

# Greenbelt

## Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone

March 2020

### **PART 1** Planning Background

#### Summary

The Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) Zone is a new zoning tool adopted by the County Council sitting as the District Council on October 23, 2018, as part of Prince George's County's new Zoning Ordinance. The NCO Zone is "intended to protect and preserve the unique development features and character of established neighborhoods throughout the County, and to promote new development that is compatible with the existing neighborhood character." This flexible tool builds on the standards for development, redevelopment, and alterations established throughout the County by the new Zoning Ordinance and incorporates revised or new standards designed for individual communities to better build upon and preserve identified unique attributes.

In order to establish an individual NCO Zone, the District Council shall review "a neighborhood study for the neighborhood specifying the development context in the zone." The District Council "may



Homes within the Proposed Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone.

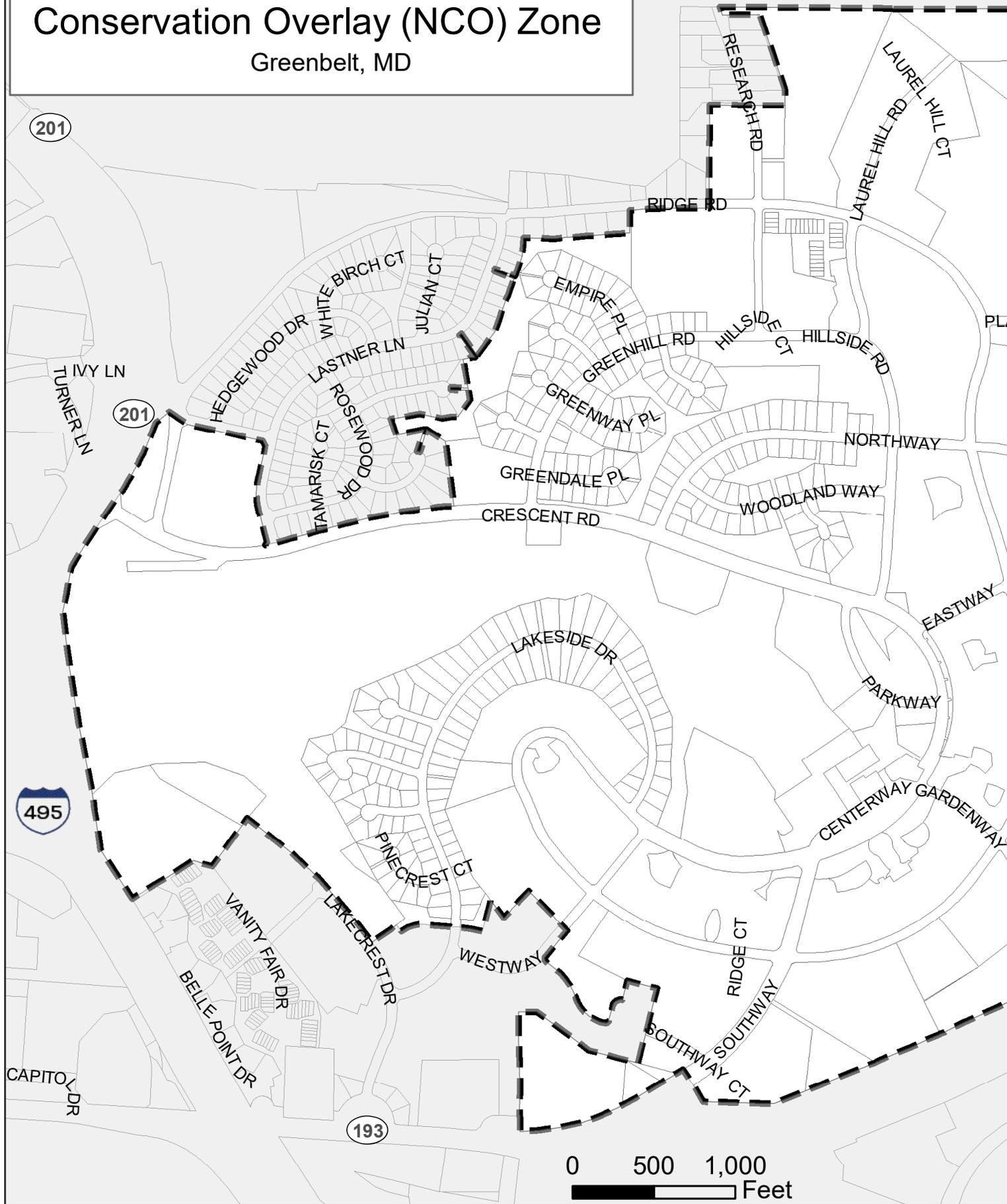
also establish a unique set of development standards applicable to all development" in an NCO Zone.

