

# 2010 GREEN FUTURES ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

SOUDERTON BOROUGH: SCULPTURE PLAZA



Montgomery County Lands Trust  
P.O. Box 300, Lederach, PA  
19450-0300  
215.513.0100 / [www.mclt.org](http://www.mclt.org)

# 2010 GREEN FUTURES ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## CREATING A DOWNTOWN SCULPTURE PLAZA

Is public art a waste of public money? Or can it become a cohesive force in a community, a way of focusing the energy and drive of a diverse population, or a way to revitalize tired spaces? There are those who have a clear idea about why public art should be part of every community. "Public art fosters civic pride, creates a sense of fun, makes a place more memorable, stimulates new ideas and contributes to environmental renewal and economic and social development," explains Sue Kay, a British advocate for bringing art to public spaces. Souderton Borough officials must have been channeling Kay when they embarked on a unique venture that would ultimately transform space occupied by several neglected buildings into a dynamic, inspiring park.

Borough officials had identified the need to create more parking spaces, and to develop linkages for traffic flow behind a row of buildings on the borough's Main Street. The Souderton - Telford Main Streets Design Committee suggested including a pocket park in the project, as a buffer between the new parking and the sidewalks. As plans for the pocket park evolved, the idea of incorporating art into the project emerged. And that is how a practical solution to parking and traffic problems blossomed into an exciting new borough landmark.

The project began with the borough's development of the Souderton - Telford Revitalization Plan in 2001. Through public meetings and outreach, and thousands of volunteer hours, plans for the park evolved. But first there were preliminary tasks to accomplish. The abandoned buildings on the

site were beyond salvage, leaving the borough with few options other than seizure through eminent domain followed by demolition. Even before this first step was completed, though, the scent of possibilities had inspired new enterprise. An abandoned factory—a sturdy brick building—next to the site underwent its own transformation. The new owners restored and renovated the building to house executive offices.

The borough obtained funding from Montgomery County's Community Revitalization program and also the Green Fields/Green Towns program for acquisition of the properties along with demolition and construction of the parking lot and pocket park. The Indian Valley Arts Foundation raised money for the sculpture that became the focal point of the park. Borough funds further fortified the project.

But the numbers only tell part of the story. The remarkable collaboration of a diverse group of organizations, borough officials, and volunteers accomplished something extraordinary. The group collaborated on every aspect of the project -- from planning, to grant writing, to fundraising, to execution. Borough public works staff laid stonework and installed railings and decorative fencing. A horticulturist, who is a member of the Souderton - Telford Main Streets Design Committee, created the landscaping plan for the park. And volunteers planted, weeded and helped install irrigation for the site. Wayne Trappe, the artist who created the striking sculpture in the park's center, was amazed by the inspiring community spirit reflected in every aspect of this unique project.

