

# OUR TOWN FOUNDATION

★ Shaping Hamburg's Future ★

## 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

February 10, 2009

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Blueprint  
COMMUNITIES



Our Town Foundation is a charitable non-profit 501(c) 3 organization funded in part by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Community and Economic Development with support from the Borough of Hamburg, local businesses, and private property owners.

## 08' – 09' Membership Data

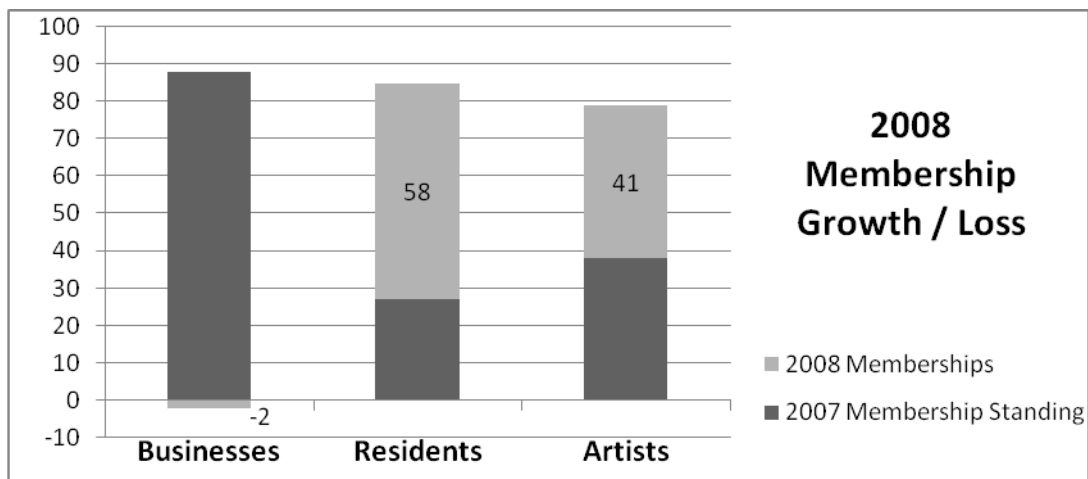
What better way to demonstrate support for the revitalization effort than to track membership statistics? Each year OTF has increased its membership, thus proving that more and more people back the organization. 265 residents, artists, and businesses are now members of Our Town Foundation.

Since this time last year...

58 NEW residents have joined Our Town Foundation

41 NEW artist members have joined the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance

Business membership remains at a standstill.

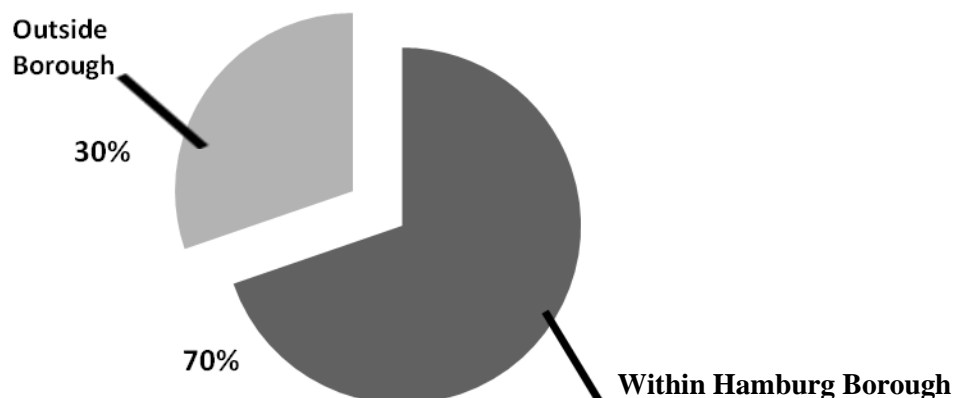


### Business Membership (86 members)

Our Town Foundation has established a consistent support base in Hamburg since 2001. This last year brought to Hamburg the same economic hard times that the rest of the nation has been experiencing. Fortunately as one business has shut its doors, another has often opened in the Borough.

Businesses in neighboring towns are as much a part of attracting visitors, residents, and entrepreneurs into the area as downtown Hamburg is, and in turn we have united some of these outlying businesses into the promotional tactics of Hamburg's marketing.

### 2008 Location of Supporting Businesses



## **Resident Membership (85 members)**

Despite tough economic conditions, the town's residents are showing additional support for our program. Resident membership more than tripled in a year's time.

Having supportive residential members confirms that revitalization efforts and years of accomplishments have left an emotional imprint on more than just the business district.

Continued support from the town's residents is important as OTF hopes to extend its beautification and revitalization efforts into the neighborhood realm with Elm Street Program funding. Not to mention that Hamburg's Blueprint Community Team will continue to work with other community organizations to make improvements within the entire Borough.

