing here?" Tugwell told him it had probably been in the papers that he was going out. He had the time of his life with that crowd that afternoon. Oh, he was happy. He just glowed under the response of the people.\(^{100}\)


\(^{98}\)McDonnell, p. 69n.

\(^{99}\)A few newspapers believed Roosevelt's visit to Greenbelt and his remarks there at least raised the possibility of more funds flowing into the suburban town program. See the Washington Herald, November 13, 1936, the Washington Daily News, November 14, 1936, and the New York Times, November 18, 1936.

\(^{100}\)Alexander, Oral History Memoir, p. 563.
The President toured Greenbelt for two hours stopping six times to look at various projects. He was accompanied by all the top officials of the Resettlement Administration and the Suburban Division along with Maryland's Senator Radoliff, Representative Gambrill, State Delegate Kent Mullikin and many other officials. F.D.R. said that no effort should be spared to give people easy access to the town because it was "too good an exhibit of what can be done in planning not to make it easy for visitors to come and go and for residents to get to their work without danger and delay." He asked how the local bodies had cooperated with the project and was told very well. At his request he was shown areas set aside for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs. He wanted the streets, water system, electrical system and playgrounds explained.

Roosevelt was impressed with the savings resulting from over-all planning of streets and utilities and noted that application of the same principles in other towns would reduce municipal debts. While touring the school and community building, the President asked architect Douglas Ellington about the materials and construction remarking "Very nice, very nice indeed," As he left

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101 The Prince Georgian (Mt. Rainer, Maryland), November 25, 1936. This is the most complete and detailed account of the President's visit to Greenbelt to be found in any newspaper.

102 Ibid.

103 New York Herald-Tribune, November 14, 1936.
one of the apartments he told reporters,

I have seen the blueprints of this project and have been greatly interested, but the actual sight itself exceeds anything I dreamed of. This is a real achievement and I wish everyone in the country could see it... The homes being built here are to serve primarily the low income group of citizens. It is an experiment that ought to be copied by every community in the United States.104

While there appears to be no direct connection between the President's visit to Greenbelt and Tugwell's resignation four days later, the R.A. Administrator may have wanted Roosevelt to see what he, Tugwell, considered the single most significant R.A. project. This possibility is suggested by Tugwell's concurrent effort to convince Roosevelt and Wallace to transfer the R.A. to the Department of Agriculture.105 The transfer was effected on December 31, 1936, the same day on which Tugwell left the government. The R.A. was under the administration of Will Alexander.106 One of his first actions was to fire the entire publicity staff, saying that he didn't want any more publicity. Nor did he and the Suburban Division staff consider building any more towns. "They had been terribly criticized," said Alexander. "We all believed


105 Sternsher, p. 324.

106 See Executive Order No. 7530, December 31, 1936 in Rosenman, IV, p. 624.
in them but we felt that three was as many as we could get away with. 107

The most plausible reason for the unpopularity of the greenbelt towns is that the leaders of the building industry, real estate and finance, mass media and many others were wedded to individualistic private enterprise in housing and community planning. They were almost all critical of the state of the American metropolitan areas, but believed that planning by thousands of individual land owners and builders—the free market—was preferable to the regimentation involved in public planning. Sir Raymond Unwin, lecturing at Columbia University in 1937, said that "rugged individualism" was instinctive in Americans and was the most serious obstacle to "planning for the common good of all." 108 An editor of Plan Age noted that Americans seemed to prefer the "disguised coercion" of an individualistic system and shuddered at the suggestion of a small degree of regimentation through government planning. 109 After his experience with the greenbelt towns and subsequently with the Regional Plan Association of New York, Tugwell decided that Americans refuse to support government

107 Alexander, Oral History Memoir, pp. 549, 638.
planning primarily out of "fear of regimentation."\textsuperscript{110} Marquis W. Childs said that after listening to Tugwell and the other planners explain the programs of the Resettlement Administration,

I remembered being exhilarated and at the same time disturbed after a dinner or a lunch with the pioneers of the brave new world. I felt that somehow they didn't know the Middle West that I knew and the people in the Middle West. The whole process seemed far removed from the deeper currents of American life...In many respects it was typical of the effort to superimpose from Washington a ready-made Utopia...without some political nourishment. As Doctor Tugwell found out, it is impossible to lay down a blueprint for even a small section of society in this vast, powerful, well-nigh ungovernable country.\textsuperscript{111}

Lawrence Hewes, more charitably, believed that many Americans supported the R.A. program, but after listening to Congressional committees attack the R.A., he realized that "our support consisted of the President and a great number of unvocal, unimpressive, unimportant non-voters."\textsuperscript{112}

Edward McKemon, Publicity Advisor in 1937 to the New York Regional Plan Association as well as the state planning boards of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, avowed that planning could only be "sold" to the nation as a profitable business program which will appeal to the selfish


\textsuperscript{112}Hewes, p. 83.
interest of powerful individuals. While recognizing that most planners are great humanitarians, planning could never appeal in that manner because "society as a whole is not interested in society as a whole."\textsuperscript{113}

CHAPTER IX

FEDERAL MANAGEMENT

The management of the towns was part of a complex inter-governmental arrangement which functioned surprisingly well. The key figures in the administrative machinery were the federally appointed Community Managers—one for each town. In each case this individual also happened to be elected by the town councils to the local office of Town Manager.¹ His salary was paid by the federal government except in his capacity as Town Manager, for which he was paid a token salary of $1.00 per year by his respective town.² The R.A. was very fortunate to select three men who share equally the distinction of being directly responsible for creating the greenbelt communities. Roy S. Braden was the oldest and most experienced of the three. In 1940, during his tenure at Greenbelt, he was elected President of the International

¹ City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 13.
² Greenbelt Cooperator, December 8, 1937, p. 2.

When the towns came under the jurisdiction of the Federal Public Housing Administration in 1943 an attempt was made to clarify the dual status of its employees in the towns by requiring each town to pay these individuals at least $300.00 per year to signify their status as legal, full-time employees. See Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 45.
City Manager's Association. Sherwood Reeder, Manager at Greendale, and Carlton Sharpe, Manager at Greenhills, were both graduates of the Syracuse University School of Public Administration and the National Institute of Public Administration in New York City. Reeder had been Assistant Manager of Cleveland and Sharpe had been Assistant Manager of St. Petersburg, Florida. All three men left their positions with towns during the Second World War. Braden left to take another city manager position, Reeder and Sharpe both left to work on defense housing. Sharpe went on to a distinguished career as the City Manager of Hartford, Connecticut and Kansas City, Missouri. In spite of the short tenure of the three men, they provided able and experienced leadership to these new towns where few if any of the citizens knew something about running a local government.

In addition to the Town Community Manager, the Town Treasurer, the Solicitor, the Town Clerk and the Director of Adult Education in each town, were paid directly by the federal government. The balance of local employee salaries was paid by the towns with funds received annually from the federal government. The dual status of the Town/Community Manager and other officials caused no serious problems in the early years because there was

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little friction between the locally elected town councils and the federal government. More complicated difficulties were encountered after 1945 under the stress of negotiations between the residents and the federal government over the dispossessions of the towns.

Power over the local officials of the towns came from the Resettlement Administration—Colonel John O. Walker, Chief of the Management Division, Administrator Will Alexander, and succeeding him, C.B. Baldwin. By the time the first residents moved into Greenbelt, of course, the Resettlement Administration had been absorbed by the Department of Agriculture. This was the first transfer of the greenbelt towns. By the end of 1947, they had been administered by five different agencies: Resettlement Administration (1935-1937), Farm Security Administration (1937-1942), National Housing Agency (1942), Federal Public Housing Administration (1942-1947), and the Public Housing Administration (1947-1954). Fortunately the towns had good friends in the Farm Security Administration. John O. Walker maintained close and friendly relations with the local town officials—particularly the Community/Town Managers.5 Will Alexander, C.B. Baldwin, and other

4 There was no change in the greenbelt town administrative structure when the Resettlement Administration's name was changed to Farm Security Administration in September, 1937.

5 J.O. Walker to R.I. Nowell, April 28, 1937, National Archives, Record Group 96, Box 231.
F.S.A. officials were deeply interested in helping the residents develop their communities. However, as Alexander himself later stated, the entire R.A. program was regarded with suspicion by the conservative element in the Department of Agriculture. Many members had opposed the merger of the two departments.

The peculiar nature of the towns tended to blur jurisdictional rights. In 1937 and 1938 there was constant correspondence between the Town Solicitors and the F.S.A. regarding the legal power of the towns to perform such acts as insuring property or prohibiting hunting on the greenbelt. At Greendale, Sherwood Reeder asked permission to fumigate the tenants' furniture before it was moved into the new homes. In these, as in most cases the Department of Agriculture responded that the Bankhead-Blank Act permitted such actions. However, such a minor request as one to obtain land in the towns for new roads required the signed approval of the President under the same Act.

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10Two such documents signed by President Roosevelt on January 13, 1936 and June 29, 1940, authorized the construction of roads at Greenhills, Ohio, R.O.A., H.H.F.A., Drawer 530.
A most ingenious arrangement was made to cut the grass at Greenbelt—an example of inter-governmental accommodation. The town cut the grass next to the streets, the F.S.A. cut it to everywhere else except for areas adjacent to the apartments where individual residents cut it.¹¹

Some examples of the regulations imposed on the residents illustrate common concern for the success of the towns. At Greenbelt, Manager Roy S. Braden requested the people to keep off newly seeded lawns, report contagious diseases, keep children from speeding through underpasses and roller skating near the houses after dark, refrain from making undue noise in the evening, and see that cars were parked in the spaces provided.¹² Rules governing the homes were the usual ones found in most private rental units. Repairs were to be made by the maintenance staff and interior alterations such as painting could be made with managerial permission.¹³ Some rules made by the F.S.A. and the town councils indicate an exaggerated regard for the physical aspect of the towns. Because of the "most unattractive appearance" of clothes hanging on the lines

¹¹Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 42n.

¹²Letter from Roy S. Braden to residents of Greenbelt March 25, 1938 (mimeographed), Lansdell Papers, official files.

¹³Greenbelt Manual (1938), Records of the Public Housing Administration, Management Division, General Services Administration, Region III Records Center, Record Group 196, Accession Number 62A-65I, Box 1 (hereafter cited as P.H.A., R.G. 196).
in Greenbelt, outside drying of clothes was prohibited after four P.M. on weekdays and all day Sunday. In December of 1937 some residents of Greenbelt wanted the ban on owning dogs lifted so they could give their children puppies for Christmas. The F.S.A. refused and, as in most other cases, the residents voted to uphold the decision by three to one. In Greenhills the same issue was raised and a referendum in 1940 indicated the majority of residents wanted dogs so the rule was changed. Apparently the only rule which Greenbelt's people refused to obey was one dictated by their own town council. On June 26, 1939, an ordinance was passed prohibiting the wearing of bathing suits and shorts in the town center. It was ridiculed by the Cooperator, scorned by the Washington papers, and ignored by Greenbelt's sweltering citizens. After a few futile efforts the Greenbelt police also ignored it. Generally, the record seems to show that the people of the towns were satisfied with the local administration of their communities in the early years.

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14 Braden to residents of Greenbelt, March 25, 1938, Lansill Papers, official files, p. 3.
16 Cincinnati Post, April 3, 1940.
17 Greenbelt Cooperator, June 29, 1939; and City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 30.
of existence.18

Many problems were similar to those in any private housing project, except that the F.S.A. was more solicitous of the tenants. The tenants, in turn, were less prone to complain and generally obeyed regulations with good humor. The regulations were considered so complicated that it was difficult to understand them at Greendale, but no substantial grievances emerged.19 There is some evidence that a few of Greenbelt's residents feared eviction if they complained but this never occurred.20 If it had, the town newspapers would have protested vigorously and the national press would have used it as an example of the rigidity of regimentation. The only study made of residents who left the towns concerned the sixty-five families who left Greendale between 1938 and 1942. It was found that in no case did management pressure force them to leave. They were either incompatible with and rejected by the other residents or they were unhappy living under the stigma of

18Hugh Bone, "Greenbelt Faces 1939," The American City, LIV (February, 1939), p. 59. William Form's extensive opinion polling at Greenbelt during 1942 and 1943 revealed that two-thirds of the residents found no fault with the federal administration of the community. See Form, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 364-365.

19Greendale Review, August 24, 1938.

20Greenbelt Cooperator, March 23, 1939.
Two unique problems arose at Greenbelt. Due to the high number of government employees there, the town government suffered from a lack of qualified people to serve. Government employees were covered by the Hatch Act of August 2, 1939, which, according to the Federal Civil Service, barred them from running for local offices or participating in local political affairs. In February, 1940, the Greenbelt Cooperator complained that the Act "cheated the local governments of the best material." In October of the same year the Commissioner of Civil Service allowed government employees to hold elective office in Greenbelt provided they remained non-partisan and were not associated with any local, state or national partisan organizations.

