

OUR TOWN FOUNDATION

★ Shaping Hamburg's Future ★

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 16, 2016



Blueprint
COMMUNITIES

Taste of
Hamburg-er Festival



Heritage Towns
and Tours



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, artists, and private property owners.

2015 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steve Keifer, *President*
Aaron Muller, *VP*
Martha Bertolet,
Recording Secretary
Donna Palko, *Treasurer*
Brian Warfel
Stephanie Adam
Dr. John Smith
Jeff Kahn
Allen Madeira
Katherine Rightmyer
O'Brien
Steve Keifer
Vreeland Wood
Brenda Bauer
Joshua Youpa

THEATER

Steve Macbeth
Property Manager
Brian Warfel
Allen Madeira
Katherine Rightmyer
O'Brien
Donna Palko
Steve Keifer
Vreeland Wood
Linda Wood
Brenda Bauer
Mark Rentschler
Matt Polis
Clare Benz
Gerry Schappell

TASTE OF HAMBURG-ER FESTIVAL

Sandra Christman
Chris Tray
Wendell Yoder
Rita Yoder
Dorothy Brobst
Glenn Brobst
Keith Brobst
Gregg Adams
Brian Warfel
Michelle Henne
Stan Henne
Marita Beers
Kathryn Bernhardt
Chris Yost
Jeff Petit
Lori Moyer

ARTS ALLIANCE

Allen Madeira
Jeff Kahn
Randy McCurdy
Lindsay Adam
Franklin Fretz
Brian Warfel
Ken Liskey
Jay Ressler
Martha Ressler

FUND RAISING

Donna Palko
Sara Kline
Dorothy Brobst
Michelle Henne
Chris Yost
Jeff Petit
Theresa Snyder

DESIGN

Sandy Caston
Melanie Geiger
Elaine Swavely
Jerry Becker
Joshua Youpa
Jeff Mengel

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Mark Mohn
Eric George
Kay Greenawalt
Tim Flynn
Steve Keifer
Clare Benz
Brenda Bauer
John Leonforte
Jerry Rotelle

STAFF: Deena Kershner, Executive Director
Dina Madara, Arts Coordinator, Marketing and Communications
Lori LaPearl, Administrative Assistant
Bethany Sholl, Theater Manager
Stephanie Adam, Assistant Manager

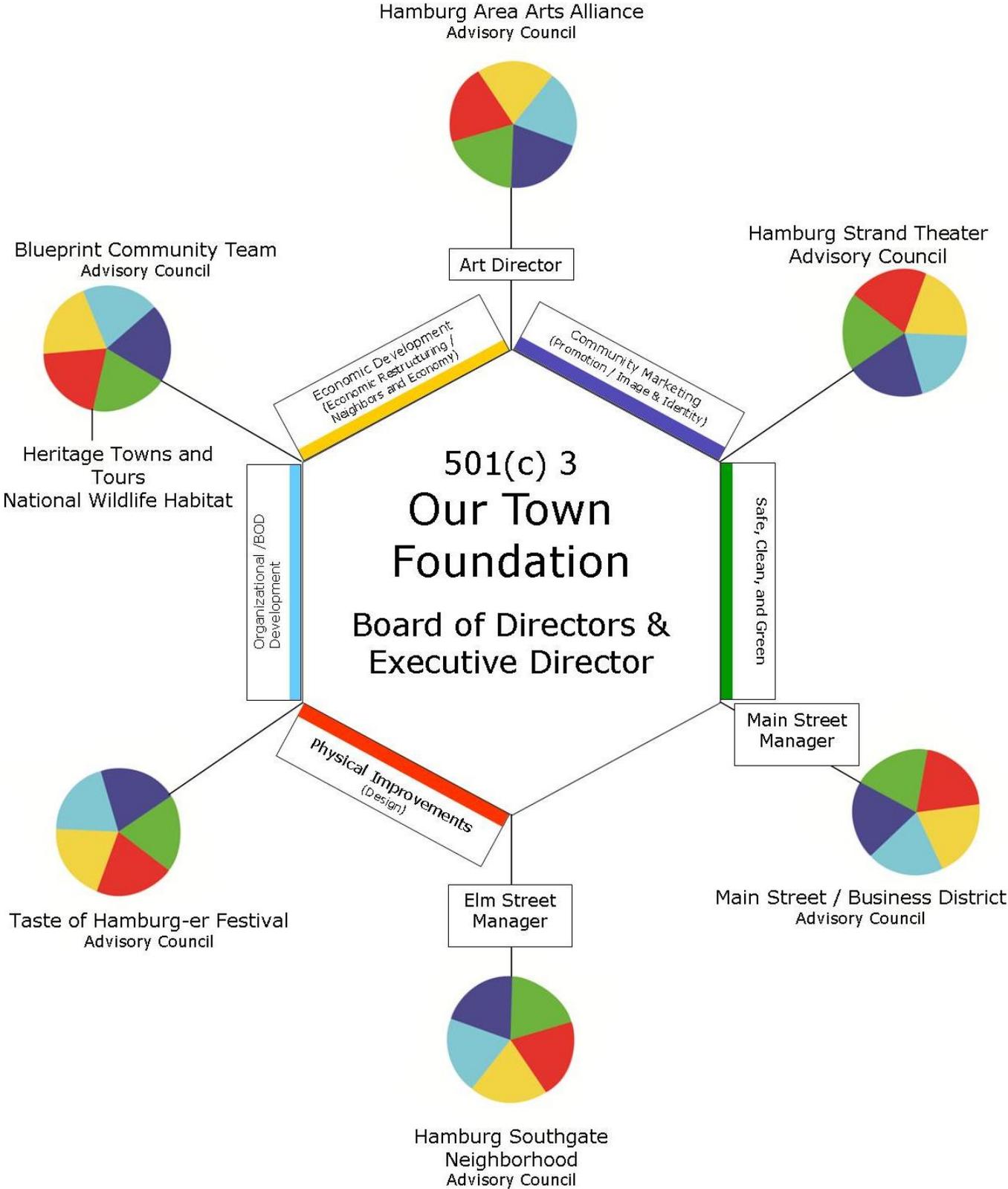
Special thanks to all the volunteers who donated 4,405 hours of their time in 2015. Their volunteer hours equal \$96,645.70 in labor costs, as per government statistics on the value of volunteers.

