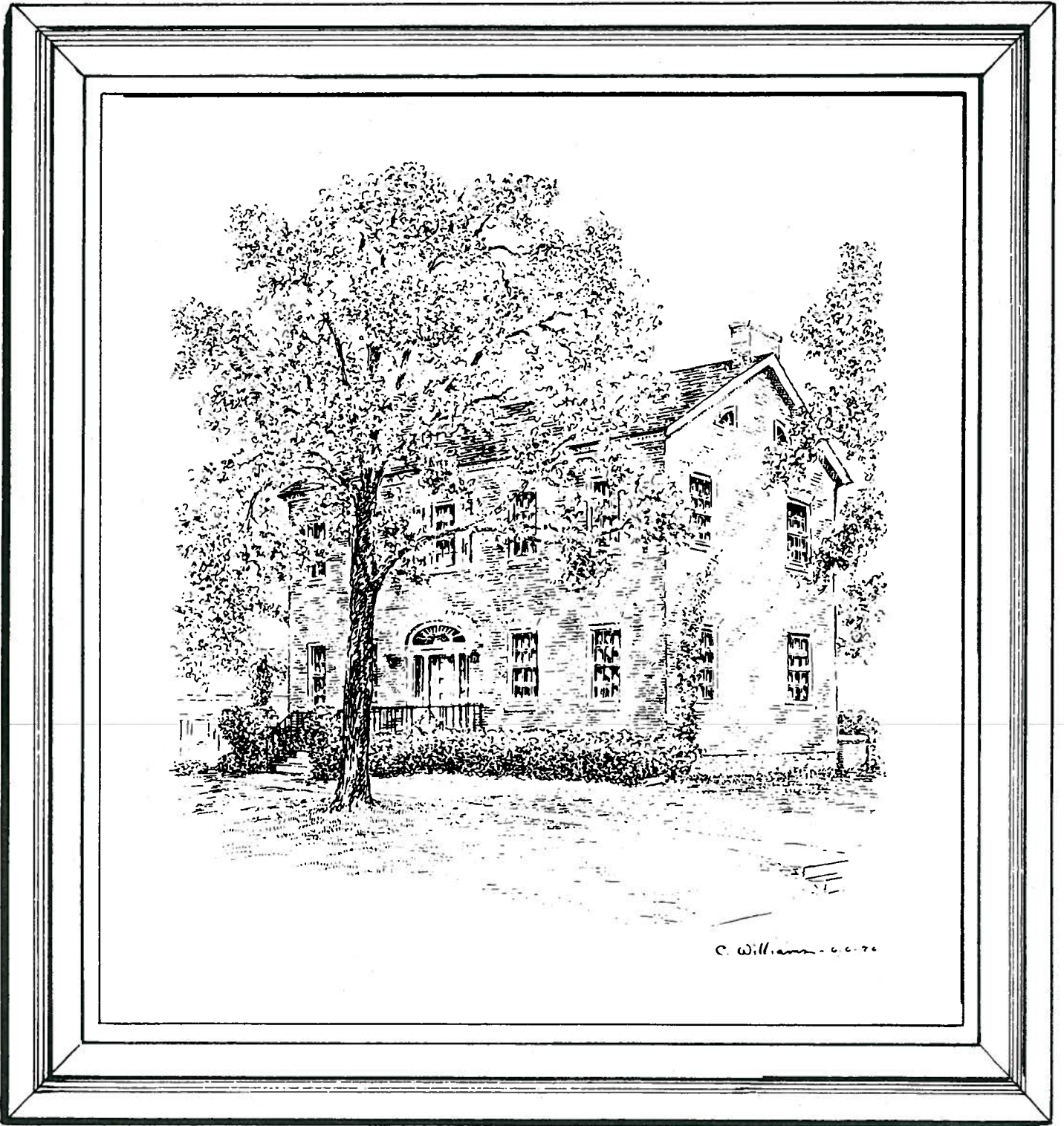


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# VILLAGE OF GREENHILLS

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## PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE

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## GREENHILLS HISTORY

Creating a Community: Greenhills, the Federal Government  
and the Cincinnati Metropolitan Region, 1935-1954

Robert B. Fairbanks

October 12, 1980

Greenhills, Ohio, one of the few federally built towns ever developed in this nation, was created during the thirties by the Roosevelt administration in the midst of the Great Depression. Although the federal government undertook the new town building project, in part, to provide jobs and promote economic recovery, the Greenhills endeavor stands for much more than an effort at temporary relief. It represented a well-conceived plan to better the metropolitan area's low-cost housing conditions by creating small scale townlike settings where former ~~sub~~<sup>Franklin</sup> dwellers could experience the positive effects of a good physical environment and proper social organization. To achieve this goal as well as to promote greater harmony between the region's urban and rural parts, the federal government purchased 5,930 acres of land outside of Cincinnati to develop their project.\*

The interest in building new suburban towns for the needy grew steadily in the twenties as illustrated by the construction of Radburn, New Jersey, by the City Housing Corporation; and Cincinnati's own Mariemont, built by Mary Emery. Many of the planning designs which influenced these new towns

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\*I have borrowed heavily from Bradley Leach's "Greenhills, Ohio: The Evolution of an American New Town," (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve), Joseph L. Arnold's The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-1954 (Columbus, Ohio, 1971), and my own "Cincinnati and Greenhills: The Response to a Federal Community, 1935-1939," Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin 36 (Winter 1978):223-41. For other sources consulted see the Bibliographic Essay following this essay.



The original Greenhills tract encompassed much more land than today's incorporated city. The above map illustrates the entire area (5,930 acres) purchased for Greenhills' development in 1935. (Courtesy, Univ. of Ky. Photo Archives)



An early (and inaccurate) artist's conception of the town layout surrounded by a greenbelt. (Courtesy, Univ. of Ky. Photo Archives)

including the Greenhills development, came from Englishman Ebenezer Howard's book on garden cities entitled The Peaceful Path to Real Reform, issued in 1898. That book, republished in 1902 as Garden Cities of Tomorrow, laid out a plan of how to decentralize the population of London by creating a number of garden cities whose openness and low population density would be protected by a greenbelt which would shelter the town from undesirable encroachment and foster community identity. While borrowing freely from the garden city concept, federal officials, however, adopted their towns to remedy what they believed to be the problems challenging metropolitan America during the thirties. As a result, Greenhills would help combat the haphazard development of the metropolitan region and would counter the social and cultural deficiencies of the area's low income families by establishing a self-sustaining community.

Built by the Suburban Division of the Resettlement Administration which was established by executive order on April 30, 1935, Greenhills and its sister cities, Greenbelt, Maryland and Greendale, Wisconsin, were constructed by funds supplied from the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. Rexford Tugwell, the controversial head of the Resettlement Administration (R.A.), initiated the project and appointed his friend, John S. Lansill, as chief administrator of the Suburban Division, the agency charged with carrying out the greenbelt communities. Both Tugwell and Lansill hoped to build scores of these projects throughout the nation, but a limited budget and an unfavorable judicial decision resulted in only three greenbelt towns ever being developed.

