

V. Strategic Plan and Recommendations

A. Proposed Mission Statements

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.

B. Vision and Goals

The Master Plan Steering Committee, Muhlenberg County, Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Task Force, Parks and Recreation Department, and community leaders envision a parks and recreation system that accomplishes the following goals:

1. Promotes Character Building and Youth Development:
 - a. Engages youth and teens in positive activities and programs to foster youth development;
 - b. Provides programs and activities that appeal to a wide variety of interests so as to engage as many residents as possible;
 - c. Engages families and all citizens to participate in healthy indoor and outdoor activities;
2. Balance:
 - a. Provides a balance of active recreation, passive recreation, and natural environments that are equitably distributed throughout Muhlenberg County;
 - b. Fosters an appreciation of nature and illustrates respect for the natural environment and promotes sustainable natural resource management practices;
 - c. Provides facilities that are equitably distributed, accessible to persons of all abilities, and for persons with a variety of interests;
3. Quality Experiences:
 - a. Provides parks and facilities that are safe, attractive, well used, and well maintained;
 - b. Provides facilities and programs that are unique and are attractive to both existing and potential residents;

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- c. Offers unique and scenic park and recreation opportunities;
 - d. 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;
 - e. Includes parks and programs that are well publicized and recognized by the residents;
4. Connectivity:
- a. 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:
- a. 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;
 - b. Complements the activities, facilities and programs offered by other organizations and businesses serving the community;
 - c. 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:
- a. Significantly adds to the unique identity of Muhlenberg County as an outstanding place to live, work and play;
 - b. Creates a unique identity for Muhlenberg County;
 - c. Increases the aesthetic beauty and sense of pride in Muhlenberg County;
7. Fiscally Sound:
- a. Is funded in an efficient and responsible manner while providing the level of service and maintenance necessary for a high quality system;

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- b. Muhlenberg County utilizes every opportunity to leverage funding from outside sources such as grants, philanthropy, and volunteerism;
- c. Provides some events, activities and programs that generate revenues to support the operations costs.

C. Observations, Analysis, and Recommendations

The following are a series of observations, findings, and information gained from the focus groups, workshops and surveys, along with the Consultant's analysis. Throughout the planning process, potential solutions are included within this section that later may become the recommendations after discussions with the Steering Committee, Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation Task Force and Muhlenberg County.

1. Youth Services

a. Observations and Analysis

- (1) The Muhlenberg County Needs Assessment by Horizon Inform for the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation identified the following:
 - The survey indicated that 97% of residents feel that there is "somewhat of a need" or a "serious need" for programs for young people.
 - Youth Services is one of the main signature needs of the County. The others are Economic Development, Substance Abuse Services, and Health and Human Services. Many of these needs correlate with each other.
 - The input indicated a need for leadership training opportunities, after-school alternatives, and ways their families can receive the resources they need to help their children.
 - In a survey question identifying the top areas of community dissatisfaction, "activities for young people" was second at 85% behind "availability of good jobs" at 88%.
 - The most important needs from the survey indicated "more activities for young people" was second at 43% behind "economic development" at 79%.

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- (2) The statistically valid and random Household Needs Assessment performed by Leisure Vision Inc. as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the following:
 - Of the various functions that should be performed by the local governments, “provide specific programs for teens” ranked highest with 94% indicating “very important” or “somewhat important” and was by far the highest when asked to indicate the “most important” functions.
 - Of the program types with the highest unmet needs, “teen programs” was second at 4,639 households to “adult fitness and wellness programs” at 4,800 households.

b. Potential Solutions

- (1) Develop a Parks and Recreation Department with a primary focus of youth and family services.
- (2) Develop programs around the concept of youth development and character building.
- (3) Upgrade existing park and recreation facilities and develop additional parks and facilities to allow more opportunities for activities and programs.
- (4) Develop a youth and teen center to provide a variety of programs and activities. This could be part of a larger recreation and fitness center to allow youth fitness programs also.
- (5) Develop a skate park and teen park in Central City and in Greenville where the largest concentration of youth would be attracted to the facilities. These facilities and programs are most successful if they are easily accessible by walking, bike or skateboard.
 - A possible location in Central City would be the existing pool and tennis court area in Central Park. Develop the teen oriented activities on the upper terrace with a skate park, basketball court and picnic shelter and use the lower area for small children and families with picnic shelters, playgrounds, picnic tables, etc. Gish Park is another possible location in Central City.
 - In Greenville, a location in or near to J.P. Morgan Park would be ideal to be close to Downtown, Greenville Elementary School and South Middle School. If a new

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family aquatic center is developed elsewhere, then the pool location would be ideal for a skate park. Another good location would be near North Middle and Longest Elementary Schools which is also near the Rail Trail to provide good access from Greenville, Powderly, and Central City.

- (6) Establish as many program opportunities as possible to accommodate the wide variety of interests and acknowledge that no one facility or program will appeal to all youth and teens.
- (7) Coordinate and cross market programs with 4H, churches, Muhlenberg County Schools, Muhlenberg County Public Library, and others to maximize participation and to avoid overlap and competition.
- (8) Support the youth programs and activities that are already in place.