OUR TOWN FOUNDATION'S REVITALIZATION TIMELINE

- 2002 Received designation as a Main Street Community (manager hired in 2003)
- 2004 The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival was initiated and has grown to be an annual event bringing over 30,000 people into the downtown
- 2005 Our Town Foundation represented Hamburg as one of 22 communities chosen by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh to participate in their Blueprint Community Program
- 2006 The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance was formed, and the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg opened. Both are administered by Our Town Foundation
- 2006 A Native Wildlife Habitat Program was initiated and Hamburg became the first community in PA to receive certification as a Native Wildlife Habitat Community.
- 2007 Completed a \$1.5 million streetscape enhancement project in the downtown
Completed a trail link from State & Front Street to the Borough's community park
- 2008 Sr. Housing project was completed at the site of a blighted, abandoned knitting mill
Completed additional trail improvements and installed canoe docks at the community park
Purchased new holiday lighting for the community
- 2010 Received designation as an Elm Street Community and the Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization Program began
Received National Historic District Status
Partnered with the Schuylkill River Greenway Association to initiate a Heritage Towns and Tours Program
- 2011 Began a weekly downtown farmer's market (has since shut down)
- 2012 Completed an Historic Interpretive Trail at the Kernsville Dam including historical interpretive signs and GPS information
Completed a feasibility study on the Sally Balthaser building, located at 3rd & State Streets
- 2013 Completed an Affordable Housing Program in which 15 low to moderate income homeowners received financial assistance to make necessary improvements to their homes
Purchased the Hamburg Strand Theater to prevent it from its demise
Erected wayward signage throughout the town directing people to heritage resources
- 2014 Installed a digital projection system and new screen and upgraded the sound system at the Hamburg Strand
Received a grant to renovate the blighted, vacant lot at 3rd & Grand Streets into a beautiful parking area
- 2015 Purchased a vacant lot within the downtown Main Street corridor to host events and use as a community gathering place. Will be making beautification improvements to the lot in the near future
- Future: Renovate the "Tot Lot" park within the Elm Street corridor if grant funding is received

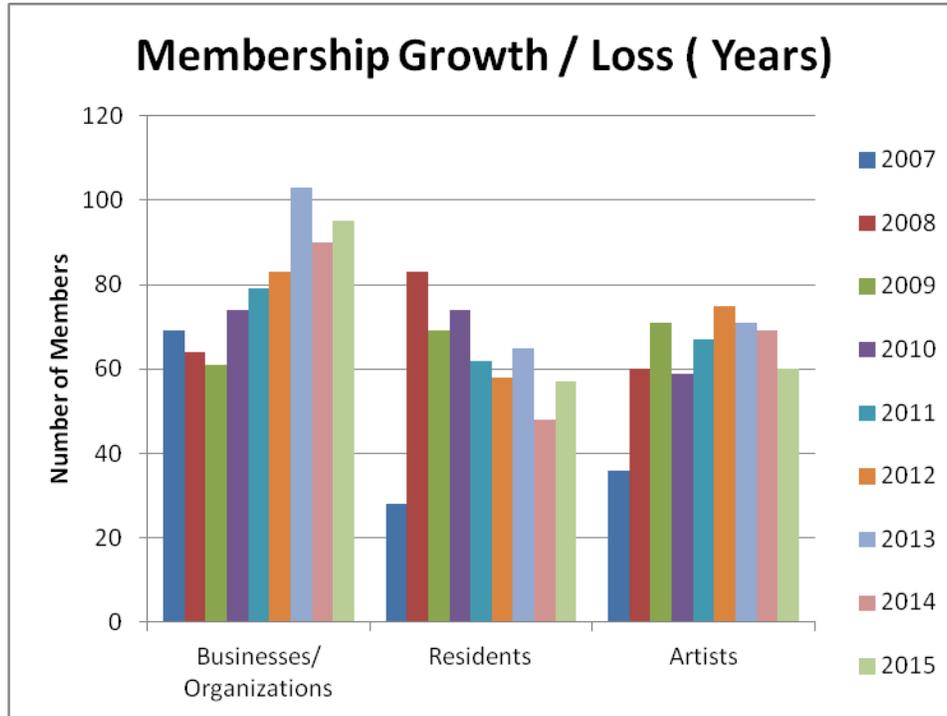
Items above are in addition to our other promotional activities, events, façade programs, smaller beautification projects, etc.

Our Town Foundation Organizational Structure



Membership

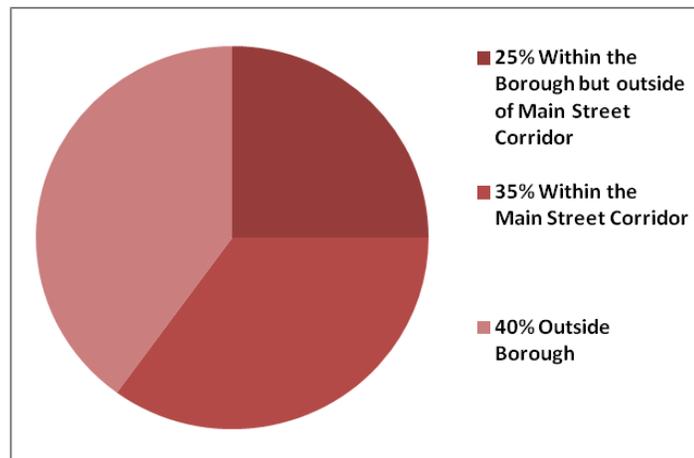
Through the generosity of donors that have faith in our program, the Foundation is able to carry out its mission. Two hundred twelve residents, artists, and businesses were members of OTF in 2015. This was an increase of five members overall from the previous year.



Business/Organization Membership (95 members)

Business membership remains strong despite the economic hard times we have faced over the last several years. The Foundation continues to attract business members in downtown and in the surrounding area. Witnessing the growth of the neighboring communities in the business sector, it is vital for the Foundation to reach out and support these businesses as well, since they play a role in attracting visitors, residents, and entrepreneurs into the area.