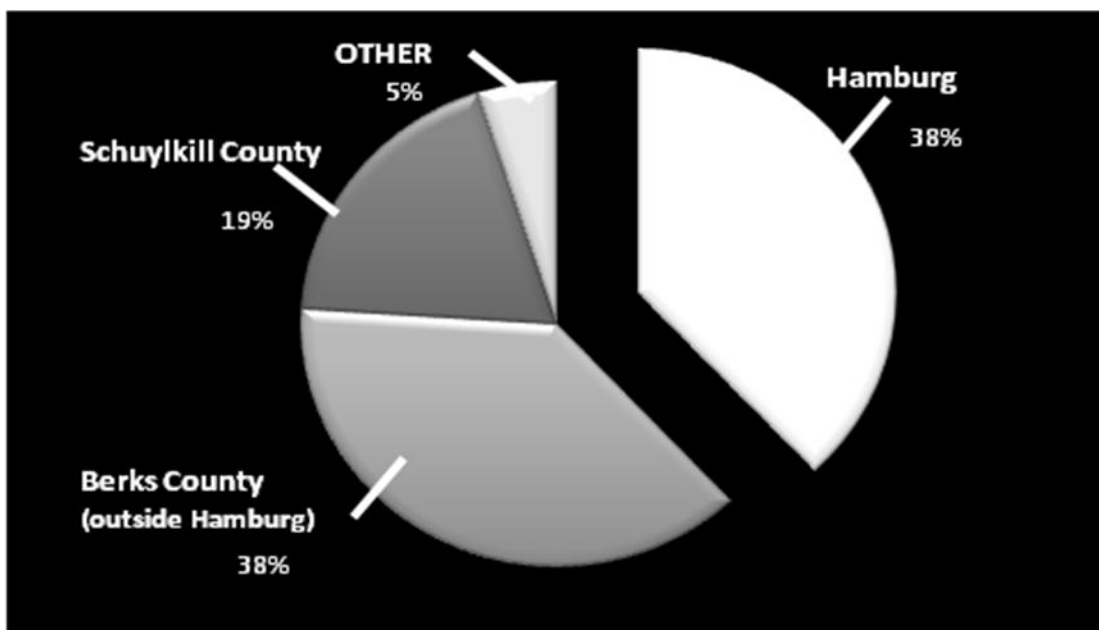
## **Artist Membership (79 members)**

The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance started with less than a dozen members in 2006. When the Gallery of Hamburg opened its doors in July of 2007 membership jumped to almost *four* dozen; when the Gallery relocated to a bigger home a year later membership soared to over *six* dozen.

The Arts Alliance has provided an affordable opportunity for aspiring and established artists to display their talents. 2009's goal is to create more exposure with more opportunity – a process of evolution that requires more dedication of time and responsibility from the artists.

Despite the new Gallery participation requirements, the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance remains an affordable opportunity for artists within town and also attracts the attention of ambitious artists in the communities surrounding Hamburg.

## **Location of Arts Alliance Members – 08' to 09'**



## **General OTF Statistics (2008)**

<b>Grant Funds (from all sources) Received to Date</b>		<b>\$ 2,210,533.00</b>
<b>Number of Façade Grants Approved in 2008</b>	6	
<b>Money Value of Façade Grants Approved in 2008</b>	\$ 5,761.50	
<b>Number of Façade Grants Approved since Inception</b>	63	
<b>Money Value of Façade Grants since Inception</b>	\$ 134,748.01	
<b>Total Investment in Façade Renovations to Date (Public &amp; Private Funds)</b>		<b>\$ 368,100.33</b>
 (2008-09)		
<b>Current Business Members</b>	86	
<b>Current Resident Members</b>	85	
<b>Current Arts Alliance Members</b>	79	
<b>Complimentary Members</b>	15	
<b>Total Members to Date</b>		<b>265</b>
 (2008)		
<b>Total Active Volunteers</b>	49	
<b>Total Volunteer Hours Reported for 2008</b>	1520	
<b>Money Value of Volunteer Hours (\$18.77 per hour)</b>		<b>\$28,530.40</b>

## **Main Street – Where it all Began**

***The Main Street Mission: To revitalize and preserve downtown Historic Hamburg for future generations to enjoy.***

***The Main Street Vision: Our vision of downtown Hamburg is one of vibrant streets lined with restored historic buildings filled with shops, restaurants, and professional services. Visitors and residents will walk on new sidewalks adorned with flowers and ornamentation. Monthly events will be held. Hamburg will once again be the premier location in Northern Berks to shop, dine, and be entertained.***

Downtowns are the heart of a community; they are symbolic of a district's economy, quality of life, and public pride. A downtown is a long-term community asset that must be nurtured, maintained, and promoted. Having a well developed, well-educated, financially stable revitalization organization is the best way to ensure that our downtown will be successful for the long term.