2. Existing Park Improvements

a. Observations and Analysis

- (1) About 76% of Muhlenberg County residents visited parks in Muhlenberg County according to the surveys. This is higher than the national benchmark of 72%. Of those that visited parks, over 41% visited over 10 times in the last year.
- (2) Of the 76% that visited parks in the last year, 6% rated the physical condition as “Excellent” and 43% as “Good.” The 6% as “excellent” and the combined “excellent” and “good” (49%) was much lower than the national benchmark of 85% indicating a strong need for improved maintenance and quality of facilities.
- (3) Parks were visited at a slightly higher rate by residents in the central cities of Central City, Greenville and Powderly compared to the rest of the County (81% vs. 73%)
- (4) The top six parks that residents in the survey indicated they visited in the last year included:

▪ Rail-Trail	50%
▪ Lake Malone State Park	39%
▪ J. P. Morgan Park (Greenville)	36%
▪ Central City Wellness Center	27%

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- Church facilities 26%
 - East and West Campuses of MHS 22%
- (5) The surveys indicated that the parks visited most by residents were generally the same list as above.
- (6) The parks that are visited most provide a variety of facilities such as playgrounds, trails, game courts, fitness facilities and picnic shelters.
- (7) The top ten improvements to existing parks that were most requested by the households that responded to the survey included the following. Note that most relate to passive parks and facilities.
- Restrooms 65%
 - Drinking fountains 46%
 - Picnic tables & benches 46%
 - Picnic shelters 44%
 - Playground equipment 44%
 - Trail lights 41%
 - Sidewalks/trails 39%
 - Park security / lights 39%
 - Upgrade pools 33%
 - Increased programs 29%
- (8) “Operating and maintaining city and county parks and facilities” was tied with “Provide specific programs for teens” with the highest percentage ranking as “very important” to residents (74%).
- (9) Residents use churches (60%) at a higher rate than city or county parks (52%), or School District land (48%).
- (10) When asked how residents would spend \$100 toward parks in Muhlenberg County, the following results were found:
- “Improvements/maintenance to existing parks, playgrounds and picnic areas” ranked highest at \$26
 - “Develop new outdoor park and recreation facilities” (\$16)
 - “Develop walking and biking trails” (\$12)

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- “Develop new indoor facilities” (\$12)
- (11) Most of the active athletic fields that are used by various youth leagues are provided at middle and elementary schools.
 - (12) Baseball and softball fields are well dispersed throughout the county. Basketball courts are primarily in the cities and at schools. Picnic shelters are primarily located in the cities. There are several old, abandoned ball fields located throughout the county. These are typically single fields with restroom/concession buildings that once were home to adult softball leagues.
 - (13) The maintenance of most of the ball fields in the county is performed by volunteers of the leagues. The quality of the maintenance varies based on budget and manpower.
 - (14) The pool in Central City is closed due to age (built in 1936) and the tennis courts are in such poor condition they are no longer useable. The City is looking for ideas of what should be located in their place.
 - (15) The County has installed several small wood playgrounds throughout the County. This style is designed primarily for backyard use and do not meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines. In addition, other playgrounds at city parks also do not meet current guidelines.
 - (16) The community needs playgrounds and parks that are more handicapped accessible.
- b. Potential Solutions:
- (1) Update the playground equipment and safety surfacing to meet CPSC guidelines and train staff to be Certified Playground Safety Inspectors through the Playground Safety Institute. Classes are offered by the Kentucky Recreation and Park Society (KRPS).
 - (2) Provide quality restrooms at parks where users visit for extended periods.
 - (3) Provide walkways to provide handicap access to all playgrounds, picnic shelters, park facilities and ball fields.
 - (4) Develop an all-access playground in the county.

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- (5) Pave, organize and increase the parking at all parks where needed.
- (6) Implement a consistent and attractive signage program to identify all City and County parks.
- (7) Bring the maintenance and appearance of all parks up to higher standards.
- (8) Expand the park facilities at Mini-Parks and Neighborhood Parks to include picnic shelters, game courts, community ball fields, and other facilities as coordinated with the neighborhoods.
- (9) Coordinate with communities to assist in the monitoring and maintenance of neighborhood and community parks. (Adopt-A-Park or Neighborhood Watch programs).
- (10) Plan and develop Central City Central Park with new facilities where the pool and tennis courts are located.
- (11) Provide maintenance staff and budget for consistent maintenance of parks and athletic facilities.
- (12) Continue to use volunteers from the leagues for maintenance of the ball fields inside the fences such as dragging and striping fields.

3. New Park Development

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) “Large Community/County Parks” (57%) and “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked tied for third (57%) among facilities for which residents have a need.
- (2) “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked 3rd and “Large Community/County Parks” ranked 4th among facilities indicated by households for which their needs are being met 50% or less.
- (3) Among facilities that are most important to households, “Small Neighborhood Parks” ranked first and “Large Community Parks” ranks 3rd.
- (4) Schools and churches meet some of the demand for close-to-home park space and facilities in selected communities.
- (5) A comparison to typical level of service standards used throughout the state for developed park land, Muhlenberg

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County is well below the standard for all types of park land including mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks and county parks by about 170 acres.

- (6) A comparison to 24 other communities in Kentucky indicates that Muhlenberg County and City owned developed park land (not including golf courses or school land) provides a level of 217 citizens per acre. The average of the other communities was 245 and the median is 174. The national median of departments is 132 citizens per developed park acre.
- (7) The Cities and the County provide 4.61 total park acres per 1000 residents (6.68 with schools) compared to the average of 11.3 and median of 5.75. Therefore, Muhlenberg County provides less than the average and median of the other communities.
- (8) When asked to identify reasons preventing households from using parks, recreation facilities and programs in Muhlenberg County more, the residents indicated: (National benchmark in parenthesis)
 - Facilities are not well maintained 33% (6%)
 - Too far from our residence 26% (14%)
 - I do not know what is being offered 28% (22%)
 - Fees are too high 24% (12%)
 - Program or facility not offered 23% (13%)

In most cases, the response is much higher than the national median, indicating a lower level of facilities, programs, and awareness in Muhlenberg County.

