

MUHLENBERG COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

FOR THE



FELIX E. MARTIN JR.
FOUNDATION



MUHLENBERG COUNTY KENTUCKY

MAY 9, 2011



Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS PLANNERS

Acknowledgements

Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Muhlenberg County, Kentucky

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee

Lee Freeman, Serving as Chair
Shannon Combs
Shawn Conkwright
Kelly Free
John Gentry, Representing City of South Carrollton
Tommy Harrison, County Extension Agent for 4-H Youth Development
Tracy Hope
Debbie Houghland, Representing Muhlenberg County Schools
Cora Hughes, County Extension Agent for Fine Arts
Gail Johnson, Representing the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Task Force, Youth
Services Subcommittee
Becky Keith
Eddie Lewis
Freddie Mayes
Judge Rick Newman, Representing Muhlenberg County
Elizabeth Oates, Student Representative
Matt Perkins, Representing Muhlenberg County High School
Cassie Reynolds
David Rhoades, Representing the City of Central City
Dean Rowe
John Soderling
Sam Sparks
James Stewart
Nancy Stewart
Rylan Tuohy, Student Representative
Ben VanHooser, Representing the City of Greenville
Donna Vincent
Steve Wells

Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Task Force

Gary Carver
Lanie Gardner
Elizabeth Anne "EA" Gentry
Mike Mercer
Peggy Williams

The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Board of Directors

Roderick J. Tompkins, Sr., Chair
L. Rush Hunt, Vice Chair
C. Dennis Riggs
Dr. Judith L. Rhoads
Kathy Steward Jacobi, President

The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Staff

Lindsey R. Ransdell, Program Officer

Consultant Team

Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
2360 Chauvin Drive
Lexington, Kentucky 40517
(859) 268-1933 VOICE
(800) 368-1933
(859) 268-3341 FAX

Patrick D. Hoagland, ASLA
Wayne Bain, CPRP
Lisa M. Wright, Associate ASLA
Michael E. Carroll, AIA
Mark E. Horman, ASLA
Lynda Gates

Architect's Project No. 09105
May 9, 2011

Second Edition
May 1, 2012



Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Muhlenberg County, Kentucky

Executive Summary

The Existing Parks and Recreation Landscape in Muhlenberg County

The residents of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky are offered a wide variety of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The community's needs are currently being met by community parks offered by the County and the cities, school facilities, State Parks, and other facilities within the County.

The citizens of Muhlenberg County have been blessed with a rare and unique opportunity to improve their quality of life through the generosity of Felix E. Martin, Jr. This project is the direct result of efforts of the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation and its 2008 Needs Assessment.

When the Foundation was established, the first decision the Board of Directors made was that the people in Muhlenberg County should first be asked what they thought was important to accomplish, and what their top issues were. The Foundation's Board felt that a thorough assessment of the needs of the county as well as its strengths had to be the starting point for the Foundation's work.



The Needs Assessment Study identified four key areas: Economic Development, Youth Services,

Substance Abuse Services, and Health and Human Services. Two of these clearly stood out as the greatest priorities - Economic Development and Youth Services.

The Need for a Plan

Muhlenberg County currently has no county-wide parks and recreation department, but does budget some funds for parks and recreation in their Youth Services budget. Facilities that are owned by the County are maintained by the Road Department. The Cities of Greenville, Central City, and Drakesboro provide some parks for their communities, but no programming except for special events and concerts. The County provides some parks and several community centers throughout the County of which some include playgrounds and picnic shelters. The ball fields are provided on school property, County owned land, or on property leased by the leagues. There are several abandoned recreation facilities throughout the County which are the result of changing demographics, lack of operational funds, and changes in recreation trends. For example, there are several former adult softball fields in many communities, but adult softball has dropped in popularity throughout the country.

In addition to the park sites, many of the Muhlenberg County Schools have playground and athletic field areas that can be used by the general public. There are areas at eight school sites that total about 115 acres that are available to the general public for use. These areas include tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, football fields, basketball courts and playgrounds. In addition, the school gyms

are also available on a limited basis for community use.

The 2008 Needs Assessment prepared for the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation clearly indicated the need for youth services in the County. A primary provider of youth services in many other counties are the parks and recreation departments serving both the cities and counties. Typically, communities with no designated park and recreation department provide some facilities, but these are primarily athletic fields that are managed by the local leagues. This is also the case in Muhlenberg County. This approach misses several target populations including persons interested in non-traditional sports or non-athletic activities, toddlers, young adults, young families, and seniors.