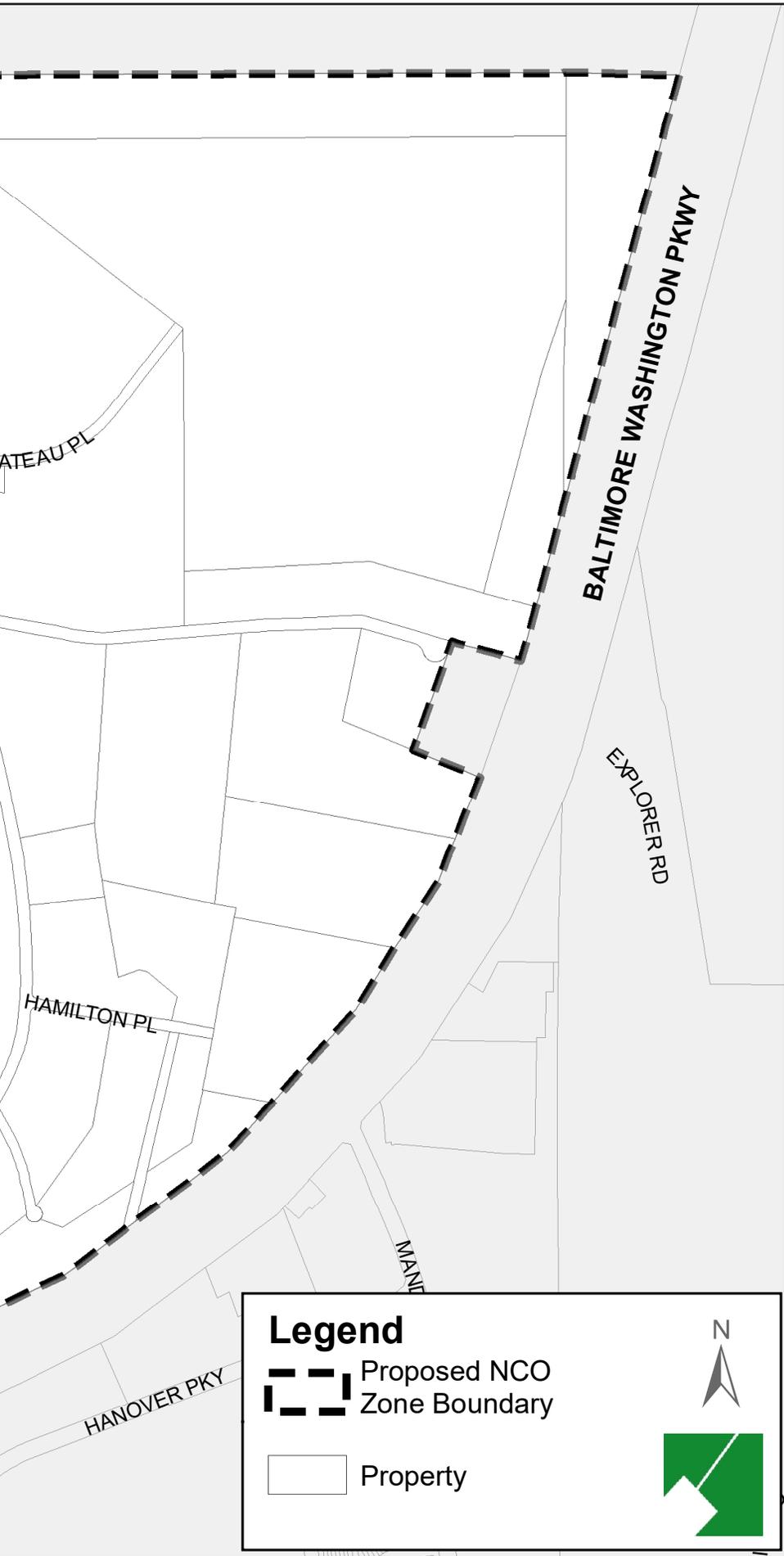
The first two proposed NCO Zones were placed in the Fiscal Year 2020 work program of the Prince George's County Planning Department and focus on single-family residential properties in the City of Mount Rainier and the portion of the City

of Greenbelt currently located in the Residential Planned Community (R-P-C) Zone. Both proposed NCO Zones will be reflected on the proposed County Zoning Map as part of the ongoing Countywide Map Amendment and, if approved, will take effect at the same time as the new zoning map. The zoning map is anticipated to take effect in early November 2020.

# Proposed Greenbelt Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) Zone

Greenbelt, MD





Concurrent with the preparation and approval of the new zoning map, which is an essential step before the new Zoning Ordinance may take effect, the District Council will consider both the required neighborhood study and a formal resolution to establish the two NCO Zones and any associated development standards. This neighborhood study consists of four parts:



The planning background for the proposed Greenbelt NCO Zone.



An overview and history of the neighborhoods included in the Greenbelt NCO Zone.



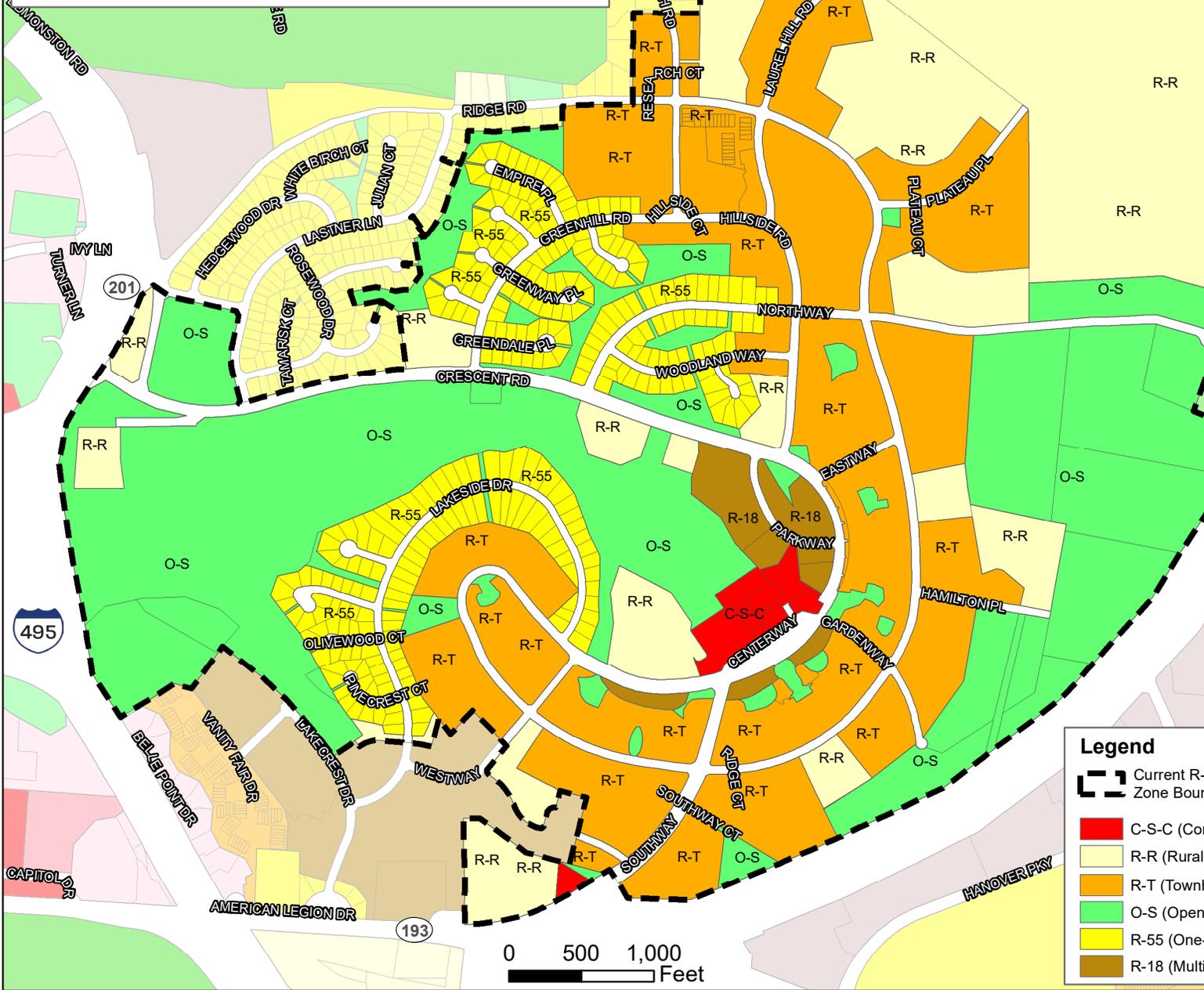
How the Greenbelt NCO Zone meets the minimum standards for establishment of an NCO Zone.