Commercial districts are prominent employment centers. Even the smallest commercial districts employ hundreds of people and are often collectively the community's largest employer. Thus, successful downtowns provide incentive for all current residents to remain. Main street property owners pay a significant portion of the community's tax base. If the district declines, property values drop, placing more of a tax burden on other parts of town. Likewise, a healthy commercial core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Besides the financial advantages, a strong business district provides convenience for the residents. Downtown Hamburg is within walking distance of the residential base, providing easy accessibility for the community and reducing the reliance on auto-dependent shopping. The local government offices are located within walking distance as well.

Lastly, a thriving downtown provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. The King Frost Parade, Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, and other events all reinforce sense of community. When viewing a movie at the Hamburg Strand Theatre, or getting a bite to eat at our many restaurants - surely you will see friends or neighbors. Where would we congregate without our community centers?

Downtown Hamburg possesses a great deal of historic character – the town still contains significant architectural styles and historical properties. Preservation of these assets increases property values and attracts interested investors and tourists into the town. Older boroughs which are preserving their historical assets are the ones succeeding in today's competitive market. We must use the past to inspire the present.

Cultural tourism is on the rise as well, therefore we must continue to enhance the cultural opportunities available to our residents and visitors.

## Organization – The Board of Directors

*Collectively, the board of directors assumes legal and philosophical responsibilities for all program activities. The board of directors is solely responsible for establishing program policy, approving the annual program budget and committee action plans, and determining the goals for the organization. The Pa Downtown Center says, “Organization means getting everyone working towards common goals.”*

Main Street organizations go through three distinct organization phases:

1. The Catalyst phase: During this phase the revitalization program is created, the organization builds collaborative partnerships, develops basic revitalization skills, and establishes a credible presence in the community.
2. Growth phase: Most of the major reinvestment needed in the historic commercial district takes place during this period.
3. Management phase: In this stage, the organization constantly monitors the community and helps the business district make necessary economic adjustments; ensures that the district is well maintained; and continues to stimulate physical improvements and economic innovations.

The catalyst phase typically lasts from 2 – 4 years, the growth phase, about 8 – 12 years; and the management phase is ongoing. Some Main Street programs cycle back and repeat certain aspects of earlier organization phases as they mature, as the marketplace changes, and as the program’s staff and leadership change over time.

Our Town Foundation is midway between the growth and the management phase. Many programs in this transitional phase experience an “identity crisis” of sorts. The organization has usually made significant headway toward correcting the initial problems that led to the initiation of a Main Street program, and program leaders may no longer be sure what the group’s mission should be in the future. It is important to remember that the revitalization and management of a traditional commercial district is an ongoing process. Just as sound management of any business remains imperative after its start up, so to is the ongoing management of a commercial district that is essential to the economic stability and continuing growth in the community.

Looking ahead, the Foundation will continue to manage the Main Street corridor; in addition, we will move forward with changing our bylaws to become a full-fledged Community Revitalization Corporation. The Board of Directors will oversee all aspects of the existing Main Street Program, the future Elm Street Neighborhood, the ever-growing Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, and the Blueprint Community Team.

While this may seem like a huge endeavor, the Foundation has actually been overseeing these programs all along.

**Volunteers have logged over 1500 of hours of volunteer time in 2008, and quite probably, many more hours that have not been recorded. According to the *Independent Sector* the monetary value of a volunteer is \$18.77 per hour, thus resulting in approximately \$30,000 of donated labor to the organization.**

## Promotions: It's All About Image

*Committee Goal: To market the town as a social, cultural, and economic center by marketing the charm and unique characteristics that Hamburg offers. The PA Downtown Center states that "promotion means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects, including residents, visitors, shoppers, and entrepreneurs."*

It takes money to make money – but what if no one has any? 2008 was a rough year for downtown Hamburg – it suffered economically with the rest of the nation, but it persevered nonetheless. The marketing ideal of getting the most bang for your buck took on a whole new meaning.

TV and FM radio commercials weren't even a consideration this past year – the funds just weren't there. Even print advertising had to get cut back. More focus was placed on advertising locally – to entice the locals that were trying to save gas money, that were looking for other shopping options.

OTF offered its business members very affordable opportunities for coop advertising. Only by experimenting can we learn what works and what doesn't. It's important to appeal to the numerous surrounding campgrounds during the summer months – although the campground packets weren't a large success, we will try a simpler approach this year: coupon sheets to leave at the front desks.

Unfortunately many residents don't understand the importance of a local economy and do all their shopping outside of their town. Coupons don't appeal to these people – they're stuck in there ways. However, a full force Shop Local image campaign may change their mind. If you throw out enough facts with the right mix of emotions, you can grab a few new customers.

OTF will continue to take advantage of any and all free advertising / promotion, i.e. online event listings and delivery of brochures. We will find a way to better utilize the [www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org) website for promotional purposes, i.e. including business coupons on it.