The other problem involved relations with Prince Georges County and the State of Maryland. At first, the residents of Greenbelt were not allowed to vote in any state or local elections or to participate in any of the state or county health services. Yet they were required to purchase Maryland driver's licenses and pay a state

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22 Greenbelt Cooperator, February 15, 1940.

23 Ibid., October 17, 1940.
personal property tax. In August, 1938, the Maryland Attorney General ruled that Greenbelt was a part of the State of Maryland and therefore its residents were citizens of the State with all rights and responsibilities thus accruing. Not until January, 1940, however, did the Maryland State Health Department agree to include Greenbelt in the Prince Georges County health programs— even the vaccination plan.

The initial suspicion and prejudice in the County was gradually overcome as the advantages of Greenbelt's high school, recreational facilities, hospital-clinic, and cooperative stores were recognized. Moreover, payments in lieu of taxes for Greenbelt were always far above any tax rate for any other Maryland community. The local Democratic leadership was not changed by the influx of new voters, in spite of the fact that Greenbelt immediately became the second largest community in the County and moved to first place in 1941.

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26 Greenbelt Cooperator, January 25, 1940.
27 Fulmer, Greenbelt, p. 36.
29 Milwaukee County includes the city of Milwaukee and Hamilton County the City of Cincinnati.
citizens took an active interest in local affairs during the pre-war years, but during the war the turnover was so high that few residents voted in the county elections. In 1943 only 200 out of 1500 eligible voters in Greenbelt registered for the local election. Only after the sale of the town did residents resume an interest in local politics. Greendale and Greenhills experienced little or no difficulty assimilating into the local political structure.

Neither town planners nor government administrators made adequate provisions for commuting. When Greenbelt opened there was no direct transportation to Washington, a distance of thirteen miles. Residents without automobiles had to find a way to Branchville, Maryland, several miles away, where a trolley would take them to Mount Rainier and another trolley would take them to the city. In November, 1937, the Greenbelt Citizens' Association formed a committee to study the problem. The F.S.A. agreed to finance bus service to Washington by contract with the Capital Transit Company of Washington. Lack of patronage caused a deficit of $10,000 during the first twelve months of service. There seemed to be no profitable way to serve so small and distant a suburb, even at a

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weekly cost of $1.75 per person. In early March, 1939, the F.S.A. decided not to subsidize C.T.C. losses any longer. The company then announced that after April 7, direct bus service to Washington would end and service to the Mount Rainier trolley line would commence—at an increased cost of $2.00 per week. An overflow crowd at the next Citizens' Association meeting voted to protest to the Interstate Commerce Commission. The Capital Transit Company was accused of "inadequate service, questionable bookkeeping, and a general dictatorial attitude." The direct bus service ended on schedule, the I.C.C. took no action, and Greenbelt residents bought twenty-six used cars in the first two weeks after the service ended.

By the end of 1939 sixty-five per cent of the Greenbelt families owned automobiles—a considerable financial sacrifice judging from the fact that only thirty-three per cent even had telephones. There was a short-lived attempt to operate shuttle station wagons to Washington but most people either drove in car pools or spent an hour or two on busses and street cars. Transportation was a continuing problem. With the war

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32Ibid., March 9, 1939, March 16, 1939, April 6, 1939.
33Greenbelt Cooperator, April 27, 1939.
34Walker, Shelter, III (December, 1938), p. 17; and Larson, Master's thesis, p. 27.
came gasoline rationing and increased difficulty in using an automobile. The Capital Transit Company cited the war as a reason for terminating bus service to Mount Rainier in September, 1943, forcing residents to drive or ride to Branchville to get a trolley to Mount Rainier. The Greenbelters appealed to the Maryland Public Service Commission, the Federal Public Housing Administration, and the Federal Office of Defense Transportation. This time they won and the Mount Rainier service was restored. After the war the C.T.C. succeeded in cutting service back to Branchville and by 1949 raised the cost to $3.80 per week. In 1951, after the completion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway reduced driving time from forty-five to thirty minutes, the C.T.C. ended all service to Greenbelt. In 1965, with the opening of the Washington Beltway which runs through the center of the town, Greenbelt finally had a highway system linking it with the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.

At Greendale, the Greendale Review admitted in 1940 that its transportation problem was not as severe as that at Greenbelt. This gave little comfort to the commuters who sometimes spent over an hour travelling to work and

36Greenbelt Cooperator, October 8, 1943.

37Hall, pp. 2-3; and City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 6.
another hour back home. The needs of Greendale were complicated by the fact that, although Greendale was closer to the center of Milwaukee, many men worked at factories scattered throughout the area. When the Wisconsin Public Service Commission was approached for service in September, 1938, several different groups petitioned for different bus routes. Bus service began in January, 1939, on a six month trial basis. At the end of the period the Midland Coach Lines reported losses due to low patronage and service was ended with the approval of the Public Service Commission. A new company, the Milwaukee Electric Railway Company, furnished transportation to the end of the Milwaukee Transit System—and charged the same rate the first company had charged to go to the center of the city. Service remained poor until the 1950's when Loomis Road, the main route between Greendale and Milwaukee, was widened into a limited access highway.

Greenhills was located halfway between Cincinnati and Hamilton, Ohio, and residents worked in both places as well as in towns in between along the Mill Creek Valley.

38Greendale Review, December 15, 1938, May 1, 1940.
39Ibid., September 23, 1938.
41Interview with John M. Kuglitsch, Village Manager, Greendale, Wisconsin, February 4, 1965.
The Cincinnati Street Railway Company refused an R.A. request for service to Greenhills unless it could depend on a government subsidy. During the first months there was no transportation for the public from Greenhills. Those travelling to Cincinnati drove to the end of the city bus line at North College Hill, approximately six miles. A private bus company was formed in early 1939, the Greenhills Transportation Company. Its single antique bus made several trips per day into Cincinnati—when it was not overheating. The same year another bus company began service to Hamilton. Obviously most residents relied on automobiles for transportation.

Attracting industry to the towns might have improved the commuting problem. At Greenbelt, however, little initial interest in that possibility was shown on the part of citizens or the government. Louis Bessemer, Greenbelt's first Mayor, introduced a resolution in the Town Council in November, 1938, to ask the F.S.A. for $10,000 to survey the industrial potential of the town, but it was tabled. One Council member said such a survey was not the responsibility of the Town Council and another questioned the value.

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of industrial development in Greenbelt. The following
issue of the *Cooperator* stated that while a survey was a
good idea, development of local agriculture and the process-
ing of agricultural products would be "in keeping with the
preconceived nature of Greenbelt." At that time the
majority of residents were long-term civil service employ-
ees and may not have had interest in industrial employment.
But by the beginning of 1944 the situation had changed
dramatically. Although over eighty per cent of the resi-
dents were government employees, many were in temporary
war time positions which would terminate at the end of
the war. In January, 1944, the Citizens' Association
invited Arthur S. Fleming to discuss post war employment
prospects for Greenbelt's federal employees. The
following month the Town Council unanimously passed a
resolution to ask the Federal Public Housing Administration
to allow the town to offer industrial sites along the
Baltimore and Ohio tracks in the northwest corner of the
town limits. The Federal Public Housing Administration
took no action and development of an industrial area waited
until the 1960's. Greendale did not develop an indus-

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45 *Greenbelt Cooperator*, December 1, 1938, December 8, 1938.
48 An industrial park approximately a mile long
and one half mile wide along the B. & O. tracks was includ-
trial area, which was called for in the original plans, until it was transferred to private control. Greenhills, built on rolling hills, is not suitable for the construction of industrial plants.

Income limitations on the residents led to continual reevaluation of their rights. Again, Greenbelt serves as the most detailed example of the problem. Families with incomes exceeding the maximum set figure were to be evicted from the town. This penalized those who were presumably rewarded by their employers and threatened to rob the town of some of its most educated and talented leaders. Further, it reinforced the belief of many residents that they were only temporary guests who would eventually be expected to move out and find a home of their own in a more permanent community. In 1939 the F.S.A. raised all income maximums by twenty-five per cent but by the end of the year a number of families had exceeded the new maximum and faced eviction. 49

A Special Committee on Community Life was created which included George F. Warner, soon-to-be Mayor of Greenbelt, Reverend Robert Kincheloe, Pastor of the Community Church, and Walter Volkhausen, President of Greenbelt Consumer Services. The committee requested an

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end to income limitations and a raise in rent for families with incomes exceeding the maximums. It noted that many government employees received raises which put them first at $2,300 and then to $2,600 pushing them just $100 over the maximum for a family of four ($2,000 plus the twenty-five per cent increase placed the maximum at $2,500).

You will not discover one family in Greenbelt which has a feeling of security of tenure which is the essence of home life and of community life because of the fear...that some day the family will get a raise and have to move.

This is the bed of sand on which we are attempting to build a more integrated community life...This is the insecure foothold from which we are trying to better our relations with surrounding communities and establish our right to recognition by our county and our state.\textsuperscript{50}

In mid-January, 1940, Alexander and John Walker agreed to allow families with incomes in excess of the revised maximum to pay more rent rather than be evicted.\textsuperscript{51} This decision was reversed on November 1, 1941, and 300 families were told they would have to leave by March 31, 1942.\textsuperscript{52} Again the F.S.A. changed the policy and all families were allowed to stay at Greenbelt regardless of income.\textsuperscript{53} At Greendale income limitation was not as severe a problem in the pre-war years because a local

\textsuperscript{50}Greenbelt Cooperator, January 11, 1940.
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., January 18, 1940.
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., November 7, 1941, March 13, 1942.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., March 13, 1942.
recession in the Milwaukee area kept incomes generally lower than in other parts of the nation.\textsuperscript{54} A partial solution to the question of what to do with higher income families residing in the towns was hoped for in some form of private home ownership. Respecting the desire of many families to own homes, the F.S.A. attempted to lease land to potential builders and to allow tenants to purchase the homes they inhabited.\textsuperscript{55} These attempts were part of the basis on which cooperative homeowners' groups were formed.\textsuperscript{56} However all efforts towards private ownership in the towns were either tabled or aborted by the increasing demands of the war and the transfer of the towns to the Federal Public Housing Administration.\textsuperscript{57} Most members of the homeowners' cooperatives built homes outside the towns.\textsuperscript{58} Residents in Greendale had hoped the government might sell the entire town to a resident coop, but as months passed without any action, they became exasperated and began leaving the town as soon as they saved enough money to

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{54}Greendale Review, March 6, 1940.
\textsuperscript{55}Greenbelt Cooperator, January 18, 1940, May 23, 1940, June 13, 1940, and July 25, 1940.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., March 28, 1941.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., July 25, 1941, December 19, 1941, January 30, 1942, May 8, 1942, and July 10, 1942.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., May 22, 1942.
\end{quote}
purchase a house. Thus, the position of the towns halfway between independent communities and federal housing projects made their management more difficult than anyone imagined.

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59 Green Dale Review, December 1, 1938, February 21, 1940, March 6, 1940, August 21, 1940, September 18, 1940, April 30, 1941; and Marshall, PhD. dissertation, p. 34.
A cooperative community—political, social and economic—was a basic goal of the Resettlement Administration planners. This was a valuable experiment which even the Washington Post believed should not be underestimated. An editorial remarks that, in spite of the initial construction cost, Greenbelt "will be the scene of a cooperative enterprise which the American people will watch with interest."\(^1\) It was the R.A.'s hope that the towns would be proof that cooperation rather than competition results in a wholesome society. The experiment was not to be carried out by impractical utopians and cranks. The residents, though carefully selected, were not a small band of the elect seeking a New Jerusalem. They were simply moderate income families who wanted more adequate housing in a pleasant neighborhood. Had they moved in to a typical P.W.A. housing project they would have been happier than in their slum dwellings. But by moving into a totally new town several miles from the nearest community—a town in which they were forced to

\(^1\)Washington Post, September 30, 1937.
establish their own institutions—they engaged in a task which, for a period of years, transformed their lives.

The original residents clearly took to heart Will Alexander's address to the first group entering Greenbelt, Maryland, in which he called them "pioneers...on a new frontier." The pioneer motif stuck with the three towns in the pre-war years. The Milwaukee News-Sentinel described the line of automobiles and trailers moving out of the city as a caravan of "uncovered wagons that bumped out to Greendale" taking the first families to the new town.\textsuperscript{3} The Cincinnati Post compared the first residents moving into Greenhills with the city's founding fathers "trudging wearily into old Cincinnati."\textsuperscript{4} The first issue of the Greenbelt Cooperator carried an editorial entitled "We Pioneers."\textsuperscript{5} The first issue of the Greenhills News-Bulletin included an editorial by Edwin B. Cunningham which read:

\begin{quote}
We, the residents of Greenhills, are pioneers in the fullest sense of the word...While we are not engaged in the conquest of a physical frontier, nevertheless, on our shoulders rests the solution of a problem most vital in our day...the art of getting along with each other...It is as pioneers
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{2}Greenbelt Cooperator, November 24, 1937.