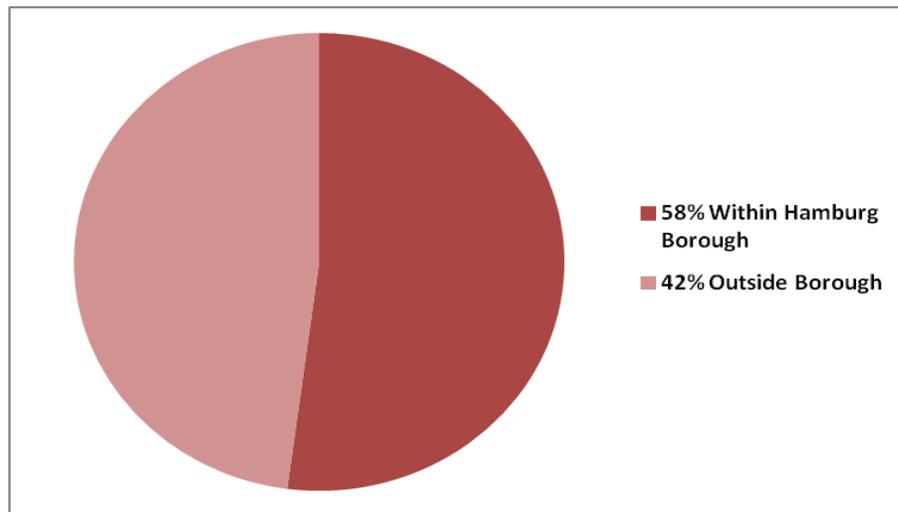
2015 BUSINESS MEMBER LOCATIONS



Resident Membership (57 members)

The residential sector also benefits from the Foundation’s revitalization efforts. As community improvements are made, the quality of life improves and the values of homes increase. Resident memberships from within the Borough as well as the neighboring townships confirm that the community supports our endeavors. OTF aims to reach out to the residential community to advance the awareness of the Foundation and what it has accomplished.

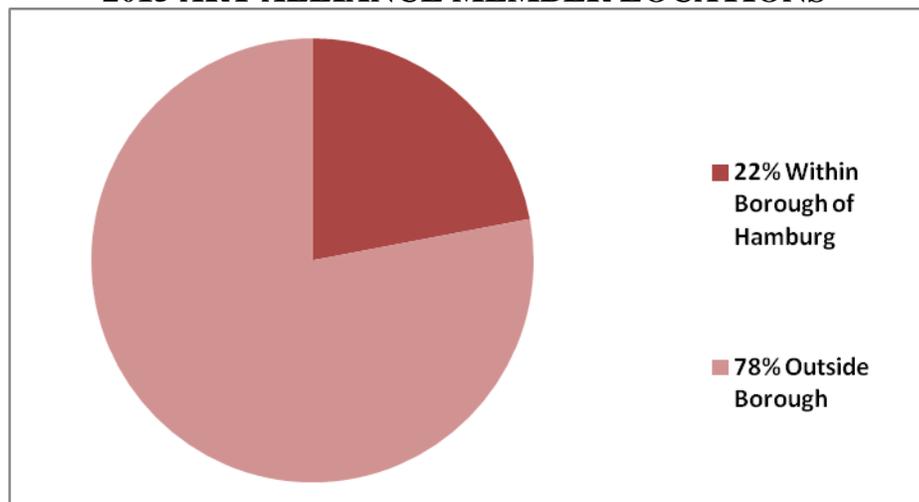
2015 RESIDENT MEMBER LOCATIONS



Artist Membership (60 members)

Upon initiation in 2006, the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) consisted of a handful of local artists – both visual and performing - who felt the arts were underserved in the area. Of the 60 HAAA members, 43 of them display in the Gallery, providing residents and tourists a sampling of our local arts and culture. Twenty nine of those artists have been active volunteers, each contributing at least 10 hours of service to some part of the community organization.

2015 ART ALLIANCE MEMBER LOCATIONS



Organization – Board of Directors

Collectively, the Board of Directors (Organization Committee) assumes legal and philosophical responsibilities for all program activities. The Board is solely responsible for establishing program policy, hiring staff, and determining the goals for the organization. They make recommendations to - and oversee the work of - the numerous committees, and they approve the annual program budget and committee action plans. The Board of Directors strives to get everyone working towards common goals.

In 2015 there was substantial progress for Our Town Foundation and with the continued hard work and dedication of our volunteers, committees, and staff, 2016 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. With the continued expansion of our revitalization efforts over the past thirteen years, the Foundation evolved from its early beginnings of being a downtown Main Street Revitalization Organization into a full-fledged Community Revitalization Corporation (CRC), expanding their efforts into several areas of the community. Our Town Foundation currently administers six programs under the umbrella organization: Hamburg Strand Theater, Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, The Blueprint Community Program and Heritage Towns and Tours, Southgate Neighborhood, and the downtown Main Street Program. This requires partnerships with other organizations and numerous community volunteers to ensure that our revitalization efforts stretch throughout the entire Borough and nearby areas.

Benefits of a Community Revitalization Corporation organizational structure:

- 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
- Simplicity of adding additional advisory councils as needed
- Leadership development and progression framework
- Stronger ties to the community – more of a community-wide organization assisting additional stakeholders
- Effective volunteer coordination between all of the managed programs
- Shared membership funds and activities
- Reduction in the creation of new non-profits



Executive Director, Deena Kershner, making a presentation during a past annual meeting

The Board of Directors (Organization Committee) is responsible for the following:

- Assuring sustainability of the organization
- Assuring all proper policies and procedures are followed according to by-laws and government regulations
- Capital campaigns, membership drives
- Researching additional funding sources
- Networking with other organizations, public representatives, business owners and community leaders
- Assessing the borough's assets, liabilities, and current trends and weaknesses
- Determining priorities and approving the committee's annual work plans based on community needs and desires
- Reviewing all financial aspects of the organization and approving the annual budget
- Seeking community involvement and media support
- Recruiting and managing the volunteer pool, including school students
- Overseeing the staff and the daily operations of the office
- Attending training sessions to stay educated on all aspects of implementing a Community Revitalization Program
- Hosting membership gatherings; holiday dinner, summer picnic, annual meetings
- Forming additional advisory councils as applicable

Organizations go through three distinct organizational phases:

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.

Growth phase: Most of the major reinvestment needed to implement projects takes place during this period.

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 quality of life innovations.