Only after the Research Section of the Suburban Division studied 100 of the nation's largest metropolitan districts was Greater Cincinnati

chosen for a greenbelt town project. Federal planners particularly liked the Cincinnati metropolitan region because of the river city's diversified industry, its fine reputation as a well-governed city and its enlightened attitude toward better housing and planning. Also, the city was experiencing a housing shortage which, according to federal officials, would get worse very soon. Citing these factors, the Resettlement Administration started preparations for building in July and officially decided on the Cincinnati region, August 6, 1935. With this decision, federal officials immediately began planning the details of the project since President Franklin Roosevelt stipulated that actual work had to commence by December 16 or the appropriated money might be withdrawn.

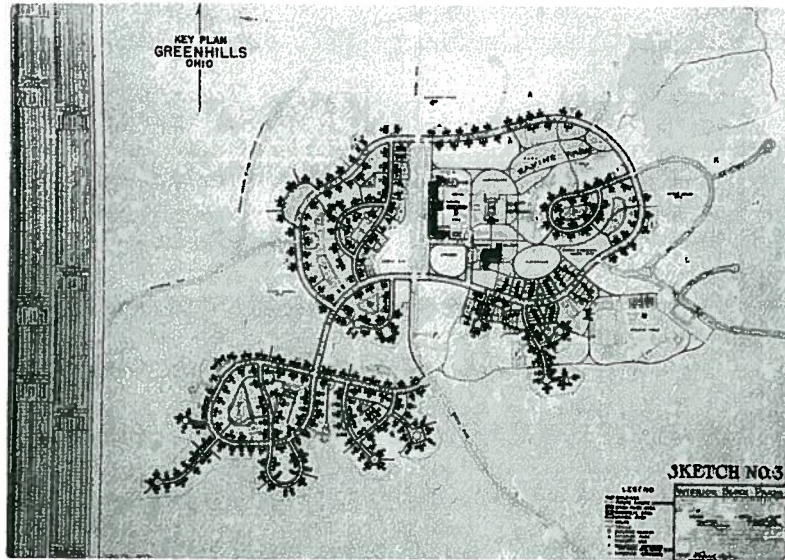
Resettlement Administration officials' first task was to choose a site for their project. After carefully looking at three potential sites, one west of Cincinnati near Delhi; one northeast of the city in Sycamore Township; and one north of the city near Mt. Healthy in Springfield and Colerain Townships, they decided on the latter because of its excellent location near the industrial Mill Creek Valley and because they thought the undeveloped farm land would be easiest to obtain. Hoping to option at least 10,000 acres, federal officials hired a local real estate firm to secure those options so that the identity of the prospective buyer could be kept secret. That precaution seemed necessary to prevent unfair price inflation by those wishing to take advantage of the federal government's huge financial resources. Beginning on September 19, agents of the Frederick Schmidt Real Estate Company worked furiously to secure the right to buy the needed land. Sometimes pleading and sometimes threatening,

within one month agents secured 9,800 acres of land for the Resettlement Administration.

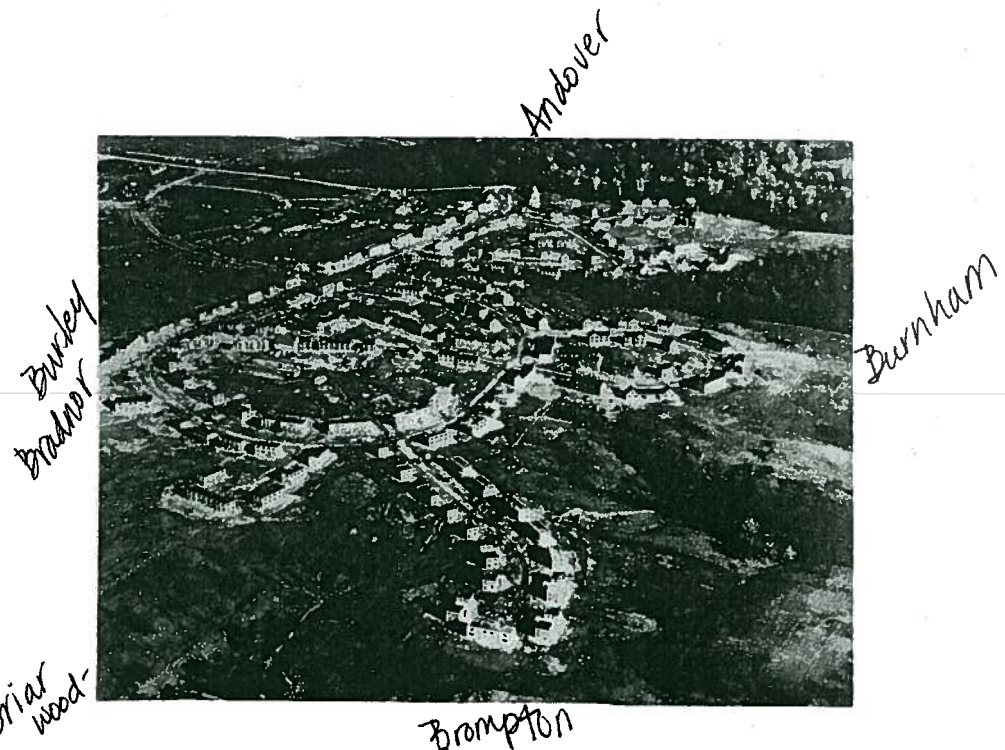
During the same time that the government accumulated land for its project, Resettlement Administration officials also assembled planners and architects to lay out the proposed development. Justin B. Hartzog, who had earlier worked on the Mariemont town plan, joined the Greenhills staff as Chief Town Planner on October 11, 1935. Frederick Bigger, in charge of planning for the entire greenbelt program, hired Roland Wank, who had been the Chief Architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority's new town of Norris, Tennessee, another regional planning effort undertaken by the federal government during the thirties. And earlier, John S. Lansill had appointed Albert L. Miller as the Regional Coordinator for Greenhills, in charge of overseeing the entire project.

These men attempted to design and promote a town setting within the larger region that would replicate the type of cultural and social environment that they believed had so strongly fostered the virtues attributable to the American way-of-life. They were interested in providing plenty of green spaces, low density housing and nearby farm land, but not simply to provide a healthy physical environment. Rather these physical embellishments along with the creation of focal points such as a commercial and educational center where town dwellers could meet, talk and participate in community affairs, would help create a social and cultural milieu that would produce better citizens.