\textsuperscript{3}Milwaukee News-Sentinel, May 1, 1938.

\textsuperscript{4}Cincinnati Post, March 31, 1938.

\textsuperscript{5}Greenbelt Cooperator, November 24, 1937.
in this field that we can blaze paths of greater happiness.\textsuperscript{6}

Greenbelt's residents were particularly self-conscious under the watchful observation of a generally hostile press. Residents wrote many letters to their own newspaper and to the city papers complaining about the unfair stories and the "ugly rumors" about the town.\textsuperscript{7} One man urged his fellow citizens to do their complaining within the community rather than in the local papers which "under pressure of strong real estate interests... are endeavoring to ridicule our town. Our complaints... are excellent fodder for their slander."\textsuperscript{8}

The following month, commenting on an article in the Washington Star, the Cooperator wrote that most residents were learning to "take with a grain of salt all 'news' of the newspapers when they hear warped reports of their community."\textsuperscript{9} One Greenbelt resident was stopped in his government office by his supervisor and asked, "What do you really think of Greenbelt wives not being permitted to have babies unless the Administration gives its official okay?" An article was produced as the source of the absurd allegation.\textsuperscript{10} So numerous were the reports of regimentation

\textsuperscript{6}Greenhills News-Bulletin, May 21, 1938.
\textsuperscript{7}Greenbelt Cooperator, November 24, 1937.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., April 13, 1938.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., May 18, 1938.
\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., December 15, 1938.
and sinister activities at Greenbelt that George F. Carnes, an early columnist for the Cooperator, wrote in the following vein:

Something should be done for the sightseers who come out Greenbelt way over the weekends. It makes me feel bad to see the hurt look on their faces after they have spent the whole afternoon vainly searching for signs of regimentation, liberty-throttling rules and restrictions and barefoot women who use their frigidaires for china closets.

Why not a little entertainment for them? Say for instance some of us could put on the oldest, ragged clothes we have, pull a rickety chair out on the lawn facing the street and prop our bare feet up in the sunshine. That would give the visitors a chance to see how the underprivileged spends his Sundays, and then too, maybe some newspaper man would happen along and we would get our picture in the paper under a caption something like this: BAREFOOT GREENBELTER CAN'T TELL FRONT FROM BACKYARD.

Portable signs, something light which we could remove after the rubbernecks had gone back home, with large illustrations indicating the dire punishment which would befall anyone who was caught stepping on the grass, hanging out wash after four o'clock, or buying groceries outside of Greenbelt, would serve the purpose of convincing the trekkers that the trip wasn't in vain; that they had so much to be thankful for in the personal liberty and exercise of free will granted them by their own city government.

Then last, but not least, we could erect a small booth in which we could place a uniformed guard with instructions to salute any and everyone as they left our city limits.\(^{11}\)

At the close of 1938, George A. Warner, Town Councilor and later Mayor of Greenbelt reminded his neighbors more

\(^{11}\text{i}b\text{id.}, \text{November 23, 1938.}\)
seriously of "The Challenge of Nineteen Thirty-nine":

We in Greenbelt...have a contribution to make to history...It is for us to prove that more can be accomplished cooperatively than selfishly...Let us make our town a model of good fellowship, neighborliness, tolerance, and practical democracy.  

While Greenbelt attracted the most national publicity the other two towns came in for a fair share of uncomfortable observation. At times the eyes of the world seemed to be, quite literally, on the residents. During the early weeks at Greenhills and Greendale, residents were often startled to see a group of visitors standing on their porches watching them eat dinner. For a time the F.S.A. was forced to limit tourists in the towns to weekends only. On these occasions the entire town population became Sunday afternoon tour guides. The first "Guest Day" at Greendale attracted over 4,000 people. In addition there were continual visits by professional groups who were guided by young men employed by the National Youth Administration. A delegation from the Soviet Union preceded by a few months a group of Americans from a convention of the National Association of

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12Ibid., December 29, 1938. After leaving Greenbelt Warner wrote a memoir and historical sketch of the community during its first four years. See George A. Warner, Greenbelt: The Cooperative Community.


14Greendale Review, October 6, 1938.
Real Estate Boards. The Greendale Review proudly told its readers that both the Communists and the real estate people were surprised and impressed by the community.\textsuperscript{15} Visitors from hostile newspapers were regarded with suspicion and treated coldly. The Greendale Review castigated the press for "hitting below the belt" by publishing erroneous information about Greendale—particularly the allegation that its homes cost $16,400 each.\textsuperscript{16}

The residents exercised strict discipline over any tendency to dependency on the F.S.A. An editorial in the Greenbelt Cooperator criticized those who would turn to the government for funds and equipment as supportive of criticism that people would only demand more if anything was given to them. "After all, this is not a slum clearance project, and we surely do not want either relief or charity. Let's stand on our own feet."\textsuperscript{17} In August, 1938, when the possibility of building a recrea-

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., August 24, 1938, November 17, 1938.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., August 24, 1938, November 17, 1938.
\textsuperscript{17}This derogatory view of slum clearance public housing projects expressed in the Cooperator on January 26, 1938, indicates that there may have been some degree of snobbery among the Greenbelt residents and an effort to dissociate themselves from any comparison with the P.W.A. or U.S.H.A. inner city project. Greendale's residents entertained a large group of people from the Julia Lathrop Housing Project in Chicago who had come to Milwaukee to visit Greendale and Parklawn, the P.W.A. slum clearance project. The Greendale residents were invited to return the visit, but there is no record they ever did so, nor did they carry on any programs with Parklawn. Greendale Review, August 24, 1938.
\end{flushleft}
tion center was being discussed, the *Cooperator* asked that citizens either pay for it themselves or forget the idea and certainly not ask, "Won't the F.S.A. dish out another helping?" The Greendale Citizens' Association, discussing a proposal to build a community center separate from the school, likewise decided not to seek government money. The majority of residents believed the F.S.A. had done enough for them and that they should finance their own building. Even during the local recession in 1939, while Greendale residents eagerly sought federal aid for unemployment relief, they established their own Labor Relations Committee to find jobs for Greendale's unemployed and set up an Exchange of Skills Office where a register of available jobs and a list of those with particular skills were kept. The citizens complained bitterly about W.P.A. labor from Milwaukee completing the groundwork at Greendale when Greendale men were jobless. So serious was the unemployment that a special fund was established by the Citizens' Association in early 1940 to help the needy of Greendale. Greenbelt citizens also sought government help to relieve unemployment there but to no avail. The situation continued through 1939 and in May, 1940 while the heads of over forty Greenbelt families

18 *Greenbelt Cooperator*, August 31, 1938.

were out of work. 20

There is no question that the towns relied on federal officials—particularly the Community/Town Manager—for initial direction and continuing advice. But the local societies and institutions grew primarily through the enthusiastic efforts of almost every citizen. During the first year at Greenbelt approximately thirty-five organizations were founded in addition to a large number of temporary committees. Meeting rooms had to be booked weeks in advance. 21 Almost every adult belonged to at least one organization or committee. The rivalry for positions was intense. 22 A political scientist from the University of Maryland studied Greenbelt in the winter of 1938-1939 and concluded that the citizens were "over-stimulated," and organized more groups and activities than the community could possibly have time or money for. 23 The Greenbelt movie theater was losing money because people were too busy with meetings to attend films. 24 In December, 1938, the people decided to call an end to all meetings or other

20*Greenbelt Cooperator*, July 27, 1938, April 11, 1940, April 18, 1940, May 2, 1940.
functions during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. The Washington Star considered the move evidence of a revolt against "experiments in regimentation" and concluded that even in the federal showcase of Greenbelt residents "prefer staying at home...minding their own business to organizing details of their own and their neighbor's lives." Walter Volokhausen answered the Star that, aside from providing a respite during the holidays, the residents realized they were moving too quickly in too many directions. In attempting to do everything necessary to start a new community, the average citizen had been moving "at top speed...not because he has been 'regimented,' but because he has been set free." He concluded by saying:

> If Washington newspapers would endeavor to see the significance of this town, and not use it as a political football, they would find that they have been scoring a development which holds more for the future of democracy than all the impassioned utterances that will ever decorate their paper.

> Democracy will grow not from your saying things, but from people doing things.

One explanation for the frenetic activity of the townspeople derives from their backgrounds. They were selected, in part, for their interest in community affairs. Because of the experimental nature of the towns, a commit-


26 *Greenbelt Cooperator*, December 15, 1938.

27 Ibid.
ment to their success was keenly felt. One writer posited that Greenbelt's residents sensed "the first real chance they ever had to express themselves, and overdid it a bit." Most came from poor sections of Washington where they had had few opportunities for social organization and no city government to which they could contribute—as one might expect they were culturally and politically starved.

Their general educational backgrounds were unusually high. In 1940 the median school year completed by Greenbelt residents over twenty-five years of age was 12.5. Approximately sixty-five per cent had completed high school, thirty-four per cent had some college education and only three per cent had less than an eighth grade education. The national median educational level in 1940 for whites over twenty-five was 8.75 years of school. In 1960, to compare, the national median was still only 10.6 years. The high educational level of Greenbelt may be explained by the fact that 72.6 per cent of these original residents were white collar workers—almost all employed by the

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29 Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 67.


government. Greendale and Greenhills included many more residents from blue collar factory employees. Greendale had forty-two per cent high school graduates and fourteen per cent with some college education. Nevertheless, Greendale's median educational level was eleven years—considerably above the national average. Another contrast between Greenbelt and the other two towns was the age of the residents. If young people can be characterized as idealists, Greenbelt must have been a most idealistic town in 1938. The median age of its adults in that year was twenty-nine while in the other two towns it was thirty-three—hardly a middle-aged group either.

Another contributing factor to the process of rapid community acclimation was the small number of homes initially occupied. It took almost a full year for the 885 homes in Greenbelt to be completed and occupied. Only fourteen people—ten adults and four children—moved into Greenbelt on opening day. In two weeks forty-five families had arrived. The Greenbelt Citizens' Association, the first and most important organization established in the early months, was founded on November 8, 1937 with approximately 100 families in residence. The first Town Council was elect-

ed on November 23, 1937, with less than 150 families and in the town. By April, 1938, the town had 483 families and by September, 1938, all 885 units were filled. 35 The 100 to 150 families who started organizing during October and November, 1937, naturally obtained leadership and maintained an esprit de corps based on close contact during the early weeks. By the end of November organizations, in addition to the Citizens' Association and the Town Council, were the Greenbelt Cooperator, Greenbelt Woman's Club, Greenbelt American Legion, the Community Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Greenbelt Federal Credit Union, the Greenbelt P.T.A., and the Greenbelt Players Theater Club. Temporary committees were formed to solve the transportation problem and establish institutions such as Kindergarten, the Greenbelt Consumer Services and the Greenbelt Health Association. Town newcomers in December and January complained that the "early settlers" of the town "have taken over all the authority where it is possible to do so...and are running the town to suit themselves." 36 Fortunately, such

35 City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 3; Greenbelt Cooperator, December 22, 1937, April 6, 1938; Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 241; and Hall, p. 4.

36 Greenbelt Cooperator, January 26, 1938. Similar complaints were made in the Greendale Review. The first residents who lived in one section of town close to the center were charged with "dominating the town offices." One editorial suggested that this situation could be corrected by allowing only one office to each resident. This was the last mention of any problem of this nature. See Greendale Review, April 8, 1939 and May 4, 1939.
accusations soon disappeared from the pages of the 
Cooperator, and the high level of participation in all town 
organizations throughout 1938 indicates they were baseless. 

