

### I. Introduction

#### A. Project Background – The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation

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. To understand this Master Plan you must first understand the mission and background of the Foundation which is explained in detail on the Foundation’s web site [www.felixmartinfoundation.org](http://www.felixmartinfoundation.org).

The Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation seeks to enrich the lives of the citizens of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky by providing support to qualified organizations to meet the educational, civic and cultural needs of the County – both today and for generations to come.

The Foundation was established in 2008 by a trust created by Felix E. Martin, Jr. (1927-2007), a native and long-time resident of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, and is administered by The Community Foundation of Louisville. At the time of his death, Mr. Felix E. Martin, Jr. included language in his Will stating:

*The remainder . . . shall be distributed . . . to create a charitable foundation or a charitable trust for the benefit of the education, civic, and cultural needs of the residents of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky...*

The executor of Mr. Martin’s estate, Mr. Roderick J. Tompkins Sr., was familiar with the reputation of The Community Foundation of Louisville as a service provider and administrative partner in many of Kentucky’s major philanthropic endeavors. Mr. Tompkins approached The Community Foundation of Louisville to establish and manage the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation. The Foundation honors the life of this generous local citizen so that his legacy will enhance the lives of individuals living and working in Muhlenberg County for generations to come.

##### 1. 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 firm selected to carry out that important work was Horizon Inform, based in Louisville, Kentucky.

The firm has undertaken thousands of studies at the national, regional, and local level over the past 20 years. Horizon Inform’s client list includes the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Procter & Gamble, Churchill Downs, Hewlett-Packard, Norton Healthcare and United Way among others. The research team spent six months asking questions and

listening to answers from hundreds of people throughout Muhlenberg County.

This high-engagement Needs Assessment of Muhlenberg County involved primary and secondary research of the demographic, economic, education, and health care status of the County as well as interviews with key community members, focus groups, and county-wide community surveys. The Needs Assessment began in May and was completed in October 2008.

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.

### 2. Grantmaking Philosophy

Mr. Martin wanted his gift to help generations of residents of Muhlenberg County. So the Foundation's assets have been set up as an endowment, and conservatively invested to grow over time so that the buying power of the Foundation stays intact in the face of inflation. Every year, part of the Foundation's income stream will be used to make grants in Muhlenberg County. That means that every year, between \$1.5 and \$2 million will be distributed to benefit Muhlenberg County.

- a. The 2008 Needs Assessment Study has confirmed one thing that was evident – Muhlenberg County has a wonderful tradition of charity. But Mr. Martin's gift is introducing a new tradition – the tradition of philanthropy. Philanthropy is focused on solutions, not symptoms.
- b. Charity can be looked at as a “downstream” investment – having an immediate effect on people and touching lives directly. Philanthropy is an “upstream” investment – where work over the long term can create change in underlying conditions. Payback from upstream investments is long-term and multi-generational. This type of investing can have an amazing impact – and research has identified where the citizens of Muhlenberg County feel that long-term impact needs to be.

### 3. Local Task Force

The Foundation realizes that making a real “upstream” and transformational change in Muhlenberg County requires people working together to set priorities about what needs to be done – and figuring out the best way to do it. A Task Force of local representatives was appointed to advise the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Board of Directors on how best to address the key areas of need - Economic Development and Youth Services. The individuals selected to serve on the Task Force are

Gary Carver, Lanie Gardner, Elizabeth “E.A.” Gentry, Mike Mercer and Peggy Williams.

The function of the Task Force is to provide guidance to the Foundation’s Board of Directors for its major grantmaking. The Task Force develops plans to address these needs by exploring local resources and opportunities, then deciding which projects could be most effective. The Task Force makes recommendations to the Foundation’s Board of Directors after looking at the overall needs and priorities of the County as they pertain to Economic Development and Youth Services. To date the Task Force has recommended nearly \$4 million in grants to the Board for projects aimed at transforming the County.

### **B. 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, South Carrollton, Bremen, 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 nine 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 Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation’s 2008 Needs Assessment 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 present and future 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.

