

Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Concept paper written by Jim Embry

Submitted October 9, 2006

An exciting collaborative community project with eyes on 2010!

**Current community partners: Leadership Lexington, Arts Power!
and Northeast Lexington Initiative(NELI)**

To: Leadership Lexington Class of 2006-2007

From: NELI

We propose the following project:

Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden, a community garden/art project that would be located in the green space at the intersection of Third St., Nelson Ave and Midland Ave. This land is presently owned by the State of Kentucky and managed by the Highway Department District 7 located on New Circle Road. This land was previously owned by Dan Brock and associates. (*Approval for permit use as art garden was granted by the Highway Department to NELI November 2006*)

This area is approximately a rectangle 80ft. wide by 180ft. long with a telephone pole, various business signs and utility boxes located there. This corner is very visible to traffic along Third Street, Midland Avenue and Winchester Road and serves as a gateway into the downtown area and into the northeast Lexington neighborhood. This project would certainly enhance the Winchester Rd gateway into the city for the **Alltech FEI World Equestrian games**.

This would be a most ideal location for this collaborative effort between our organizations (Leadership Lexington, NELI, Arts Power) and many others. Dan Brock has already mentioned his willingness to donate funds for this project and he mentioned that Smuckers, the mulch company and other nearby businesses would also be pleased to be a part of this project. We see ourselves also working of course with various LFUCG departments, the UK Arboretum, the Highway Department agronomist, Downtown Development Authority, Keeneland, UK Design, Smuckers, neighborhood associations and churches, local artists and youth.

We see this space being called the **Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden (IMMAG)***. As many of you know, Murphy is the most well known and celebrated jockey from this neighborhood whose record of winning **three(3) Kentucky Derby victories** stood until the 1950's. We see this space being a WOW! Site that is very attractive to those that drive or walk by. We see this **site multi-tasking** and thus being educational, environmentally functional, very bold and colorful, historical, inviting and interactive! We see this space looking like the following:

***Outdoor classroom:** Circular areas composed of many different varieties of flowers, native plants and small trees with identification signage as a teaching tool for students and community members. To be used like a mini-arboretum or

outdoor classroom. Community garden spaces made available. Very interactive and informative.

***Historical markers:** Within each circular area would also be historical markers of the numerous African American jockeys, trainers and other horse industry personnel as well as info on such items as Kentucky Association track.

***Art from used objects:** Sculpture pieces that relate to the horse industry made from such things as used bailing wire for sculpture of horses, used horseshoes welded into forms representing the horse industry, wood sculpture pieces, art pieces from found objects, and especially youth art pieces.

*flags with **stable colors**

*demonstration **rain gardens** that tie into the EPA storm water consent decree

* **Sidewalk story line:** the sidewalk area could be used like a story book of the neighborhood and KY horse industry with such information as derby winners, picture of old race track in the sidewalk squares

***mosaic tiles** arranged along the curb with horse industry theme

We see this memorial garden also having other associated pieces:

- a very nice tourist-type **historical pamphlet** that describes the history of northeast Lexington with a strong emphasis on the history of the horse industry in this area. This pamphlet would describe the contents of IMMAG but more. It would also describe such sites as: Thoroughbred Park, the Public Library display, Isaac Murphy's house along 3rd St, Charles Young Center, the Lyric Theatre, the site of the Lexington Association race track, the 7th St African Cemetery no.2, the new school, the Horse Park, Keeneland to name a few.
- A short **documentary film** about Northeast Lexington that would expand upon the information within the brochure
- Development of **community tours** that would guide people from Thoroughbred Park to Isaac Murphy Memorial Park and then throughout the community identifying such sites as the old race course, historical houses landmarks and could conclude at the downtown Public Library display of horses and jockeys
- **Historical markers** placed at different locations around the community telling the story of individual, an event, or an experience.
- **Streets** in the new Hope 6 housing development named after African American jockeys
- **Interactive Connections** with the new school in particular and also connections with the Charles Young Center, the Lyric, 7th Street Cemetery. etc.
- **Plays** performed and written by youth, residents and others about historical themes or individuals
- **Retail shops** centered around history and art.

All of these associated pieces would be woven together to create a very exciting and informative community collaboration around the FEI Equestrian games and as a continuing contribution to the overall vision of creating a **vibrant and sustainable community**.

We welcome your input and enthusiasm.

Submitted October 9, 2006

By Jim Embry, Bruce Mundy
Northeast Lexington Initiative (NELI),

***FOOTNOTE:** Why the name **Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden (IMMAG)** ?
From our research we know that the Murphy's home is somewhere very near this site at 3rd and Midland. The words "**Isaac Murphy**" in the name is meant to honor Isaac Murphy, his legacy, his wife and their home. The word "**memorial**" in the name is our way of recognizing the many other racing personnel and community people beyond Isaac and even other jockeys that made it possible for Isaac and other jockeys to become the famous icons of the racing industry. Such people as: trainers, grooms, farmers who raised the hay that horses ate, women who sewed the racing silks, folks who mucked the horse stalls, blacksmiths who shod the horses, bookies, cooks and many other individuals that should be remembered and respected in the word "**memorial**". Paraphrasing the African proverb, the word "**memorial**" was meant to connote that "*It takes a village to support a jockey*". The words "**art garden**" in the name was meant to connote: a place for art installations and gardens worked on by community people using an integrated approach; an interactive space, a transformative space; a place to teach principles of sustainability; a place of past, present and future; an evolving place; a place for spiritual renewal; a community gathering place and a place that looked and felt different from a park that is usually more static. While I was working in Detroit I helped create art gardens and experienced how they could literally transform neighborhoods. Bruce and I see the opportunity with this project that the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden could be another link in the transformation of the Eastend that we have been working towards for many years.