

The Greenbelt Reparations Commission



In November 2021, Greenbelt residents passed a referendum to create a 21-person commission

To review, discuss, and make recommendations related to reparations for African American and Native American residents of Greenbelt.



A Message From Mayor Emmett Jordan

The Story of Greenbelt

PRESENTED BY
THE
GREENBELT
REPARATIONS
COMMISSION

TOWN HALL
JUNE 27, 2026

Systemic Racism

"Prejudice is a pre-judgment about a person based on the social group to which that person belongs.

Discrimination is an action based on prejudice.

Racism occurs when a racial group's prejudice is backed by legal authority and institutional control.

This authority and control transform individual prejudices into a far-reaching system that no longer depends on the good intentions of individual actors; it becomes the default of society and is reproduced automatically."

- Robin DiAngelo

What are Reparations?

Reparations is a process of repairing and healing from the harms that have been inflicted on African Americans and American Indians by government laws, policies and practices of sectors that benefited from the injustices such as banks, corporations, insurers, educational institutions, health systems and religious groups.

Our Goals

- ▶ Research local history and harms to Native Americans and African Americans
- ▶ Engage residents
- ▶ Uncover impacts on equity and well-being
- ▶ Educate the community
- ▶ Review, discuss, and make recommendations related to reparations

Questions for you



What do you like about living in Greenbelt?

What would you change?

How would you describe race relations in Greenbelt?

Greenbelt's Founding Vision and Evolution



This was the vision of a
'utopian' community

New Deal community was created
during the Great Depression

Designed to provide a walkable
community with affordable housing,
recreation, schools, and open space

Residency **was highly selective** and
restrictive

Social engineering encouraged civic
engagement

The federal government sold Greenbelt
housing to a cooperative in 1952

Historical Context

**...laid the foundation for
present-day inequities**

The State of Maryland and Prince George's County were built on the legacy of slavery

Housing, education, employment, and transportation were all segregated from the inception of Greenbelt in 1937

African Americans were excluded from residency

Nearby Black residents and workers who built Greenbelt were NOT allowed to live in Greenbelt

Greenbelt developed a reputation as a "Sundown Town"

Reflections



Please share your
thoughts about this
history



That was then,
This is now ...

Segregation and Representation

Greenbelt East and West were separated physically from Greenbelt Center as highways were built

Residents in those areas had less access to community events and less influence on government decisions