The policy goals for the standards proposed in the upcoming legislative amendment to establish the Greenbelt NCO Zone.

# Existing Zoning and Residential Planned Community (R-P-C) Boundary

Greenbelt, MD

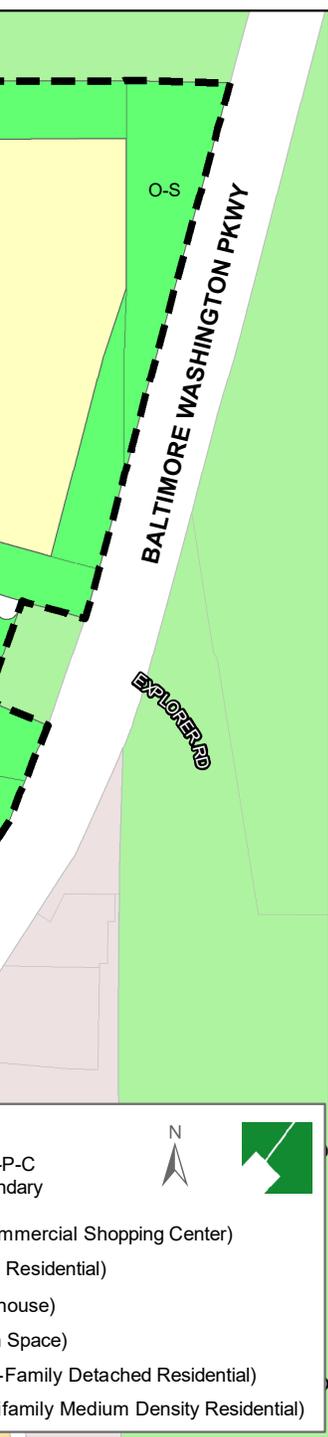


**Legend**

- Current R-P-C Zone Boundary
- C-S-C (Community Service Center)
- R-R (Rural Residential)
- R-T (Township Residential)
- O-S (Open Space)
- R-55 (One-Family Detached)
- R-18 (Multi-Family)



## The 1989 Approved Master Plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt and Vicinity and 1990 Adopted Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Areas 65, 66, and 67



The current County master plan for the area to be incorporated in the Greenbelt NCO Zone is the 1989 *Approved Master Plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt and Vicinity*.

This master plan updated and replaced the 1970 master plan and remains the oldest applicable master plan in Prince George's County. The accompanying 1990 Adopted Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Areas 65, 66, and 67 (SMA) established the current Greenbelt R-P-C Zone by more than doubling the size of the R-P-C that existed at the time, culminating in 1,397.68 acres centered on the New Deal green town community embodied by the Greenbelt Homes, Incorporated (GHI) cooperative housing development, several multifamily buildings, Roosevelt Center, and the civic spaces including the recreation fields, Buddy Attick Lake Park, library, youth center, Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center, municipal center, and community center. The expanded R-P-C Zone also included three single-family detached areas; the forest preserve flanking the northern and eastern portions of the community; offices, workspaces, and storage areas used by GHI and members; the defense housing area built by the Farm Security Administration; and other abutting properties. Additional rezonings were made in 1990, including placing the GHI cooperative superblocks into the R-T (Townhouse) Zone. Refer to Part 2 of this study for additional information on these included properties. The R-P-C Zone included much of the Greenbelt National Historic Landmark designated on the National Register of Historic Places.

As part of the approval of the expanded R-P-C Zone, the R-P-C official plan was established as two maps on pages 213 and 214 of the master plan and SMA. The official plan restricts residential density by block and establishes the land use recommendations for the community. The approved land use plan consists primarily of "low urban," "high urban," "park," "private open space," "commercial," and "institutional" land uses