Toward this end, the Greenhills' developers proposed to house between 1,000 and 1,500 families in single and multi-unit dwellings situated on large circular super-blocks. Many of the houses on the



Actual plan of the original town of Greenhills.  
 (Courtesy, Univ. of Ky. Photo Archives)



Construction of areas F and G, the southwest section of the town and the first area developed. (Courtesy, Univ. of Ky. Photo Archives)

periphery of the block were built to face inward away from the street traffic toward open green spaces, gardens and play spaces found within the block's interior. These super blocks would foster a special sense of neighborliness and would circle the Town Common, a large, grassy open space in the heart of the town. The business center, planned and located just north of the Common, would contain both food and general stores along with a bank, post office and other service facilities.

The town's proposed two story fireproof school building and community center would provide another focal point for the community. Not only would that building, located just east of the Commons, house the town's educational facilities, but its auditorium and gymnasium would provide the town's social and cultural center. Here, in the thousand seat auditorium, movies could be shown and plays produced. And in the gymnasium, play space and recreational opportunities were provided for both the community's adult and child population. Space for other evening functions such as adult education programs would also be available.

To preserve their well planned community, Resettlement Administration officials decided to maintain their ownership over the community's land and refuse to sell dwellings to the town's residents. Furthermore, they decided to follow Ebenezer Howard's example and surround their town with a greenbelt of undeveloped land and woods, both to assist in preserving the community from future unregulated developments and to help define better a specific geographical area with which local citizens could identify.

Contrary to what the greenbelt might suggest, federal planners planned their model town not as an isolated entity but provided for its full

integration into the Cincinnati region--physically, socially and economically. As a result, they worked closely with the County Commissioners and the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission to make sure their plans meshed with those of local officials.

Not only did Greenhills' planners sometimes alter their plans to placate local officials, but they also took into account regional tastes and preferences when designing their project. A survey of the customs and living habits of the region's potential Greenhills' residents was undertaken in January, 1936 by Milton Lowenthal of the Research Section of the R.A., to ascertain the extent to which customs might affect the planning, the design, the construction and equipment of the dwelling units to be built. From this study, federal officials discovered Greater Cincinnati's preferences for sloped roofs, basements and automobile garages. Although later financial cutbacks in the Greenhills project would limit the contributions of these studies, nevertheless they signify the intentions of Resettlement Administration officials to make their town an acceptable component of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Region.

Despite federal efforts to integrate Greenhills into the Cincinnati Metropolitan Region, many area residents initially opposed the government's model town project for low-income families. Even though most of the area's governmental officials cooperated from the beginning, certain private citizens such as residents living nearby the project's site as well as many of those associated with the real estate business vehemently fought the Resettlement Administration's project. Local opposition was particularly intense between October, 1935 and January, 1936 because the government released few details about the project often allowing rumors,

## Contrasts in Housing



This photo illustrates the congested slum housing in Cincinnati that Greenhills was built to alleviate. (Courtesy, Special Collections Department of the Univ. of Cincinnati Libraries)



Housing in Greenhills. Note the open spaces and the two different types of dwelling units. (Courtesy, The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin, vol. 36, Winter, 1978)

falsehoods and misconceptions about Greenhills to go unchallenged. Some residents of nearby Mt. Healthy and College Hill feared that their homes and communities would be threatened by the lower class clientele destined for the federal town and wired their protests to Washington. A Mt. Healthy merchant expressed the low opinion that many suburbanites held for the proposed new town and its future residents when he contended that the federal government would "bring people from the congested West End of Cincinnati to live here and when these people use the woodwork and banisters in the new homes for firewood, they will go back to Cincinnati."

Even stronger and more persistent opposition came from the area's realtors and savings and loan officials who feared that federal government involvement in the building of low income housing threatened their financial well-being and established dangerous precedents of federal intrusion into a private business, real estate and house building. Soon after the Resettlement Administration announced the project, the Cincinnati Real Estate Board wrote Rexford Tugwell and protested that the proposed greenbelt town had caused "a great disturbance in Cincinnati." And W. Ray Skirvin, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Greater Cincinnati Savings and Loan Exchange, not only feared the economic consequences of the federal town on the private building sector, but feared the political implications of the project. According to Skirvin, it appeared that Greenhills was "an attempt to create a socialistic community."

When their protests to Washington failed to halt the model town project, local opponents attempted to convince the area's governmental officials to oppose the project on the assumption that strong resistance from city and county officials would probably impede, if not halt, the

federal project. As a result of this strategy, many of the most vocal opponents to the creation of Greenhills appeared at the County Commissioners' Meeting on November 20, 1935. The Cincinnati Times-Star reported that over 100 people attended the meeting where "many comments of a caustic nature were hurled by some of the speakers as they spoke of the 'experimentation' by the Government officials." At that meeting, the Taxpayers Association of Hamilton County, another opponent of the proposed town, cautioned that such a project constituted "a menace to Hamilton County's self government and the rights of its citizens." Representatives of the Board of Real Estate also claimed that the undertaking would wreck the building industry and result in renters losing their tenants.

Not all residents of the metropolitan district, however, opposed the new town project. Groups such as the Cincinnati Association, a leading civic reform organization, endorsed the project because it would provide both jobs and housing, something desperately needed in the metropolitan region. Other civic groups, including the Better Housing League, the city's most important housing reform body; the Woman's City Club, an influential and often philanthropic ladies organization; and the Federation of Churches, another organization sympathetic to the plight of the poor, supported the project. The city's labor organizations, particularly the building trade unions, enthusiastically endorsed the new town project too. For instance, the Cincinnati Building Trades Council backed the project because it would necessitate the employment of thousands of men at union wages as well as provide needed housing for the area's wage earner.

Despite the local controversy developing over the rumored Greenhills project, Resettlement Administration officials did little to refute unfounded charges and rumors about the project until late November, nor did they arm local supporters with valuable and persuasive information to help their arguments. Only after the project was officially announced on November 25 did the R.A. launch a major publicity campaign. On that date, Albert L. Miller, the Regional Coordinator for the Cincinnati area, spoke at the Real Estate Board and disclosed that the project would probably employ 7,000 men, provide homes for 1,500 wage earners and pay taxes. And after the final site for Greenhills had been approved by Tugwell on December 3, 1935, local Resettlement Administration officials provided even more details of their project, particularly emphasizing that it would be a "normal American town."

Rexford Tugwell's appearance in Cincinnati on February 3, 1936 was easily the apex of the publicity blitz. Speaking to over 600 area residents at the annual dinner meeting of the Regional Planning Commission, Tugwell asked his audience "to give us active cooperation." He also observed that the project was well underway and would not be halted or modified because of local opposition. And finally, Tugwell chided local opponents and asked

Where are those impulses--being good sports, helping the underdog, all that--are you willing to sacrifice them all to save the interests of an interested few? I don't believe it. I believe the great body of your citizens, unvoiced as they may be, will still sense the rights and wrongs here.

Tugwell then discussed the philosophy of the Greenhills project and laid out its details, as well as its potential contributions to the metropolitan region. He emphasized how the physical plans for the project

were based on the villages of New England, New York and central Ohio. Furthermore, Tugwell argued, Greenhills was more than a mere housing development, for its schools, stores, churches and use of space made it a "design for an American community." Tenants for the town, who would be chosen by a local advisory board, according to Tugwell, would live in the best of two worlds here, working in the city but living in a beautiful small community protected by a greenbelt.