With as many assets and historical attractions that Hamburg has in town and surrounding it, we could, and should, be a destination – a tourist stop. After years of discussing opportunities and ideas for weekend package deals, OTF hopes to make these destination packages a reality.

The Promotions and Marketing Committee is not all about promoting the businesses – it also needs to promote the Foundation. We are aware that after 7 years of existence, there are still many people in the community that are not aware of everything we do and the benefits of the program within the community. Therefore, perhaps the most important endeavor for this committee will be an image campaign for the Foundation itself.

With all the activities taking place within Our Town Foundation it is important to keep the public up-to-date on everything going on. 2009 will mark the return of the *Town News* newsletter. We will continue to update people via the internet with our email updates of town events and happenings.

## 2008 Promotions Accomplishments

- Coop Advertising
  - Direct Mail Discount Card to in-town residents
  - Full page Clipper Magazine advertisements and coupons
  - Campground Packets – an envelope of business fliers and coupons
  - Holiday Coupon Sheets – locally distributed / put out at Cabela's, too
  - Shopping Spree Promotion for the Holiday
- Initiated the Shop Local Campaign with participation in the National Shop Local Day
- [www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org) website is now done in house, which means revisions can be made with much more efficiency and as often as necessary, at no cost
- Groundhog Day – OTF sponsored WEEU's live broadcast of Groundhog Day in town
- Continued the Hamburg Bucks gift certificate program
- Designed, printed and distributed 15,000 Downtown Hamburg Event brochures
- Updated the Our Town Foundation general informational brochure
- Business members' brochures / rack cards were delivered to Cabela's – Microtel also just granted permission to include their hotel as a distribution point.
- Business OPEN HOUSEs during the Holiday Historic House Tours and business cooperation / extended hours during the Art Strolls
- Updated the Hamburg Shopping sign at the Hamburg Field House – will do annually
- Continued the Complimentary Membership program – businesses can offer an OTF comp membership to loyal customers that take an active interest in the community
- Tin Ceiling Photographs – Carl Hess donated his time to take photographs of the remaining business tin ceilings left in downtown Hamburg (these may now be used to make promotional postcards for the businesses)
- Welcome Center sign – to put outdoors during business hours

## 2009 Promotion Goals

- Coordinate one day or multi-day mini vacation packages and market to the PA Tourism Dept. and Visitors' Bureaus
- Billboard along route 78 (dependent on cost and business support)
- Design and print 2009 Hamburg event schedules
- Maintain the [hamburgpa.org](http://hamburgpa.org) website
- Maintain and grow the Hamburg Happenings database and mailing list
- Continue distribution of members' brochures
- Purchase small removable roadway signs for all events
- Maintain brochure rack at Cabela's, Microtel and the Field house
- Market Hamburg to the campgrounds
- Promote 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Shop local campaign
- Design and print new downtown maps
- Maintain community calendar of events
- Continue to offer co-op advertising opportunities

## **Events & Fundraising: Live, Learn, and Progress**

Although misinformed – many residents believe that OTF’s primary job is to plan events. You can’t blame them for thinking that with all the exciting activity in town. While OTF can not take credit for all the events and activities (other local organizations / churches actively engage the town), they can for many of Hamburg’s happenings.

As OTF grows to encompass the preservation and revitalization of the whole borough, we have also grown to embrace stronger partnerships with local organizations and businesses. Community organizations often play roles in our events – either as participators or partners. Beach Night’s duties will continue to be shared with Culture Shock Booster Club. The Bridge Church has assisted with our House Tours and Kids Fest, and our Chicken BBQ fundraiser will again be held in conjunction with the Hamburg Grange. Partnering with various organizations allows more than one group to reap the benefits of our activities.

Fundraising money is overly important to sustaining OTF – a hundred dollars here, a thousand dollars there, really adds up. These funds are often used for promotions and advertising, or for designated projects. Kauffman Chicken BBQ sales and Murder Mystery Dinners continue to be opportune fundraisers. The town has embraced the Hometowne Collectibles – plans for series # 9 & 10 include the old Regal Hotel and possibly Schlenker Motors or Keiser’s Peanut Shop.

Local and corporate businesses offer sponsorship monies and product donations to assist with the expenses of many of our events.

The Foundation is planning a new “fun” fundraiser for 2009 – Beer, Bands, and BBQ in October, featuring local music and good times. As OTF grows to include more sub-committees, it’s important to divvy up the duties. The annual calendar fundraiser will now fittingly become an Arts Alliance endeavor. Beer, Bands, and BBQ is a take-off of the Art Alliance’s Music in the Park. In addition, Beach Night’s pig roast will now be moved to the beer festival. New ideas are always circulating – the risk of failure is always an option however, you never know until you try. We have learned to grow off those errors.