If attendance at meetings of the Greenbelt Citizens' 
Association is any gauge of activity, 1939 reflected a 
turning point from hyperactivity to what Philip Brown 
called a "second and somewhat more efficient stage--one 
of struggling with routine management problems and spreading 
responsibility."37 Weekly meetings of the Association in 
the beginning of 1939 were rarely attended by less than 
200 people, but by October the Cooperator lamented the 
decrease in attendance implying the Association was "on 
its last legs."38 A similar trend appeared in the other 
two towns. Most of the temporary committees in Greenhills 
had achieved the specific goals for which they were 
created--to select a dentist, investigate methods of munici-
pal incorporation, or devise a policy towards door-to-
doorsalesmen. Other committees, such as the Transpor-
tation Committee, the committee to establish church services, 
and the committee to print a newspaper, became permanent 
but required fewer meetings.39 Greendale had acquired over 
fifty organizations in the first two years, "for everything 

38Bone, The American City, LIV (February, 1939) p. 
59; and Greenbelt Cooperator, November 2, 1939. 
39Greenhills News-Bulletin, May 21, 1938; Sharpe, 
"Greenhills Progress Report," Lansill Papers, official 
files, p. 3.
you could think of," said one resident. 40 During the first year there were so many meetings that a number of people resigned in the new year to spend more time at home. 41 Regular attendance at meetings of most groups decreased to about thirty-five per cent of the memberships. 42 The Greendale Citizens' Association, founded in January, 1939 with large turnouts of residents, floundered after two years. 43 Despite the natural lessening of interest in active participation, the process of creating community institutions, ranging from car pools to complex consumer cooperatives, was most significant to the cooperative and democratic nature of the communities. This phenomenon is not unique with the greenbelt towns. It has been marked by observers of newly born communities in the United States as early as de Tocqueville and as recently as the 1950's by sociologist Robert K. Merton. The process of community formations has led two American historians to isolate it as the most significant factor in Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier democracy. 44

A brief analysis of Greenbelt's major institutions

40 Milwaukee Journal, February 17, 1946.
43 Greendale Review, March 6, 1940.
reflects the growth and subsequent disintegration of cooperation in the town. The two major political institutions were the Town Council and the Citizens' Association. The Council was established in the Town Charter as the official representative body of the citizens. On November 23, 1937, five Councilors were elected from a field of twelve after a short non-partisan campaign. Almost every voter went to the polls. Neither of the two conservative candidates was elected. The Councilors selected Louis Bessemer as chairman—thus he became the first mayor. Bessemer was an employee of the U.S. Public Health Service and a long-time member of the District of Columbia Cooperative League. The Council also elected Roy Braden to the post of Town Manager. Braden worked closely and amicably with the Council—never becoming involved in local political disputes. Local politics remained non-partisan; but interest in national parties was high. A Greenbelt Democratic Club was founded in the summer of 1939 and the Democratic Party was the overwhelming preference of Greenbelt's voters.

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46 Greenbelt Cooperator, November 24, 1937.

47 Ibid., August 27, 1943.

48 Ibid., July 27, 1939, November 6, 1942, November 10, 1944.
The alter ego of the Town Council was the Greenbelt Citizens' Association founded two weeks before the first Council was elected. The Association immediately leaped into action—its many committees investigating literally hundreds of problems and establishing dozens of new organizations. During periods of controversy the Citizens' Association operated as a town meeting and provided an instant channel of communication between the residents and the Town Council or the federal government.

The day following the election of the Town Council Greenbelt's residents saw the first edition of the Greenbelt Cooperator. Founded by the new Journalism Club, the paper remains to this day a non-profit enterprise staffed by unpaid volunteers. This is the only one of the three greenbelt town papers which has survived as an independent local newspaper. It is an invaluable record of Greenbelt's development. The first issue advised readers that "We Pioneers" had a responsibility to create a self-governing democratic community and "develop a Greenbelt philosophy of life." An article "In the Public Eye" urged citizens to "help make the facts clear" when writers and photographers came to Greenbelt. The name of the paper was itself the subject of controversy. One person thought it sounded too "preachy" and had a "tendency to associate Greenbelt with

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49 Ibid., November 24, 1936.
50 Ibid.
regimentation and paternalism."

he suggested the name Greenbelt Town Crier. 51

Another citizen retorted that town crier conjured up images of "powdered wigs and knee britches—outmoded symbols of an outmoded age. Greenbelt has been pronounced the town of the future." 52

The Cooperator espoused a liberal view, selecting such books for review as Eleanor Roosevelt's This is My Story, Upton Sinclair's Co-op, and G.J. Holyoak's History of the Rochdale Pioneers, a history of an early cooperative movement. 53

The paper attacked the "horrors" of Japan's army in China in January, 1938. In March, it discussed the fall of Austria and Roosevelt's rearmament proposals, scoring "misguided and deluded pacifists" who believe that "gangsterism can be stopped by protests." 54

However, it defended the right of pacifists and Jehovah's Witnesses to dissent warning against "Super-patriots" such as members of the D.A.R. and the Dies Committee. 55

The consumer cooperative movement was supported against the charge by J.B. Mathews, Research Director for the House Un-American Activities Committee (Dies Committee), that "communists

51 Ibid., December 22, 1937.
52 Ibid., December 29, 1937.
54 Ibid., January 5, 1938, March 16, 1938.
55 Ibid., January 22, 1940, September 12, 1940, December 28, 1939.
were working through consumer organizations to destroy the American profit system.\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{Cooperator} pointed out that Mathews had, previous to his job with the H.U.A.C., been Vice President of Consumers Research, a private group opposed to the consumer cooperative movement.\textsuperscript{57} The paper endorsed President Roosevelt in 1940. In those years the \textbf{Greenbelt Cooperator} was the rarest of suburban newspapers --interested in national and international affairs and their relation to the local community. It was the defender and conscience of Greenbelt--attacking the community's critics, praising, scolding and preaching to the pioneers.

The Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative founded in January, 1940, was the keystone in Greenbelt's structure of mutual aid. It survived the sale of the town and through careful management, has expanded into Baltimore, Washington, and Northern Virginia.\textsuperscript{58} A consumer coop to operate the retail establishments at the three towns had long been planned by the Resettlement Administration. The R.A. hoped to loan the residents funds repayable through the sale of stock and the proceeds of sales. No action was taken, however, and the R.A. was merged with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56}Ibid., December 14, 1939.
\item \textsuperscript{57}Ibid., December 21, 1939.
\end{itemize}
the Department of Agriculture. The solicitor of the U.S.D.A. noted that no loans could be made to the town coops because all funds allocated to the R.A. and transferred to the F.S.A. were for "rural rehabilitation." He regarded the retail coops as contributing to the rural rehabilitation of the residents "only by a very tenuous line of argument." The F.S.A. then turned to the Consumer Distribution Corporation financed by the Boston merchant, Edward A. Filene. Filene's organization agreed to establish a subsidiary called Greenbelt Consumer Services, which received the exclusive right to operate all commercial facilities in Greenbelt. These included a supermarket, valet shop, barber shop, beauty parlor, motion picture theater and a gasoline station. Rent for the buildings was based on a percentage of the sales and was comparable to the ratio for privately rented stores. The G.C.S. was a non-profit self-liquidating subsidiary. It would return all profits to the consumers and turn over ownership to Greenbelt residents by December 31, 1940.

On October 3, 1937, the grocery store opened in temporary quarters and sold $11.45 worth of food to twenty-

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60 New York Times, January 28, 1940.

four customers. By 1939, after the opening of the permanent supermarket and the other establishments, G.C.S. was doing an average daily business of almost $1,000.00. During 1938 and 1939, Walter Volckhausen and a large number of Greenbelt residents organized a Greenbelt Consumer Coop, selling $5,000 worth of stock at $10.00 per share to over 400 residents. On January 2, 1940, Greenbelt Consumer Services was sold to the resident stockholders for $40,000 of which $5,000 was paid in cash and the balance, in the form of a Consumer Distribution Corporation loan at four per cent interest, was paid off over the following six years. Volckhausen, a mathematics instructor at the University of Maryland, was selected as the first president.

A survey of the Greenbelt Coop by the University of Maryland in 1940, revealed that sixty-seven per cent of the residents had purchased stock. Generally, it was in a strong financial position. The beauty parlor, however, was losing money because few Greenbelt women patronized it regularly and almost one-third of them had never patronized one. The supermarket accounted for half the coop's revenue. Average food prices were nine per cent

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63 Bennett, Journal of Marketing, VI (July, 1941), p. 4.
64 Greenbelt Cooperator, January 4, 1940; Warner, p. 59-60, 91-92.
lower than District of Columbia chain stores and 9.3 per cent lower than independent food stores.\textsuperscript{65} It could have charged even lower prices had it not been for Maryland's retail price maintenance law.\textsuperscript{66} All members (stockholders) of the coop, of course, received dividends on their purchases—in 1940 these amounted to 3.85 per cent.\textsuperscript{67} The strength of the coop's financial position was due, not only to lower prices and the desire to succeed on the part of the residents, but to a monopoly position in Greenbelt. The nearest private competitors were in Beltsville, three miles away.

In 1943, after the completion of 1000 defense homes in Greenbelt, the coop stores expanded and a second food store opened adjacent to the new homes.\textsuperscript{68} The government also depended on G.C.S. for new services such as operation of a swimming pool opened in 1939 and a local bus service in Greenbelt from 1945 to 1951. A large turnover of residents and thus of shareholders weakened the institution. By May, 1944, membership had dropped from sixty-seven per cent of the population in 1940 to approximately fifty per cent, and attendance at shareholder's meetings was far

\textsuperscript{65}Bennett, \textit{Journal of Marketing}, VI (July, 1941), p. 9.

\textsuperscript{66}"Coop Stores Grow in Greenbelt," \textit{Business Week}, May 14, 1938.

\textsuperscript{67}Bennett, \textit{Journal of Marketing}, VI (July, 1941), p. 10.

\textsuperscript{68}City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 6.
The addition of the defense home residents, however, increased membership in absolute numbers, and, in November, 1944, the coop had the good fortune to obtain the services of Samuel F. Ashelman as general manager. Under his imaginative and careful administration the Greenbelt Consumer Services launched an expansion program that helped it survive the sale of the town and the opening of competitive private retail stores.

The Greenbelt Federal Credit Union also survived the sale of the town and vigorous private competition. Founded, in part to fill the need for banking facilities, it was granted a charter on December 13, 1937, by the Farm Credit Administration. Beginning with twenty-four members, it grew, in one year, to a membership of 334 with total assets of $6,175. By 1945 assets rose to $54,800 and in 1964 to $66,752. It has continued to grow in spite of competition from the Twin Pines Savings and Loan bank, established in 1957, and a branch bank of the Suburban Trust Company. Part of the reason for its success has been the excellent administration by a number of Greenbelt's leading citizens. Its current president, Benjamin Rosenzweig, was an original resident, a leader in the community for thirty years, and a charter member of the Credit Union.70

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69Greenbelt Cooperator, May 26, 1944.

70City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary... p. 34; Greenbelt Federal Credit Union, Newsletter, January, 1965;
The Greenbelt Health Association, like the Credit Union, was established to serve immediate needs. There was no doctor in Greenbelt and no hospital in Prince Georges County. The Health Association was patterned after a consumer owned clinic in Washington founded in 1937 by federal employees. It began with seventy-five families each contributing a $5.00 entry fee and a monthly payment of $1.50 for a single person to $2.25 for a family of six. By December, 1938, 212 families had joined. On April 1, 1938, the Greenbelt Health Association opened a clinic and employed a doctor whose salary was paid to treat members, although he could treat non-members on a fee-for-service basis. This arrangement was not satisfactory to the doctor and he resigned. Two more were hired in his place, one of whom, Dr. Joseph Still, was an enthusiastic supporter of cooperative health associations. Through his efforts Greenbelt was able to open a small twelve-bed hospital in May, 1939. Unfortunately disagreements arose regularly between the doctors and the Association Board. One resigned but Dr. Still remained—fighting the Board to the point of being

(con'd) Greenbelt Federal Credit Union, Your Greenbelt Federal Credit Union, 1965 (pamphlet).

71 Walker, Shelter, III (December, 1938), p. 17; and Warner, p. 44.


73 Ibid., pp. 82-84.
fired. Membership pressure on his behalf was exerted resulting in the resignation of the Board and the rehiring of Dr. Still. He was apparently the only doctor committed enough to Greenbelt and the Association to persevere. His loss to the Army Medical Corps in 1941 was a great one.\textsuperscript{74} A husband and wife team was hired and resigned in November, 1941, having worked less than a year.\textsuperscript{75} In January, 1942, the F.S.A. dealt the Association a severe, probably mortal, blow, by refusing to pay $23,000 to cover the hospital expenses for fiscal 1942. The Town Council held a referendum to determine if the residents wanted to pay the cost themselves. Two plans were presented, one calling for annual payments of $12.00 and one calling for annual payments of $6.00. The $12.00 plan lost 347 to 175 and the $6.00 plan lost 285 to 260. One reason given for rejection of both plans was that the county was constructing a hospital in nearby Riverdale. Despite protests to the F.S.A. and an appeal to Mrs. Roosevelt, the hospital closed its doors on January 31, 1942, and its only doctor left two months later.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., and Greenbelt Cooperator, May 30, 1941.

\textsuperscript{75}Greenbelt Cooperator, August 13, 1943, March 10, 1943, April 7, 1943, July 28, 1944, September 8, 1944, November 3, 1944.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., January 2, 1942, January 23, 1942, April 24, 1942; The appeal to Mrs. Roosevelt, her letter to the U.S. D.A., and the reply of the Acting Secretary of Agriculture on February 6, 1942, are found in the National Archives, R.G. 16.
The health problems of Greenbelt became even more serious after the construction of the defense homes, and the G.H.A., even with its declining membership, succeeded in hiring two more doctors. Again there was feuding. Both doctors resigned as did the Board members. In March, 1944, after the sudden resignation of one of two remaining doctors and membership had dropped to 300 from the 1940 peak of 377, the Federal Public Housing Administration ruled that private doctors could open offices in Greenbelt. Soon thereafter the last G.H.A. doctor resigned and opened a private office in the town. Several more doctors came and went and the membership, which rose to 350 in November, 1944, declined after the war until the last 180 members dissolved the organization in June, 1950.77

The women of Greenbelt, noting that public schools provided nothing for pre-school children, organized a cooperative nursery school, which, like the kindergarten, was the first in Prince Georges County. They also organized a Better Buyers' Club which studied products, labeling, and consumer legislation. The elementary school children even organized a coop for selling candy, pencils, and other small items—it was reportedly dubbed the "Gum Drop Coop" by the local press.