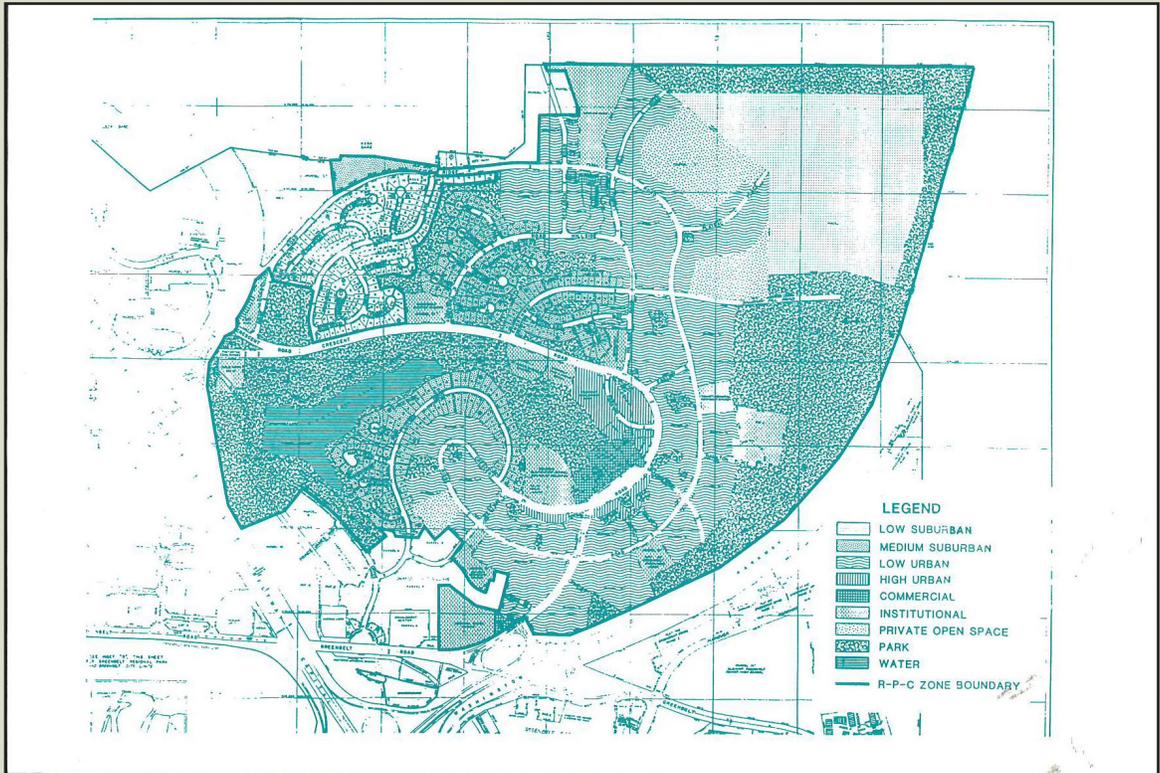
with a large portion of "low suburban" land uses in the northeast quadrant and recognition of the single-family detached areas in the "medium suburban" land use classification. While these land uses are associated with density ranges in the master plan, the density map of the R-P-C official plan supersedes the master plan recommendations and controls the level of density permitted in historic Greenbelt. The commercial category "includes retail, service and office uses" while the institutional category was generally used to identify municipal and County properties along with places of worship and Federal facilities such as the former post office.

The official land use map of the master plan supplements the R-P-C official plan by identifying portions of the forest preserve as "conditional reserve areas," which indicated the presence of unsafe soils and other ground conditions that would make development challenging. Roosevelt Center was also identified as a village activity center; the centers were envisioned as mixed-use, primarily commercial areas that were also appropriate for between 50 and 150 dwelling units. Village activity centers were replaced as a County planning concept with the approval of the 2002 General Plan.

The master plan reflected Roosevelt Center as an area approximately 8.2 acres in size with approximately 53,800 leasable square feet at the time. City of Greenbelt records currently indicate approximately 54,000 square feet of retail area with 6,500 square feet of medical office. The 1989 master plan recommendations for Roosevelt Center were largely brought forward from a 1981 study designed to address challenges such as physical upkeep, litter removal, advertising, and ensuring the central plaza remains pedestrian oriented.

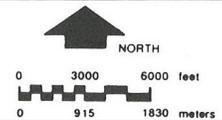
The 1989 open space implementation map recommended all open space and wooded

# Greenbelt RPC Official Plan



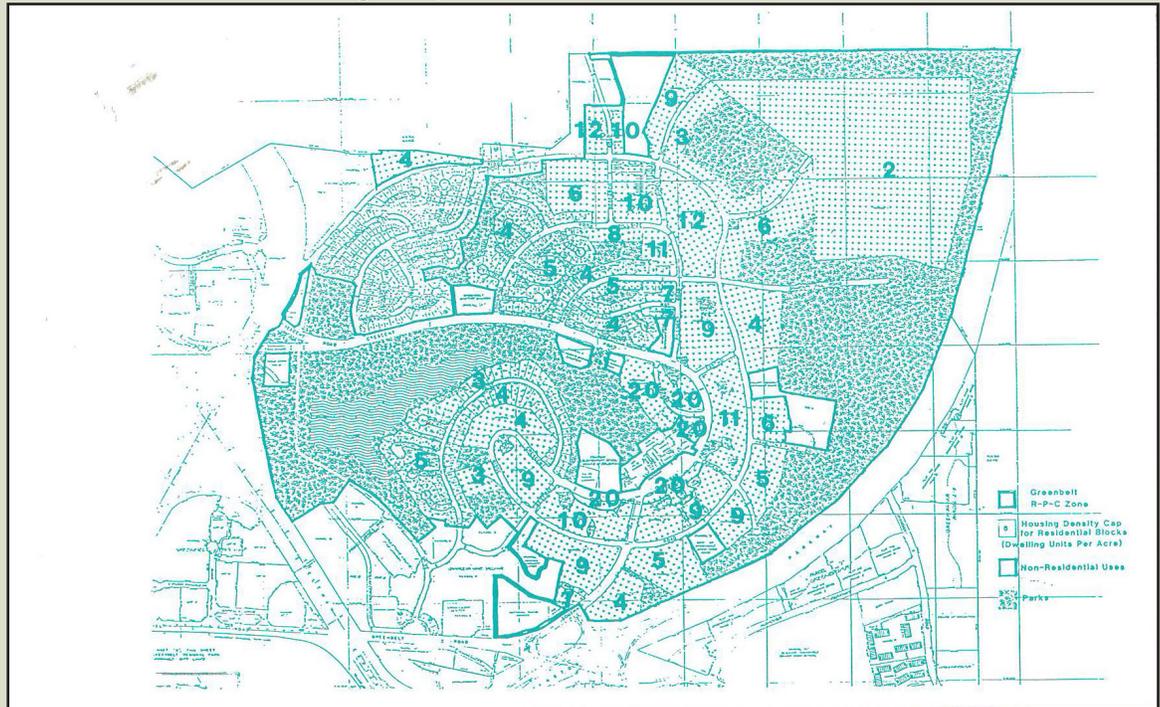
Langley Park-  
College Park -  
Greenbelt  
Master Plan

## OFFICIAL PLAN FOR GREENBELT R-P-C ZONE



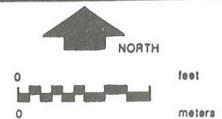
Map No.  
16

# Greenbelt RPC Density Map



Langley Park-  
College Park -  
Greenbelt  
Master Plan

## GREENBELT R-P-C ZONE DENSITY FOR RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS



Map No.  
15



Roosevelt Center

areas except a portion of the forest preserve identified as a promontory for park acquisition or dedication and reinforces the presence of unsafe lands for development in the preserve. Greenbelt Lake is identified as a scenic vista and recommendations were incorporated to minimize adverse impacts on the natural environment.