## 2008 Events & Fundraising Accomplishments

- Fundraisers
  - Kauffman's Chicken BBQ fundraiser – teamed up with the Hamburg Grange
  - Two Murder Mystery Dinners at Haag's Hotel
  - Beach Night Pork BBQ
  - Hometowne Collectible – the Hamburg Theatre
  - Hoss's Fundraiser – gave us a percentage of meal price one day during the year with use of a coupon
  - 2009 *Hamburg After Dark* Calendars – pictures donated by Kevin Shire
  - Summer Money Raffle
- Events
  - Kids Fest
  - Beach Night – with the help of Hamburg's MaluLani Dancers & Pahutanes, this is a fun family-geared community event
  - Taste of Hamburg-er Festival – OTF was again a primary player in the planning committee
  - Community Wide Yard Sale – in lieu of hosting the Funky Hunk of Junk Yard Sale and charging fees to set-up, OTF placed a classified in the *Merchandise* for a Borough-wide yard sale, free to set-up (saved time and money but still got people into town)
- Sales
  - Re-ordered Historic Hamburg t-shirts; plans for 2009 include incorporating more Hamburg merchandise, i.e. special handcrafted souvenirs made by local artists
  - Postcards – featuring a digitally-altered photograph of 4<sup>th</sup> St. donated by a local artist; plans include making more postcards of downtown streetscapes / properties with computer-enhanced photographs
  - Food Sales – at almost all OTF and Arts Alliance events

## 2009 Fund Raising Endeavors

At present, the committee's plans are to continue with all of the above activities, with the exception of the summer money raffle.

In addition we will host a Beer, Bands and BBQ event at the Hamburg Gun Club in October.

## DESIGN: Receiving a Face Lift

*Committee Goal: To make the downtown more visually aesthetic, easily navigable, and well-identified, while preserving its historical integrity and our heritage. The PA Downtown Center said, “Good design conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.”*

Design is about getting our Main Street corridor into top physical shape. Capitalizing on Hamburg’s best assets, such as our historic buildings and traditional downtown layout is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through window displays, landscaped parking areas, proper signs, clean sidewalks, and historical street lights conveys a visual message about what Hamburg is and what it has to offer.

The Design Committee has been diligently providing suggestions for, and implementing, beautification projects in the downtown.

### **2008 Design Committee Accomplishments**

- The finishing touches of the \$1.5 million streetscape enhancement project were completed in the first half of the year.
- Improved downtown signage
- Parking stall lines painted
- New sidewalks on Pine Street
- 6 new façade grants approved
- Applied for a grant through the PA Historical & Museum Commission for a historical marker for the Hamburg Public Library
- Maintained the landscaping at the Borough’s 4<sup>th</sup> & Pine Parking lot
- Purchased and distributed OPEN banners to downtown businesses
- Purchased and distributed planters to downtown businesses
- Created a mock-up design for a landscaped version of the M & T Bank parking lot on 4<sup>th</sup> and Pine Streets
- Assisted student volunteers with community service projects, i.e. fire hydrant painting, community clean-up days, window washing services, etc.
- Purchased LED lights for the town Christmas tree
- Awarded “golden brooms” to business owners who strive to keep their storefronts clean

### **2009 Design Committee Goals**

- Continue to administer the Façade Improvement Grant Program for properties within the Main St. corridor
- Install historical markers or plaques on historic properties
- Continue to maintain municipal parking lot landscaping at 4<sup>th</sup> & Pine Streets
- Encourage enforcement of borough ordinances, i.e. weeds, trash, blighted buildings
- Promote use of the Berks County Rehab program for property owners
- Green up the town by creating pocket parks

# **Economic Restructuring Committee: Building a Better Tomorrow**

*Committee Goal: To assist in the growth of downtown businesses while recruiting new and diverse ones, the whole time encouraging the use of vacant properties. The PA Downtown Center says that “economic restructuring means finding new or better purposes for Main Street enterprises.”*

At a time when Malls and independent stores across America are dying because of the economic crises and competition with big-box stores, architects are designing “faux” main street shopping centers to recreate the quaint charm and graciousness of places just like Hamburg. Residents and visitors can enjoy a variety of shops and services, some that offer your basic needs, and others that sell the unique items you can’t find in the malls and big box stores. Dining options range from fast food, sandwich shops, diners, and fine dining. Art & Culture now proliferates throughout the town via the Gallery of Hamburg, the Hamburg Strand Theatre, the Rock School, two dance studios, and numerous other businesses that embrace the opportunity of growth through art and culture. Natural recreational opportunities are abundant as well. We should appreciate the “real thing” we already have in place and do all we can to preserve it.