The catalyst phase typically lasts from 2 – 4 years, the growth phase, about 8 – 12 years; and the management phase is ongoing. Some 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.

The Downtown Main Street Program, the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, and the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival are all in the management phase - the programs have been in existence for quite a number of years and are past the growth stage; however, adjustments and improvements are made as needed. The Hamburg Strand Theater, Southgate Neighborhood Program, and the Heritage Towns and Tours Program are in the growth stage.

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. Just as sound management of any business remains imperative after its start up, the ongoing management of community revitalization projects is essential to economic stability and quality of life.

The Hamburg Strand Theater

Our Town Foundation feels that Downtown Hamburg's main attraction should be owned and preserved, not by any individual or company, but by the people of the Hamburg community. With that in mind, on March 28th, 2013 the Our Town Foundation purchased The Hamburg Strand Theater in an effort to preserve and protect this complex as a major asset and attraction in our community.

The building that houses the Hamburg Strand Theatre was built in 1799, and was one of the first properties to be built when the town was laid out. Located at 6 South 4th Street, it was a Federal style house which was later turned into a restaurant, before being converted to the theatre in 1920. This historic property needs continuous care to remain a vital cultural center for Hamburg.

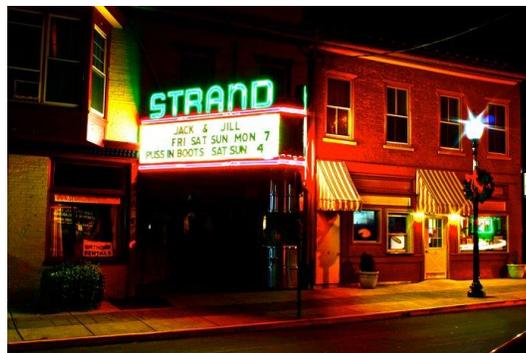
In 2013 several building improvements were made to satisfy the Borough's safety codes. In March of 2014 Our Town Foundation kicked off a capital campaign with a goal of raising \$200,000 for other necessary renovations and improvements. By the end of that year the Foundation raised over \$56,000 plus they received a grant from DCED for approximately \$30,000. Monies from the capital campaign and grant paid for a digital projector, a new film screen, and a new sound system. There were also sufficient funds to replace the main theater roof which was in terrible shape and leaking profusely. The capital campaign continued through 2015 and additional funding was received to refurbish the marquee, repair and re-point the exterior back brick wall which was crumbling, scrape and paint the façade of the property, and install an exterior gas line so we can later convert to gas heat. In addition a computer was purchased to enable live streaming, and a new popcorn machine was installed.

The capital campaign will continue through 2016 and as funds are received additional improvements will be made. Top priorities are to add a 2nd bathroom to the main theater level and upgrading the plumbing, laying hard wood flooring on the stage, and upgrading the electric inside the theater.

In April of 2015, Bethany Sholl became the Manager of the Strand with assistance from her husband, Jacob, who is the projectionist. Her mother, Stephanie Adam, assists her with the management. Under their direction, the theater has seen an increase in attendance as well as an increase in special movie events and activities offered.

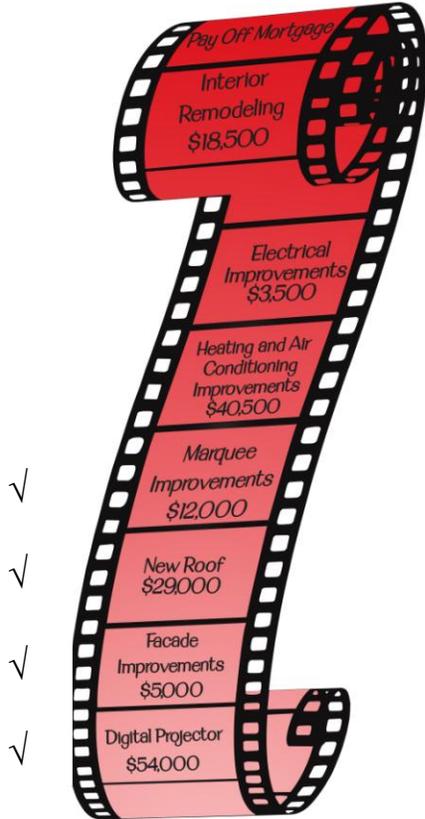
The Foundation's desire is to schedule other entertainment such as live shows, local theatrical performances, open mic nights, and other cultural activities during times when there are no movies scheduled. In addition they would like to team up with the Arts Alliance committee to display visual art throughout the theater and offer art classes in the side room. The theater could also serve as a location for "Meet the Artist" nights and other arts related activities.

The theater currently is, and will always remain a community hub.

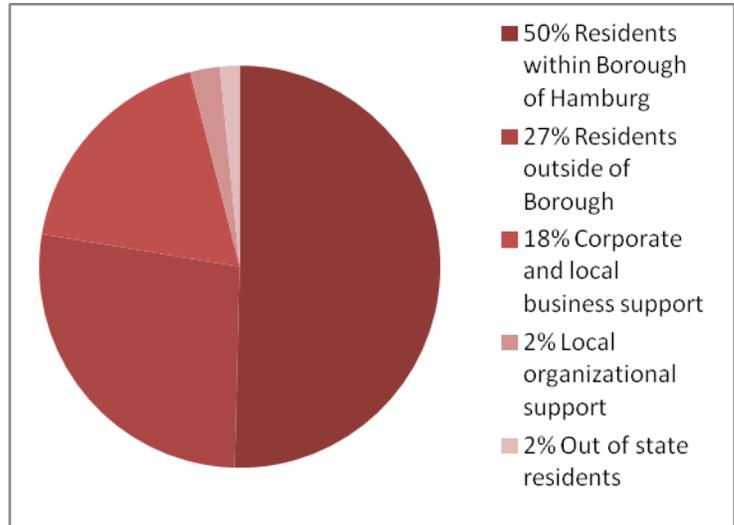


HAMBURG STRAND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

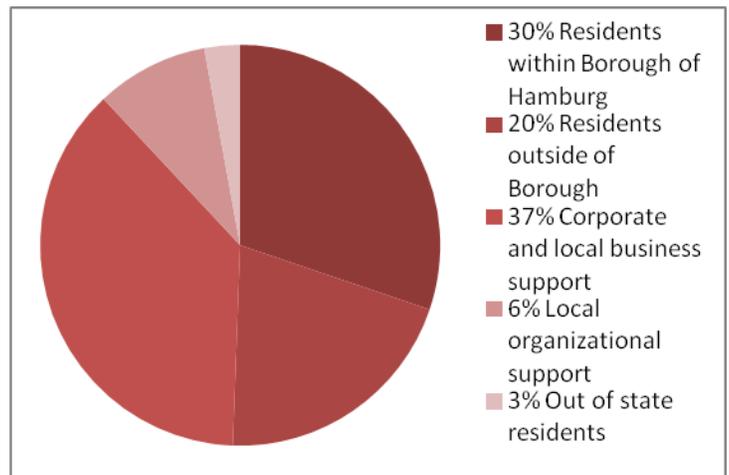
SAVE OUR STRAND GOAL
\$200,000



NUMBER OF THEATER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS (134)