One point of note in the 1989 master plan is a recognition that “a group of citizens” have been seeking County historic designation of the 1937 original green town. This interest remains to this day, although most stakeholders prefer alternative solutions such as the Greenbelt NCO Zone.

## Additional Planning Context

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Public facilities recommendations have largely been updated by subsequent functional master plans. The recently renovated library, along with the municipal community center, youth center, and municipal building, form the heart of Greenbelt. The community is well served by the municipal police department and the County's District VI officers based in Beltsville provide backup. The Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad remains planned for relocation as an intermediate priority to a location closer to MD 193 and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway per the 2008 Public Safety Facilities Master Plan. As the Greenbelt NCO study will discuss in further detail, there is strong desire to ensure residential growth is limited; therefore, there are few anticipated impacts on the County's public schools as a result of the Greenbelt NCO Zone.

The 2009 *Approved Countywide Master Plan of Transportation* updated the 1989 master plan's transportation recommendations and is the current master plan for roadways, trails, and transit. There are no master plan roadways in the proposed Greenbelt NCO Zone. Planned shared-use road trails are indicated on Crescent Road, Ridge Road, Greenhill Road, Hillside Road, Northway Road, and Southway. Existing hard surface trails surround Greenbelt Lake, connect to Lakecrest Drive and the athletic fields, and form a partial network through other open spaces in the historic core, supplemented by the robust off-street trail network present in the

original superblocks and underpasses of the green town. A planned hard surface trail is indicated along most of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway with a link to the Greenbelt NCO area. Finally, the community is well-served by bus transit with TheBus Route 11 providing weekday service and WMATA Metrobus routes G12 and G14 providing daily, evening, and weekend service between the Greenbelt and New Carrollton Metro Stations.

The R-P-C Zone has proven ineffective. While it can and does continue to limit residential density within the Greenbelt R-P-C, there is little else this zone can do that would benefit the community. It is designed to require Detailed Site Plan review and approval for new development—even prior to the issuance of use and occupancy permits but GHI is exempt from this requirement while Roosevelt Center and other residential development are subject to. This creates a substantial inconsistency and severe hardships on property owners of commercial buildings because forcing a new tenant to obtain approval of a Detailed Site Plan, even if all they do is change ownership and run the same or a similar type of business such as the New Deal Café, is a costly, uncertain, and time-consuming requirement.

Additionally, several unique aspects of the original green town community require interpretations or prior zoning text amendments that are sometimes insufficiently documented or are difficult to locate unless one is

intimately familiar with the details of the current ordinance. One such example is a May 2005 interpretation regarding the current requirement for Detailed Site Plans in the R-P-C Zone. This interpretation is intended to reduce the potential burden on property owners of a Detailed Site Plan by stating the R-P-C Official Plan acts as a global, approved Detailed Site Plan for the entire R-P-C area. Any application in this area is treated as a revision rather than a new Detailed Site Plan. Another is a use regulation footnote in a separate part of the Zoning Ordinance from the R-P-C Zone that addresses the situation of the superblocks having never been platted and providing that there are no applicable individual lot standards for the homes contained on the superblocks.



One of the superblocks containing park space within the community.

The opportunity offered by the development of the Greenbelt NCO Zone is that it allows clarity to be brought to these interpretation questions.

## The Greenbelt Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone

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Formal work on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project began in January 2014. An evaluation and recommendations report produced by the consultant team led by Clarion Associates and released in December 2014, recommended the elimination of the R-P-C Zone. Planning Department staff began coordination with the City of Greenbelt by the end of March 2015, meeting with the City Council and Advisory Planning Board on March 30 to discuss initial concerns about the repercussions of deleting the R-P-C Zone and potential alternatives for the community.

The first part of the new proposed Zoning Ordinance was released as Module 1: Zones and Use Regulations in October 2015, confirming the elimination of the R-P-C Zone and incorporating the initial recommended language for the NCO Zone as a new type of overlay zone. The City's official response to the proposals of Module 1 was adopted by the City Council in March 2016 and recognizes the ongoing work between County and City planning staff on a potential Greenbelt NCO Zone. The City developed an initial set of goals for the Greenbelt NCO Zone and Clarion Associates offered feedback in September 2016.

Based on initial staff coordination, the City's initial goals, and Clarion Associates' professional expertise, a consultant draft of development standards for the Greenbelt NCO Zone was developed and released for stakeholder review and comment. By early 2017, it was clear from stakeholder feedback this initial draft missed the mark, and the decision was made by the County Council not to include the Greenbelt NCO Zone (or the

Mount Rainier NCO Zone, which was also in draft form at that time) in the September 2017 Comprehensive Review Draft, a complete second draft of the proposed Zoning Ordinance.

Subsequent to the decision not to release draft standards in the Comprehensive Review Draft, and reflecting documented requests from the City of Greenbelt and GHI in 2017, the County Council indicated its intent to continue work on the NCO Zones in the expectation that these zones may be approved with, or added soon after, the approval of the new Zoning Ordinance. The two proposed NCO zones were added to the Planning Department's work program.

In 2018 a legislative draft of the proposed Zoning Ordinance was presented as Council Bill CB-13-2018. After extensive public review and comment, the new Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Landscape Manual were adopted on October 23, 2018, with a delayed effective date to allow for the rezoning of the County to the new zones through the ongoing Countywide Map Amendment. With the approval of the new Zoning Ordinance, the County Council clarified its intent and expectation to ensure the Greenbelt and Mount Rainier NCO Zones would be ready for public review and potential approval concurrent with the effective date of the new ordinance.