The residents also organized a wide range of clubs

77City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 5; and Greenbelt Cooperator, September 12, 1941, November 28, 1941.
and interest organizations. One of the earliest was the American Legion Post No. 136, which was to play an important role in the negotiations over the sale of the town. Cultural interests flourished in three groups—the Greenbelt Community Band, the Greenbelt Players and the Bi-Weekly Book Club. The Community Band became familiar to many Washington area residents. Under the direction of Paul Garrett, a striking man with a goatee, the band performed concerts throughout the area playing sacred music for churches and popular music for parades and other events. There was also a Choral Society and Chamber Music Society, the latter composed of members of the Navy Band and the National Symphony. The theater group presented classic and contemporary plays such as Clifford Odets' "Awake and Sing." The book club reviewed such books as Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hans Zinsser's *As I Remember Him*, and John F. Kennedy's *While England Slept*.

There were, of course, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and many special interest clubs to serve athletes, camera bugs, bridge players, riflemen, radio operators, and gardeners. The garden club was the largest of these. Almost half the families joined during the summer of 1938 and received portions of a plot on the edge of town.78

The spirit of cooperation in the early years was strong enough to exercise unusual influences. In November, 1939, the Citizens' Association and the Town Council firmly rejected the suggestion of a group of residents that Negroes be excluded from the supermarket lunch counter. This is more remarkable in light of the rigid segregation in Prince Georges County and the rest of Maryland. Also surprising for the time, was the decision of the Coop Board of Directors not to show the racist film "Birth of a Nation" at the Greenbelt Theater.\textsuperscript{79} There was, on the other hand, no record that residents ever considered the possibility of opening the town to Negroes.\textsuperscript{80}

Another example of the influence of cooperative effort was in religion. Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Mormon services began shortly after the town opened. In May, 1939, the heads of these four denominations formed a Permanent Conference on Religious Life in Greenbelt, the purpose of which was to "foster a clearer understanding of religious principles among various groups...serve as a clearing house for interdenominational differences and curb religious prejudices and to participate jointly in efforts to achieve social justice and to aid in community progress."

\textsuperscript{79}Greenbelt Cooperator, November 16, 1939, November 30, 1939, August 8, 1940.

\textsuperscript{80}On September 11, 1967, the Greenbelt City Council voted unanimously to ask all owners and managers of apartments to adopt nonsegregated rental practices. See Greenbelt News Review, September 14, 1967.
improvements.81 Reverend Kincheloe, the Protestant minister, began a movement to build a single structure for all denominations.82 This ecumenism was short-lived. In January, 1940, the Catholics, who were part of the Berwyn, Maryland parish, voted unanimously to seek F.S.A. approval for the construction of their own church. The Cooperator said the move caused keen disappointment among a number of citizens who thought that "in these days of intolerance and persecution...and segregation...We had hoped for cooperation here, at least in the field of religion."83 In a reply to the article Reverend Leo J. Fealy, the Berwyn-Greenbelt parish priest, wrote:

Speaking of cooperation, we Catholics would like to find some spirit of cooperation on the part of the Cooperator--yes, and on the part of some others in Greenbelt...The Catholics of Greenbelt are going ahead with plans for a church building. Whether it be a separate building or a part of a combined building depends on future developments and on the decision of His Excellency, the Archbishop of Baltimore.84

During the spring of 1940, Reverend Kincheloe negotiated with the Archbishop on the question and led a group which drew up blueprints for a Religious Center to serve all the denominations. The war crisis stopped all plans for the

81 Greenbelt Cooperator, June 1, 1939.
82 Warner, p. 35; and Greenbelt Cooperator, June 1, 1941.
83 Greenbelt Cooperator, January 18, 1940, January 25, 1940, February 8, 1940.
84 Ibid., February 8, 1940.
construction of churches or other facilities at Greenbelt. Reverend Kincheloe left Greenbelt in June, 1941, to become an army chaplain and never returned. Greenbelt's churches all built separate houses of worship and the Catholic church built its own primary school in 1949.\footnote{Ibid., February 8, 1940, April 11, 1940, June 1, 1941; and City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., pp. 28-29.}

The Greenbelt schools provided a more lasting source of community participation for people of all ages. The community centered school, as Cedric Larson called it, offered education for the children during the day, and served as an adult education and community center at night. The elementary school was the focus of this activity since it was located adjacent to the commercial center and also contained the library.\footnote{Larson, Master's thesis, pp. 59-60.} The kindergarten was promoted by a committee of eight Greenbelt women who convinced the F.S.A. to hire a teacher in the fall of 1938.\footnote{Greenbelt Cooperator, July 6, 1938.} The elementary students, it will be remembered, instituted a coop in the fall of 1939. Shares were sold for ten cents and the first profits were distributed by the end of the first half of the year.\footnote{Bone, The American City, LIV (February, 1939), p. 61.} The curriculum was labelled progressive and the teaching staff was of a high quality.\footnote{Larson, Master's thesis, pp. 62-70.}
Considering the size of Greenbelt, adult educational opportunities were great. Art instruction was given both to the children and the adults by graduates of the Maryland Institute of Art under an instructional grant from the Federal Arts Project. Also, the F.S.A. employed a man and a woman as full time directors of recreation. They taught physical education in the day schools and directed athletic activities for the adults in the evening. The best educational asset was the Greenbelt extension of the University of Maryland which opened in 1939. Two courses were offered the first year—accounting and Contemporary American Political Problems. The latter was described in a brochure as dealing with "a select list of problems...the conflict between government and business, housing, social security, freedom of the press, labor relations, etc."^{90}

The $142,000 regional high school at the west end of Greenbelt served the town and the surrounding rural area. In 1939, forty per cent of the students came from outside Greenbelt. Vocational training, a general course and a college preparatory program were provided. School officials expected ten to fifteen per cent to attend college.^{91} Since the entire Greenbelt public school system

^{90}Ibid., p. 105.

^{91}Ibid., pp. 83, 87; and City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 27.
was administrated by the Prince Georges County Board of Education, there were continual disagreements—usually about money for the high school. The elementary school was supported entirely by the F.S.A. through payments-in-lieu of taxes to the county; but the high school budget was jointly supported. In 1937 the F.S.A. paid three fourths of the $36,000 and was anxious to have the county pay a slightly larger share in 1938. The two parties could not agree on which would pay the telephone bill so the school operated the first few months of the 1938-1939 year without a telephone. The same delay occurred in bus service for the Greenbelt students—the county refused to offer bussing until it received equitable compensation. The county and the F.S.A. had just begun to cooperate more easily when the war and the addition of 1000 new families upset all the educational programs.

The cooperative spirit flourished in the other two towns but failed to maintain its initial momentum to the degree seen at Greenbelt. The Greendale Cooperative Association was launched by the residents in the summer of 1938 at the suggestion of Sherwood Reeder. A cooperative

92Greenbelt Cooperator, September 21, 1938.
93Ibid., October 27, 1938, November 10, 1938.
94Interviews with Mrs. Ethel Shweer and Mr. and Mrs. Agent Sandstrom, Greendale, Wisconsin, February 4, 1965.
committee was formed in July which decided to follow Greenbelt's example and establish a consumer cooperative to operate Greendale's commercial facilities. The Coop was incorporated on August 22, 1938, with a loan from the Consumer Distribution Corporation (the same organization that financed the Greenbelt coop) and staff members borrowed from the Midland Cooperative Wholesale Corporation. The Greendale Cooperative Association leased the commercial center from the F.S.A. A food store and a variety store opened on September 17, 1938. A drug store, movie theater, shoe repair and valet shop, barber shop, beauty parlor, tavern-restaurant and a gasoline station were all subsequently opened by the G.C.A.95

At its third annual meeting in March, 1941, the Greendale Cooperative Association, which had remained a subsidiary of the Midland Cooperative Association, became independent. At that time all its enterprises were earning a net profit. The Coop had angered some residents in the early years by refusing to give credit, but it remained a vital and popular institution throughout the war.96 After the war the Public Housing Adminis-


tration leased several of the stores to private proprietors because the Coop no longer wished to operate them. In 1948 the P.H.A. refused to renew the leases on remaining Coop businesses and opened them to competitive bidding. The Coop lost the food store, the variety store, and the barber shop—retaining only the tavern-restaurant and the gasoline station. The Coop disbanded in December, 1948.97

Coop directors blamed the P.H.A.'s action for its failures, but this is not entirely fair. Greendale was the smallest of the greenbelt towns and was located closer to private stores than any of the other towns. While the Coop stores sold to a few people outside Greendale, the town residents traded in much larger numbers with outside competitors.98

Greendale also attempted to establish a cooperative medical organization. Two groups were established in 1938. The Greendale Medical Union failed after several months of trial operation. The Greendale Health Association, founded with the aid of the Milwaukee Medical Center, operated successfully until after the war when, hampered by pressure on its doctors from Milwaukee hospitals, other area doctors, and P.H.A. sanctioned competition from private


98Milwaukee Journal, February 17, 1942; and Interviews with several Greendale residents agree with this assessment.
physicians in Greendale, it merged with the Milwaukee Medical Center. 99

The Greenhills Consumer Services survives today, but on a much smaller scale than of the Greenbelt coop. As in the other two towns, a consumer cooperative was established, this time, with the aid of the Co-Operative League of Cincinnati and a loan from Filene's Consumer Distribution Corporation. In April, 1938, when there were only 100 families in the town, a meeting was held at which, at the suggestion of Community Manager Carlton Sharpe, a committee presented the coop plan. It was immediately adopted by a unanimous vote. In 1939, the Coop signed a ten year lease with the F.S.A. for the commercial center and opened a food store, service station, barber shop, valet shop, beauty shop, drug store and general merchandise store. By 1940, approximately 400 residents were members of the Coop. Not all were pleased with the Coop, however, and a number preferred private chain stores. During the war the Coop ran into financial trouble and divested itself of all businesses except the food and drug stores. In 1954 the food store built a new and larger structure and in 1960 opened a second store in the neighboring community of Mt. Healthy. By 1962 its total sales

99 "The Story of Greendale...," Rev., 1944, pp. 6-7; and Interview with Mrs. Ethel Shweer.
had risen from $200,000 in 1940 to $2,200,000. This is, of course, small compared with the Greenbelt Coop sales which in 1962 were over $20,000,000.

Why did cooperative enterprise disintegrate at Greendale, decline at Greenhills, and expand at Greenbelt? One reason was the smaller size of the latter two towns compared to Greenbelt, which made it much harder to support the variety of business operated by the coops. Had Greendale's Coop consolidated its efforts in the food and drug stores during the war as did the Greenhills Coop, it might have survived. Also, the Greenbelt Coop met its competition by the expansion of its own facilities, through a stock sale to the residents in 1945 to 1947 resulting in the construction of a larger and more modern supermarket in 1948. In 1951 it opened another supermarket in nearby Takoma Park. During the years 1954-1956, when Greenbelt was adjusting to its sale, the Coop made some basic decisions which have since guided its policies. All its Greenbelt business except the food, drug and general merchandise stores which were consolidated in the supermarket through a $200,000 extension of the building, were ended. The small service station in the commercial center was also abandoned, but in its place the Coop

opened a $100,000 automobile service plaza. Thus while divesting itself of less profitable businesses, the total operation of the Coop expanded, as did its membership. Finally, the Coop absorbed the Westminster Cooperative in neighboring Carroll County in 1956 and in 1959 merged with the Roohdale Cooperative in Prince Georges County, which brought not only more members, but two more supermarkets. By 1967, Greenbelt Consumer Services had become a major business enterprise with 17,000 members and fourteen retail stores in the Baltimore-Washington area. 101

The Greenbelt Coop appears to have attracted far wider support from the residents than did the other two ventures, particularly during the years following the War. In 1945-1946, there was an attempt to discredit G.C.S. by a small group of local citizens. In 1947, the group was aided by a Subcommittee of the House Small Business Committee in its August hearings. The Subcommittee, composed of two Republicans (Walter Ploeser of Missouri and R. Walter Riehman of New York) and one Democrat (Wright Patman of Texas), heard a number of witnesses condemn the exclusive control of G.C.S. at Greenbelt. In a two to one party line vote the committee's report stated that the lease between the P.H.A. and G.C.S. was