DOLLAR VALUE OF THEATER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS RAISED TO DATE \$82,701



FUNDS RAISED TO DATE

Capital Campaign Kick Off: \$63,093
 Marquee Donations: \$12,935
 Other Donations: \$6673

DCED Grant: \$31,050
 Gala Auction Profit: \$8772
 Misc. Fundraisers: \$2,510
Total Raised to Date: \$125,033

Outstanding Pledges to be received
 \$11,975

2015 Hamburg Strand Theater Committee Accomplishments

- Hired a Theater Manager and Assistant Manager
- Restoration of the marquee and other façade improvements
- Repaired exterior brick wall in rear of theater
- Replaced the garage roof on the property
- Installed an exterior gas line to the theater to convert to gas heat in the future
- Purchased a new popcorn machine
- Purchased a computer
- Improved marketing the theater through social media and the website
- Prepared a Facility Use Agreement for people/groups to rent the theater
- Participated in a regional film fest

2016 Theater Committee Goals

- Install a 2nd bathroom on the main level and plumbing improvements
- Electrical upgrades
- Stage renovations
- Convert garage area to changing rooms for theatrical performers
- Interior renovations to allow for bistro tables in the rear
- Visual improvements in lobby
- Seek advertising income (business commercials, sponsors, etc.)
- Integrate visual arts into the theater - art classes, exhibits, member receptions
- Integrate performing arts such as concerts, comedy shows, cultural activities, etc.
- Host a 2nd Gala Auction and other fund raisers – continue with capital campaign
- Hold special events such as Girls Night Out, Sensory Sundays for special needs groups, and summer camps for kids.



Taste of Hamburg-er Festival



It just keeps growing, and growing, and growing! This Festive community event brought approximately 3,000 to the town in 2004, the first year of the event. According to our estimates, over 40,000 people attended the 12th annual event in 2015.

The event is one that supports a broad range of stakeholders within the community, while serving as a fund raiser for the Our Town Foundation. The downtown businesses see an increase in their revenue that day due to the volume of people that are strolling right outside of their stores. Many businesses located within the festival corridor display their wares on the streets to entice people into their shops. It is reported that the day of the festival is now the best day of the year for the merchants, even surpassing their annual sidewalk sale profits. Numerous local nonprofits and churches also participate, either by selling food or providing an activity. This also serves as a fund raiser for them and provides an excellent opportunity to network within the community. Regional artists and crafters are encouraged to set up displays providing a means to display and sell their artwork. Benefiting the most, however, are the local restaurants and caterers who sell a variety of burgers and other side dishes to the festival attendees. The festival provides an opportunity for the chefs to become creative with their burgers, possibly trying a new recipe for visitors to sample.

In 2010 the festival expanded from three blocks to five, providing additional vendor space on Pine and South 3rd Streets. In 2011, it expanded again to include ½ block of State Street, and in 2012, another expansion took the festival down to 2nd Street on State. In 2015, Our Town Foundation purchased the vacant grass lot at 222 – 228 State Street and expanded the festival into that location, adding a 2nd beer garden. The M & T Lot located at the corner of 4th & Pine Streets also became a selling area. In past years it was used for parking only. The 7 block area is completely filled with burger stands, artisans and crafters, entertainment, children’s activities, and more.

The festival has become an anticipated event that grows with every year. It has become a homecoming day for families and friends. While the majority of visitors come from Berks County, we have seen an increase in people attending from the surrounding counties due to increased advertising outside of our immediate area. In addition, because of an increased web presence and marketing, visitors from out of state continue to increase as well. According to the results of a zip code survey done in conjunction with the People’s Choice Award for Best Burger, the results show that people are attending the festival from:

Hamburg	14%	Schuylkill County	7%
Reading	22%	Other PA Counties	11%
All other Berks County	32%	Outside the State	3%
Lehigh County	9%		

2015 Statistics

- Approximately 40,000 attended
- 2,200 highest number of burgers sold at one stand
- 165 volunteers the day of the festival
- 1,994 volunteer hours
- 60 sponsors
- 34 burger stands
- 58 artists/crafter stands
- 26 home based business stands
- 28 miscellaneous literature/non-profit stands
- 23 miscellaneous food vendor stands
- 7 downtown participating businesses
- 10 activity stands
- 5 stages hosting 17 bands and 11 individual performing artists

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.

The Alliance's Vision: We envision a community that engages the arts, both visual and performing. There will be public art on display; street festivals and gatherings for artists, performers and the general public; galleries and other spaces for group and solo exhibitions and sales of artwork; and educational opportunities in the form of art classes and workshops, lectures and presentations. People of all ages and races will embrace the cultural and artistic movement transpiring in the area.

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

Our Town Foundation acted by forming the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) in 2006. As the Alliance celebrates its 9th year anniversary, the future of the organization looks strong as dedicated volunteers and members continue to carry on the mission of supporting the arts movement in the community. The Alliance boasts 60 members, of which 43 display their work in the Gallery of Hamburg.

The Alliance hosts many arts activities and events throughout the year. Member artists are given first choice to participate, providing an opportunity to sell their work or perform. Event fees are always kept at a minimum and many times are offered at reduced rates to members allowing more artists to partake in the festivities.