All of these factors and the desire to improve the quality of life for residents of Muhlenberg County caused the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation and Muhlenberg County to realize the need for a comprehensive process to identify the true needs of the community so that Muhlenberg County can be in a position to meet those needs in the future.

The first phase of the Master Plan process was to identify the community needs through an extensive public input process, comparison to other communities, and identification of regional and national trends in parks and recreation services. The process continued with an approach of identifying specific strategies to provide for the needs of as many residents as possible in the most efficient manner.



A Citizen Driven Plan

The Plan is truly based on the community needs. The public was involved in the process in the following methods:

- A public workshop at the beginning of the process.
- A Community Attitude and Interest Survey that was completed by approximately 422 random households and an additional 154 surveys completed on-line or as hand-outs.
- An active Parks and Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee.
- Meetings with over 35 stakeholder groups representing:
 - Sports organizations
 - Community organizations
 - Muhlenberg County departments, committees, and elected officials
 - Community leaders
 - Program organizations
 - Muhlenberg County Schools
- Preliminary presentations of the public input findings.



What Muhlenberg County Residents Told Us

Through the many opportunities for community input, the citizens' needs were determined. The following is a brief summary of the findings and needs as communicated in the various methods:

1. The Rail-Trail, Lake Malone State Park, J.P. Morgan Park, and the Central City Wellness Center, are the parks and recreational facilities that are visited by the most households.

2. 76% of persons responding to the survey visited a park at least once in the past year which is much higher than the national benchmark of 72%.
3. Approximately 49% of the households that use parks rated the existing facilities as “Excellent” or “Good”. This is much lower than the national benchmark of 84%.
4. 37% of respondent households have participated in programs offered by the cities or County in the past year. (Higher than the national benchmark of 30%)
5. According to the survey results, the facilities with the highest unmet demand include:
 - Natural areas and nature parks
 - Picnic areas and shelters
 - Small Neighborhood Parks
 - Large Community or County Parks
 - Playgrounds
 - ATV Trails
 - Non-paved walking and biking trails
 - Indoor swimming pools/water parks
 - Outdoor swimming pools/aquatic centers
 - Shooting range
 - Recreation/Community Center
 - Rental facilities for banquets/receptions
6. Programs with the highest unmet needs include:
 - Adult wellness and fitness
 - Teen programs
 - Youth sports programs
 - Youth fitness and wellness
 - Nature programs
 - Before and after school programs
 - Special events
 - Shooting skills
 - Youth learn-to-swim programs
 - Mature adults programs
 - Water fitness
 - Pet exercise
 - Pre-school programs
 - Youth summer camp



7. There is a general shortage of active recreation facilities throughout Muhlenberg County and gaps in the locations of parks and facilities.
8. There is a strong desire to maintain and upgrade the park and recreation system.
9. There is a strong demand indicated in all methods of public input for a recreation/community center and integrated trails throughout the community.
10. There is a strong need for improvements to the park and recreation system because “Facilities are not well maintained” and “Program or facility not offered” were two of the top five reasons indicated in the survey that prevent households from using parks, facilities and programs more often.
11. Thirty-seven percent of respondents indicated they use parks and facilities in other communities. Churches, city-owned parks, and school sites were the most used facilities for recreation activities.
12. The addition of restrooms in the parks was by far the most indicated improvement to existing parks that residents desired.



Future Vision of Parks and Recreation for Muhlenberg County

Proposed Mission Statement

The Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Department is committed to providing a high quality of life for all residents by providing access to an interconnected and outstanding system of scenic parks, active and passive recreation areas, facilities, programs, and services in a manner that promotes character building, is cost effective, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally conscious, and efficient.

Vision for the Future

The Master Plan Steering Committee and County leaders envision a parks and recreation system that accomplishes the following goals:

1. Promotes Character Building and Youth Development:

- Engages youth and teens in positive activities and programs to foster youth development;
- Provides programs and activities that appeal to a wide variety of interests so as to engage as many residents as possible;
- Engages families and all citizens to participate in healthy indoor and outdoor activities;

2. Balance:

- Provides a balance of active recreation, passive recreation, and natural environments that are equitably distributed throughout Muhlenberg County;

- Fosters an appreciation of nature and illustrates respect for the natural environment and promotes sustainable natural resource management practices;
- Provides facilities that are equitably distributed, accessible to persons of all abilities, and for persons with a variety of interests;