At the same meeting, John S. Lansill warned that the experimental town would be expensive because of its innovative nature and because relief help would build it. But the costs would be worth it, according to the Regional Coordinator, since it would demonstrate the proper way in which to develop suburban areas. Now the city would have a viable alternative to the "jeribuilt shacks, misplaced factories and filling stations" appearing on its periphery. The message from Lansill and Tugwell was clear, Greenhills would better the metropolitan region in a variety of ways.

Although criticism of the project persisted after the Regional Planning Commission's meeting and the Tugwell visit, its intensity and visibility seemed somewhat to lessen. Unlike at Bound Brook, New Jersey where the R.A. had its proposed greenbelt town halted by court action, Greenhills' developers were only harassed with harsh criticism and not court action. In fact, much more restrictive and threatening to the final development of Greenhills were the federal government's own financial limitations and time restraints.

When planners first conceptualized the greenbelt projects they hoped to develop five "town" sites in each project so that approximately 25,000

persons could be housed per greenbelt community. Limited appropriations quickly thwarted this dream as decisions were made to build one town site in each greenbelt for between 1,000 and 1,500 families. Eventually, Greenhills' developers had to settle for a 676 unit community because of cost overruns and miscalculations of expenditures. Not only did the financial squeeze result in Greenhills' developers constricting the town's size but also skimping on building materials so that fewer garages and more ugly flat-roofed dwellings were constructed than had originally been planned.

Probably most disconcerting to the planners who wished to truly establish model greenbelt communities was the dual purposes of the new town projects--building model communities and supplying relief. Sometimes the former concern had to give way to the latter one of providing jobs. From the beginning, time constraints had been placed on the Resettlement Administration to undertake the projects as soon as possible. According to John S. Lansill, it normally took more than a year's advance work "to plan a town complete, from raw land to finished plans and specifications." But for Greenhills this process, he noted, was stepped up quickly and undertaken almost simultaneously with the project's construction since to delay the program in any way meant jeopardizing its funding from the Relief Appropriations Act.

In order to help the unemployed, the project's developers were forced to use relief labor whenever possible despite the fact that it added considerable expense to the project. Also, labor intensive procedures were adapted to provide the optimal number of jobs. And when cost overruns at Greenbelt, Maryland resulted in a reduction of Greenhills' appropriation from \$10,155,400 to \$8,750,000 on February 6, 1936, local developers opted

to use less expensive materials and rely more on the "S" type of dwelling which included the economies of no basements and asbestos siding for the exterior veneer. Even with these cutbacks, Resettlement Administration officials realized they could not build 1,000 dwellings and decided on constructing 676 dwelling units for their new town.

Although federal officials had originally hoped to complete their new towns within a year, a variety of factors slowed up the building process so that the first occupation of the units did not occur until April 1, 1938. Bad weather, intergovernmental disputes and the very newness of federal town building slowed up the execution of the new town plan. For example, the winter of 1935-36 was very cold with great amounts of snow, thus delaying the initial construction of the project. Not until May, 1936, did construction begin in full, giving jobs to more than 1,200 workers.

Disputes with local planning agencies and governmental officials created annoyances which occasionally interfered with the project's progress. When the Resettlement Administration officials submitted their subdivision plans to the Hamilton County Commissioners for approval, they often requested minor but time consuming changes in the plan. More important was a dispute between the R.A. and the local Regional Planning Commission over the fate of the Springfield Road extension. According to the County's Main Thoroughfare Plan, Springdale Road was to be extended through the site of the proposed new town. But the Resettlement Administration, wishing to avoid the potential disruption of an east-west main thoroughfare, attempted to have the proposed road rerouted. Only after some heated negotiations did the Planning Commission allow the change on May 28, 1935.

Greenhills' developers also faced problems in attempting to secure a water supply for their town. Unable to obtain what they considered a fair price from the city, the R.A. decided to dig wells for its community. This however brought an immediate protest from five communities in the Mill Creek Valley which feared that their own water supply would be threatened by new wells. Noting that the water level for the Mill Creek area had dropped nineteen feet in the last six years, representatives from Reading, Arlington Heights, Lockland, Wyoming and Glendale urged the County Commissioners to disallow any new wells. This controversy forced the R.A. to reopen negotiations with the city for its water supply. An agreement was finally reached between Greenhills and Cincinnati, December, 1936.

Nevertheless it was not these problems but a federal court ruling which most clearly threatened the completion of Greenhills. When the Washington District Court of Appeals in May, 1936 upheld a lower court's injunction against the Greenbrook Greenbelt Town Project in New Jersey, R.A. officials feared that similar court action might be successful against the other greenbelt town projects. Such a fear may have helped convince Roosevelt not to appropriate any additional funds for the projects, a decision which in fact limited the size and the impact of the experimental new town project. And when Rexford Tugwell, who had first conceptualized the program, resigned from the Resettlement Administration on December 31, 1936, the new town program lost its strongest advocate thus further weakening the greenbelt's chances of any further commitments from the federal government.

Despite what appeared to be the gradual curtailment of the greenbelt town program by the federal authorities, planners and builders continued to

ready Greenhills and its two sister projects for their future opening. Fully aware that physical design alone would not create the type of community that Resettlement Administration officials wished to encourage, federal officials adopted certain guidelines and procedures to insure they would fill their new town with the right kind of tenant.

Besides having to reside in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area and maintain a current income of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 (for larger families \$2,500), prospective tenants were required to submit to a security and credit check. A social worker also visited their current dwelling place to observe their living conditions as well as to quiz them on their attitudes toward financial obligations and the care of property. Martha Francis Allen, the federal official in charge of the selection process, explained that such a process was necessary since the town's creators only wanted families "with a capacity for community citizenship." Furthermore, the government set certain quotas to encourage a mix of religious preferences, job occupations and ages.

Apparently securing the "right" type of people for Greenhills proved more difficult than had been anticipated by both local and Washington R.A. officials. Although thousands from around the area had visited Greenhills during its construction suggesting that public interest (or at least curiosity) was high, the actual number of official applicants for residency in the new town fell below expectation. Under the headlines "Greenhills Apartments Going Begging," the Enquirer reported that as of February 18, 1938 "only" 1,269 families had applied for the 676 dwelling units at Greenhills. This number was 1,000 less than had applied at Greendale, Greenhills' twin project near Milwaukee. Miss Martha Francis Allen, federal supervisor

at Greenhills, attributed the fewer applications to Cincinnati's conservative nature. Many potential applicants decided against the project, according to Allen, when they discovered that the stoves were electric instead of gas. She also observed that Cincinnati did not have much of a floating population to settle.