## **2008 Economic Restructuring Accomplishments**

- Initiated a snow removal program for downtown property owners (from travel lanes to curbside)
- Assisted the Blueprint Community Team with initiating a 2009 farmer’s market
- Hosted round table discussions for business owners
- Maintained an available property inventory
- Assisted numerous business entrepreneurs
- Student secret shopper program
- Personal business visits
- Identified “Roadblocks to Business Entrepreneurs” within the Borough; the committee is working towards eliminating the roadblocks.
- Encouraged the Borough to allow for public parking on the 3<sup>rd</sup> St. municipal parking lot

## **2009 Economic Restructuring Goals**

- Initiate a ribbon cutting program for new businesses
- Provide welcome wagon packages to new residents
- Design and print an updated business directory
- Continue to send business recruitment packages to targeted entrepreneurs
- Update all surveys including business owners, resident, and customer
- Offer a variety of computer classes
- Establish a revolving loan fund to provide financial incentives to businesses
- Build relationships with area developers and investors
- Host community forums and round table discussions
- Assist with a farmer’s market start-up
- Assist artists and businesses with e-commerce opportunities
- Maintain an available property inventory

## Elm Street Community Program: An Introduction

Hamburg Southgate Star Community: Maple to Walnut Revitalization Program

*The Elm Street Mission: The Hamburg Southgate Star Community aims to sustain an enticing neighborhood that offers a higher quality of life through community ownership, to encourage and stimulate growth and prosperity while maintaining the historical integrity and beauty of the neighborhood setting, and to instill a sense of rebirth and pride amongst those residing in the neighborhood.*

*The Elm Street Vision: The Hamburg Southgate Star Community will offer a safe and friendly atmosphere for community integration to occur, thus inspiring homeownership and neighborhood empowerment. Its convenient accessibility to several major roadways and an abundance of available resources in the downtown will encourage new homebuyers to raise their families in the neighborhood.*

*The Hamburg Southgate Star Community will enhance the usability of its recreational assets by creating a pedestrian-friendly environment that is both accessible and inviting to multiple generations. Parks, green space, and community gatherings will abound.*

*The neighborhood will embrace its sense of place – preserving its historical appeal and deep-rooted values while integrating its recent diversity of character.*

Designated Elm Street communities seek to remedy and revitalize a historic, downtown neighborhood. Being designated with the “Elm Street” label increases the opportunity to receive up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in residential reinvestment grants. Our Town Foundation just submitted a plan to the State that, if approved, would provide Hamburg with five years of Elm Street Program funding that would assist with the administration expenses of the project.

Like the Main Street program, the Elm Street Project must have defined boundaries for revitalization. This chosen neighborhood must be adjacent to the existing borders of the Main Street corridor. In Hamburg it consists of 15 blocks at the southern end of town – between Walnut and Maple Streets, including 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and Peach Street. **If this program is successful, Hamburg can receive additional funding for other neighborhoods.**

Members from this neighborhood participated in three community visioning meetings between August and December, 2008:

(Meeting 1) a general discussion about the positives / negatives of where they live,

(Meeting 2) a discussion of neighborhood survey results and the major objectives of the residents, and

(Meeting 3) the approval of the 5 year action plan and a neighborhood name, mission, and vision.

These visioning meetings were planned, organized, and guided by the input of a steering committee consisting of individuals with an invested interest in that neighborhood.

From these meetings, a 5 year action plan was created to guide the future course of revitalization for this neighborhood. The action plan defines the primary objectives of the neighborhood, uncovered from stakeholder's discussions and surveys. Future Elm Street volunteers will work towards meeting these objectives through a number of committees.

The committees are as follows:

### **Clean, Safe, and Green**

Safety: Reality VS Perception – the difference between how things *really* are & how people see them  
Being clean and having greening enhancements affect perception – just as important to image as reality

- Block Watch Programs
- Graffiti Removal
- Public Space Maintenance
- Plantings
- Community Gardens

### **Neighbors and Economy**

Encourage demographic diversity within the neighborhood setting,  
i.e. mixed incomes are more desirable than just one social level

Employment rates and homeownership

Having minimal job centers means neighborhoods that do well offer instead a higher quality of life

- Homeownership Programs
- Employment Training
- Partnerships with Local Organizations
- Quantity of Housing Options

### **Image and Identity**

Image - how *non-residents* see the neighborhood (their perception)

Identity – community engagement and maintenance among *residents*: a feeling of belonging

- Media used to show positivity in neighborhood
- Hosting events – festivals, clean up days, fundraisers, etc.
- Awards Programs
- Website or Newsletter
- Media Coverage of neighborhood accomplishments

### **Design**

Character – “feel” of a neighborhood / familiarity to both those within and outsiders

Architectural consistency

Property site plans (not just architecture) – how homes and land are placed and their designated uses

- Streetscape Improvements
- Revolving Loan Funds – building rehab
- Matching Grant Money – Façade Improvements and housing rehab
- Rehabilitation Guidelines List
- Vacant Lots

## **The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance: The Cultural Movement**

*The Alliance's Mission: To support and showcase local artists and to advance the awareness of arts in the community.*

Through the US, artists and arts organizations have carried on their work despite the often meager incomes they may earn from it. They continue on, motivated by a commitment to their artistry, their family traditions, and the cultural heritage of their communities. Fortunately, these values are increasingly prized in the broader economy as markets for traditional arts - and for travel linked to the cultural uniqueness of particular places - has grown substantially over the last several decades.