In late 2018/early 2019 GHI developed its own proposed NCO development standards and released the proposal for review and comment by the membership. As with the Clarion Associates draft, the GHI draft proved

controversial among stakeholders; unlike the Clarion Associates draft, however, the GHI draft obtained the support of the GHI Board of Directors. In late 2019, the Prince George's County Planning Department met with the City Council, community stakeholders, and the Roosevelt Center Merchants' Association, and in January 2020 met with the GHI Board of Directors. The goal of these meetings was to review the zoning background, discuss the purposes and development of the NCO Zone, and solicit broad community support for the key goals for the Greenbelt NCO Zone.

One final item of importance pertains to State law, specifically Title 5. Special Types of Corporations of the Corporations and Associations Article. Subtitle 6B. Maryland Cooperative Housing Corporation Act, § 5-6B-32(a)(b) states in part that "A law, ordinance, or regulation concerning building codes or zoning may not establish any requirement or standard governing the use, location, placement, or construction of any land and improvements which comprise a cooperative

project, unless the requirement or standard is uniformly applicable to all land and improvements of the same kind or character not comprising cooperative projects." Although the current Zoning Ordinance contains several provisions specifically applicable to cooperative housing projects, these provisions appear to be contrary to the Corporations and Associations Article. While GHI is the largest property owner in the Greenbelt NCO Zone, it is not possible to codify any development standards that treat the GHI properties any differently than other properties in the NCO Zone or in the rest of the County. As such, the proposed NCO standards will not include any regulations or proposals specific to GHI; any such standards which may have been contained in the prior proposals by Clarion Associates and GHI will not be incorporated.

This neighborhood study and the proposed Greenbelt NCO Zone development standards will be the direct result of community collaboration over a period of several years and will directly reinforce the goals supported by the Greenbelt community.



## Overview of the Neighborhood\*

### Historic Greenbelt

Greenbelt is one of three “green towns” founded by the United States government under the New Deal as an attempt to solve social, economic, and housing problems confronting the nation. Constructed on garden city principles, the builders of Greenbelt took advantage of the natural topography in the form of a crescent-shaped plateau or “green belt,” to site the town. Houses were planned on the ridges around the commercial center, where stores, the post office, and community building/school were located. A series of three-story apartment buildings formed an inner circle around the commercial center. Athletic fields and the recreation center were placed in the low portion of the bowl-shaped terrain. Houses were sited in a way so that residents would have to interact with one another and to foster a sense of community. Architectural influences include the Art Deco style, as well as the International and Streamline Moderne styles.

The character-defining features of Greenbelt include common spaces, community spaces, the siting of buildings and courts according to the natural topography, and the architecture of the residential units. The buildings are arranged on superblocks of 10 to 18 acres in size, containing approximately 120 houses arranged in clusters with a “garden” side and a “service” side. Roads were kept to a minimum to promote pedestrian movement through the community, with walkways and underpasses



constructed to minimize conflicts with automobiles. The entire development was surrounded by a “green belt” to provide recreational space and to act as a buffer from incompatible development.

Techniques such as the Radburn method of the use of culs-de-sac or service courts were used to face the dwelling units toward the garden side comprising an interior park or green space. The service side of the buildings face the service courts, where trash was collected, and laundry could be hung. Pedestrian footpaths are used to link the housing within the superblocks and other park areas.

### Residential Development

There was no specific architectural style adopted for the buildings, but the emphasis was on good proportion and scale in the exterior facades with a harmonious use of materials and color, all in relation to the site groupings. The brick-clad buildings were constructed with gable slate roofs, unadorned wall surfaces and steel-sash casement windows. The concrete block buildings were constructed in the International style with flat roofs, white walls, and the lack of ornamentation. Brick rustication was

used between the upper-floor windows to break up the massing of the buildings.

Most units are two stories tall, with 16 one-story units located at the ends of rows, originally referred to as “honeymoon” units. Rows range from two to eight units in length. Because of the high watertable in the area, the units were designed without basements. Originally, the units were heated with one boiler in a single basement under one unit only or in an attached boiler room at one

\*Some partial excerpts in this section taken from the National Historic Landmark Nomination for Greenbelt, Maryland, Historic District ([https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NHLS/80004331\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NHLS/80004331_text)).



Left page: 1937; This page: Original homes (top), Original apartments (bottom).

end of a row. All foundations and first-floor beams and slabs are made of reinforced concrete. A total of 44.6 percent of the original units are concrete or cinder block wall construction with poured-in-place beam and slab floors and flat roofs, covered with built-up roofing and constructed entirely by unskilled laborers. A total of 51.6 percent are balloon frame with pitched roofs covered in slate and brick veneered walls. A total of 3.8 percent are balloon frame with pitched roofs covered in slate and cement asbestos shingle walls.

The architects grouped the flat and pitched-roof dwellings to achieve appealing vistas and aesthetic variation. Group housing units were planned in pairs to economize on plumbing. In most instances, units were designed with their long axis parallel to the service court to take advantage of light, ventilation, and ease of circulation. The orientation also allowed for wider plots for each individual unit, and in most cases, stairs in a central location.

The 12 multifamily buildings around the commercial center in the original planned community were designed with complete floor plans, rather than assembled in modular units like the group houses. Each building contains 18 to 48 units. Basements were used for tenant storage, laundry, and as a play space for children. The buildings are constructed of 12-inch-thick cinder block wall with reinforced concrete slab floors and roofs.

They are three stories tall and are staggered like the group housing units for visual interest and to adapt to the topography. Unlike the group houses, the primary façades of the multifamily houses face the street. Entrances on the street frontages feature glass block treatment framing the doors and highlighting the stair halls for the full three stories. The garden side entrances are simpler with no decorative elements. The apartment buildings feature brick rustication between the windows for decoration. The multifamily apartment buildings more closely resemble the Bauhaus style of architecture.