In a letter to Alfred Bettman several months later, Carleton F. Sharpe, the newly appointed community manager, also complained that the applications were not coming in as rapidly as had been expected. He blamed this on the "ridiculous rumors" pervading the city about the project. Later, he devoted an entire lecture to this topic of rumors in a talk given at the Social Workers Club entitled "Myths of Greenhills." Most of the rumors about Greenhills, Sharpe noted, emphasized the supposed regimentation within the new town. Some, he claimed, were so absurd as to suggest that the project was really a disguised army cantonment or that those living in Greenhills would be the first drafted in a national emergency.

Nevertheless, neither low number of applications nor rumors of regimentation and coercion kept the first tenants from moving into the town on April 1, 1938. That initial occupancy was treated as a major news event by the metropolitan newspapers. The Cincinnati Post, giving extensive coverage to the move, heralded the "pioneer" families at Greenhills. By February of 1939, the town was completed with about a 90% occupancy level. All one and two bedroom apartments were filled and had extensive waiting lists. Greenhills, the federal town, was now a full-fledged member of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Community.

The successful opening of Greenhills, however, did not dim all the criticism. Both the town's physical appearance, as well as its social make-up came under criticism by certain critics. For instance, the Cincinnati Times-Star expressed particular disgust with the new town's appearance. That newspaper observed that

Instead of the comely rustic village we had thought of, we saw the once beautiful countryside desecrated, and on its tortured surface a confused jumble of box-like shades, looking like an ill-designed army barracks. It was disillusioning.

The Enquirer also disliked some of the buildings, particularly the flat-roofed asphalt apartments which, it noted, "would look well in an army camp."

A more telling criticism of the new town came from Cincinnati City Councilman Charles P. Taft, a former advocate of the program. He suggested that the biggest problem of the greenbelt town was its failure to take care of the people it had originally been planned for. Taft pointed out that the minimum income restrictions were too high, credit ratings too strict, and the screening process so stringent that the really needy were shut out of Greenhills.

The Cincinnati Enquirer expressed the same concern, wondering why some of the new town's residents came from Hyde Park and Westwood rather than "the West End or the flood ridden areas of the eastern part of the city." According to the paper, the average annual income of Greenhills' residents was \$1,689, and this, it argued, was enough to buy a house with. Rather than opting for the home buying alternative, the Enquirer noted, Greenhills' residents who are potential home owners "are not buying homes because they are getting more for their money from the big hearted

federal government." The same paper also observed the high number of craftsmen, salesmen, and professionals living in the project.

Other evidence also suggests that there was, in fact, from the beginning a substantial number of professionals, primarily teachers, as well as clerical and sales personnel living in Greenhills. The 1940 U.S. Census reported that the town's population included 12.9 percent professionals and 26.8 percent persons engaged in sales and clerical occupations. This, of course, was allowable by Resettlement Administration standards since these people, temporarily "down-on-their-luck" because of the Depression, fit the income requirements. And one of the goals of the R.A. had been to create a balanced community within the income limitations set so that Greenhills could truly be a diverse community of peoples with different backgrounds and experiences. Mixing professionals with unskilled laborers and skilled craftsmen, then, seemed appropriate and necessary for the type of community environment the federal officials sought.

Nevertheless, both Charles P. Taft and the Cincinnati Enquirer made their type of criticism because of the way Greenhills had been originally sold to the public. When Tugwell spoke in the city that February of 1936, he had promised a project which would help clear the city's congested slums and provide an environment which would help develop society's lowest members into better citizens. Therefore, when the town was at least partially filled by middle class citizens temporarily experiencing the hardships of the Depression, critics viewed the expenses incurred by this model community as excessive and unnecessary since these people primarily needed better paying jobs and not better living conditions to set their lives in order.

Although the town may have failed to admit the neediest to its environs, and it may have contained some ugly dwelling units within its boundaries, still, it did seem to foster the type of community spirit that Resettlement Administration officials had hoped it would. Charleton F. Sharpe, the Community Manager for Greenhills was particularly anxious to promote a sense of community and purpose within the town. Towards this end, he helped organize more than twenty committees and associations within the first two years of the town's existence to provide a sense of belonging for persons moving to Greenhills from the impersonal big city and the isolated farm areas. In response to these new opportunities, more than 60 percent of the tenants living in the entire Greenhills tract (both town and farm tenants) joined at least one organization. Sharpe believed these new opportunities were important and expressed the feeling at the town's two year anniversary celebration in 1940. There, he pointed out how citizens' who were just "one in a thousand" in Cincinnati were now able to participate in dozens of activities in Greenhills and feel somewhat special.

For in Greenhills, citizens not only managed their own retail center by running a cooperative Consumer Services Corporation, but they also maintained their own savings institution, the Greenhills Credit Union, and advised the Community Manager by electing a nine-man community council. The town also included the more traditional types of clubs and organizations such as a volunteer fire department, scouting organizations, political clubs, and a garden club which offered to teach residents how to grow their own food and flowers. The town also had its own newspaper, the Greenhills News Bulletin.

The incorporation of Greenhills as a town on August 30, 1939 was also, in part, an act to foster better community identity by establishing a distinct political entity within the larger regional setting. Also, by incorporating Greenhills, federal officials were preventing the possibility that a nearby town would annex the greenbelt town. Soon after the incorporation proceedings, which included only the 850 acre town site rather than all the greenbelt land, residents elected a Village Council to govern the community. It promptly hired Charleton Sharpe as Town Manager who would help the council better serve its constituency. Sharpe also maintained his position as Community Manager for the federal government which wished to protect its investment in the town. For despite the incorporation of Greenhills, federal officials were unable to make arrangements to transfer the property to private interests so it maintained its ownership over the project until the early fifties.

Federal government ownership, however, did not mean the continued emphasis on "low income" housing in the town. For during the forties, several changes in rental policy gave the town an even broader income range than before. Resettlement Administration officials had originally planned to evict tenants whose income exceeded the \$2,000 maximum limit (\$2,500 maximum for large families of 6 to 8) so that more needy people could experience the advantages of a real community environment. The policy was modified in January, 1940 when rent schedules were revised to allow persons making more than the maximum limits to stay. About the same time, the Farm Security Administration which had replaced the R.A. in 1937 announced that it would permit private companies to build and sell housing in the greenbelt towns, in part, to accommodate the growing number of

better-off residents living in the new towns. However, when this plan was not adopted, federal officials dropped all income restrictions and initiated a sliding rent scale based on income so citizens could pay the rent their income levels would allow them to spend.

After World War II, there became an increasing pressure on the federal government to dispose of its greenbelt projects. To prepare for this future event, the federal government hired Justin Hartzog, the original town planner to draft a new plan and zoning ordinance for Greenhills in 1946 with the hope that the future private developers of the model town would complete the task the federal government had started. But when federal officials finally sold their greenbelt town (not the excess farmland) for \$3,511,300 in January, 1950 to the Greenhills Home Owners Corporation, a non-profit co-operative group made up of local veterans and tenants, the Hartzog 1947 plan for future development was ignored. The Home Owners Corporation, eager to encourage the town's growth and to receive a return on its investment contacted the Kenneth Hammond Corporation to construct more dwelling units for the town. And that corporation, eager to build for the mobile and affluent suburbanites of the fifties, opted to follow the accepted subdivision practices of the day rather than the Hartzog plan.