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"monopolistic" and recommended that it be revoked. The G.C.S. held a special meeting and voted 400 to 0 to adopt a resolution charging the Subcommittee with bias against cooperatives, inaccurate and prejudiced press releases, and use of witnesses who were all opposed to G.C.S. The Greenbelt town elections on September 23, 1947, reflected the struggle between the anti-coop group, organized as the Greenbelt Improvement Association under Mayor George Bauer, and the pro-coop group called the Committee for Better Government. The latter group controlled the editorial board of the Greenbelt Cooperator and charged that the Improvement Association was in collusion with Congressman Ploeser and other outsiders to sell Greenbelt to private real estate interests. The Improvement Association waged a defensive campaign claiming that it was not really against the coop, but merely wanted private business in Greenbelt also. The group was embarrassed by its association with James Flynn, whose accusations of disloyalty and of being a communist, against one of the town's most respected citizens, Walter Volokhausen, plus his physical assault on another citizen at a

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102 Greenbelt Cooperator, August 29, 1947.
103 Ibid.; The original copy of the Resolution is in P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 2.
104 Greenbelt Cooperator, September 12, September 19, and September 26, 1947; Community Manager Charles Cormack to Joseph C. Gray, P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 2.
town meeting in 1945, won him the disfavor of all groups including the American Legion. Also, it appears that the townspeople reacted as they had in 1937-1940, to attacks from the outside and closed ranks in defense of their institutions. The entire slate of Coop candidates won. The opposition group started publication of a newspaper called the Greenbelt Independent dedicated to "further the principal of the American way of life here in Greenbelt. In order to achieve this end, the town must be opened to private enterprise. Competition is the essence of our country's success. It is the American way." The editorial stated that the recommendation of the Small Business Subcommittee should be supported and the G.C.S. monopoly broken. The newspaper soon died and G.C.S. remained the sole commercial outlet in the town for another five years until it independently gave up control. There seems little doubt that G.C.S. was strengthened by the attacks against it as a majority of residents rallied to its support. In Greendale only the

105 Greenbelt Cooperator, September 14, 1945. In November, 1945, Flynn, on behalf of the Greenbelt Improvement Association, had introduced a resolution to G.C.S. that the Coop withdraw from the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale Association. The resolution was defeated 528-10. Greenbelt Cooperator, November 30, 1945.


Greendale Review supported the coop, and there were no mass meetings in its defense. In the post war years, therefore, Greenbelt emerged even more clearly as the sole retainer of the cooperative democracy envisioned by the Resettlement Administration.
CHAPTER XI
THE WAR YEARS

The citizens of Greenbelt, like the nation at large, were overwhelmingly opposed to the fascists. A. Chinitz and George A. Warner, editors of the Cooperator, gave extensive coverage to the events in Europe during the years 1938-1941. They condemned the Munich Agreement and lamented that our neutrality legislation prohibited aid to the "people of Spain in their struggle against foreign fascist aggression." They urged concrete action by the democratic nations to stop fascist expansion. On December 5, 1938, The Citizens' Association agreed not to purchase any goods produced by aggressor nations. The "peace politicians" and "peace societies" were scored for their failure to see that the only way to keep oppression out of the Western Hemisphere was to increase our military strength. Chinitz and Warner were opposed, however, to sending U.S. troops to defend the European nations. A strong defense program at home and

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1 Greenbelt Cooperator, October 13, 1938.
2 Warner, p. 96.
3 Greenbelt Cooperator, March 9, 1939.
aid to the allies short of troops was the position taken by eighteen out of the twenty leading citizens polled by the Cooperator. Isolationist citizens had their views presented in early June, 1940, when Senator Gerald P. Nye visited Greenbelt to debate a professor from the University of Maryland. A crowd of over 300 heard Nye state that we should have nothing to do with the war in Europe, a comment which "brought a stirring round of applause from the audience." However, a resolution to that effect which was to be sent to the President, was discussed briefly by the 100 people who remained after the debate and the final vote to send it was only 59-26. The debate continued at Greenbelt until December 7, 1941.

Greendale, reflecting the isolationism of the Midwest, was much more clearly opposed to American entry into the War. The Greendale Review, commenting on the Munich Crisis, believed the answer to world peace lay in the development of "cooperative principals applied to world affairs." The development of an international cooperative economy would eliminate the primary cause of international hostilities. The current European

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4Ibid., June 6, 1940.

5Ibid., June 13, 1940, May 23, 1940, and June 20, 1940.


7Ibid.
conflicts were mainly economic and the paper suggested that the United States stay out of that war and spend its money on public housing instead of battleships. Armistice Day was celebrated in Greendale in 1938, with a public World Peace Pageant by Greendale Junior High School, highlighted by the crowning of a Goddess of Peace. In June, 1940, while the Germans invaded France, the citizens of Greendale sent a resolution to Congress and the President stating that while they would defend their nation if it was attacked, they urged the government to "exert every effort to keep the United States from armed participation in the war." The attack on Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war by Germany on the United States ended further debate at Greendale. A large number of its men fought in the war--five of them losing their lives in battle.

Greenbelt was the only one of the three towns to be significantly altered by the Second World War. Long before Pearl Harbor the community began to feel the effect of the war. Important residents, who had built the close cooperative society that characterized Greenbelt, left the town. On October, 1940, 567 Greenbelt men registered for the selective service and fifteen days later nine of

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8 Ibid., November 11, 1938, April 22, 1939, October 7, 1939, June 12, 1940, June 26, 1940.

9 Ibid., April 26, 1945.
them were drafted. Mayor Henry Maurer resigned his post when his government employer transferred him in January, 1940. George A. Warner was elected to replace him, but was also transferred in February, 1941. The same happened to the next replacement, Arthur Gawthorp, who served only seven months. An even larger number of Councilmen were likewise forced to resign. The high turnover in local government officials was not as damaging as it might have been without the excellent guidance of Roy Braden and his staff—but, of course, that changed too. O. Kline Fulmer, the Assistant Manager, was transferred to work on defense housing in February, 1941. Vincent Holochworst, the Recreation Director since 1938, left for the Navy in June, 1942. In 1943 Braden himself resigned. Fortunately his replacement, James T. Gobbel, proved to be another efficient and well-liked manager. The turnover in other institutions was even greater. The Cooperator had nine different editors between May, 1940 and July, 1945. Three of the five directors of the Greenbelt Consumer Services elected in August, 1941, had to resign by October. Francois Fosnight, noting in his editorial on June 6, 1941, that the latest announcements of people included an unusually large number of past and current

10 Warner, p. 173.

11 Greenbelt Cooperator, January 18, 1940, December 12, 1940, February 21, 1941, June 12, 1942, October 1, 1943; and City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, pp. 7, 9.
community leaders, asked sadly, "Who will replace these men? We can only hope that we will be able to find others who can at least carry on the fine tradition each of these men has established in his own sphere." Fifteen months later, September, 1942, editor Fosnight and 661 of the other original residents of Greenbelt were gone. Those who remained awaited the arrival of the families which would move into the nearly completed 1000 unit defense homes project, and more than double the size of the town.

As the government expanded its facilities to accommodate the administration of a gigantic defense program in 1940, residents of Greenbelt, many of them government employees, discussed rumors concerning the future use of the townsite. In July, 1940, when the F.S.A. switched from an annual lease to a monthly one, the rumor spread that the residents would all be evicted and the town "converted into a barracks." In October, 1940, Congress passed the Lanham Defense Housing Act which permitted the construction and management of housing for defense workers by the federal government. The following month the Greenbelt Town Engineer let slip that the government planned to build defense housing at Greenbelt

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12 Greenbelt Cooperator, June 6, 1941.
13 City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 33; and Greenbelt Cooperator, October 17, 1941, October 2, 1942.
14 Greenbelt Cooperator, July 11, 1940.
and the citizens again pressed the F.S.A. for confirmation—without success. When the 1000 unit project was finally announced in February, 1941, it elicited a mixed response. On the one hand, Mayro Warner said it would be a great asset by reducing service costs and providing more potential membership for Greenbelt organizations and more business for its cooperative stores. On the other hand, Dayton Hull, President of the Citizens' Association questioned whether the new housing units would be "of the present Greenbelt quality." Both men were correct.

The project, officially called MD-1811, was built under the direction of the Federal Works Agency at a total cost of $4,481,023. The net construction cost of the dwellings was $3,900 per unit. Ground was broken in May, 1941, and the first families moved in eight months later. The defense homes were only for employees of the War and Navy Departments, but were managed by the Farm Security Administration until the towns were all transferred to the Federal Public Housing Authority. They were of inferior quality compared to the original Greenbelt homes. A government appraiser in 1948 reported that the


16 Greenbelt Cooperator, May 30, 1941, December 26, 1941.

17 Baird Snyder, Acting Administrator, F.W.A., to the Secretary of Agriculture, February 10, 1942, National Archives, R.G. 16.
defense housing was built with inferior materials, but was better than most other war housing classified as "permanent." It was said that the insulation was so thin between apartments that, "you can hear your neighbors break an egg." Street and utility systems had been installed during the original construction, but landscaping was put off until the complaints of the residents produced some small effort in that direction. In 1947 the residents were still petitioning for shrubs, hedges, and trees, but nothing was done until after the sale of the town. Also inferior to the original parts of town, was the site planning by the architects and engineers of the Federal Works Administration. While the street plan dictated placement of the row houses fronting on interior parks, the system of internal parks and sidewalks with underpasses was abandoned. This resulted in numerous traffic hazards unknown in the original town. The first child in Greenbelt to be killed was run over by a truck as she played in a defense home parking lot. Maintenance costs on the defense housing units became a significant

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Survey Preliminary to the Appraisal of Greenbelt, Maryland, P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 1.


20Greenbelt Cooperator, June 3, 1942. The original copy of the petition is found in P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 6.
problem in the years following the war. 21

The prediction that the town institutions would benefit from the presence of the new families was fulfilled. The Coop business flourished with the influx of new customers. On the other hand, Greenbelt's schools were almost drowned in a tidal wave of new students. When school opened in the fall of 1941, the classes were overcrowded. The number of first-graders jumped from forty-three to eighty-seven and classrooms built to hold thirty-six students contained up to forty-nine. 22

The relative youth, and therefore the number of children, of the original residents had been underestimated in the beginning, so when even more children moved in the facilities proved totally inadequate. 23 In June, 1942, the Town Council threatened to seek an injunction to

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22 Greenbelt Cooperator, September 26, 1941.

23 Some observers believe that Greenbelt's high birth rate, four times the national average, was due to the town's healthy environment. In reality the rise was due to the large number of young couples at the peak child bearing age. When Greenbelt's birth rate was adjusted for this age group it fell below the national average and was insufficient to maintain the town's population. See Greenbelt reports in "A Planned Community Appraised: Greenbelt, Maryland," The Architectural Record, XXII (January, 1940), p. 62, and the New York Times, June 25, 1939. For the statistical analysis see Elbridge Sibley, "Fertility in a Greenbelt Community," Social Forces, XX (May, 1942), pp. 476-477.
prevent more families from moving into the defense homes until the government provided more classrooms. Jointly with a reluctant Prince Georges County Board of Education, the government financed conversion of a row house into a temporary school for 200 kindergarten and elementary school children, but it was not ready until the autumn of 1943. In 1942 schools had to open on a double shift. In the fall of 1943 the high school had to use the cafeteria for classrooms and for lack of an instructor there was no physical education program. The elementary school was overflowing with 700 students, 250 more than in 1941. It operated on a double shift for all grades except kindergarten, which had a triple shift for its 175 children. There were no qualified teachers for the seventh and eighth grades. 24

In March, 1944, General Philip Flemming of the Federal Works Administration announced that $282,000 had been appropriated for the construction of a twelve-classroom elementary school and an addition of five classrooms to the high school. The new facilities, scheduled to be ready by the autumn of 1944, were finally completed in May, 1945. 25

An important factor in the maintenance of stability and continuity in Greenbelt was the nucleus of 300 original

24 Greenbelt Cooperator, June 12, 1942, June 26, 1942, September 3, 1943, January 8, 1943.

families who remained during the war years. After three mayors in a row were called away from Greenbelt in 1940-1941, the office went to Allen D. Morrison, a member of the first Town Council in 1937. He served from September, 1941 to September, 1945. Francis Lastner, another original resident, with substantial experience in municipal administration, served as a Council member from 1941-1945 and from 1947-1955. Some initial resentment towards the defense home families was gradually dispelled. When Dayton Hull, an original resident, resigned as President of the Citizens' Association to serve in the Army, in April, 1944, he was replaced by Wells Harrington, who had moved into the defense homes only eighteen months previous.

With the influx of new people, there were obvious changes in interests and emphasis. The Greenbelt Chamber Music Society and the Greenbelt Players folded during the war and the annual Greenbelt Town Fair was abandoned in 1940. A noticeable difference in the editorial policies of the Cooperator occurred. Articles on the cooperative

26 The Cooperator reported on October 6, 1944, that 313 of the original families still resided in Greenbelt. Only 60 original families remained by 1962. A complete list of Town Council members from 1937-1962 is found in City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 7.