- (9) The surveys indicate that the unmet facility needs were highest for the following:

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Households</u>
▪ Natural areas/nature parks	5,901
▪ Picnic shelter/areas	5,734
▪ Small neighborhood parks	4,884
▪ Large community/county parks	4,788
▪ Playgrounds	4,510
▪ ATV trails	4,305
▪ Non-paved walking and hiking trails	4,295
▪ Indoor swimming pool /water park	4,172

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- (10) The web site survey results indicated that 92% stated there is a need for more parks and recreation facilities in the County.
- (11) Several counties of comparable or smaller size have large centrally located County Parks and recreational complexes. For reference, Muhlenberg County has approximately 31,187 residents from the 2008 estimate from the Kentucky State Data Center. Some of these counties and their major parks include:
- Marshall County with 31,189 residents has the 80 acre Mike Miller Park with 5 lighted ball fields, 5 soccer fields, 5 acre stocked lake, picnic shelters, playground, 2 mile walking trail, basketball courts, 18 hole Disc Golf course, sand volleyball courts, community room, Veterans' Honor Plaza, and more.
 - Boyle County with 28,933 residents has the 135 acre Millennium Park with 7 baseball/softball fields, 8 soccer fields and a football field, lake, 3.5 miles of walking trails, skate park, dog park, picnic areas, playgrounds, wildflower area, and more. Future plans call for an outdoor aquatic center and multi-purpose recreation center.
 - Montgomery County with 25,618 residents developed Easy Walker Park with 75 acres and 6 ball fields, soccer fields, lake, playgrounds, picnic shelters, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, and more. The County also has recently developed Herb Botts Park with 35 acres and includes walking trails, natural areas, amphitheater, playground, and picnic shelters.
 - Mercer County with 21,920 residents has developed the Anderson Dean Community Park with 213 acres including a swimming pool, indoor facility for rental, picnic shelters, walking trails, basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, skate park, tennis courts, 7 baseball/softball fields, 7 soccer fields, and room to expand.
 - Harrison County with 18,654 residents has acquired 135 acres for the development of a new community park which will include walking trails, skate park, tennis and basketball courts, baseball/softball complex, soccer complex, family aquatic center, and a recreation center. The trails, soccer fields, a picnic shelter and Farmers Market are in place.

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- Ohio County with 23,739 residents has the 500 acre Ohio County Park and RV Campground with a replica of Fort Hartford, playground, basketball and volleyball courts, golf putting greens and driving range, picnic area, nature trails for hikers, bikers, or horseback riding as well as Disk Golf.
- (12) Muhlenberg County has a lot of reclaimed mined land that may be available for some type of recreational use.
- (13) Muhlenberg County Schools also have several acres of undeveloped land that could potentially be used for park development. The Schools are very receptive to this idea.
- (14) The public workshops and stakeholder meetings indicated a need for a wide variety of new facilities including the following, along with large central complexes:
- Land for indoor facilities
 - Nature parks
 - Small parks close to residences
 - Dog park
 - Outdoor concert venue/amphitheater
 - Skate park
 - Mountain bike/BMX trails
 - Paintball and laser tag
 - Boat ramps
 - Equestrian facilities
 - Shooting sports area
- b. Potential Solutions:
- (1) Acquire additional land for parks with emphasis on parks that will provide a balance of active and passive recreation and natural areas. Acquire land in strategic locations to provide good access to every planned residential area in Muhlenberg County.
- (2) Be proactive in land acquisition, easements and leases. Concentrate on land acquisition and then on development to secure land for the future of Muhlenberg County.
- (3) Develop an education and marketing campaign to inform residents of the parks, trails and services available. This should be an ongoing effort.

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- (4) Locate and develop a site for an additional boat ramp along the Green River. The State Department of Fish and Wildlife has grants available for this purpose.
- (5) Investigate the possibility to lease land to develop a Community Park at Lake Luzerne with trails around the lake, picnic shelters, fishing areas, and more.
- (6) Utilize acreage at the Muhlenberg County High School West Campus to develop a large central park complex with a wide variety of active and passive park and recreation facilities. The site is easily accessible from the Bypass. This site could be the home of a combined Little League as the various leagues have been in discussions to consolidate into one organization.
- (7) Develop partnerships with the large land owners in the County and special interest organizations to make use of reclaimed mined land for equestrian use, shooting sports, and ATV trails.