So it was with the other new town development made from the original greenbelt farmland located north of Greenhills. Since the federal government had only sold the incorporated town site in 1950, it still sought a buyer for the other 3,488 acres remaining in its possession (some other land had been given to the Hamilton County Park Board). About the same time, the Cincinnati Community Development Company, an organization con-

cerned with rehousing Cincinnatians displaced by the city's urban redevelopment program was in the market for a building site. Deciding that the nearly 6,000 acres provided an excellent site for a low cost housing project for those displaced persons, the CCDC purchased the land from the government in 1952 for \$1,200,000, the same price the Resettlement Administration had paid for it in 1936. When the original developers backed out, the CCDC, fearful of getting stuck with the land, turned to the Warner-Kanter Corporation, builders of Park Forest, Illinois, and contracted with it to build housing for the site. This ultimately led to the development of the new town Forest Park, a community of expensive homes which in no way bore any resemblance to the original Greenhills. Ignoring the regional approach advocated by the CCDC which called for a low cost housing project for the city's basin dwellers, Warner-Kanter built a project more concerned with accommodating individual rather than societal needs. Although Forest Park was also developed to be a community of homes, it was not designed to have the same kind of social and cultural impact that Greenhills had been developed for in the thirties.

In many ways, then, only the greenbelt surrounding the original Greenhills remains unchanged and suggests some continuity with the past. But even this was almost lost during the fifties when the Greenhills' City Council, eager to promote local growth, amended the town's zoning ordinance to allow private developers to build housing on the city's inner greenbelt. This practice ceased in 1959 when Theodore Linder became mayor, and promptly forbade further destruction of the greenbelt. After a lengthy court case over the constitutionality of the zoning ordinance forbidding the destruction of the Greenbelt, the U.S. Supreme

Court, by refusing to hear the case in October, 1966 supported the State Supreme Court which upheld the constitutionality of the zoning law. Although the greenbelt surrounds a different type of community today than it did 40 years earlier, it nevertheless should remind current Greenhills residents of the town's important place in the history of town and regional planning in America.



The Greenhills' tract as it was in the 60's. A denotes the original town area; B identifies the additional housing added in the 50's; and C denoted Forest Park. (Courtesy, Journal of Housing, vol. 24, February/March, 1967)

## Bibliographic Essay

By far, the most extensive study of Greenhills is Charles Bradley Leach's dissertation "Greenhills, Ohio: The Evolution of an American New Town," (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1978), which provides a storehouse of information on the development and implementation of this federal new town from its inception in 1935 to its disposal by federal officials during the early fifties. Leach closely examines the planning process which resulted in Greenhills and explores the tensions between local and federal officials over the project. He also has an excellent chapter on the management of the federal community. Although his interpretation of the town's history differs from mine at times, I have nevertheless relied heavily on his work in writing the preceding essay. The only published scholarly work solely on Greenhills is my "Cincinnati and Greenhills: The Response to a Federal Community, 1935-1939," Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin 36 (Winter 1978):223-41, which examines the nature of the reception that the local metropolitan community afforded the new town.

For an interesting essay on the greenbelt town projects since the 1930's, see Albert Mayer, "Greenbelt Towns Revisited: In Search of New Directions for New Towns for America," Journal of Housing, 24 (January, February-March, April, 1967), 12-26; 80-85; 151-60. This three-part essay examines what has happened to the greenbelt towns 30 years after their development and explores how closely the towns have adhered to the principles they were planned by. For an enlightening

discussion of the other town developed on the original Greenhills tract see Zane L. Miller's forthcoming book, Suburb: Neighborhood and Community in Forest Park, Ohio, 1935-1976 (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1981). Miller's early chapters discuss how Forest Park was built from the excess Greenhills' land and how this development was in response to an entirely new "structural reality" in American society.

If the reader wishes an even more in-depth account of the history of Greenhills, he should consult two important archival collections which contain boxes of information on the planning and implementation of Greenhills. The John S. Lansill Collection at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, contains massive amounts of information on all three projects including individual notebook accounts of each, as well as a variety of final reports and correspondence. Since Lansill headed the Suburban Division of the R.A. which oversaw the greenbelt projects, there are many accounts of the administrative side of implementing the project in these files. The Justin Hartzog collection in the Olin Library at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, is the other main collection of Greenhills documents. Hartzog was the town's planner and therefore many planning related documents are found here. Unlike the Lansill Papers, this collection is almost entirely devoted to Greenhills. Locally, both the Cincinnati Downtown Public Library and the Greenhills Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County have newspaper clippings of the Greenhills Project. Other information on Greenhills can also be found at the small Greenhills collection at the Cincinnati Historical Society and in the Alfred Bettman Collection at the Special Collections Department of the University of Cincinnati. Also periodicals from the thirties carried