Greenbelt Center remained predominantly white

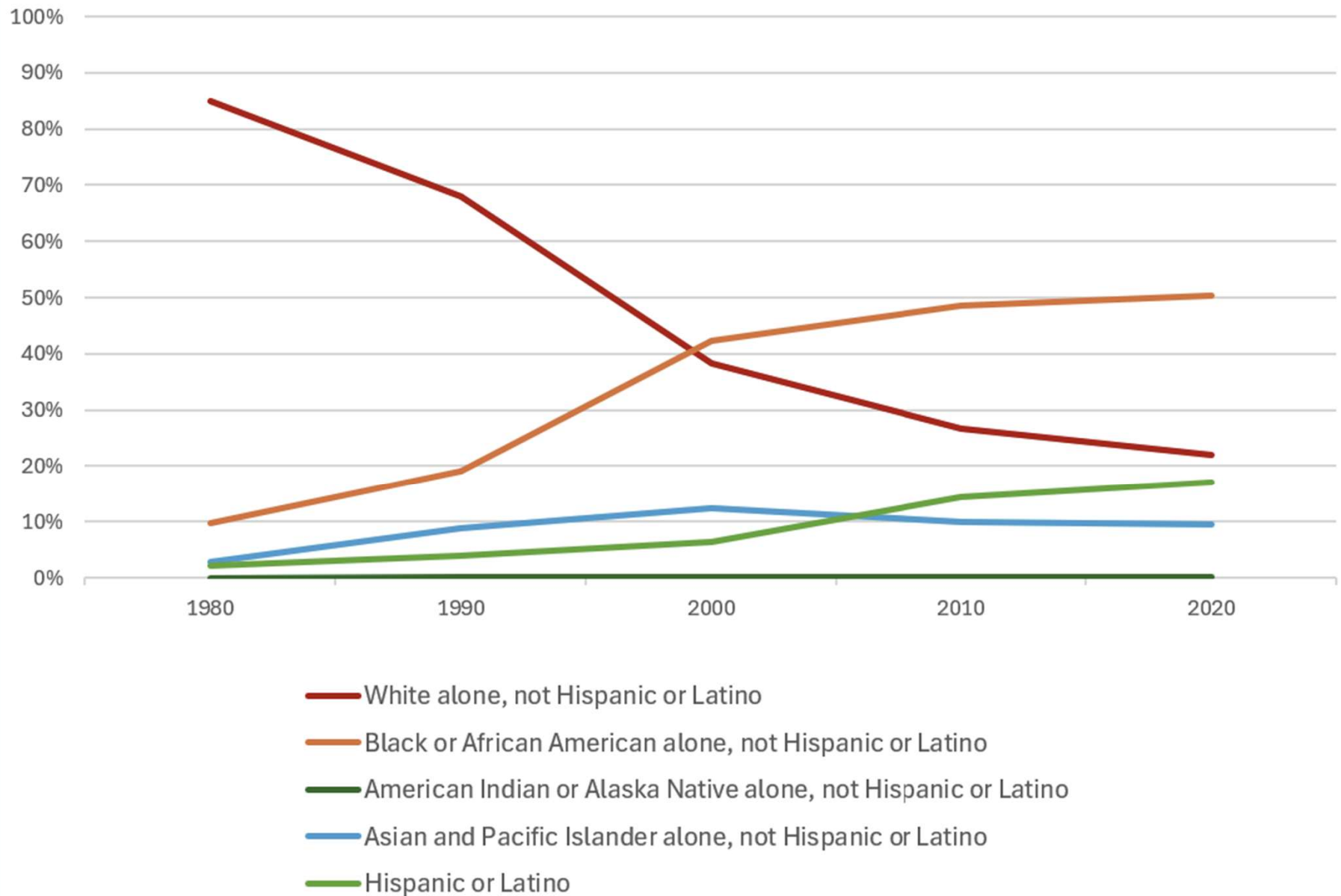
The African American population grew in Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West

Greenbelt West represents 39% of our population

In 2008, almost 50% of the population were African American, however...