Visual arts members are invited to display their work in the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg, a co-op art gallery managed by the Alliance. Located in the heart of the downtown, the co-op provides an affordable means for artists to display and sell their work. The Gallery first opened in 2006 and quickly outgrew its original space. Its present location has over 1,800 square feet of display space allowing all mediums of art to be showcased.



Artwork displayed in
The Gallery of Hamburg

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

The Alliance's growth to date can be contributed to our dedicated members – a team of creative and imaginative people who share a common vision of a society rich with culture.

2015 Arts Alliance Accomplishments

- Continued to manage the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Hosted the 5th Annual Hamburg Arts & Craft Fest, and “Rolling Art Exhibition” car show
- Hosted two membership art shows at Cabela’s retail store
- Conducted a silent art auction during the Hamburg Arts Fest
- Sponsored an art contest featuring “Shoes”
- Hosted a “Paint with Spirits” night
- Received a \$16,000 grant from the Berks County Community Foundation
- Received a \$2,117 Program Stream Grant from the PA Council of the Arts
- Networked with other arts organizations
- Coordinated a raffle fundraiser
- Created and distributed a Hamburg Area Arts Alliance membership directory
- Initiated a public art program to incorporate new visual art into the community
- Held an artists’ rummage sale

2016 Arts Alliance Goals

- Continue to plan and host the annual Arts Fest, expanding the activities to include performances in the Hamburg Strand Theater.
- Partner with Mark Panty from Central Penn Events to gain his expertise on recruiting vendors and marketing the annual Arts Fest
- Continue to host two Cabela’s art shows, a silent auction, and an art raffle
- Host “Meet the Artist” nights and featured artist’s receptions
- Augment the ways we utilize the www.hamburgpa.org website to promote the arts by providing e-commerce opportunities for our member artists
- Reinstate art classes
- Erect public art displays such as quilt blocks and a community sculpture
- Partner with several Schuylkill County art venues to host a “Spring Thaw” event and “Spirit of the Holidays” a self guided driving tour to the participating venues



Children enjoying the 2015 Arts and Craft Fest



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.

As a Blueprint Community, our vision is for the Borough of Hamburg to become a premier location to live, work and play.

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. The committee members should be considered a strategy board - they are not necessarily the volunteers that complete the projects. The group mainly provides expertise, oversight, and coordination of community projects.

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.

The Blueprint Team's "Action Plan for the Future" details desired projects in eight categories: Recreation, Traffic/Transportation, Arts/Culture/Heritage, Hamburg Pride, Hospitality/Visitor needs, Services and Education, Property Values, and Housing.

Funding for implementation of specific projects is sought from public and private sources such as the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the USDA, and the Schuylkill River Heritage Association, as well as County programs such as Community Development Block Grants and the Greater Berks Development Fund.

Major Projects Initiated by the Blueprint Team & Partners since Inception

- Rehab of the blighted Wright's Knitwear building into senior housing
- Formed the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance and the Gallery of Hamburg
- Native Wildlife Habitat Program
- Affordable Housing Program (Provide housing rehab funding for 15 low to moderate income families)
- Schuylkill River Enhancements – trails, canoe launch, parking areas, picnic tables
- Expansion of the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum
- Field house façade improvement
- Received designation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Downtown Historic District
- Heritage Towns and Tours Program
- Resurrected a Downtown Farmer's Market (has since closed)
- Installed soccer fields at Kaercher Creek Park
- Hamburg Community Park improvements – pool, concession stands, ball fields, etc.
- Various improvements at the Kernsville Dam including a butterfly garden and additional trails
- New holiday decorations in town
- Redevelopment of the blighted industrial area off of Route 61 (in progress)

Heritage Towns and Tours Program

HT&T Mission: Hamburg's Heritage Town and Tours Committee was created to preserve, enhance, and promote the heritage resources within the Hamburg Area School District.

HT&T Vision: A vibrant and revitalized downtown and community that promotes, utilizes, and preserves local heritage resources. Natural recreational opportunities will be abundant and supported by regularly occurring events held to celebrate and promote the Schuylkill River Trail Region. Promotional materials, site resources, and outdoor leisure initiatives will improve the quality of life for local residents and attract visitors to navigate trails and visit shops and attractions in the community. This will increase heritage tourism and business opportunities. The Schuylkill River Trail will become a popular destination for travelers, outdoor enthusiasts, and vacationers.

Hamburg was one of five communities chosen to take part in a "Heritage Towns and Tours Program" initiated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association in 2011. The Program's aim is to assist communities within the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA) in developing heritage and cultural tourism offerings and attractions, enhance the character of our historic district, link visitors to the Schuylkill River walking trails and water trails, and to increase visitation and visitor spending, thereby improving the local economy.

Heritage resources are defined as the historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological, scenic, and natural resources that are present within a community. They are the unique places, attractions, and stories that make up a community's identity. Examples are historic buildings and remnants, parks, waterways, scenic mountains, and local trail systems. These resources are valuable commodities of the past and present that need to be promoted, preserved, and utilized.

What does heritage preservation mean for our community? Implementing a heritage tourism and preservation program will make our community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit. There are impressive benefits, which are both social and economic. Preservation increases municipal revenue by creating higher property values. Heritage resources are capable of bringing additional dollars into our local community and region by enhancing cultural heritage tourism. But more importantly, celebrating a community's heritage also instills pride in residents. Preservation equates to an improved quality of life through safer, healthier neighborhoods that are more pleasing to both residents and tourists. We must ensure that our heritage resources are preserved for our future generations to enjoy.

The HT&T Committee completed most of the projects on their five year action plan that was created in 2011 during years one through four; therefore there were no committee meetings held during 2015.

2015 Heritage Towns and Tours Accomplishments

- Continued bike loaner program in partnership with the Schuylkill River Greenway and the Hamburg Borough
- Assisted the Hamburg Area Historical Society with their search for a larger facility
- Reprinted 15,000 copies of the Hamburg Area Visitors guide

Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood

Maple Street to Walnut Street Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood Mission: The program 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.

Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood Vision: The program will offer a safe and friendly atmosphere for community integration to occur, thus inspiring homeownership and neighborhood empowerment. The 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 Neighborhood 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.