4. Trails

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) The Rail Trail is used by the most number of residents and is the most visited park and recreation facility in the County, both by a large margin.
- (2) Walking, hiking and bike trails were rated very high in the surveys including:
- (3) Paved walking and biking trails were highest among facilities that residents have a need (66%). Non-paved trails were 11th at 41%.
- (4) Paved walking and bike trails ranked second highest among facilities that are most important to households,
- (5) Trail facilities among those whose needs are being met less than 50% ranked as the following:
 - 6th ATV Trails
 - 7th Non-paved trails
 - 15th Paved trails
 - 25th Mountain bike or BMX

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- (6) Trails rated 7th highest of potential improvements households would most like to have made in parks in Muhlenberg County and trail lighting was 6th.
- (7) When asked how residents would spend \$100 toward parks in Muhlenberg County, “development of walking and biking trails” ranked 3rd at \$13 behind “improvements / maintenance to existing parks, playgrounds and picnic areas” at \$26 and “new outdoor parks and recreation facilities” at \$16.
- (8) “Provide trails and linear parks” ranked 6th among functions that should be provided by local government in the survey.
- (9) Trails and linkages of parks, schools, business areas, and neighborhoods were discussed by several of the focus groups and identified as a high priority in the Community Workshops.
- (10) Grants have been obtained and a trail is being developed at the Brizendine Nature Park in Greenville.

b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Continue to place emphasis on implementation of interconnecting trails in all communities and especially in areas of new housing developments.
- (2) Develop a Muhlenberg County Greenways Plan to identify the more specific potential routes, design guidelines, and implementation steps. Coordinate these efforts with the adjacent counties to integrate into a region-wide network of trails.
- (3) Develop an integrated trail system of bikeways and walkways throughout Muhlenberg County. Encourage sidewalks where trails are not available. Begin in the central part of the County where the Rail-Trail can serve as a start and build upon that.
- (4) Develop additional walking trails in the parks and open spaces. Additional trails could be developed in several existing neighborhood parks, in proposed community parks, and in undeveloped parcels.
- (5) Place a high priority on the acquisition of land to link parks, neighborhoods, schools and commercial areas in all new open space acquisition.

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- (6) Develop a balance of natural, unpaved trails and paved bike/walk trails.
- (7) Establish a volunteer base to assist in the development and maintenance of trails and trail related parks.
- (8) Need to ensure that all parks have safe access facilities (marked streets, shared roads, sidewalks, side paths) for pedestrians and bicyclists, including a bike rack in every park.
- (9) Light the remaining portion of the Rail-Trail for increased security.
- (10) Widen the existing Rail-Trail to a minimum of ten feet wide.
- (11) Extend the Rail-Trail into Central City and Greenville and provide new links to the East and West Campuses of MCHS and to Lake Luzerne.
- (12) Develop trails around Lake Luzerne.
- (13) Establish parks for:
 - BMX and mountain bikes
 - Equestrian trails
 - ATV trails
- (14) Promote and market the existing and proposed trail systems to promote tourism.
- (15) Develop a trail around the new Bremen Park when the school is redeveloped and a new park is developed.
- (16) Apply for grants for trail development and maintenance (if possible). There are several sources of both government and foundation grants for this purpose.

5. Nature Areas and Nature Education

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) In the Community Attitude and Interest Survey, “natural areas and nature parks” rated the following:
 - “Preserving the environment and providing open and green space” ranked 8th in the functions that should be performed by Muhlenberg County with 54% indicating

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this function as “Very important” and rated 7th highest for the functions that are “most important”.

- “Natural areas and nature parks” ranked 8th highest in the facilities which households have a need with 52% of households indicating this need. This rank is higher than national benchmarking of 50%. It also ranked 10th highest of the facilities that are “Most important” to households.
 - “Natural areas and nature parks” ranked highest among the facilities where residents indicated their needs are being met 50% or less with 5,901 households.
 - “Natural areas” ranked 12th in the improvements respondents would most like to have made to existing parks.
 - “Nature Programs” ranked 5th for programs which residents have a need with 36% of households indicating a need.
 - “Nature Programs” ranked 3rd for programs with the highest unmet need indicating that there are 4,274 households whose needs are being met 50% or less.
 - “Nature Programs” ranked 5th among recreation programs that are most important to households at 15%.
- (2) “Acquisition of land for open space/green space/future park land” received the lowest amount at \$8 when respondents were asked to allocate \$100 in new funding to various types of parks and recreation facilities.
 - (3) The City of Greenville is developing the Brizendine Nature Park.
 - (4) The need for more nature education has been identified in the focus groups and workshops.
 - (5) Stakeholder groups indicated that about 75% of the county population hunts and/or fishes.
 - (6) Muhlenberg County has an abundance of wildlife management areas and reclaimed mined land.
 - (7) Western Kentucky University has an off-site nature education facility in Hart County.

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b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Preserve the environment and acquire more open space.
- (2) Continue to purchase open space with a priority on linkages between parks, schools, neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- (3) Partner with other organizations, such as Muhlenberg County Schools, National Wild Turkey Foundation, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, land owners, colleges and universities, and others to provide nature education programs.
- (4) Develop a balance of active, passive and natural areas in park development.
- (5) Develop a shooting sports area with a range for sporting clays, rifle range, and archery range with 3D range.
- (6) Support the State in leasing more land for small game hunting.
- (7) Develop additional access to waterways on the Muhlenberg County side of the Green River.
- (8) Continue to develop the archery program in the schools.

