

## Archival Records

The Records Retention Task Force appointed by the Board of Directors for Greenbelt Homes Inc. co-operative community has determined that the records held by the administration of the co-operative contain materials essential to the story not only of GHI but also of the city and community of Greenbelt, MD generally, specifically the original green town. Special attention must be given to these records to preserve them for future generations.

### Determination

Archival Records are records which should be retained in perpetuity and may NOT be destroyed except in cases of severe damage due to fire, smoke, water, rodents, insects, mold, or extreme disintegration.

The following categories of materials are designated Archival Records:

- any and all documents relating to the planning and construction of the original Greenbelt, MD green town;
- any and all documents relating to the planning and construction of the defense housing, or frame units in GHI;
- any and all documents relating to the founding of the GHI co-operative;
- any and all minutes and agenda for GHI Board of Directors, committee, subcommittee, and task force meetings and projects;
- any and all community/member newsletters, publications, and communications including posters, flyers, and brochures;
- any and all maps and plats that are undatable and any and all that are datable prior to 2000;
- any and all original photographs of community/member activities and events of any date;
- any and all editions of the Member Handbook;
- any and all documents and photos relating to the National Register of Historic Places application, nomination, and maintenance;
- any and all original photographs of residences and other structures original to the green town or in GHI;
- any and all materials relating to celebrations and commemorations;
- any and all correspondence with visitors, including visitor logs from the community's early years;
- any and all signs and architectural fragments from 1935 to 2000.

### Location and Access

- GHI Archival Records must be stored in an appropriate location;
- GHI Archival Records must be readily available for members, staff, and researchers to consult;

- GHI Archival Records that are digitized must NOT be destroyed but retained in long-term storage with proper climate control;
- A Finding Guide must be created for GHI's Archival Records.

### Care and Handling

- Documents, photos, maps, plats, etc. that are very brittle or otherwise very fragile may NOT be digitized;
- Sheets of paper including maps and plats should be stored flat in acid free file folders in acid free boxes or cabinets;
- Sheets of paper that are brittle or otherwise fragile should be stored in mylar sleeves;
- All photographs must be stored in mylar sleeves;
- Documents in binders must be re-housed in acid-free binders or files or boxes;
- All staples, metal paper clips, and brads must be removed and replaced with plastic fasteners;

### Rationale

Many of these records are held by GHI in original unique copies and cannot be consulted elsewhere, including the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Such records can never be replaced. They contain information that might be considered mundane by the untrained eye, but which are actually the kinds of records that historians can only hope to find. The GHI records include for example a daily log of workers on the job, their worksites, and tasks. Architectural scholars as well as scholars who study the operations of federal government agencies during the Great Depression and New Deal will benefit strongly from this kind of archival material. The records also contain iterations of the Member Handbook over the history of the community. They include also various newsletters and community communications that are likely to be found only in the mementos of residents. The records hold numerous maps and plats, several of which have been identified as unique.

### Historical Relevance

The Greenbelt Homes Inc. co-operative community represents the heart of the original New Deal green town of Greenbelt, MD. The green towns were planned by the U.S. Resettlement Administration created May 1, 1935 by the Franklin Roosevelt administration during the Great Depression. R. G. Tugwell, an assistant Secretary of Agriculture, was the first head of the RA and immediately planned to build camps and communities to help hundreds of thousands of displaced persons such as those displaced by the Dust Bowl. The RA hit the ground running with the Maryland town as construction began there in September 1935.

Tugwell's plans were controversial and potentially expensive, so only three green towns were actually constructed--Greendale, WI; Greenhills, OH; and Greenbelt, MD. These towns were planned to be "cooperative communities where the built environment would reinforce community spirit and cooperation among its residents. The green belt towns combined the best

aspects of a rural life: lakes, woods, and open spaces with the best aspects of an urban life: recreational facilities, theaters and shops" (Greenbelt Museum).

Old Greenbelt, MD is the most intact of the green towns that were built. This survival is due to the fact that it was purchased from the federal government in 1952 by a co-operative group. The Greenbelt Homes, Inc. co-operative community has provided stewardship for most of the original town, which has also allowed the atmosphere and quality of life that the RA hoped to foster has in large part survived.

The story of Greenbelt Homes, Inc. is central to the story of the unique city of Greenbelt. It has major achievements that included preserving the original structures, parks, and pathways of the planned community while also outfitting them for post-modern living. GHI has taken on this daunting task in caring for 1600 townhomes and single-family dwellings as well as apartment buildings and other structures.

GHI's history and success are fundamental to the history and development of the entire city of Greenbelt. When Greenbelt, MD is included in urban planning curricula all over the country and indeed the globe, it is actually GHI that is most significant to consider. The original community has been the subject of more than 15 books, as well as numerous articles, films, videos, and documentaries. It attracts visitors from all over the world. The historic community of Greenbelt is significant to the history of planned communities; utopian experiments; the co-operative movement; the Great Depression and New Deal; and the history of landscaping, architecture, and mid-twentieth century material culture.