In 2011, Our Town Foundation received word that we were designated by DCED as an Elm Street community – one of 28 communities in PA to have this designation. The Elm Street neighborhood in Hamburg, named Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood (HSN), consists of 15 blocks at the southern end of town – between Walnut and Maple Streets, including 3rd and 4th streets, and Peach and Primrose Alleys. Receiving the designation allowed us to receive administrative funds to hire a program manager who could focus on neighborhood revitalization. Angela Kase served in that role until March of 2014, when she resigned from her position. Upon her resignation, Deena Kershner, current Director of the Foundation, resumed the manager role.

Southgate has had a good amount of success gaining community support for events and initiatives over the past few years. Volunteers have actively assisted with event coordination, general planning at neighborhood steering committee meetings, or acting as block captains delivering newsletters and flyers to their block.

Unfortunately, this past year was the last year of receiving funding from DCED for administrative support; however, the Foundation will continue to seek additional avenues of raising the funds needed to manage the program so we can continue to offer services and activities to the neighborhood.



Right - Members of the Southgate Steering Committee reviewing work plans

Left - Students enjoying free time during a past Clean Up Day



2015 Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood Accomplishments

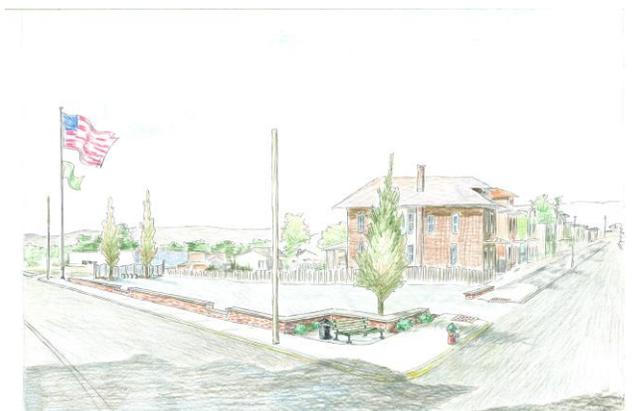
- Progressed with the beautification plan for the blighted parking lot located at 3rd and Grand Streets (completed the design, have property surveyed, prepare bid documents, sign contracts)
- Organized two “Great American Cleanups” for the borough
- Partnered with several organizations during the borough’s trick or treat nights to provide crossing guards at intersections within the Southgate Neighborhood
- Assisted seven property owners by providing façade improvement funding totaling over \$20,000
- Assisted with the improvement and/or construction of several blocks of sidewalks to provide improved pedestrian walkways
- Assisted the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum with their beautification efforts

2016 Southgate Neighborhood Committee Goals

- Complete the 3rd & Grand parking lot renovation project
- Make renovations to the tot lot and spread awareness about its place in the community
- Mount “Hometown Heroes” banners on telephone poles
- Renovate neighborhood entranceway by adding nicer signage and greenery
- Initiate a community garden project and host a plant exchange



3rd and Grand Street Parking Lot
prior to renovations



Artist rendition of proposed
changes to parking lot at 3rd and
Grand Streets. Improvements to be
made in 2016

Main Street – Where it all Began

The Main Street Mission: To revitalize and preserve downtown Historic Hamburg for our families and 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.

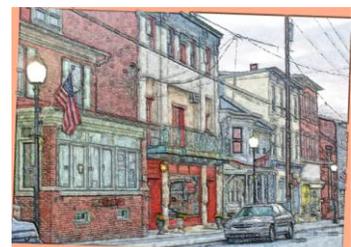
Lastly, a thriving downtown provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, the annual Arts & Craft Fest, and other events all reinforce sense of community. When viewing a movie at the Hamburg Strand Theater, or getting a bite to eat at our local eateries - 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 and heritage tourism is on the rise as well; therefore, we must continue to preserve and enhance our numerous heritage resources that are available for our residents and visitors to enjoy.



Postcard Pictures of Downtown



Physical Improvements/Design - Receiving a Face Lift

Committee Goal: To make the downtown more visually aesthetic while preserving its historical integrity and our heritage. The PA Downtown Center Said, “Good design conveys a visual message about what your downtown is, and what it has to offer.”

Design is about getting our Borough 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.

2015 Physical Improvements Accomplishments

- Met with engineers, contractors, and borough representatives to design a final plan for the renovation of the 3rd and Grand Streets parking lot.
- Approved a total of 16 new applications for the façade improvement program (seven within the Southgate Neighborhood, nine within the Main Street Corridor)
- Provided funding for five sidewalk renovation projects within the Southgate Neighborhood
- Held two Great American Cleanup events in partnership with local organizations
- Reviewed town entrances and made recommendations if grant funding becomes available
- Offered design assistance to residents who requested it
- Maintained the fish feeder at the Mill Creek on 3rd Street
- Created “Adopt-a-lot” guidelines for volunteer maintenance on public land
- Encouraged enforcement of borough ordinances, i.e. weeds, trash, blighted buildings

2016 Physical Improvements Committee Goals

- Complete the 3rd & Grand Street parking lot renovation project
- Make visual improvements to State Street Square
- Rehab the tot lot playground on Primrose Alley
- Replace the faded trailhead signs
- Replace worn out American Flags in the downtown with new ones
- Initiate the “Adopt-a-lot”
- Improve all the gateways into town to make them more visually appealing
- Partner with the Arts Alliance in their initiative to implement additional public arts such as murals and sculptures
- Paint vacant storefront windows



***Ornate woodwork restored
at 249 S. 3rd St.***

Economic Development 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. Art & Culture now proliferates throughout the town via the Gallery of Hamburg, the Hamburg Strand Theatre, 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 and support it.

2015 Economic Development Accomplishments

- Recruited the assistance of Jim Shenkweiler, Penn State Berks Business Professor, to assist with our business recruitment efforts
- Partnered with the Reading RR Heritage Museum to further develop tourism to their museum
- Administered a snow removal program for downtown property owners
- Hosted networking meetings to improve communications amongst business members
- Maintained accurate list of commercial properties for sale or lease in the borough
- Made personal visits to new businesses in town, welcoming them to the community
- Provided assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs as requested
- Maintained the business directory on hamburgpa.org
- Provided information to several business entrepreneurs considering locating in Hamburg

2016 Economic Development Goals

- Complete a market analysis and marketing plan
- Update Business Recruitment and Business Retention plans, reflecting the results of VISION 2020
- Host quarterly networking meetings
- Host an economic development forum
- Identify roadblocks to business entrepreneurs within the Borough and work towards eliminating the roadblocks
- Work closely with the Borough to ensure everyone has the same vision and goals for the community

Community Marketing: It's All About Image

Committee Goal: To promote 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."