6. Outdoor Athletic Fields and Game Courts

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) In the Community Attitude and Interest Survey, sports fields and courts rated the following:
 - “Providing places for outdoor sports programs” (59%) ranked fourth of the functions that are “very important” to residents and 3rd among functions that are “most important” to households.
 - The following number of households indicated a need for more sports fields and courts:

Outdoor basketball courts	3,231
Baseball and softball fields	2,115
Tennis courts	1,883
Soccer fields	1,616

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Youth football fields 1,556

- (2) Most athletic fields in the Muhlenberg County area are provided at the schools except for the Ben Topmiller Park and Beechmont Little League.
- (3) Youth football is expanding and in need of additional fields. Junior Pro Football plays games and practices at North Middle School. The schools also use this field which receives a lot of use.
- (4) Little Leagues rely on volunteers to maintain fields and have very limited funds for maintenance.
- (5) MCHS will be constructing a new football complex at the West Campus to replace their facility at South Middle School.
- (6) There is a very strong demand for athletic fields, especially for practice fields.
- (7) The trend for sports to extend their seasons has strongly increased the demand for rectangular field space.
- (8) Bremen and Longest Elementary Schools will be relocated onto areas now used for sports fields. The fields will be replaced when the new schools are built.
- (9) The Little League organizations are each struggling and have been in discussion about consolidating into a single charter.
- (10) The only city or county owned tennis courts are located at J.P. Morgan Park in Greenville (2 courts). The other courts available to the public are located at Greenville Elementary school (2 courts) and at MCHS East Campus (8 courts).
- (11) Basketball is very important to citizens of Muhlenberg County.

b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Develop additional athletic fields at existing park land or land to be acquired. Ideally the fields would be developed in complexes with multiple fields for maximum efficiency of management and maintenance, reduced travel time for families, and oversight by league organizations.
- (2) Light and irrigate existing and new fields where possible to maximize use.

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- (3) Potentially develop a synthetic turf field to be used by all sports at a new or existing park.
- (4) Tennis courts and basketball courts should be developed in a new large County Park.
- (5) Basketball courts should be developed in each neighborhood park, where appropriate.
- (6) Develop new sports fields in complexes to attract tournaments and increase tourism as well as to provide higher quality facilities for Muhlenberg County residents. Phase the construction of the fields to meet the demand. The complexes should be part of a larger park with a variety of family oriented activities to further attract tournaments as several communities are trying to attract teams for tournaments.

7. Programming

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) 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.
- (2) The various sports leagues provide most of the youth sports programs such as soccer, baseball, softball, football, and basketball.
- (3) The new Central City Wellness Center is meeting its attendance and membership goals.
- (4) Central City and Greenville host events and festivals.
- (5) The programs that have the highest unmet demand from the surveys include:

Program	Households
▪ Adult fitness and wellness programs	4,800
▪ Teen programs	4,639
▪ Nature programs	4,274
▪ Youth fitness and wellness	3,838
▪ Special events	3,675
▪ Water fitness programs	3,577
▪ Shooting skills	3,458

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- (6) The community desires additional programming. Providing programs for teens, seniors and residents of all ages ranked 1st, 3rd and 7th respectively among functions that should be performed by Muhlenberg County with 74%, 53% and 57% of households indicating them as “very important.”
 - (7) 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.
 - (8) 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.
 - (9) The County and cities have no trained staff dedicated to recreational programming.
 - (10) Churches and private organizations provide additional programming in the community. Dance studios and Taekwondo are examples.
 - (11) There is a need for transportation opportunities for programs throughout the County.
 - (12) The community desires programs that build character and that are affordable.
 - (13) One goal of the Paradise Park proponents is to host more teen activities in the park.
- b. Potential Solutions:
- (1) Muhlenberg County needs a Director of Parks and Recreation to organize, promote, and implement programs and to coordinate with volunteer and partner organizations, as well as hire appropriate program staff as needed.
 - (2) Develop a base of core programs for various age groups and target audiences.
 - (3) Initially focus on programs that can be provided in existing parks and facilities.
 - (4) The priorities for new facilities should be based upon the program needs.
 - (5) Provide transportation opportunities where possible.

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- (6) The large number of households with unmet needs in the area of adult and youth fitness and wellness programs suggests the need to develop a fitness center for the community in addition to the Central City Wellness Center. Muhlenberg County may consider the development of a fitness and recreation facility in the new central park location.
- (7) Coordinate with the Muhlenberg County Schools for possible use of their indoor and outdoor facilities for programming.
- (8) Supplement the Parks and Recreation Director position with internships from university students majoring in Recreation Administration as the demand for additional programs grows.
- (9) Suggested core program ideas
 - Age groups to be served:
 - Preschool/Toddlers
 - Elementary school age
 - Middle school
 - Teens
 - Adults
 - Seniors
 - Intergenerational
 - Multiple ages
 - Potential settings
 - Instructional classes
 - Progressive skill levels
 - Drop-in
 - Special events
 - Special interest clubs
 - Leagues and/or tournaments
 - Outings and field trips
 - Program types
 - Athletics
 - Creative arts
 - Games
 - Health and wellness education
 - Outdoor/nature education
 - Performing arts

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- (10) Program ideas should be presented as proposals to a new Parks and Recreation Board or Commission and consider cost of providing the program, cost to user, potential attendance, facility needs, safety to the user, cost-benefit analysis, etc.
 - (11) Program User Satisfaction
 - Develop monitoring system for customer/user feedback on programs and facilities.
 - Continue to develop an increased level of program and facility statistics in monitoring use and program needs.
8. Indoor Programming and Recreation
- a. Observations and Analysis:
 - (1) Focus groups with seniors support the need for additional indoor space throughout the County.
 - (2) Several small community centers are provided throughout the County in Powderly, Nelson Creek, Ennis, Bremen, South Carrollton, Millport and Midland.
 - (3) “Providing places for indoor recreation and fitness” was selected by 60% of the survey respondents ranking 5th and 4th for the “most important” function that should be provided by the local government.
 - (4) About 26% of the responses in the survey indicating use of the Central City Wellness Center.
 - (5) “Indoor fitness and recreation” was 4th at 57%, “indoor swimming pool” 8th at 51%, “indoor multiple use courts” ranked 10th at 45%, “indoor basketball” 14th at 35%, “banquet facility” 15th at 34% among facilities needed by residents.
 - (6) “Indoor swimming” ranked 8th with 4,172 households indicating an unmet need of 50% or more. “Indoor multi-purpose center” ranked 11th.
 - (7) “Adult fitness and wellness programs” ranked first in the programs needed by residents (64%) and ranked as having the highest unmet need. “Youth fitness and wellness” were 3rd and 4th on the same questions.
 - (8) “Churches” and “schools” ranked 1st and 3rd among facilities used by residents for recreation.