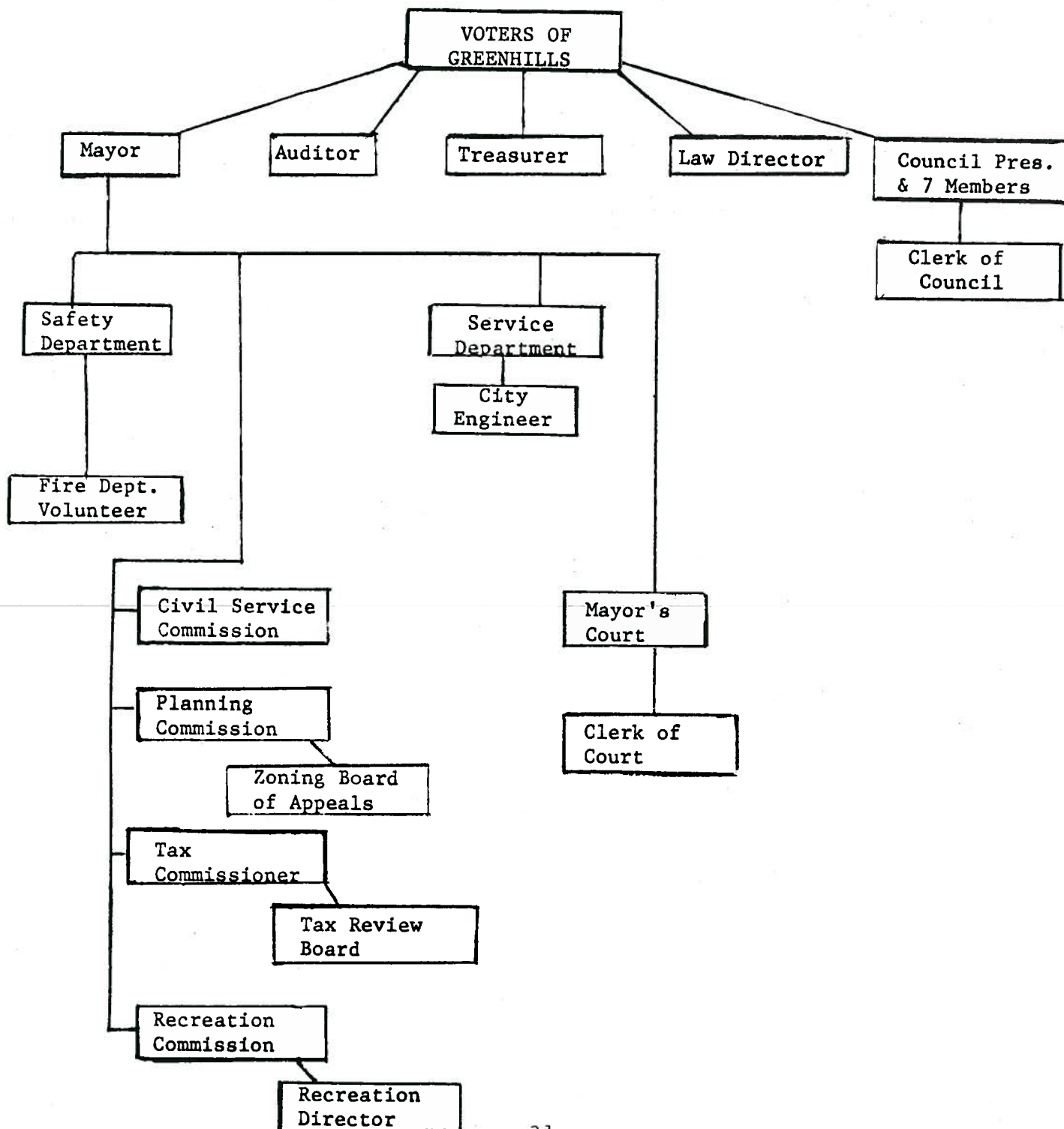
numerous articles on the greenbelt projects. Many of these magazines and journals can be found in the Public Library or at the University of Cincinnati Library. See, for instance, Justin Hartzog, "The Planning of Suburban Resettlement Towns," Planners Journal, 4 (March-April, 1936), 29-33; and Albert Mayer "The Greenbelt Towns: What and Why," American City, 51 (May, 1936), 59-61.

Providing the best overview of the entire greenbelt town project undertaken by the Resettlement Administration is Joseph L. Arnold's The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-1954 (Columbus, Ohio, 1971). The author emphasizes the problems that the federal government had in carrying out its innovative town program and attempts to explain why they occurred. Paul Conkin's Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, New York, 1959), examines the whole spectrum of community making programs undertaken by the Resettlement Administration, thus providing an even broader perspective for understanding the significance of Greenhills. In his chapter on the greenbelt projects, Conkin, just as Arnold had, suggests that the projects failed to achieve the impact their developers had hoped for because they were in conflict with the individualistic traditions of American society. And finally, Carol Corden's Planned Cities: New Towns in Britain and America (Beverly Hills, California, 1977), should be consulted by those wishing to see the connection between Greenhills and the federally promoted new town program of the seventies. Although Corden examines and compares the current new town programs of the United States and Great Britain, she also devotes a chapter to examining the country's greenbelt projects of the thirties.

Those wishing to understand better the influences behind the planning design of Greenhills should consult Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow (London, 1902), generally acknowledged as the book behind the greenbelt town concept. To gain an even clearer idea of what the Greenbelt towns were attempting to accomplish, however, read Harlan Paul Douglass's The Suburban Trend (New York, 1925) which discusses the importance of a metropolitan strategy for curing the city's housing ills. Also see Roy Lubove, Community Planning in the 1920's: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America (Pittsburgh, 1963) for an excellent discussion of the concern with regional planning which dominated the twenties, and Clarence S. Stein, Toward New Towns for America (Liverpool, 1951), which provides a history of the new town movement in the United States through a series of sketches of selected new towns.

GREENHILLS ORGANIZATION

The following is a brief description of how our city is organized. You'll note that the Voters head the entire list because the organization and regulation of community life and activities in Greenhills is the responsibility of the people who live here.



## THE PEOPLE

The residents of Greenhills elect officials to serve in legislative, legal, fiscal, and executive positions. Further, resident electors through initiative and referendum procedures may enact, approve or reject legislation.

## MAYOR

The Mayor is the Chief conservator of peace within the City. He may appoint and remove the director of public service, the director of public safety and the heads of the sub departments of public safety and public service. The Mayor of Greenhills has jurisdiction to hear and determine any prosecution for violation of Greenhills' Ordinances, and has jurisdiction in all criminal cases involving moving violations in Greenhills. The Mayor's Court is not a court of record.

The Mayor serves for a four year term, and performs all duties prescribed by the bylaws and ordinances of the municipality. The Mayor signs all commissions, licenses and permits granted by legislative authority, or authorized by Title VII of ORC., and shall see that all ordinances, bylaws and resolutions of legislative authority are faithfully obeyed and enforced.

### PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

In our city the President of Council is a separately elected official who presides at council meetings but may not vote except in the case of a tie. He must be a elector of the city and shall preside at all regular and special council meetings. Under our statutory plan the President of Council is a part of the executive branch of the city. When the Mayor is absent from the city the president is the acting Mayor and while acting as Mayor shall not serve as President of Council. While acting as Mayor he is vested with all the powers and duties of the Mayor. The President Pro Tem presides in the absence of the President and may vote on all matters coming before council.

### LAW DIRECTOR

The Law Director can be elected or appointed by Council to prepare all contracts, bonds and other instruments in writing. Further, the Law Director shall prosecute all cases, defend the City, vendor opinion and provide legal council to Greenhills.

AUDITOR

The City Auditor is the chief fiscal officer of the City and shall be a resident elector being elected for a four year term. The Auditor shall keep the books of the City and exhibit accurate statements of all monies received and expended, of all properties owned by the City and their income and all taxes and assessments. The Auditor as authorized by Council can appoint a deputy. Fiscal reports must be made each year to the State Auditor to certify the text of the ordinance. A referendum petition signed by 10% of electors shall be filed with the auditor within 30 days of the passage of the ordinance. Further, the Auditor may by resolution of Council serve as census taker (according to ORC 703.08 - 703.09).

TREASURER

The Treasurer shall be a resident elector and is elected for a four year term. He shall keep an accurate account of:

- 1) all monies received by him.
- 2) all disbursements made by him.

The Treasurer shall arrange the treasurer's books that amounts paid and received are in separate funds and shall have such powers and perform such duties as are received by City ordinances not in consistent with ORC 733.43.