Downtown Hamburg serves as a hub for commerce, culture and community life. We are fortunate to have numerous natural recreational assets surround us, as well as many local historical attractions. A positive image of a town is the most important factor in revitalizing any town. Image will determine a community's potential for vitality and prosperity. The Community Marketing Committee strives to promote a positive image of Hamburg – one that offers plentiful goods and services, a variety of activities, a positive attitude, a beautiful environment, and a quality of life that people seek when choosing a location to live.

There are several types of marketing that must be done for the town to be successful:

1. Market to the local residents – we must educate the locals on what Hamburg has to offer and on the importance of supporting their local economy.
2. Market to tourists – we must determine who our potential shoppers are, what they are looking for, who the competition is, and then promote our assets to these visitors.
3. Market to business entrepreneurs – we must identify targeted businesses and persuade them to establish a business or expand in the Hamburg area.

In order to do this, we must constantly develop new strategies in this ever-changing market.

1. Provide events and activities to bring people to town
2. Embrace social media in all forms
3. Market the existing assets of the town and the surrounding areas – don't try to be something we are not
4. Promote our heritage and cultural resources

The Community Marketing Committee is not all about promoting the businesses – it also needs to promote the Foundation. We are aware that after many years of existence, there are still some people in the community that are not aware of everything we do and the benefits of supporting the organization. This committee - along with the Board of Directors - continues to spread the word of our accomplishments.

The following outlines Our Town Foundation's regular marketing strategies for promoting Hamburg to showcase its attractions and resources to residents and visitors.

E-mail newsletters These attractive email blasts have allowed us to get information to our members and other subscribers faster! In 2015, we sent a total of fourteen newsletters to our "Hamburg Happenings" subscribers. The newsletters included information on major Hamburg events and promotions. The total number of subscribers receiving our email newsletters is 1,854, up from 1,474 in 2014

Social Media has been in full swing over the past year! Our Town Foundation officially manages four Facebook pages including Hamburg PA, Taste of Hamburger Festival, The Hamburg StrandTheater, and the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance.

“Hamburg, PA” is Our Town Foundations’ primary **Facebook page**. It currently has 1,660 likes, up from 1,576 likes at the beginning of 2015. Posts include local event flyers from Hamburg community organizations, OTF events, and other general Hamburg items of interest.

The statistics for Hamburg, PA’s Facebook Page averaged over the past year:

- 128 posts made in 2015
- 35,714 total reach from all posts
- 2,930 likes or comments
- 16 people go to our Facebook front page daily

Press releases and media alerts are sent to surrounding print, online, and radio media sources. This alerts them of our items of interest so they can post the information on their website, write an article in their publication, announce it on the radio, or be present at one of our upcoming events.

Online Calendars are another way to reach audiences within certain interest groups or a geographic region. Our Town Foundation uploads its events and other main Hamburg events to numerous online event calendars.

Brochures are a key way we connect with visitors to the area. Brochure distribution is performed by staff to hit a wide range of locations including nearby attractions, restaurants, offices, banks, and shops, totaling 120 locations. In addition, larger brochure kiosks that hold information regarding nearby attractions, as well as selected business member and organizational member brochures are located at the OTF office, Cabela’s retail store and the Microtel Hotel.

Our Town Foundation has created the following brochures: The Hamburg Area Visitor’s Guide, “101 Fun Things to do in and around Hamburg”, a Historic Hamburg architectural walking tour, and Historic Hamburg “Discover Our Past”. In addition, OTF has created brochures promoting the various facets of our organization including The Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg, The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, and Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood brochures.

Poster Delivery is another avenue of marketing the Foundation utilizes for its events. Posters are regularly distributed to the downtown businesses. Larger special events posters are distributed to an additional eighty nearby locations.

A quarterly insert in the Hamburg Item called “Our Town News” is a four page newsletter that gives Our Town Foundation news including upcoming events, new initiatives, grant funding, etc. The insert is distributed to all *Hamburg Item* subscribers, which has a circulation of approximately 2,000 and is also sent to Our Town Foundation members. This newsletter also serves as a place for us to promote our various events, as well as share other community events.

The **Hamburgpa.org website** is one stop shop for all local Hamburg businesses and attractions, serving as an online directory of local resources. The #1 referral to hamburgpa.org is through Google Searches with the 2nd highest coming from the Cabela's website. Unfortunately, due to the fact that we switched website hosts in 2015, accurate statistics were not available for this report.

Our Hamburg, PA **Twitter** account posted 81 tweets in 2015. Tweets mimic Hamburg, PA Facebook posts. Currently we have 524 followers, up from 342 followers at the beginning of year.

The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival has its own Facebook page which has 5,473 likes, up from 4,708 at the beginning of the year. In 2015, Gretz Distributers assisted with promoting the festival to their "friends" on Facebook, contributing to the approximate 16% increase in likes for the year.

The **Hamburg Strand Theater hosts their own website**, thanks to a volunteer on the theater committee who keeps the site current. Here is a glimpse of the theater's website statistics over the past year.

- 28,998 unique visitors
- 4,585 (15.8%) visitors from Hamburg
- 36.1% returning visitors
- 63.9% new visitors
- 1.37 average pages per visit
- 33 seconds average site visit duration
- 53.1% visitors are viewing from mobile devices

The Hamburg Strand Theater Facebook page has 2,558 likes, up from 1829 likes in April 2015. The page posts 1-2 times per week posting the new movie titles and a movie trailer.

The Hamburg Area Art Alliance created a face book page in 2014 and currently has 161 likes.



Find us on
Facebook



WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

- Shop locally
- Volunteer for events and other activities
- Serve on a committee
- Support the program financially
- Make suggestions for improvements
- Inform borough representatives and neighboring representatives of the importance of their continued support
- 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.

For questions in regards to this report, or to discuss any revitalization issues please contact:

**Our Town Foundation Office
335 State Street
Hamburg, PA 19526
610-562-3106
otfmanager@aol.com**



Additional information on the community can be found on the web at
www.hamburgpa.org



Natural recreational opportunities abound in the area.