3. Quality Experiences:

- Provides parks and facilities that are safe, attractive, well used, and well maintained;
- Provides facilities and program that are unique and are attractive to both existing and potential residents;
- Offers unique and scenic park and recreation opportunities;
- Provides quality athletic fields for children and adults to participate in healthy sports programs. The fields are developed in complexes for efficient maintenance, management and supervision. The complexes serve the needs of local leagues and host tournaments to generate income;
- Includes parks and programs that are well publicized and recognized by the residents;

4. Connectivity:

- Is connected with a series of safe pathways and bikeways to provide access to neighborhoods, parks, schools and other destinations for transportation purposes and for recreation. Current and future modes of transportation are considered;

5. Fosters Cooperation:

- Includes a partnership of Muhlenberg County, The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation, Muhlenberg County Schools, 4H, athletic organizations, special interest groups, cities, communities, volunteers, and various organizations to acquire, develop,

operate and manage the parks, trails, and facilities;

- Complements the activities, facilities and programs offered by other organizations and businesses serving the community;
- Is supported by an active group of community leaders and volunteers that promotes implementation of the Master Plan over the long term.

6. Improves Muhlenberg County:

- Significantly adds to the unique identity of Muhlenberg County as an outstanding place to live, work and play;
- Creates a unique identity for Muhlenberg County;
- Increases the aesthetic beauty and sense of pride in Muhlenberg County;

7. Fiscally Sound:

- Is funded in an efficient and responsible manner while providing the level of service and maintenance necessary for a high quality system;
- Muhlenberg County utilizes every opportunity to leverage funding from outside sources such as grants, philanthropy, and volunteerism;
- Provides some events, activities and programs that generate revenues to support the operations costs.



Major Recommended Facilities

The Master Plan Steering Committee met to discuss the results of the capital project priority ranking and the draft Action Plan. The following recommendations are a compilation of the general sentiment of that group.



1. Improve Existing Parks

- Upgrade all playgrounds in the County to meet current standards.
- Improve access to all park facilities with paved walkways.
- Upgrade Central Park in Central City with a skate park, sprayground, restrooms, walking paths, and picnic facilities.
- Upgrade J.P. Morgan Park I Greenville with a sprayground, skate park, picnic facilities, walkways, and improved amphitheater.
- Upgrade Gish Park in Central City.
- Add a playground at Simmons Street Park in Drakesboro.
- Partner with the School Board to redevelop the Bremen Park after the new schools is developed.
- Develop a consistent park entrance signage program.

2. Bike Trail Linkages

Develop bike trail linkages throughout the County to connect parks, schools, and neighborhoods.

- Widen the Rail-Trail.
- Extend the Rail-Trail to Greenville, Central City, MCHS West and East Campuses.



3. New Parks and Facilities

Develop the following new parks and facilities as recommended:

- Central County Park with picnic areas, trails, natural areas, baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, playgrounds, and more.
- Outdoor Family Aquatic Center.
- South County Athletic and Recreation Center.
- ATV Park
- Equestrian Park
- Shooting Skills Park
- New Neighborhood Park in the Beechmont and Graham areas.
- Central City Festival Park.
- Greenville Downtown Park.



Other Key Recommendations

1. Establish a Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Department to provide programming and to coordinate among the various partner organizations.
2. Develop a consistent park entrance and way finding signage program.
3. Expand maintenance staff as facilities and acreage expands to maintain a high quality park and recreation system.
4. Establish a marketing program and web based calendar to promote and coordinate the parks, programs, and events offered in Muhlenberg County by various organizations.
5. Maximize partnerships to utilize space for programs.



Where to Get More Information

This new Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes a great deal of additional detail including the following topics:

- Population and land use trends
- Existing budget
- Inventory of existing parks and facilities
- Summary of public workshops and focus groups
- Discussion of survey results

- Parks, facilities, and open space needs
- Individual park recommendations and budgets
- Priorities for the proposed improvements
- Implementation strategies in a time-line

This information is intended to provide the direction needed by the Fiscal Court, cities in the County, Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation, and other community groups to implement the Master Plan. The final Master Plan is available for viewing at the Muhlenberg County Administration Building.