## CITY COUNCIL

The City Council is composed of seven members, four elected by Wards and three At Large. Council members serve two year terms and shall have been a City resident one year prior to their election. This elected body of representatives chief function is law making. They shall perform no administrative duties, nor appoint any officials or employees of the City, except as specifically provided. Legislative powers of Council are derived directly from the Ohio Constitution in which cities are authorized to adopt ordinances for the exercise of police powers, provided that such ordinances are not in conflict with general laws. In order to uphold an ordinance against unconstitutional delegation of legislative authority, the ordinance must provide sufficient standards and criteria to guide the administrative officer in performing his duties.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio Revised Code Section 737.01 causes a city to have a department of public safety, which shall be administered by a director of public safety. The director shall be an elector of the city and shall be appointed by the mayor.

The department of public safety for the city of Greenhills consists of a "Police Department" and contractual responsibility for fire protection. The director enters into contract with the Greenhills Volunteer Fire Department, which carries out all responsibilities of fire and life squad services.

The police department of Greenhills consists of a Police Chief, two sergeants and such other patrolmen and employees as the legislative authority thereof provides by ordinance. Section 737.11 of the O.R.C. describes the general duties of the police department as follows:

1. Preservation of Peace
2. Protect persons and property
3. Obey and enforce all ordinances of the legislative authority thereof, and all criminal laws of the state and the United States.

It is the intent of the Safety Department to make the City of Greenhills the safest community in Hamilton County. The law enforcement motto is "To Protect & Serve". The department is on call twenty-four hours a day to meet the needs of all citizens.

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Per the State of Ohio Revised Code section 735.01, in each city there shall be a department of public service which shall be administered by a director of public service. The director shall be appointed by the mayor and shall make rules and regulations for the administration of the affairs under his supervision.

In the City of Greenhills this Department is responsible for the following, 1. improvements and repair of city streets, lands, buildings, sidewalks, playgrounds, storm sewers, and other public works, except those having reference to the department of public safety. 2. operation of waste and leaf collection. 3. operation of Greenhills Recreation Center (golf, pool, tennis). 4. inspections for zoning and buildings. 5. coordination for all city/state/federal funded programs. 6. monitoring prevailing wage rates and equal employment opportunities.

## PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission consists of five members including the Mayor and Service Director. The commissioners shall be appointed by the Mayor for six year overlapping terms. Specific powers and duties include the planning of the city and surrounding lands, the location and height of buildings and structures, setback building lines, the division of the city into zones and districts with making of maps or plans for streets, playgrounds or improvements. The Commission also hears requests for changes or modification in zoning. The Planning Commission has a wide range of authority as defined in section ORC 711.01 and 713.

### CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

The Civil Service Commission consists of three members who shall be resident electors of the City. They perform duties as provided by ORC 124.40. The Mayor shall appoint the members who each have six year overlapping terms. No more than two commissioners shall be members of the same political party. The Civil Service Commission shall prescribe, amend and enforce rules for classification of positions in the City and the School District, 2) examination for appointments, promotions, transfers, reductions and reinstatements, and 3) for standarizing positions and maintaining their efficiency. This commission shall make reports as required by the law and administration.

### RECREATION BOARD

The Recreation Board consists of five members, two shall be members of the board of education or their appointees and three shall be appointed by the Mayor with council's consent. The Board has the authority to equip, operate, supervise and maintain public playgrounds, athletic fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, baseball diamonds, football fields, indoor recreation centers and other recreational facilities on or in public grounds which the city may designate for such use. It further has the authority to work with the Board of Education in similiar recreational activities.

## CITY ENGINEER

The City Engineer is employed by the City for the purpose of consulting with the Mayor, Council, Safety Director, Service Director and Planning Commission, and to have the following general duties:

- (a) Investigation, preliminary studies and estimates on proposed public improvements.
- (b) Coordination of specifications, schedules and inspection of maintenance of streets, sidewalks, storm sewers and all other public works.
- (c) Consultation on matters of zoning, violations of zoning, planning, park development, platting and budgeting for public improvements within the City.
- (d) Drafting of City maps, plats, engineering records and details.
- (e) Review of plans for public and private improvements within the City.
- (f) Inspection of construction of public works within the City.

## TAX COMMISSIONER

The Tax Commissioner collects and receives the tax imposed in the manner prescribed in the income tax ordinance, and keeps an accurate record thereof, and reports all moneys so received. It is the duty of the Tax Commissioner to enforce payment of all income taxes owing the Municipality, to keep accurate records for a minimum of five years showing the amount due from each taxpayer required to file a declaration or make any return, including a return of taxes withheld, and to show the dates and amounts of payments thereof. Further the Tax Commissioner assists taxpayers in preparing returns and maintains a card file on all residents, both rentals and property owners. Questionnaires are obtained and kept confidential as to tax status for all residents.

ROSTER OF CITY OFFICIALS

1/81

MAYOR - Robert G. Carlson, 141 Junedale (Lynn)	825-0804	<u>office</u>
PRES. OF COUNCIL - Thomas H. Williams, 41 Jewel (Jackie)	825-9303	863-2665
LAW DIRECTOR - Perrino, Woellner & Mire Assoc. 806 Main St. 45202	825-3142 (Woellner)	421-4855
AUDITOR - Wesley A. Weaver, 11 Briarwood Ln. (Esther)	825-1288	825-2100
TREASURER - Robert W. Merritt, 145 Junedale Dr. (Theresa)	825-7734	977-7460
CLERK OF COUNCIL - Barbara Fischer, 10746 Stargate (John)	851-2964	
<u>MEMBERS OF COUNCIL:</u>		
At Large: Jack Statler, 118 Bayham Dr. (Evelyn)	851-1348	948-7013 Ext. 529
George Fecher, 6 Hamlin Dr. (Joyce)	825-4684	851-1220
Lee Ziolkowski, 1005 Ligorio Ave. (Stanley)	851-1287	729-5791
BY WARD:		
1st Dormas (Jack) Manning, 81 Burley Cir. (Bea)	825-5094	
2nd Oscar A. Hoffman, 8 Chalmers Ct. (Joy)	825-8469	948-9111 ext.2139
3rd Sue Jones. 58 Junefield Ave. (Jack)	825-2885	
4th Richard Yeager, 141 Junefield Ave. (Jean)	825-0773	385-5660
SAFETY DIRECTOR - Jack Collins, 2 Hamlin Dr. (Bonnie)	825-5202	632-8514
SERVICE DIRECTOR - David B. Moore, 2 Imbler Dr.	851-5366	825-2102
CHIEF OF POLICE - Charles R. Albertson, 6 January (Carol)	825-6729	825-2101
RECREATION DIRECTOR - David D'Avignon, 6 Junefield (Carolyn)	851-4746	825-2165
TAX COMMISSIONER - Wilma J. Duplain, 58 Beckford (Dupe)	851-1209	825-2100
CLERK OF COURT - Evelyn Statler, 118 Bayham Dr. (Jack)	851-1348	