### **RESETTLEMENT AUTHORITY PREFABRICATED UNITS**

Five prefabricated units were constructed by the Resettlement Authority on Woodland Way to demonstrate economical construction. These structures are one story in height with a sloping roof and two bedrooms. They are lightweight construction comprising plywood walls set on a masonry foundation and were sited carefully to take advantage of topography and wind conditions.

### **PARKBELT HOMES**

The Parkbelt Homes consist of 10 houses located on Forestway and are the only privately constructed buildings sanctioned by the federal government as part of early plans to expand Greenbelt. These streamlined houses were built by General Houses of Chicago, a pioneer in the field of prefabricated housing. The Parkbelt Homes were originally one-story, flat-roofed structures with a copper-bearing steel frame bolted to a concrete foundation. The walls and roofs are made of factory-made insulated panels that were shipped to the site and assembled. Most of these structures have been modified by the addition of newer siding, pitched roofs and replacement windows. The 10 Parkbelt homes were constructed on 0.13 to 0.38-acre lots arranged around a cul-de-sac. Houses range from one to two stories in height. Green space surrounds the outer edge of the development to provide a park-like setting.

### **DEFENSE HOUSING**

From 1941 to 1942, 1,000 units of defense housing were constructed by the Farm Security Administration. These units were placed in areas originally designated for Resettlement Authority housing that was never built. Siting of these buildings is similar to the original units but does not employ the same garden city principles as the original structures. The orientation of the defense housing is directly on the service courts, which are shorter and squatter, as opposed to being separated from it by garages or hedges. Service yards are shallower than the

original units, there are no garages, and there is a lack of topsoil and footpaths on the garden sides. There are no underpasses under Ridge Road to protect pedestrians from vehicle traffic. These courts lacked trees, hedges, and interior gardens and are generally poorly graded.

The defense houses are two-story frame buildings set on masonry foundations. Floor plans are more compact and differ from the original units. In addition to two-story town houses, the defense homes also feature some flats stacked one on top of the other. Entrance is by side porches at the ends of the units. Other second-floor flats are accessed via a central, first-floor door that leads to a common stair.

## The Town Common

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The original town common comprised two commercial buildings, an elementary school/community building, a combination police station/fire department and automobile repair shop, a gasoline filling station, and one set of closed garages. All buildings were heated by a central heating plant located in the basement of the theater.

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

The Community Building/Elementary School is the heart of the original town and is a superb work of Art Deco architecture. The building is two stories tall, with a flat roof and concrete frame covered in brick veneer. The building's rigid concrete frame is strengthened by protruding buttresses, which are fluted to stress the verticality of the Deco style. The buttresses also provide for unobstructed interior space. At the base of each bay on the exterior of the building between the buttresses, and on the entry above the principal door is a carved limestone bas-relief panel representing part of the preamble of the Constitution and reflect the democratic ideals of the Greenbelt community. The panels were sculpted by Lenore Thomas, who was working for the Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Authority at the time, with the assistance of Tony Lucasini. The panels are executed in the Art Deco style associated with federal art of the late 1930s. A wing was added behind the north wing in 1947. Another addition housing an adult care center is located to the rear of the main block on the north side.

### COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The original pair of commercial buildings are located on Centerway and originally housed a movie theater, drug store, barber shop, shoe repair, valet, and a bus

### GARAGES

Resettlement Authority planners originally intended to provide garages for all dwelling units. However, only 50 percent of them were built due to lack of funding. As a result, paved parking areas were provided in the service court areas. A total of 275 garage units are arranged in compounds adjacent to service courts and 100 are attached to housing units where service courts are too far distant. The garages are flat-roofed concrete block structures set upon poured concrete foundations. In 1937, only the garages attached to buildings contained overhead doors, while those within the service courts were left open. However, those buildings were designed so that they could be easily fitted with doors, and today, all garages feature wooden panel overhead doors.

station. Offices for the town government and cooperative endeavors were located on the second floors. The buildings are constructed of concrete block with a brick veneer and have the low modern lines of the Streamlined Moderne style, consisting of horizontal compositions, curved walls, flat roofs, and banded corner windows. Construction of the theater included buttressed walls, like the community center. The commercial shopping center is a noteworthy example of an integrated neighborhood shopping center because of its siting within the larger community and its emphasis on the pedestrian experience, separating walkers and cars. The 100-foot-wide pedestrian mall was meant to provide social and cultural interaction as much as to provide access to the commercial space. Access to the commercial area is provided by a secondary road off the main arterial with most of the parking concentrated in the rear of the shops. The "Mother and Child" statue, also sculpted by Lenore Thomas in 1938, serves as the focal point of the shopping court. An addition was placed on the southwest corner of one of the buildings in 1947 for the Town of Greenbelt offices, but ultimately housed a bank.

### FIRE STATION/REPAIR GARAGE

This two-part concrete block, brick-veneered structure originally housed the fire and police station at its southwest end and a repair garage at its northeast end. A new fire station was built on Crescent Road in 1961 and this building was adapted to commercial uses. The auto repair facility still operates as that use.

## Recreational Facilities

### SWIMMING POOL AND BATH HOUSE

The swimming pool and bath house were constructed in 1938, after swimming was banned in the lake. The pool was designed to accommodate 1,000 families. The concrete wall behind the diving board is original. The bathhouse was originally a freestanding building, but is now incorporated into the Aquatic Center, constructed in 1992. Porthole windows are located at the attic level. The original entrance into the bathhouse still contains triple doors but is no longer a working entrance.

### MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS

The three buildings to the east of Ridge Road on Hamilton Place were constructed in 1944 for the Public Housing Authority to house maintenance activities for the community. They are long, low brick buildings in a polygonal site plan. The main building serves as the administration building for Greenbelt Homes, Inc. Two buildings set at an angle to the main building serve as repair/maintenance shops.

### RECREATION

A 27-acre man-made lake with an earthen dam and concrete spillway was provided for recreational purposes. It is surrounded on three sides by Buddy Attick Park, named in honor of one of Greenbelt's original citizens and first police officers. Braden Field is the heart of the recreational area and is original to the planned community. In 1938, there were four tennis courts and, one year later the three baseball/softball fields and football fields were added. The Youth Center, located between the pool and the fields, is a more recent addition.

