In 1934 the federal government built the town of Greenbelt, Maryland, a bold experiment in town planning and cooperative living. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, millions of people were unemployed and thousands were crowding into the nation’s cities, looking for work. They were also seeking homes for their families at the same time that the country faced a serious shortage of affordable housing. In response, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed a National Resources Board, and a Columbia University economics professor, to head the agency. Tugwell had the utopian dream that building communities throughout the country would create construction jobs for the unemployed workers, provide well-designed homes for low-income people, and demonstrate to developers how to build housing following the garden city planning principles he advocated. In addition to Greenbelt, the government built two other New Deal “greenbelt towns”: Greenhills, Ohio, near Cincinnati, and Greenhills, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee. When he visited Greenbelt, President Roosevelt was so impressed that he declared the towns “an experiment that ought to be copied by every community in the United States.” In 1995, Greenbelt became a National Historic Landmark.

The Heart of Historic Greenbelt

Greenbelt’s historic past is easily appreciated by taking a self-guided walking tour along the pedestrian paths that surround the public buildings and original houses in Greenbelt’s center. This walk highlights seven interpretive panels in the historic district beginning at Greenbelt’s historic past is easily appreciated by taking a self-guided walking tour along the pedestrian paths that surround the public buildings and original houses in Greenbelt’s center. This walk highlights seven interpretive panels in the historic district beginning at the Community Center. (Approximately 15 minutes.)

1. Community Center

15 Crescent Road. This building is open to the public Monday – Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Sunday 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and the halls are lined with historic photographs illustrating Greenbelt’s development. The Greenbelt Museum presents exhibits about the history and preservation of the historic district. At the rear of the building is the original entrance of the Department Store. (Hands-on interpretation; open to the public.)

2. Roosevelt Library

11 Crescent Road. The Greenbelt Library is run by the Prince George’s County Memorial Library System. The Greenbelt Library began as a grassroots partnership between residents of the city and the County, and was housed in what is now the Community Center. In 1955, the Prince George’s County Memorial Library System took over the operation of the Library. The current facility opened in 1970 in this central, pedestrian-accessible location. The library contains the Collection Room, a special collection of books and archival materials relating to the history of the Greenbelt town, city planning, and the cooperative movement. Redford Tugwell ran the Re新零售 Administration and was responsible for the creation of the Greenbelt town. You can access the Collection online at http://www.pgc.lib.md.us/tugwell.

3. Pedestrian Underpasses and Parkway Overpass

This walking tour was created by the Greenbelt Museum, originally printed with funds from the Preservation Maryland Special Grant Fund, and reprinted in 2011 Points of Interest.

Greenbelt Day     First weekend in June
Greenbelt Night     Labor Day Weekend
Greenbelt Festival     Festival of Lights

Greenbelt Day     First weekend in June
Greenbelt Night     Labor Day Weekend
Greenbelt Festival     Festival of Lights

City Offices
301-474-8000

Greenbelt Library
301-345-5800

Greenbelt Homes Inc.
301-346-4616

www.greenbelt.md.gov

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All Original historic homes are still owned cooperatively by the residents. The cooperative businesses in Greenbelt included a grocery store, drug store, movie theater, gas station, newspaper, and video shop. The residents shared in the businesses’ profits, and helped decide upon the products offered, the prices, and the hours of the stores. When the government sold the town in 1972, the residents formed a cooperative in order to buy the houses. These original homes are still owned cooperatively by the residents. The Co-op Supermarket and the local paper, the News Review, remain as cooperative, while the other businesses are now privately owned.

Public Restrooms
Public restrooms are located in the Community Center, the Public Library, the Youth Center, the Aquatics and Fitness Center, and at “Buddy” Attick Park near the playground.

Parking
Free public parking is located in designated parking lots. Buses can unload in the parking lot behind the Library. Please observe that some parking areas have time limits.

Walks to “Buddy” Attick Park

This walk makes a 1.5-mile circuit from the Community Center around scenic Greenbelt Lake without crossing any roads! The path around the lake is mostly flat, shaded, and is maintained with a crushed stone surface. (Points of Interest #11)

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