27 City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 7.

28 Greenbelt Cooperator, April 7, 1944.

29 Ibid., April 23, 1943; City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., p. 5.
spirit disappeared along with those on public housing. National and international issues were no longer presented and no comment was made on the 1944 presidential election. The paper still presented wide coverage of local news, but it no longer expressed the crusading zeal of the prewar years. The need for town identification seemed past.

On the other hand, a new cooperative service was founded during the war to satisfy new needs. The child day-care center for 150 to 250 mothers who took full-time jobs in Washington began with a grant from the government and continued on a cooperative basis when the funds were withdrawn after the war.30 Also, the Greenbelt Town Council appropriated funds for a youth center in 1944 after several incidents of vandalism temporarily closed the soda fountain at the drug store. The Greenbelt Woman's Club also contributed to the center.31

A sociological study of Greenbelt conducted during the war indicated that enthusiasm for the cooperative idea had declined. Thirty per cent of the men in 1943 belonged to no organization at all and only forty-five per cent

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30 Gutheim, Magazine of Art, XL (January, 1947), p. 19; Greenbelt Cooperator, January 9, 1941.

31 Greenbelt Cooperator, November 10, 1944, November 24, 1944, December 29, 1944; City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., pp. 21, 38.
belonged to two or more. Interviews with a sample group of residents revealed that thirty-one per cent endorsed the cooperative idea without reservation, forty-eight per cent had some reservations, nine per cent thought both coop and private business should be allowed, and thirty-nine per cent preferred private business over coop business. Few residents considered Greenbelt their home. The personal columns of the Cooperator were filled with articles about families who "go home" for vacations and to be married. Only six of the sixty people who died in Greenbelt between 1937 and 1944 were buried in the town cemetery. Finally Greenbelt had developed a complex status system similar to that of an average suburban community. Seven "status groups" were identified ranging from the federal administrators and residents with professional occupations to the maintenance laborers and Negro janitors. Those who comprised the leadership of Greenbelt's institutions were found to be individuals whose occupations had more prestige, whose family background was white collar and middle class, and whose tenure in the community was longer. It was noted, however, that members of lower status groups (not the maintenance nor janitorial groups) could achieve more status through active participation in local affairs than in the typical American town.  

The war years were also marked by change in the administration of Greenbelt. While there were no precise policy changes, there was an increased tendency on the part of the new administrators—including the new Community/Town Manager, to regard Greenbelt "more as a housing project than a social experiment." In April, 1943, the Federal Public Housing Administration announced that after June 1, 1943, rents would be raised from the old scale of $18.00-$42.00 per month to $24.00-$65.00, and the income requirements would be raised to a scale of $1,400-$4,000. In practice, the F.P.H.A. did allow all residents to stay throughout the war, regardless of how high their incomes went. The Citizens' Association, which had only twelve people in attendance at the March, 1943, meeting, called a special meeting in May to discuss the rent increase and over 500 people attended. Roy Braden, the original and at the time Community/Town Manager, explained that while the average rent was increasing from $31.50 to $44.00, the percentage of incomes spent on rent would actually be lower than it had been in 1939. The $31.50 in 1939 comprised twenty-four per cent of the average resident's income of $2,962. After an emotional discussion, the justice of the increase was acknowledged by the majority.

A second meeting, several days later, intended to arouse further protest, drew only 200 people. A Rent Protest

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33Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 33n.
Committee was formed, but dissolved after four months. In December, 1943, the F.P.H.A. made a concession to residents in the original town by agreeing to allow wives of those serving in the armed forces, whose incomes were naturally reduced, to pay rent either on the old scale or at a rate of twenty per cent of their gross income, whichever was higher. The new administrators showed good sense and liberalism in small matters too. James Gobbel became extremely popular when, having replaced Braden, in October, 1943, he lifted the "clothes line curfew" on hanging up wash after 4 P.M. and on Sundays.

V-J Day saw town residents, after a heated campaign, vote four to one to reject a proposal permitting a liquor store in the town. Greenbelt, its 8,000 residents comprising the largest community in Prince Georges County, looked forward to the reopening of the Town Fair on August 30th—the first since 1940. Overcrowding due to wartime expansion was finally alleviated with the completion of the new school facilities. Greenbelt Consumer Services planned major expansion. The only cloud on the horizon was a rumor which had appeared in the Washington papers that Greenbelt was going to be put up for sale. It was denied

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35 Greenbelt Cooperator, October 22, 1943.
by all government officials. But the announcement of the F.P.H.A.'s decision to sell the town finally came in September, 1945, plunging the town into another period of major change.

Ibid., August 3, 1945, August 17, 1945, August 31, 1945.
For more than ten years the Federal Public Housing Authority, which managed the Greenbelt towns, attempted to dispose of them in a manner satisfactory to Congress, the residents and the original planners. The F.P.H.A., created primarily as a war housing authority under the National Housing Agency, received control of the towns in June, 1942, as part of a general consolidation of federal housing agencies ordered by President Roosevelt in February of that year.\(^1\) F.P.H.A. officials have been charged with treating the greenbelt towns as housing projects rather than social experiments.\(^2\) Such does not appear to be the case regarding the sale. A number of F.P.H.A. officials— and Oliver C. Winston in particular— attempted to expand the towns to the size contemplated by the original planners and/or sell them to institutions which would do the same. It was hoped the enlarged towns would adequately support their municipal services and commercial facilities, thus making their entire property

\(^1\)See Executive Order 9070, February 24, 1942.

\(^2\)Form, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 33n.
more attractive for potential purchasers. Winston believed the completed towns "should be maintained as at least three outstanding examples of good community planning...which could do much to influence future developments by private enterprise throughout the country." 3

The F.P.H.A. believed it had a clear obligation to sell the greenbelt towns. Congressional Appropriations Committees from 1939 to 1942 had construed Title IV, Section 43 of the Bankhead-Jones Act as providing for the liquidation of the entire F.S.A. community program--including the greenbelt towns. 4 The Commissioner of the F.S.A. 5 Oliver Winston, Director of the F.P.H.A. General Field Office, was given the job of expanding and then liquidating the towns. During 1944 and 1945 he discussed the question confidentially with Greenbelt's Town Council.

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The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to continue to perform such of the functions vested in him pursuant to...the Bankhead-Black Act as shall be necessary only for the completion and administration of those resettlement projects...

5 Philip Glick, General Counsel, Public Housing Administration, General Counsel's Opinion No. 28, General Considerations Underlying Disposition of the Greentown Projects, March 24, 1948, p. 11n.
men. He decided, however, to use Greendale as the pilot project in his disposition program. In the summer of 1944 initial plans were made for the expansion of the town. F.P.H.A. officials met with Greendale Manager Walter Kroening, Warren Vinton and a Greendale Tenants Advisory Committee. Also consulted were Elbert Peets, planners from the F.P.H.A. who reviewed literature on the English garden cities, and the Research Director of the British Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction who happened to be in Washington. Alexander Bing, the builder of Radburn, discussed the plans and asked to be informed when the time came to seek a developer. The proposal resulting from these studies recommended the sale of the town together with the entire tract, to a single corporation or syndicate. The Village of Greendale should retain ownership of all public property plus the commercial center, industrial sites, and the area set aside for the greenbelt—the last three could then be leased to private developers as the Village saw fit. The preliminary development plan

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6 Greenbelt Cooperator, September 14, 1945.
7 Greendale Review, August 16, 1944, and September 28, 1944.
drawn up by Peets in January, 1945, contemplated four new villages approximately the same size as the original one. In addition there was to be an expanded commercial area and an industrial park, but over half of the undeveloped tract was to remain either as parks or farmland.  

When the plans were first unveiled, the Greendale Tenants Advisory Committee was pleased with them. The Committee's recommendation that the town be sold to a tenant cooperative received little support from the residents, who preferred to purchase their present dwelling individually or to build in one of the four new proposed villages. Winston's office made contact with possible buyers, several of whom showed interest. During the summer and fall of 1945, however, construction costs in the Milwaukee area rose so rapidly that prospective buyers became unwilling to make the required investment. Winston therefore gave up immediate plans to sell the town.

During 1945 and 1946 both Congress and residents pressed F.P.H.A. to dispose of the towns. Greenbelt townspeople, angry that their Town Councilmen had kept plans to

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sell the property secret, unanimously voted to form a mutual homeowner's corporation to buy Greenbelt. In January, 1946, Councilman Allan Morrison, one of the organizers of the American Legion in Greenbelt, suggested the town be turned over to returning veterans and renamed Veteran, Maryland. There were no suggestions, however, as to how the residents or the returning veterans could purchase the town which was valued by the government in 1945 at almost $19,000,000. The Congressional Appropriations Committee, from which the F.P.H.A. received its funds, was perplexed when the towns were not sold at once. Committee member Ben F. Johnson thought the towns had been abandoned. Representative Albert Gore wondered why the F.P.H.A. "procrastinated" when the project could be sold "overnight" at a price which would almost recover the initial investment. F.P.H.A. Commissioner Philip Klutznick replied that the projects presented many complex disposition problems and that to determine the real value of the property and the best method to dispose

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13*Greenbelt Cooperator*, September 14, 1945, November 9, 1945, and January 18, 1946.


15Ibid., p. 1380.
of them would cost time and money. The F.P.H.A. received $99,500 (derived from management receipts of the three towns) to facilitate further study of the problem, but only $60,000 of it was used during fiscal 1947. The funds were used to plan for the expansion of the other towns in a fashion similar to the plan for Greendale. In January, 1947, Hale Walker presented the Greenbelt version of expansion to the residents. Accompanied by Winston, Walker painted a glowing picture of the future with 2000 additional homes surrounded by extensive parks and open lands. "The only fly in the ointment," commented the Greenbelt Cooperator, "is the question of who is to do this and how it is to be done."

All plans were altered by President Truman's announcement in May, 1947, to seek Congressional reorganization of all federal housing agencies under a single


18Oliver C. Winston to Charles S. Lawrence, Director, Region III, July 22, 1946, F.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 2.


20Greenbelt Cooperator, January 17, 1947.
Housing and Home Finance Administration. Under this reorganization plan the General Field Office of the F.P.H.A. was to be abolished. Winston decided to leave government service to become Executive Director of the Baltimore City Housing Authority. Before leaving, however, he tried to find a private foundation willing to purchase the towns and develop them as model communities. He contacted the Rockefeller Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation, neither of whom was interested. His attempt to have the Social Science Research Council undertake a study of the greenbelt towns also failed to stir any action.

A week after the General Field Office was abolished Raymond Foley, the new Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Administration, issued Public Regulation No. 1 which declared that in order to encourage home ownership by small investors, all properties being sold by the agency "should be subdivided into the smallest

21 For a brief discussion of the history of this action see Richard O. Davies, Housing Reform in the Truman Administration (Columbia, Missouri; University of Missouri Press, 1966), pp. 62-63.

22 Oliver C. Winston correspondence, P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 2.


feasible units of sale consistent with a practical plan for their disposition.\(^{25}\) Preference was to be given to veterans occupying the homes, then to veterans intending to occupy a home for sale, and finally to non-veterans occupying a unit to be sold. Within each of the preference groups sales were to be made for cash to the highest bidder after public advertising—the method long established by Congress.\(^{26}\) Fortunately John Taylor Egan, Commissioner of the Public Housing Administration, was committed to the sale of the towns as a unit to "safeguard the educational and demonstrational value of these examples of community planning."\(^{27}\) Egan prevailed on Foley to exclude the towns from sale under the Public Regulation No. 1, thus allowing the Public Housing Administration to sell them for cash on a competitive bid basis, with restrictions to protect the character of the existing communities.\(^{28}\)


\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 18.

U.S., Revised Statutes of the United States, 2d ed., 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Title XLII, Sec. 3709 (March 2, 1861) as amended by the Surplus Property Act of 1944 (50 U.S.C., App. 1638) and by amendments to R.S., Sec. 3709, August 2, 1946 (60 Stat. 809).

\(^{27}\) J.T. Egan, Assistant Commissioner, to Orville R. Olmsted, Director, Region III, November 10, 1947, P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 6.