Traditional arts can support economic development by strengthening communities, stimulating demand for local products and supporting the economic activities of other local businesses.

Results from a 2005 market assessment of Hamburg and its business district clearly concluded that the town's future and growth would depend on whether it shunned or embraced the arts and culture of the area.

In 2006, a subcommittee of Our Town Foundation started to seek visual and performing artists who might be interested in joining a localized network of arts – an alliance of like spirit and mind.

The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance kicked off with a fundraising drive by hosting the first ever Hamburg Holiday Historic House Tours. Architecturally marvelous homes would be festively decorated and shown to ticketholders as part of a self-guided walking tour. It was a huge success and continues biennially.

The 2007 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month Summer in the City Art Strolls set the Alliance into cruise control: for months they remained on a steady course of exposure and living up to their mission – to support and showcase local artists and advance the awareness of arts in the community.

That year closed out with a bang. Membership increased from only 12 members to 38 members because the Alliance found the key to unlock an artist's interest: a place to display their work. The Gallery of Hamburg opened in July and expanded at such an enormous rate the Gallery / office relocated to a larger location. The Alliance is now a network of nearly 80 talented individuals – the Gallery opened up the door of opportunity for so many artists who've been in hiding.

The progress of the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance depends on the involvement of its members – 09' Gallery requirements include mandatory volunteer time. The Arts Alliance has grown at such a tremendous rate that its future depends on committed members who can offer both time and counsel.

The Alliance's growth to date can be contributed to those who have understood that success must start small in order to be great. The Alliance runs off of the energy of volunteerism and dedication of its members.

## **2008 Arts Alliance Accomplishments**

- New Home – the Gallery of Hamburg grew so fast it relocated to a larger location in May, three times the size of the old office (but luckily right across the street)
- Saturday Hours – once relocated, the Gallery of Hamburg remained open four hours every Saturday in 2008 thanks to volunteer time from members of the Arts Alliance
- Initiated Art Classes – offered four different courses in 2008; The beginning of 2009 (session one) offers seven different choices – artist Allen Madeira is heading this venture
- First Friday Summer in the City Art Strolls – accomplished their goal of promoting local arts and getting the community out to stroll the downtown on Friday nights during the warm weather
- Featured Artist Nights – first Friday of every month, a different group of artists under a common theme were featured in the Gallery along with an open house
- Music in the Park: *Riverside Rhythms* – showcased a variety of local bands at the Hamburg Community Park
- Holiday Historic House Tours – a successful fundraiser, over 200 tickets were sold; this works best as a biennial event, so this year the Alliance will try a driving studio / showroom tour in its place
- Gallery Sign – metal letters spelling out “the Gallery of Hamburg” were cut and donated by artist Jeff Kahn; they were painted free of charge by Patriot Collision (the letters will be placed on the building when weather allows)

## **2009 Arts Alliance Goals**

- Seek more volunteer assistance and expertise from the extensive artist membership base
- Create more opportunities for artist exposure, i.e. the Cabela’s Art Show and the Clock-themed Art Show (a mixer to be held in the Gallery); a potential temporary sculpture garden at Cabela’s Outfitters outdoor pond
- Raise more sustainability money with a primary fundraising venture: the art auction and gala event planned for the Fall
- Continue the success of the Summer in the City Art Strolls, established as a first Friday of the month series to promote the awareness of local arts and encourage people to shop, dine, and be entertained locally
- Plan a studio / showroom driving tour of artist members to (a) help promote their individual endeavors as aspiring artists and (b) raise money for the Arts Alliance’s sustainability as was done with the biennial Holiday Historic House Tours
- Promote and market the Gallery as an asset to the town’s cultural and charming image
- Continue offering art classes to both instigate interest in the arts and to raise money to help promote the Gallery of Hamburg
- Create more promotional tools, i.e. an arts alliance brochure / rack card and an updated flier for the Gallery of Hamburg
- Augment the ways we utilize the [www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org) website to promote the arts; consider stepping into the realm of e-commerce in association with the Gallery
- Encourage local writers to participate in the newly-formed Hamburg Writers’ Guild – established to provide a support group for collaboration on writing and getting published

# **The Blueprint Community Team: Let's Work Together!**

*The Team's mission: To provide knowledge, education, and opportunities for social, economical and recreational growth in the Borough of Hamburg.*

Formed in 2005, Hamburg's Blueprint Community team consists of representatives from numerous local organizations and businesses who collaboratively seek improvement for the whole borough. Successful communities are ones that offer a thriving business district, natural recreational opportunities, arts & culture, and a strong educational program. The key to attracting employers to the area is not offering the best incentives, but rather offering a superior quality of life to the employees. By providing a distinct and valuable product in terms of quality of life, we will attract the people who enable economic success.