Table of Contents

I.	<u>Introduction</u>	1
	A. Project Background – The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation	1
	B. The Need for a Plan	3
	C. Planning Process	4
	D. Why are Parks and Recreation Important?	4
II.	<u>Planning Context</u>	7
	A. Population Trends	7
	B. Land Use Trends	9
	C. Existing Programs	9
	D. Budget Overview	10
III.	<u>Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory</u>	11
	A. Parks and Recreation Classification System	11
	B. Overview of Parks and Recreation in Muhlenberg County	14
	C. County and City Facilities	17
	D. School Facilities	30
	E. Other Parks and Facilities	33
	F. Abandoned Parks and Facilities	35
IV.	<u>Needs Analysis</u>	37
	A. General	37
	B. Park and Recreation Area Needs by Park Type and Planning Areas	37
	C. Distribution of Parks and Facilities (Figure 2)	39
	D. Geographic Distribution of Facilities	40
	E. Citizens Served per Park Acre	53
	F. Public Workshops	53
	G. Stakeholder Meetings	55
	H. Community Attitude and Interest Survey	58
	I. Survey Results	59
	J. Trends in Parks and Recreation	92
	K. Benchmark Comparison to Other Kentucky Communities	100
V.	<u>Strategic Plan and Recommendations</u>	103
	A. Proposed Mission Statements	103
	B. Vision and Goals	103
	C. Observations, Analysis, and Recommendations	105

Table of Contents

VI.	<u>Facility Recommendations and Criteria</u>	135
A.	Trails	135
B.	Playgrounds	136
C.	Athletic Fields	138
D.	Picnic Areas	139
E.	Restrooms	140
F.	Pavilion/Amphitheater Covered Stage	140
G.	Dog Parks	141
H.	Outdoor Aquatic Facilities	141
I.	Recreation/Community Center	146
J.	Signage	148
K.	Site Concept Plans	148
VII.	<u>Implementation Costs</u>	157
A.	Introduction	157
B.	Existing Parks	157
C.	New Parks and Facilities	162
VIII.	<u>Action Plan</u>	167
A.	Capital Improvement Ranking	167
B.	Action Plan	169
C.	Potential Funding Sources	177
IX.	<u>Appendices</u>	185
A.	Existing Site Plans	187
B.	Public Input Summaries	205
C.	Community Attitude and Interest Survey	247
D.	Kentucky Benchmarking Tables	271
E.	Aquatic Center Feasibility Study	279
F.	Land Acquisition Tips	315
G.	How You Can Help	317

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Table 1: Muhlenberg County, Kentucky Population History and Projections (1980-2050)	7
Table 2: Muhlenberg County Population Distribution	7
Table 3: Household and Family Size (1990 to 2015)	8
Table 4: Median Age (1990-2015)	8
Table 5: Population Age 65 and over (1990-2015)	8
Table 6: Population 19 and Under (1990-2015)	9
Table 7: Recommended Park and Recreation Area Classification System	11
Table 8: Parks and Recreation Areas and Facilities within Muhlenberg County	15
Table 9: Parks and Recreation Land Level of Service Standards	38
Table 10: Parks and Recreation Facility Needs	39
Table 11: Nationwide Ten-Year History of Selected Sports Participation	97
Table 12: 2006 Youth Participation in Selected Sports with Comparisons to 1997 (National)	99
Table 13: Capital Projects Priority Ranking	168

List of Figures

Figure 1: Park Locations	16
Figure 2: Park Service Areas	43
Figure 3: Parks with Picnic Shelters	45
Figure 4: Parks with Playgrounds	46
Figure 5: Parks/Schools with Baseball/Softball Fields	47
Figure 6: Parks/Schools with Soccer Fields	48
Figure 7: Parks/Schools with Tennis Courts	49
Figure 8: Parks/Schools with Outdoor Basketball Courts	50
Figure 9: Swimming Pools and Swim Clubs	51
Figure 10: Proposed Park Service Areas	133
Figure 11: Typical Family Aquatic Facility Features	143
Figure 12: Typical Family Aquatic Centers	144
Figure 13: Typical Sprayground Features	145
Figure 14: Typical Community/Recreation Center Features	147
Figure 15: MCHS West Campus Central Park Concept Plan	149
Figure 16: Lake Luzerne Park Concept Plan	150
Figure 17: J.P. Morgan Park Concept Plan	151
Figure 18: Central City Central Park Concept Plan	152

Table of Contents

Figure 19: Gish Park Concept Plan	153
Figure 20: Central City Festival Park Concept Plan	154
Figure 21: Greenville Main Street Plaza Concept Plan	155