\(^{28}\) Memo from J.T. Egan to R.M. Foley, March 17, 1948, R.O.A., H.H.F.A., Drawer 538. See also U.S., Public Housing
For tenants hoping to purchase the towns, the chief problem was inability to obtain financing. In order to aid them, Congress enacted legislation authorizing F.H.A. insured loans on greenbelt town mortgages. Charles P. Taft, brother of Senator Robert A. Taft, drafted the bill. Veterans and other tenants at Greenbelt, who had formed a purchasing group in 1946, were imitated by similar groups in Greendale and Greenhills. Early in 1948 the Greenhills Homeowners Corporation, composed of two-thirds of the town residents, many of whom were veterans, employed Charles Taft to negotiate purchase of the property. Taft's bill authorized the F.H.A. to insure mortgages on the towns at four per cent interest and to cover up to ninety per cent of the mortgage with a maturity of twenty-five years. Taft discussed the measure with Philip Glick, General Counsel for the H.H.F.A., who sent it on to Administrator Foley. After minor revisions, Foley sent the bill to Congressman Jesse Wolcott, who introduced it in the House. The Eighty-first Congress passed it as Public


Law 901, on August 10, 1948.\textsuperscript{31}

The requirement that the towns be sold for cash to the highest bidder impeded purchase efforts of the resident and veteran groups. Not only would the process take a long time, but there was no assurance that mortgage loans could be obtained even with F.H.A. insurance. To obviate these problems, the Greendale group, called the American Legion Community Development Corporation, sought legislation to allow sale on terms through direct negotiations with the Public Housing Commissioner.\textsuperscript{32} Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin introduced a bill providing for the sale of the three towns through negotiation rather than competitive bidding. A similar bill was introduced in the House by Representative Monroney, a member of the Committee on Banking and Currency, which was to hold hearings on the resolution.

When hearings began on February 22, 1949, only the Greendale group had contacted the Public Housing Administration in regard to the proposed legislation, but subsequent hearings were attended by veterans groups in


Greenbelt and Greenhills. The Greendale American Legion Community Development Corporation appeared to be the most thoroughly prepared—presenting elaborate plans for the development of the entire tract. The most serious problem, the Committee was told, was raising the capital because banks were reluctant to make even F.H.A. insured loans to veterans' groups for fear of bad publicity in the event the loan had to be foreclosed. Commissioner Egan testified that the House and Senate bills were slightly different but he was satisfied with the general provisions. Senator Paul Douglas was concerned that the development groups protect the undeveloped lands from haphazard growth and was assured by a member of the Greenhills Home Owners' Corporation that no such thing would be allowed. Douglas was the only Congressman showing interest in the preservation of the towns' heritage of imaginative planning.

In the House hearings Representative Wright Patman and


35Ibid., p. 11.

36Ibid., p. 7.

37Ibid., p. 30.
Representative Lansdale Sasscer wanted assurances that the veterans' groups would not immediately evict the present residents after the sale, and Senator MoCarthy appearing on behalf of the Milwaukee group, agreed heartily. The bill was reported out of the House Committee on April 6, 1949. It was amended first to allow purchasers to pay ten per cent down, the balance to be amortized over a period of not more than twenty-five years—essentially the same terms insured by the F.H.A. Also, a provision was added allowing present occupants of the towns to retain their homes by joining the veteran development groups.

H.R. 2440 was brought to the House floor on April 13, 1949, by Representative Brent Spence of Kentucky, Chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency, and author of House Report No. 402. He told the House he was pleased to see the towns sold to veterans' groups and noted that Charles P. Taft was interested in Greenhills as the representative of a group that was anxious to buy the town immediately. Representative Smith of Wisconsin agreed that the sale of the towns to veterans "is a fine way for the government to get out of the real


estate business. The bill passed unanimously and was sent to the Senate where Senator Douglas amended it in his Committee Report to allow the Public Housing Commissioner to transfer streets, public buildings, playgrounds, parks and open land surrounding or adjacent to the towns to non-federal government agencies under terms he considered to be in the public interest. The Senate bill, containing both the House amendments and the Senate Committee amendments passed unanimously on May 6, 1949. The House accepted the Senate version passing it on May 10. President Truman signed it on May 19, 1949.

Public Law 65 was intended to transfer the towns to private ownership, aid veterans in finding homes, protect occupants in the homes, and allow the P.H.A. Commissioner to retain some of the green open spaces from which the towns derived their names. In Greendale only the first goal was achieved. The potential purchasers, American Legion Community Development Corporation failed to purchase any portion of Greendale. After initiating the legislation and presenting its formal application to


qualify as a negotiator for the sale of Greendale, the
group ran into serious problems. The Corporation
expected financial support from the City of Milwaukee,
but was never able to reach a lasting agreement.
Also, the group was overwhelmingly distrusted by other
Greendale residents who formed a rival housing group
called the Greendale Cooperative Veterans Homes Association which was supported in a special referendum on
August 23, 1949, by 621 residents, as against ninety-eight for the Corporation. The most serious blow to the
Corporation was the sudden death of its organizer, Arthur
Marcus, the man who had originally interested Senator
McCarty in the project. Neither housing group was
able to purchase the town and the P.H.A. prepared to
break up the property and sell it in any size parcels
which would bring the most money. Even the Village Hall
was to be sold off for private use. The residents were
allowed to make offers to the P.H.A. on their own houses.
During 1952 ninety-seven per cent of the residents pur-

43The Corporation application dated April 18, 1949,
is found in the Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman
Library, Independence, Missouri, Official File (hereafter
cited as Truman Papers, Official File).

44Greendale Review, March 4, 1949, July 22, 1949,

chased their own homes for a total price of $4,666,825. The 2,280 acres of undeveloped land and all the commercial facilities including the Town Hall were advertised for sale to the highest bidder in 1952, but the bids received were so low that the P.H.A. rejected all of them. Shortly thereafter the Milwaukee Community Development Corporation, one of the bidders, entered into negotiations with the P.H.A. and purchased the entire property for $825,727.

The Greenhills Home Owners Corporation told the Senate Committee, in 1949, that it was prepared to purchase the entire 4,000 acre tract. Unfortunately, the Corporation was only able to purchase the townsite. In 1950, the P.H.A. transferred title to all the houses, the commercial center, the Town Hall, and 601 acres of land at a price of $3,511,300. Approximately 400 acres of land along Mill Creek were transferred to the Hamilton County Park Commission and the remaining 3,378 acres of undeveloped land was sold to Cincinnati Community Develop-

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ment Corporation for $1,200,000.\textsuperscript{50}

The Greenbelt Mutual Home Owners Corporation, which had been formed in 1947, represented a majority of the residents and their hopes to continue the original concept of cooperative ownership and careful planning.\textsuperscript{51}

Their attitude toward the sale of the community is clear. R.J. Wadsworth, who had helped plan Greenbelt in the 1930's and was now aiding in its disposition, made the following observation,

There is deeply rooted in the thinking of most tenants the original conception upon which the planning of the community was based, namely, that it would be held in one ownership, preferably a local public agency, to which the Federal Government would transfer title... but there is a great lack of understanding on the part of the tenants as to what disposition may mean to them.\textsuperscript{52}

The Greenbelt Mutual Home Owners Corporation was organized by several hundred tenants to carry out the community's intentions. While the organization occasionally pressured reluctant residents to join, it had no rivals and enrolled the great majority of families by the spring of 1949.\textsuperscript{53} It employed Colonel Lawrence Westbrook, the

\textsuperscript{50}U.S., Public Housing Administration, \textit{Sixth Annual Report...}, p. 30.


\textsuperscript{53}R.J. Wadsworth to M.R. Bailey, March 16, 1948, R.O.A., H.H.F.A., Drawer 538; and J.T. Egan to Edmund Frei-
former director of the R.A. Rural Rehabilitation Division, to negotiate the sale and direct planning for future community expansion using Hale Walker's master plan of 1946. Westbrook told the House Committee that the Corporation intended to purchase the entire Greenbelt property, but did not think it could finance it with less than a forty year mortgage.54

To meet the requirements of Public Law 65, the G.M.H.O.C. was reorganized as the Greenbelt Veteran Housing Corporation. At the time of the Congressional hearings in 1949, half the members of the Corporation were veterans.55 By 1952, the number grew to fifty-five per cent, of which one-fourth were not residents of Greenbelt.56 The corporation entered into negotiations with the P.H.A. in 1950. The government decided to transfer to the Town of Greenbelt, the community building,


Greenbelt Lake, and the swimming pool, the roads, sewers, and other government properties. The entire southeast quarter of the tract (1,362 acres) was transferred to the National Park Service. Offered for sale was the original town, the war housing, the commercial center and approximately 2,000 acres of undeveloped land. The total price was $8,886,700.\(^{57}\) Negotiations were halted in June, 1950, by the Korean War and did not resume until 1952. By then, the G.V.H.C. decided to purchase only the row houses and 800 acres of undeveloped land.\(^{58}\) A canvass of residents showed little interest in cooperative ownership of the apartment units or of the commercial center. The balance of the undeveloped land was not purchased because the Corporation was unsure it could develop it. Its financial backing was almost entirely drawn from non-resident sources --the residents provided only one-fourth of the down payment. The mortgage was financed by a subsidiary of the Nationwide Insurance Company.\(^{59}\) The 1,580 housing units and 708 acres

\(^{57}\) Sales of Greenbelt, Maryland, to Veteran Group, May 1, 1950, P.H.A., R.G. 196, Box 1. Also excluded from the sale was a large tract of land later transferred to Bureau of Public Roads for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway which, to the dismay of Greenbelt's residents, was built within 400 feet of the closest residences. See the Greenbelt Cooperator, May 24, 1946, June 7, 1946, and July 26, 1946.


\(^{59}\) City of Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary..., pp. 8-9, 36.
of land were purchased in December 1952, for a total price of $6,995,669. 60

The twelve apartment buildings in the original town containing 306 units were sold at public auction to the highest bidder. Six individual purchasers bought them in April, 1953, for a total price of $914,342. 61 The last undeveloped land was sold to private real estate developers in June, 1954. The commercial area was sold in October to the highest bidder—the Gilbert Realty Company of Philadelphia. 62 With the transfer of the commercial center on January 1, 1955, the federal government severed its last connection with the New Deal experiment begun twenty years before by Rexford Tugwell.

60 The housing units sold for $6,285,450, the purchase price covered by a ten per cent down payment and the balance secured by a twenty-five year mortgage at four per cent interest. The 708 acres of land sold for $670,219 on the same terms except for a ten year, rather than a twenty-five year mortgage. U.S., Public Housing Administration, Sixth Annual Report of the Public Housing Administration, p. 31.


CONCLUSION

The greenbelt town program reflects the character of the New Deal in several important ways. It was undertaken to relieve unemployment, stimulate recovery of the building industry, and demonstrate fundamental reforms in architectural and city planning, real estate and construction practices, and social and economic cooperation. Mirrored in the program is the New Deal concept of a society planned for an optimum balance of elements where individualistic economic competition would be replaced by cooperative enterprise. As with the Keynesian pump priming, the program derived from an English source, but its administrators emphasized its American background. Also apparent in the program as a striking optimism which possibly exceeded that of President Roosevelt. All those connected with the towns, from the architects to the residents, spoke of the thrill of participating in a significant and noble enterprise. Finally, the greenbelt towns, like the rest of the New Deal reform program, was never executed on the scale envisioned by its authors.

Conversely, while most New Deal reforms have become institutionalized, the greenbelt town program disappeared,
and has exerted almost no influence on those areas of American life it sought to reform. In the housing area, federal insurance agencies have become an integral part of construction financing. Public housing on the pattern demonstrated by the P.W.A. and institutionalized in the United States Housing Act of 1937, has been little affected by the limited government restrictions on home construction. The urban renewal programs, originally suggested by New Deal agencies, have transformed almost as many acres of urban land as freeway programs. In contrast, new towns are still so rare that few Americans have yet heard of them. The reasons for this are clear. Public housing, urban renewal and the freeway serve the purposes of concerned industries and the urban middle classes. The three programs segregate the lower income groups and non-whites, provide for the improvement of center city commercial facilities and provide reasonably adequate commutation between home and work for the middle classes. Building complete cities remains beyond the capacities of the real estate and building industries, which are composed of small scale operators. Federal construction or financing would mean—as it did in the greenbelt towns—far more lower income families moving out of the city slums next door to suburbanites whose fear of slum dwellers grows each summer. If the middle classes are unsatisfied with the present individualistic planning of metropolitan areas they have expressed little
interest in alternatives.

The chief advantage, uniquely demonstrated in the greenbelt towns, was the construction of low income housing on a community basis. While the physical designs have been superseded, the social planning has never again even been attempted. The present public housing program is justifiably criticized for producing poorhouse islands in which the inadequate physical plant and paternalistic management combine to demoralize the residents. The greenbelt towns demonstrate that inexperienced moderate income families can manage and create their own community and government institutions. In so doing they unquestionably developed a sense of community solidarity so lacking in low income areas. There is some question whether the passing of the greenbelt towns from their creative to administrative stages sustained the same degree of socialization. The towns also exemplify the difficulty in supporting mass participation institutions in highly mobile communities. Finally, the greenbelt towns program demonstrates that Americans are very reluctant to allow a single entity—particularly a political one—to plan their cities and towns. They prefer to purchase a private freehold and protect it against many small encroachments. If these become overwhelming, the family—simply sells out and jumps to a new island of privately held land.

The architects of the greenbelt towns could not
convince home builders or buyers that their homes were part of an intricate metropolitan web of physical, economic, and social systems best secured by preplanning. Consequently, American cities operate with late twentieth century economies and technologies and— for good or evil—pre-industrial patterns of community planning.
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