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- (9) The development of indoor recreation facilities ranked 4th of the allocation of \$100 question in the survey.
- (10) The basketball leagues use school gyms for their programs.
- (11) Interviews with students at middle and high schools in the County indicated a need for bowling alleys, teen areas to hang out, and more.
- (12) The new Felix E. Martin, Jr. Auditorium at MCHS will provide a venue for indoor performances. The Merle Travis Center also provides an opportunity for indoor performances.
- (13) Typical costs for operation of a recreation center are about \$18 to \$20 per square foot per year and the cost recovery through programs, memberships and user fees are typically 50% - 75% of the operating costs.

b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Maximize use of schools, churches and community centers for indoor programming.
- (2) Develop an indoor multi-purpose recreation center of 30,000 to 40,000 square feet in a central location that should include the following:
 - Two full size game courts,
 - Elevated track,
 - Locker rooms (small – functional),
 - Multi-purpose community rooms,
 - Game room, youth and teen area,
 - Fitness and cardio-vascular area,
 - Aerobics/dance studios,
 - Location should be in the Greenville area or south to minimize competition with the Central City Wellness Center and to extend the geographic opportunities for residents.
- (3) Types of programs that have been suggested in the stakeholder groups and public workshops include:
 - Adult and youth fitness
 - Senior programs
 - After-school activities

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- Year round camps
- Programs to build character
- Life skills programs
- Athletic leagues- adult and youth
- Transportation to programs
- Arts and culture programs
- Martial arts programs

9. Outdoor Aquatics

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) The pool at J.P. Morgan Park in Greenville is the only public pool in the County and it averages 91 people per day over the last three years. ROTC rents the pool for a week.
- (2) Central City has closed its swimming pool. This pool was built in 1936 and was well past its useful life. Central City plans to develop a new pool adjacent to its Convention Center.
- (3) Central City Country Club and Greenville Country Club offer swimming pools for their members.
- (4) Use of “outdoor swimming pools and water parks” was the 9th highest unmet demand with 4,165 households indicating their needs are being met less than 50%.
- (5) “Outdoor swimming pools and water parks” ranked 9th among facilities for which residents had the highest need (48%).
- (6) Swimming is the second highest participatory recreation activity in the country following exercise walking.
- (7) The public workshops indicated that residents travel to neighboring communities for swimming.
- (8) An analysis by Brandstetter Carroll Inc. that is based upon several case studies and industry standards, indicates that the following persons per day could be expected at the following locations if a modern style family aquatic center were constructed:

<u>Location</u>	<u>People per day</u>
MCHS West Campus	280

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Central City	274
W. Ky. Pkwy at US 431	248
Powderly area	247
W. Ky. Pkwy at Us 62	230

(9) At a conservative estimate of 280 people per day at an average income from entrance fees and concessions of about \$5.95 per person results in a total income of \$131,000. Using an average figure of \$0.92 per gallon for annual expenses based upon several case studies, and assuming a pool with about 200,000 gallons, results in an annual operational cost in the range of \$184,000 per year. This results in an annual loss. Keep in mind that attendance is based upon weather and variations will occur. For example, 2009 was a poor year for pool attendance due to cooler and wetter summer, whereas 2010 is an excellent attendance year due to the extremely hot weather. Hopkinsville has seen their attendance increase by 75% this year over the last three years with an average daily attendance of 662 compared to an average of 380 the last 3 years.

(10) Expenses will increase if a pool management company is retained to operate the pool. The County would need to evaluate the cost/benefit of having this service outsourced if this option is desired due to a lack of expertise among staff.

b. Potential Solutions:

(1) The County could develop an outdoor family aquatic center in a central location if possible. This could be supplemented by locating spraygrounds in other parks. The central location is ideal if developed as part of a larger complex of family and community use facilities such as walking trails, ball fields, picnic areas, etc.

(2) The outdoor family aquatic center may operate at a loss, but will provide a highly desired service for youth and families. To attract the desired users of youth and families, the aquatic center should include the modern attractions of zero depth access, shallow water, water sprays and play apparatus, shade areas, and deck chairs. A lazy river attracts all ages from small children through seniors. Water slides will attract the middle school children and teens. Lap lanes and competition areas are not necessary unless there will be a swim team. But an area with 3' to 4' deep water is advised for swim lessons.