The Blueprint Team meets on a regular basis to review the projects and improvements that are in progress or have been completed to date. The committee members should be considered as a strategy board - they are not necessarily the volunteers that complete the projects. The group mainly provides expertise, oversight, and coordination of community projects. They are responsible for the following:

- Assessing the borough's assets, liabilities, and current trends
- Determining priorities
- Researching funding sources
- Seeking community involvement and media support
- Creating a plan based on community needs and desires

Funding for implementation of specific projects will be sought from public and private sources such as DCED, DCNR, USDA, and County programs such as the Greater Berks Development Fund.

The Blueprint Team measures their success by the positive impact on residents, entrepreneurs, investors, visitors, and youth. Success will be measured by the following:

- Increase in housing and property values
- New business start ups
- Amount of tourism dollars being spent
- Number of people on trails
- Number of organizations partnering with program
- Stabilized tax rates

## **2008 BLUEPRINT COMMUNITY TEAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Assist with the planning of the Hamburg Area School District student volunteer program
- Continue with Hamburg's nomination for a National Historic District
- Work with the North Berks Recreation Commission to complete the Riverfront project; trail connections, canoe launch, signage, native plantings, parking lot enhancements, etc.
- Implement the National Wildlife Habitat Program
- Assist the Economic Restructuring Committee with a downtown snow removal plan
- Assist the Economic Restructuring Committee with initiating a Farmer's Market
- Continue to host quarterly Hamburg Happenings meeting for all organizations
- Updated the five year action plan

## **Community Revitalization Corporation – The Next Step**

*Revitalization is nonstop – it never ends. Those that came before us started it all with a quest for a better life back in the late 1700's. Our Town Foundation is continuing that quest into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Communities that are most successful are those that have grasped the concept that revitalization is not a project with a beginning and an end. It never ends.

2008 has been a year of tremendous growth and progress for Our Town Foundation, and with the continued hard work and dedication of our volunteers and staff, 2009 will prove to be the same.

As this year's Annual Report demonstrates, the Foundation has become an extremely diverse organization that is reaching out to all facets of the Hamburg Community in an effort to maintain and further enhance this already very special place.

The growth of the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, the prospect of receiving Elm Street designation, the ongoing Main Street program, and the diverse Blue Print Community Action Plan, have prompted the Foundation to consider forming a Community Revitalization Corporation which would allow all of the branches to become better organized under one structure. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center has been assisting with this process.

It is the recommendation of the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development to have one 501(c)3 non profit oversee and integrate all the community revitalization projects. This organizational structure provides many benefits as listed below:

- The elimination of duplicative administrative costs, such as insurance and office space
- Shared staff – reduced labor costs
- Less competitive fund raising
- Increased chance of receiving sales tax exemption status
- Increased opportunities for additional grant funds
- The simplicity of adding additional advisory councils as needed
- Creates leadership development and progression framework
- Stronger ties to the community – more of a community-wide organization assisting additional stakeholders
- Effective volunteer coordination between Elm Street and Main Street
- Percentage of all advisory council's activities or membership funds are shared
- Reduces creation of new non-profits

Of course, with all the advantages, there comes a disadvantage – more volunteers will be needed.

The integration of our existing programs will require our existing committees to expand their focus. For example, the existing Main St. Economic Restructuring Committee will now integrate the Elm Street Neighbors and Economy Committee into one. The Promotions and Marketing Committee will now be responsible for the Neighborhood Image. The existing

Design Committee may integrate the Safe, Clean, and Green component of Elm Street. This will require training sessions that will be provided by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center to assure a smooth transition.

The Board of Directors also will assume additional responsibilities. They will receive training as well.

The first step has been taken towards this concept – adding additional Board members to assure that ALL stakeholders are represented. Our bylaws have been changed from 9 members to a maximum of 15. Our goal for 2009 was to elect a board of 13 members, which we have accomplished. We will be working with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center and an attorney to draft additional revisions to our bylaws as we progress.

## **WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY**

**Serve on a committee**  
**Volunteer for events and other activities**  
**Assist the office staff**  
**Support the program financially**  
**Make suggestions for improvements**  
**Inform Borough representatives and neighboring  
representatives of the importance of their continued support**  
**Shop locally**  
**Share your knowledge of the program with others**

**Your energy, funding, and commitment will help leave a vibrant and tangible legacy for our community and all who pass through it for generations to come.**

**Contact us at:           The Our Town Foundation Office**  
**335 State Street**  
**Hamburg, PA 19526**

**610-562-3106**

**The staff is available to answer any questions you may have in regards to this report, or to discuss any revitalization issues. They are always willing to convey any suggestions that are made to the proper committees on.**

**Additional information on the community can be found on the web at**  
**[www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org)**