### WOODLAND AND FARMLAND

The remains of the physical "greenbelt" can be seen in the woodlands that surround the lake and act as a buffer between housing subdivisions at the north. Portions of the greenbelt are also preserved on the eastern side of the town in the Forest Preserve between the townhouses and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

### PARCELS ADDED AFTER ORIGINAL TOWN BUILT

After construction of the original and defense houses by the Federal government, several private subdivisions were platted within the greenbelt. These include Lakeside Blocks A & B (1954); Lakeside First Addition (1956); Woodland Hills Blocks A, B & C (1956); Lakewood, Greenvalley Sections I and II (1956); and Lakecrest

(1962). Like the original Greenbelt town plan, these developments sited single-family houses on individual lots bordering green spaces. The subdivisions took advantage of the natural topography and follow the contours of the natural ridge around which portions of the original town were developed. Houses are sited on cul-de-sacs and are one to two stories in height.



Single-family detached homes added after the original Greenbelt housing.

Religious structures were also later added to the community including the Greenbelt Community Church (1951), Mishkan Torah Jewish Community Center (1955), Mowatt Memorial Methodist Church (1955), and St. Hugh's Catholic Church and School (1963). Other structures include the Greenbelt Plaza Apartments (9, 11, 51, and 53 Crescent Road), the Concession Stand at Greenbelt Lake (1960s), Youth Center (1961), Greenbelt Fire Department (1961), Co-op Supermarket (1962), City of Greenbelt Offices (1964 and 1978), Professional Building (115 Centerway), Public Works Department Building and Open Garage (1969), Greenbelt Public Library (1970), Greenbelt Homes Townhouses (1970), Green Ridge House Nursing Home (1977), Police Station (1990), Greenbelt Elementary School (1992), and Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center (1992).



Places of worship continue to provide important community services.

# Minimum Standards for the Approval of a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone

Section 27-4403(a)(3) of the adopted Zoning Ordinance contains the minimum standards for designation of an NCO Zone. An NCO Zone may only be approved by the District Council if the following standards are met:

**(A) At least 65 percent of the land area within the proposed NCO Zone, not including street and other rights-of-way, is developed.**

The majority of the proposed Greenbelt NCO land area was developed between 1937 and 1970. A small number of parcels, almost all located in the forest preserve to the north and east of the proposed NCO Zone, remain undeveloped. However, these undeveloped parcels are very large in acreage; as a result, Greenbelt does not currently meet this standard as only 484 of the 807 total acres (59.9 percent) of the proposed NCO Zone land area are developed.

As a result of this analysis, staff will recommend the County Council revise the requirement of the adopted Zoning Ordinance from the percentage of land area to the percentage of properties within the proposed NCO Zone. Until and unless such a revision is incorporated, the Greenbelt NCO Zone cannot be approved by the Council as currently proposed.

**(B) Development patterns in the NCO Zone demonstrate an effort to maintain or rehabilitate the character (including, but not limited to, the historic character of existing communities) and physical features of existing buildings in the zone.**

The City of Greenbelt, GHI, the Roosevelt Center Merchants' Association, Prince George's County Library System, and other key property owners play an active and ongoing role in maintaining the historic character of Greenbelt, one of only three New Deal green towns in America. Renovations of existing structures are subject to architectural guidelines in GHI, and the Roosevelt Center businesses remain interested in preserving the form and architectural quality of the commercial buildings. There are Maryland Historical Trust easements on the original theater and community center, as well as the "Mother and Child" statue anchoring Roosevelt Center. Several of the apartment buildings in the proposed NCO boundary are under recent new ownership with owners expressing interest in context-sensitive improvements that will retain the character and architectural styling of the apartments. Single-family detached owners generally maintain their properties in

good condition and at appropriate size and scale to the original post-war construction patterns of these areas.

The intense interest of the City and community in pursuing the NCO Zone itself is drawn from the deep desire of all stakeholders to maintain the historic character and physical features of Greenbelt.

**(C) The development standards proposed to be applied to the zone will encourage the retention of the general character and appearance of existing development in the zone.**

Compliance with this standard will be determined through the legislative process when the District Council reviews and approves the proposed development standards in an upcoming draft Council Bill. The standards of the draft bill will be designed to facilitate and encourage retention of the general character and appearance of the existing development.

**(D) The area must possess one or more of the following distinctive features that create a cohesive identifiable setting, character, or association:**

- (i) Scale, size, type of construction, or distinctive building materials;**
- (ii) Lot layouts, setbacks, street layouts, alleys, or sidewalks;**
- (iii) Special natural or streetscape characteristics, such as creek beds, parks, gardens, or street landscaping; or**
- (iv) Land use patterns, including mixed or unique uses or activities.**

The proposed Greenbelt NCO area is one of the Country's best examples of the Art Deco style integrated into one of only three New Deal green towns in America. It is distinctive in its construction and layout. The superblock design of the original 1937 development is unique in Prince George's County and features a robust pedestrian network well-integrated to the natural environment and inclusive of grade-separated pedestrian underpasses that reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. The overall land use pattern, integration of mixed residential development with commercial, institutional, and recreational uses, and walkable scale of historic Greenbelt make it well-suited for designation as a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone.

# Policy Goals for the Greenbelt Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone

The goals of the Greenbelt NCO Zone are:

1. Preserve the development characteristics of the New Deal community, including the superblock concept, garden city character, walkability, internal green spaces, sustainable development practices, and the “green belt.”
2. Restrict the residential density allowed by the new zones of the Zoning Ordinance so that new development does not overwhelm or negatively impact the character of the community.
3. Clarify the applicability of development standards for properties that were never subdivided.
4. Ensure new buildings and structures and additions to existing dwellings, accessory structures, and nonresidential buildings are appropriate in size and scale with existing buildings.
5. Minimize impacts to or restrictions on existing nonresidential uses to ensure they have every opportunity to continue to serve the community.
6. Minimize the provision of new parking spaces to limit expansion of impervious surfaces and preserve open space.