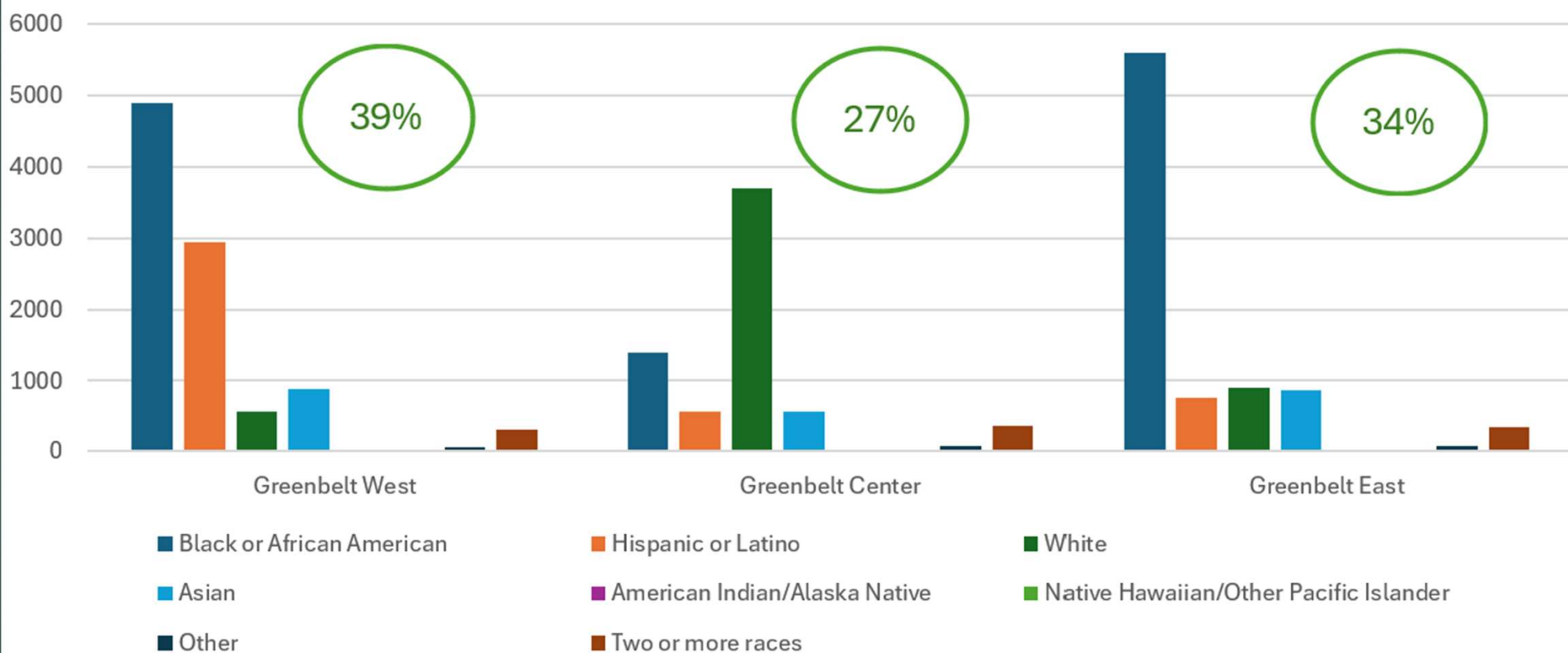
The City Council was 100% white

Greenbelt, Maryland, Demographic Changes 1980-2020



Note: The graph does not show residents who identified as "Some Other Race alone, not Hispanic or Latino" in the race/ethnicity category. There were 192 in 2020.

Racial Demographics in Three Areas of Greenbelt



These data are estimates based on 2020 data from Census tracts.

Poverty Rates

Percentage of people who live below the poverty line

- ❑ in Maryland: 10%
- ❑ In Prince George's County: 11%
- ❑ in Greenbelt: 19%
- ❑ In one section of Greenbelt: 27%

15.6%

Wealth Disparities

Slavery was the foundation for the State of Maryland's and Prince George's County's economy - White communities became rich because of slavery

The criminal justice system has contributed to White wealth

On average White households have 10 times the median wealth of African American households (Census Bureau, 2024)

Even after African Americans were allowed to move to Greenbelt, they experienced numerous barriers to homeownership

Historians and economists trace the present-day wealth gap to the injustices of race-based chattel slavery & **subsequent race-based discrimination**

Our Story Today



African American residents are considerably less wealthy than White residents

Some African American residents feel marginalized

Some feel excluded from decision-making

Some experience less access to services and amenities

Many have concerns about equitable support provided by the city

What can we do about it?

*We invite you to enjoy lunch as
you discuss these questions with
your neighbors*

How do we, as a community,
come to terms with how the
past has affected the well-
being of residents today?

Should the community
acknowledge past harms?

Should we make changes to
build a more equitable
future?



Reparations: From Concept to Reality

NKECHI TAIFA, ESQ.

DIRECTOR OF REPARATION EDUCATION PROJECT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwf8KIHpVBA>



Lakeland's Restorative Justice Commission

ROBERT THURSTON
VICE CHAIR
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COMMISSION



Draft
Recommendations
Discussions

Overview of Recommendations

- ▶ Our first goal is to acknowledge the harms that have occurred in the past and to recognize the lasting effects systemic racism has had on some residents
- ▶ To meet this goal, we have two suggestions:
 - ▶ An acknowledgement of the harms that have occurred and an apology from the City
 - ▶ Education about the harms that were inflicted on African American and Native Americans on the land currently known as Greenbelt

Draft Recommendations

Specific to the African American Communities

- ▶ Due to historic inequities designed into our utopian community, the **wealth gap** between African American residents and White residents is significant
- ▶ The wealth gap is driven primarily by **housing** and **education**
- ▶ How can we redesign systems that have favored White residents to create **greater equity** for African Americans who have been historically denied access to housing and education?

Recommendations Discussions

- ▶ Today, we present to you 3 areas of remedies to consider today:
 - ▶ Housing
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Good Governance
 - ▶ Good governance includes strategies that create equality for all residents across all segments of Greenbelt

Small Group Discussions

Report Out From Discussion Groups

Thank you for
your
participation!