### **C. Planning Process**

1. The planning process for the Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Master Plan included the following components.
  - a. A review of the previous studies that pertain to the delivery of parks and recreation facilities and services in Muhlenberg County.
  - b. A review of the population and land use trends for Muhlenberg County.
  - c. Preparation of a parks and recreation facilities and programs inventory, including a discussion of facilities by park type and a discussion of parks and recreation facilities provided by the County, Cities, State, not-for-profit organizations, and other providers.
  - d. The preparation of a Comprehensive Needs Analysis based on recreation facility level of service guidelines, public workshops, surveys of the general public, and meetings with stakeholders and special interest groups.
  - e. Benchmarking to other parks and recreation agencies throughout Kentucky to develop comparisons to their budgets, programs, land, and staffing.
  - f. Review and oversight by a Master Plan Steering Committee with representatives of the community and officials from the County and cities.
  - g. Recommendations for improvements to existing parks.
  - h. Recommendations for land and new parks.
  - i. Preparation of conceptual plans for selected sites based on recommendations.
  - j. An Action Plan identifying the recommendations and proposed improvements, responsible party, and potential funding sources for the recommendations.

### **D. Why are Parks and Recreation Important?**

Here are some reasons why this Master Planning effort, additional planning, and the future of parks and recreation in Muhlenberg County are very important:

The local governments, State, schools and non-profit organizations in the Muhlenberg County area manage nearly 490 acres of land designated for parks, recreation, and open space purposes. The Muhlenberg County Schools operate

approximately 207 additional acres of playgrounds and recreational field areas. These agencies have the responsibility to manage this land in an efficient manner that is consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

For many residents, parks provide their only access to the natural environment. For all residents they provide natural and active outdoor recreational opportunities.

The quality of a community's parks and recreation system is viewed as one of the indicators of the overall quality of life. A quality park and recreation system is essential to attracting businesses to locate in the County.

Obesity has become an ever growing problem in the county, state and country. Parks and recreation facilities and activities are needed to provide opportunities for citizens to become more active. The popularity of the Rails-Trails and the Central City Wellness Center clearly illustrates the desire of residents to be more active.

Property values around parks tend to be considerably higher than other areas, thereby making an annual contribution to the community in the form of higher property tax revenues, as well as additional profits to the owners at point of sale. More valuable properties also tend to be maintained at a higher level, improving the appearance of the communities.

A recent study titled "The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation" by John L. Crompton for the Trust for Public Land included a section on the impact of parks and open space on property taxes. This study indicates that property values are higher for properties near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere. Approximately 20 studies have investigated this issue in the last few decades which overwhelmingly verified the legitimacy of the "Proximate Principle" of increased land values near parks. In addition, recent surveys of home buyers by the National Association of Home Builders indicate that trails, parks, and playgrounds are three of the top five amenities that a home buyer desires when considering a new home purchase.

The residents and leadership of Muhlenberg County place a high value on the quality of life that can result from an outstanding park and recreation system. As you will see in the Needs Analysis section, the public uses parks and programs in surrounding communities at a high rate and desire these services in the Muhlenberg County community. The parks can become the gathering place for the community and help to provide a positive community identity.



**II. Planning Context**

**A. Population Trends**

Population History and Projections

An overall understanding of the population trends of Muhlenberg County is necessary to identify the present and predicted future needs for parks and recreation services and facilities. Table 1 illustrates the population trends for the County from 1980 to 2050. These tables use US Census Bureau data and projections from the State Data Center at the University of Louisville. Trends indicate that the population has declined slightly since 1980 and will continue to decline through 2050 as predicted by the State Data Center.

**Table 1: Muhlenberg County, Kentucky Population History and Projections (1980-2050)**

	Census			Projections								
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Muhlenberg County	32,238	31,318	31,839	31,120	30,852	30,507	30,120	29,721	29,252	28,734	28,196	27,687

Source: Kentucky State Data Center, University of Louisville, April 2009

Table 2 summarizes the population breakdown of the communities in Muhlenberg County and indicates that over half of the population does not live in an incorporated city. The largest city is Central City at approximately 5,690 residents followed by Greenville (4,299), Powderly (882), Drakesboro (616), Bremen (359), and South Carrollton (181). The table indicates that all have shown a decline since 2000 with the largest decline in Central City.