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10. Maintenance

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) “Operating city/county parks and facilities” ranked 2nd among the functions that should be provided by local government in the survey.
- (2) Only 49% of residents rank the current condition of parks as “excellent” or “good” according to the surveys, which is much lower than the national benchmark of 85%.
- (3) Central City, Greenville, Drakesboro, Powderly and other cities maintain their parks with minimal budget through their road or public works departments.
- (4) There is no staff in the County dedicated to park maintenance and practices such as playground safety inspections, except at the schools.
- (5) The abandoned ball fields in the County are eyesores.
- (6) Many playgrounds do not meet safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
- (7) Historically communities and the County have relied on grants and Coal Severance Funds to fund park improvements, but do not have the budget to adequately maintain the parks.
- (8) With the high demand for trails indicated in the survey and the focus groups, a much higher level of maintenance will be warranted to maintain and monitor the additional trail and park system.
- (9) The development of additional parks and programming to bring people into the parks will require that Muhlenberg County budget additional funds for maintenance. In addition, additional expertise and training will be required in the areas of horticulture, turf care, tree care, and playground safety inspections.
- (10) Athletic fields currently rely on volunteers for maintenance.

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b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Develop a new Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Department with an appropriate budget to oversee all parks maintenance and programs. The cities and the County will need to designate funds to this department if the new department is to maintain existing parks.
- (2) Explore various options for consolidating the maintenance of park land into one organization. This will eliminate overlap and duplication of manpower, equipment and supplies. This will require legal advice and a series of agreements between the cities, County and School Board. The transfer of equipment and staff may also be considered in the reorganization.
- (3) Provide additional maintenance staff and a viable operations budget as the facilities expand.
- (4) Investigate the potential use of Coal Severance funds for operations and maintenance as well as development.
- (5) Expand and coordinate a volunteer base to assist in the maintenance, development, and monitoring of the trail system and parks.
- (6) Establish and implement maintenance standards for parks and recreation areas.
- (7) Develop an adopt-a-park or trail program to promote volunteerism and community support.

11. Partnerships

a. Observations and Analysis:

- (1) Churches are the number one organization households use for parks and recreation programs and activities from the survey. Schools ranked 3rd and the Ag Center ranked 5th. The use of these non-government facilities is higher than the national benchmark, indicating the lack of a Parks and Recreation Department.
- (2) The Martin Foundation is a major partner in the community with a goal of improving youth services.
- (3) The Muhlenberg County Schools are a great partner allowing the use of their schools and sites for park facilities and programs. This relationship is not experienced

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everywhere throughout Kentucky and the Schools should be applauded and encouraged.

- (4) Thousands of acres in the County are either undeveloped or reclaimed mined land. These lands offer potential for recreational use. In addition, the Commonwealth of Kentucky operates large areas as wildlife management areas.
- (5) Several organizations in the community provide leisure and recreation programs for residents of all ages. This is especially true for youth sports activities, which have placed substantial financial and manpower resources into the youth sports facilities and programs.
- (6) First Baptist Church has a track and gymnasium which are used by the community. Other churches also offer recreational facilities.
- (7) 4H does have some grants for facility development.
- (8) The Wendell Ford Center has offered some land and manpower to develop parks and trails. They could help with clearing, grading and trail development.
- (9) The State Department of Fish and Wildlife is another potential partner to stock the lake at Lake Luzerne.

b. Potential Solutions:

- (1) Establish a separate account within the Martin Foundation specifically designated for donations/sponsorships for parks and recreation purposes. Note that the Martin Foundation does not desire to hold title to land.
- (2) Establish a potential public/private partnership for the development of specialized facilities. This could potentially include use of reclaimed mined land for ATV trails, equestrian trails and areas, and shooting sports.
- (3) Continue partnerships with Muhlenberg County, Muhlenberg County Schools, cities, youth sports organizations, 4H and other non-profit organizations for trail development and management, land acquisition, park development, and programs
- (4) Continue an open dialogue and partnerships with Muhlenberg County Schools for facility use and programs.

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- (5) Continue an open dialogue among the various groups to cross market, coordinate, and avoid duplication of programs and activities.
- (6) TVA is a major employer and partner in the community and could possibly be considered for a seat on a parks and recreation board.
- (7) Develop a brochure and use the Muhlenberg County web site to list available programs, not just for County or city activities, but also for the sports organizations, schools, 4H, Chamber, and private opportunities in Muhlenberg County. This could include a calendar of events. The process of developing and maintaining the calendar will also be a good tool to coordinate among the various organizations in planning for events and avoiding conflicts. The Chamber of Commerce has volunteered to perform this function.

12. Budget

a. Observations and Analysis

- (1) 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 was \$29.42 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.
- (2) 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.

b. Potential Solutions

- (1) Develop a fee structure for the use of the new ball field complexes to support the maintenance and renovation of the areas as needed.
- (2) Expand program opportunities to increase revenue.
- (3) Continue to pursue grants for the development and operations of parks and programs.

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- (4) Establish an account within the Martin Foundation to be a source for funding for implementing this Master Plan and to raise funds through donations, endowments, bequests, trusts, and grants. Experience indicates that individuals are more likely to donate money or land to a foundation than a government agency.
- (5) Consolidate the staff, equipment and operations for the maintenance of the parks in the County and cities to increase efficiency.

