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GARY HENDERSON



New park brightens downtown corner

It seemed like an unusual place to build a park – a corner where its neighbors are car repair garages, an old feed mill and a boarded-up house.

But now that the work is done, Hub City Park at East Henry Street and South Daniel Morgan Avenue seems like a nice fit in the neighborhood that some hope will someday be a thriving arts section in downtown Spartanburg.

The Group of 100, a body of civic-minded friends who identify eyesores on the city's landscape, footed the bill for the park.

Most of the locations the group has identified were near gateway entrances to the city.

Those include both ends of the bridge on North Church Street near Krispy Kreme, the fountain, the landscaped corner at Carver Jr. High School on South Church Street, the pocket-sized park at the North Pine Street and East St. John Street intersection and the fountain at Kennedy and Union streets.

The group does its works in anonymity, though I've learned who a few of them are. When I asked one of them to talk with me about what they're doing, I practically had to sign in blood that I wouldn't reveal her name.

"This was a two-year project," she said, talking about the new park. "We had to purchase the property before we could do anything."

The group has given the property to the city for use as public space.

Another thing the Group of 100 keeps under wraps is what they spend on projects. So far, they've done eight projects, some that are in just as unlikely places as this park.

Drive by, or better yet, get out of your car at Hub City Art Park and walk the

labyrinth that's the centerpiece of the park.

Chris Thompson, a principal in The LandArt Design Group in Spartanburg, was the park designer.

"The labyrinth is based on the 800-year-old labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral in France," Thompson said. "It's much smaller, but it's based on proportions and the style. If you look at it from above, the labyrinth loosely resembles a dove."

Thompson has designed many public and private landscapes around Spartanburg, including the Jacobs

Arboretum at the University of South Carolina Upstate. He's working on the landscape design for the George Dean Johnson Jr. Business School, which will be constructed on East St. John Street near the Chapman Cultural Center.

Before the park was built, the half-acre site was a thick patch of overgrown weeds and tree saplings.

Drivers going north on Daniel Morgan see the park best. First they see the 10-foot-tall stainless steel sculpture by Salisbury, N.C., artist Michael Baker.

Mostly, it has a grayish appearance,

but as the light changes, so does the sculpture's color.

Visitors to Hub City Art Park will notice that pads and spaces for additional pieces of art have been left vacant.

They will be added as they are completed.

This park is not a place to go to shoot a game of hoops or to have other athletic activity.

"It's a place for reflection and relaxing," Thompson said. "You can feel very safe here."

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Michelle Mogavero/Staff

A PLACE OF REFLECTION: Hub City Art Park provides a place for downtown workers to spend a relaxing and reflective lunch hour.