**Table 2: Muhlenberg County Population Distribution**

County / Incorporated Place	2000	2005	2009	Change			
				2000-2009		2008-2009	
				#	%	#	%
Muhlenberg County	31,839	31,458	31,274	-522	-1.6	-5	0.0
Bremen	365	361	359	-6	-1.6	0	0.0
Central City	5,899	5,735	5,680	-203	-3.5	-2	0.0
Drakesboro	627	620	616	-10	-1.6	0	0.0
Greenville	4,398	4,316	4,299	-87	-2.0	-6	-0.1
Powderly	895	888	882	-12	-1.3	0	0.0
South Carrollton	184	182	181	-3	-1.6	0	0.0
Balance of Muhlenberg County	19,471	19,356	19,257	-201	-1.0	3	0.0

Table 3 indicates the household and family size from 1990 to 2015 and indicates that in Muhlenberg County, the average household size decreased from 1990 to 2000 and is expected to drop slightly in 2010 and into 2015. The household and family size for residents in Muhlenberg County is lower than for the State of Kentucky and the United States as a whole. The 2010 average household size is 2.37 as compared 2.41 for the State of Kentucky, 2.59 for the U.S.

**Table 3: Household and Family Size (1990 to 2015)**

	Housing Units	Average Household Size		Average Family Size		Average Household Size	
		1990	2000	1990	2000	2010	2015
	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	2010	2015
USA	115,904,641	2.63	2.59	3.16	3.14	2.59	2.60
Kentucky	4,041,769	2.60	2.47	3.08	2.97	2.41	2.40
Muhlenberg County	31,839	2.62	2.45	3.05	2.90	2.37	2.35
1-Source: ESRI Bis Forecast							

Table 4, Median Age, identifies trends throughout Muhlenberg County, Kentucky and the USA of the median age becoming higher. The median age in Muhlenberg County was 34.8 in 1990 and is expected to increase to 42.3 in 2015. It should be noted that the median age for Muhlenberg County is significantly higher than for the State and the United States. The median age in 2010 is 41.3 in Muhlenberg County as opposed to 38.2 for Kentucky and 37.0 for the USA. The age of the residents is important because Muhlenberg County needs to plan for the appropriate age groups that it will be serving.

**Table 4: Median Age (1990-2015)**

	1990 <sup>1</sup>	2000 <sup>1</sup>	2010 <sup>2</sup>	2015 <sup>2</sup>
USA	32.9	35.3	37.0	37.3
Kentucky	33.0	35.9	38.2	38.8
Muhlenberg County	34.8	38.6	41.3	42.3
1 - Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2-Source: ESRI Bis Forecast				

Table 5 indicates the population age 65 and over from 1990 to 2015 and indicates that this age group increased in percentage from 1990 to 2000 from 15.1% to 15.5% of the population in Muhlenberg County and is expected to increase to 16.6% in 2010 and 18.3% in 2015. All of the other jurisdictions including Kentucky and the USA have indicated a significantly smaller percentage of the population in this age cohort with the county currently at approximately 16.6%, the state at 13.3%, and the USA at 13.0% of the population. The percentage of persons over age 65 is significantly higher in Muhlenberg County than the other jurisdictions.

**Table 5: Population Age 65 and over (1990-2015)**

	1990 <sup>1</sup>		2000 <sup>1</sup>		2010 <sup>2</sup>		2015 <sup>2</sup>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
USA	31,241,831	12.6%	34,991,753	12.4%	40,471,364	13.0%	46,658,714	14.4%
Kentucky	466,845	12.7%	504,793	12.5%	578,269	13.3%	668,984	14.9%
Muhlenberg County	4,738	15.1%	4,926	15.5%	5,181	16.6%	5,648	18.3%
1-Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2-Source: ESRI Bis Forecast								

Table 6 identifies the population age 19 and under from 1990 to 2015. The table indicates that in Muhlenberg County there was a large decrease in this percentage from 1990 to 2000 from 29.1% to 25.3%. This is expected to have dropped to 24.94 in 2010 and is expected to remain the same in 2015. This

corresponds to the previous table which identified the growing population over age 65. It should be noted that the percentage of the population age 19 and under in Muhlenberg County is significantly lower than for the State and USA. Currently Muhlenberg County has 24.4% of the population within this age cohort as opposed to 26.2% for the state and 27.1% for the USA.

All of this information indicates that the population of Muhlenberg County is significantly older and has a smaller household and family size than for the State of Kentucky and the United States in terms of their percentages.

**Table 6: Population 19 and Under (1990-2015)**

	1990 <sup>1</sup>		2000 <sup>1</sup>		2010 <sup>2</sup>		2015 <sup>2</sup>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
USA	71,321,886	28.7%	80,473,265	28.6%	84,382,980	27.1%	86,153,914	26.6%
Kentucky	1,076,775	29.2%	1,113,644	27.5%	1,135,867	26.2%	1,156,906	25.8%
Muhlenberg County	9,118	29.1%	8,066	25.3%	7,619	24.4%	7,552	24.4%

1-Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2-Source: ESRI Bis Forecast

### B. Land Use Trends

Land use trends are of significant importance to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan process due to the fact that residents want parks close to their homes. Therefore, identifying the existing and proposed residential areas becomes extremely important.