13. Administration

a. Potential Solutions

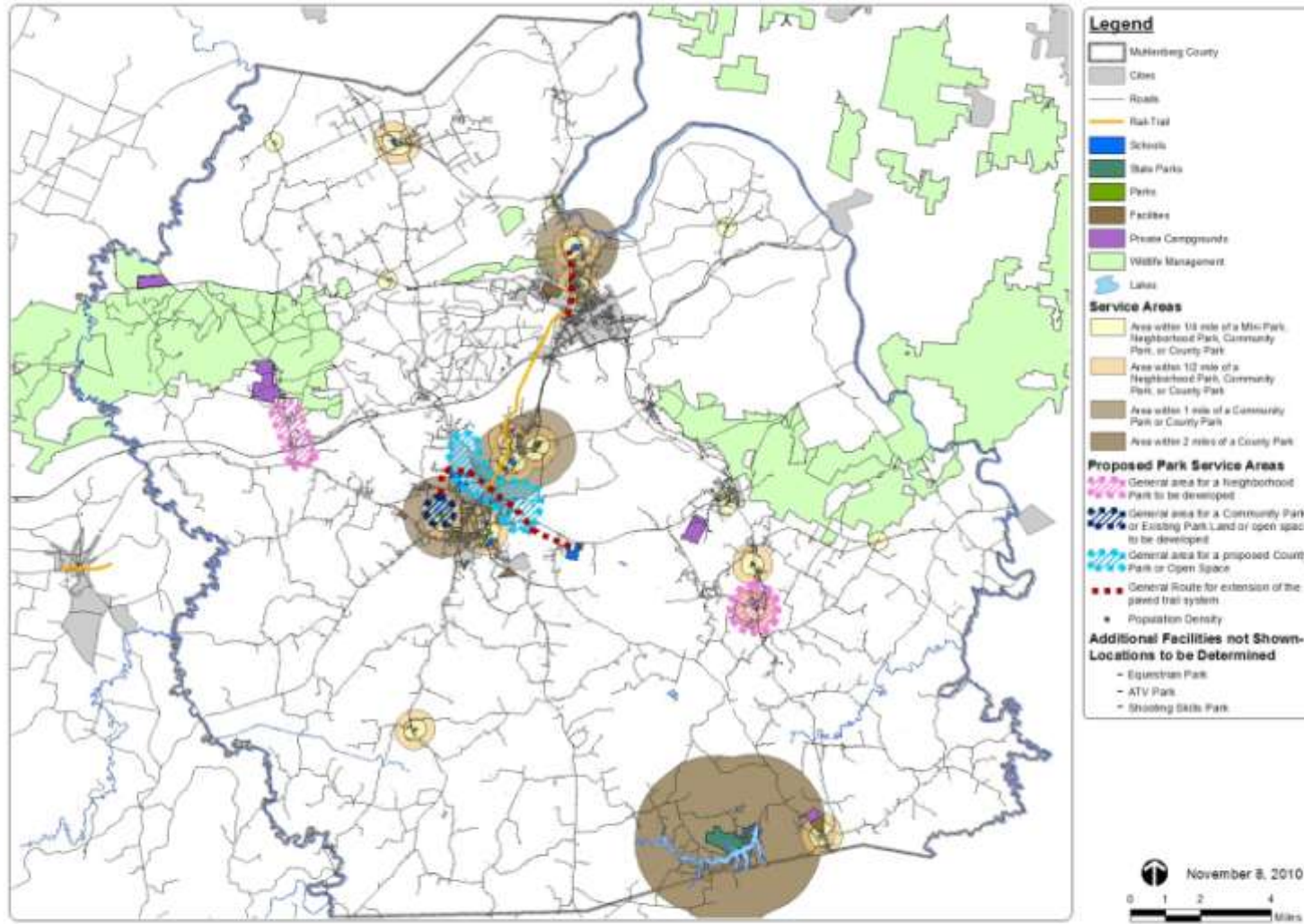
- (1) Establish a Muhlenberg County Parks and Recreation Department, initially with a Director and staff as the department grows. The department will include:
 - Parks and Recreation Director
 - Administrative assistant/Clerical
 - Program Staff
 - Maintenance Staff
- (2) The position of Parks and Recreation Director is an administrative position primarily with duties to manage staff, establish programs, coordinate partner organizations, coordinate volunteers, market parks and programs, and more. More detailed position descriptions will be included in later drafts of the Master Plan. The key is that this position should be a parks and recreation professional with a degree in Parks and Recreation Administration, certification as a Parks and Recreation Professional, and active in the Kentucky Recreation and Parks Society. This person should not be expected to mow grass, line ball fields, etc. as so many directors in Kentucky are expected to do. The goal is for the Director to grow with the County-wide parks and recreation system.
- (3) Several options are available for the management of this position. The Martin Foundation Legal Counsel will look into the Kentucky Revised Statutes for the available options. This document discusses the desires of the Master Plan Steering Committee and we will then try to work the arrangement for the department around the desires.
 - One potential solution that has been discussed is for the Department to be a Department of Muhlenberg

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County and to be under the direction of the County Judge-Executive and Fiscal Court. If the option of a County department is used, it is suggested to have an advisory board to assist in promoting the department and to provide guidance to the Parks and Recreation Director and Fiscal Court.

- Another option is for a separate Commission to be developed which would oversee the Department. The Commission members would be appointed by the Fiscal Court, City Councils, and possibly the School Board. The Commission would have a separate budget from the County and would be a policy making body. There are several examples of Joint City-County Parks and Recreation Commissions throughout Kentucky where the major city and the county fund the department through their general funds. The Consultant and Martin Foundation staff are currently looking into the possibility of multiple cities and the county participating in the Commission.
- (4) A question for the communities throughout the County is what will happen to their parks? An option is for the County to take over the operation and maintenance with some financial assistance from the cities, or for the cities to maintain their current parks and the new department to focus on any new parks that are developed.

Figure 10: Proposed Park Service Areas



MUHLENBERG COUNTY
Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Proposed Park Service Areas