Muhlenberg County contains approximately 479 square miles. Approximately 61.5% of the population does not live in one of the six incorporated cities with about 35% living in the three central cities of Greenville, Powderly, and Central City. With the population projections indicating a slow decline in the future, the only anticipated land use change of major significance is the development of the Paradise Regional Business Park near the community of Graham.

### C. Existing Programs

Due to the lack of a recreation center, with the exception of the Central City Wellness Center, minimal indoor programs are currently available in the County. The new Central City Wellness Center is meeting its attendance and membership goals.

The various sports leagues provide most of the youth sports programs such as soccer, baseball, softball, football, and basketball.

Some of the cities in Muhlenberg County host events and festivals. The major events in Central City are the concerts on the Downtown stage, Rock 'n Roll Cruise In on Labor Day weekend, Gospel Fest, Central City Poker Run and Motorcycle Show, and other activities. Greenville hosts concert series at the Courthouse Veterans' Plaza. Additionally several events are held at the Ag Center and Paradise Park area including July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks, National Barrel Horse & State Championship, International Thumb Picking Weekend, Kentucky Deer

Classic, and more. Drakesboro hosts several music concerts in their series of Four Legends Jamboree.

The 4H organization provides a variety of programs for youth with at least 60% of Muhlenberg County School students participating. There are 60 clubs, such as the Equestrian Drill Team and Shooting Club, with 150 volunteers. The Equestrian Drill Team and Handicapped Riding Program compete for space at the Ag Center and often cannot practice due to other events at the Center.

Churches and private organizations provide additional programming in the community. Dance studios and Taekwondo are examples.

The County and cities have no trained staff dedicated to recreational programming.

### **D. Budget Overview**

The existing budgets designated for parks and recreation are difficult to determine with any certainty. The County has approximately \$80,000 budgeted for Youth Services and both the County and Cities of Greenville and Central City use their Public Works and Streets Departments for maintenance of the parks. The combined budgets for parks and recreation from the County and cities are approximately \$171,500 without the operating cost of the Central City Wellness Center. This equates to approximately \$5.50 per person in the County. The average expenditure per person of the 26 surveyed communities in Kentucky as part of the benchmarking process was \$29.08 with a median of \$20.00. Therefore, Muhlenberg County spends much less per person on parks and recreation than most of the communities that were surveyed in Kentucky.

The only user fees experienced in the County are from the pools and Wellness Center. Greenville's pool loses approximately \$35,000 per year and Central City's lost about \$15,000 per year. The Wellness Center should break even.

# Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

## III. Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

### A. Parks and Recreation Classification System

The purpose of developing a park and recreation classification system for a community is to evaluate the total recreation opportunities that are being made available to the public. Too often, a community will “meet the standard” in terms of acreage, but it may meet this provision through only a single park that does not provide for the entire community. Therefore, a system of parks should be developed that provides a combination of local space such as mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks with county-wide space such as linear parks, county parks and support by regional or state parks.

The parks and recreation facilities inventory in this section identifies each park by its park type category and also list the number of specific facilities that are located within each park. Table 7 defines each park by its typical size and service area of each category, population served by each park, typical features and facilities, and the desirable characteristics of each park in these categories. The categories and descriptions were adapted from the Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines that was published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1987 and 1995.

A park system is generally reviewed and analyzed as a composite of recreation areas, each existing to meet a particular public need. Based on a review of national and regional standards, a parks and recreation area classification system has been developed to reflect the actual conditions and opportunities for Muhlenberg County.

**Table 7: Recommended Park and Recreation Area Classification System**

PARK TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
LOCAL SPACE:				
1. Mini-Park (MP)	+/- 1 Acre 1/8 – ½ Mile Service Radius	0.5 Acre/1,000	Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	Most often provided in association with school facilities.  May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where children do not have adequate yard space.
2. Neighborhood Park (NP)	5-15 Acres  ½-1.0 mile service radius. To serve a population up to 5,000	2.0 Acres/1,000	Suited for intense development.  Typical facilities include field games, court games, playground apparatus, small pools, small neighborhood centers, drinking fountains, and	Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance)  May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility.  May not be needed in areas served by “community”, “county” or “regional” parks.