

# OUR TOWN FOUNDATION

★ Shaping Hamburg's Future ★

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 20, 2018



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.



# 2017 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeff Pettit, *President*  
Chris Yost, *V.P.*  
Cindy Blefgen, *Treasurer*  
Donna Palko,  
*Recording Secretary*  
Steve Keifer  
Aaron Muller  
Martha Bertolet  
Anne Steffel  
Gerry Schappell  
Stephanie Adam  
Dr. John Smith  
Allen Madeira  
Katherine Rightmyer  
O'Brien  
Vreeland Wood  
Joshua Youpa

## TASTE OF HAMBURG-ER FESTIVAL

Sandra Christman  
Chris Tray  
Wendell Yoder  
Rita Yoder  
Dorothy Brobst  
Glenn Brobst  
Keith Brobst  
Gregg Adams  
Michelle Henne  
Stan Henne  
Marita Beers  
Kathryn Bernhard  
Chris Yost  
Jeff Pettit  
Lori Moyer  
Mark Flammer

## FUND RAISING

Donna Palko  
Dorothy Brobst  
Michelle Henne  
Chris Yost  
Jeff Pettit  
Theresa Snyder  
Rebecca Henne

## DESIGN

Sandy Caston  
Melanie Geiger  
Jerry Becker  
Joshua Youpa  
Jeff Mengel  
Joshua Butz

## THEATER

Steve Macbeth  
Property Manager  
John Smith  
Allen Madeira  
Katherine Rightmyer  
O'Brien  
Steve Keifer  
Vreeland Wood  
Linda Wood  
Mark Rentschler  
Matt Polis  
Clare Benz  
Gerry Schappell

## ARTS ALLIANCE

Allen Madeira  
Jeff Kahn  
Randy McCurdy  
Lindsay Adam  
Brian Warfel  
Ken Liskey  
Jay Ressler  
Martha Ressler  
Thomas Schucker  
Petra Martin  
Marty Tomosy Herman  
Karleen Jensen  
Hil Eldridge  
Anne Steffel

## ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Mark Mohn  
Eric George  
Kay Greenawalt  
Tim Flynn  
Steve Keifer  
Clare Benz  
John Leonforte  
Jerry Rotelle  
Erica Cogle  
Gabriella Wilson  
Carol Adams  
Todd Hummel

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

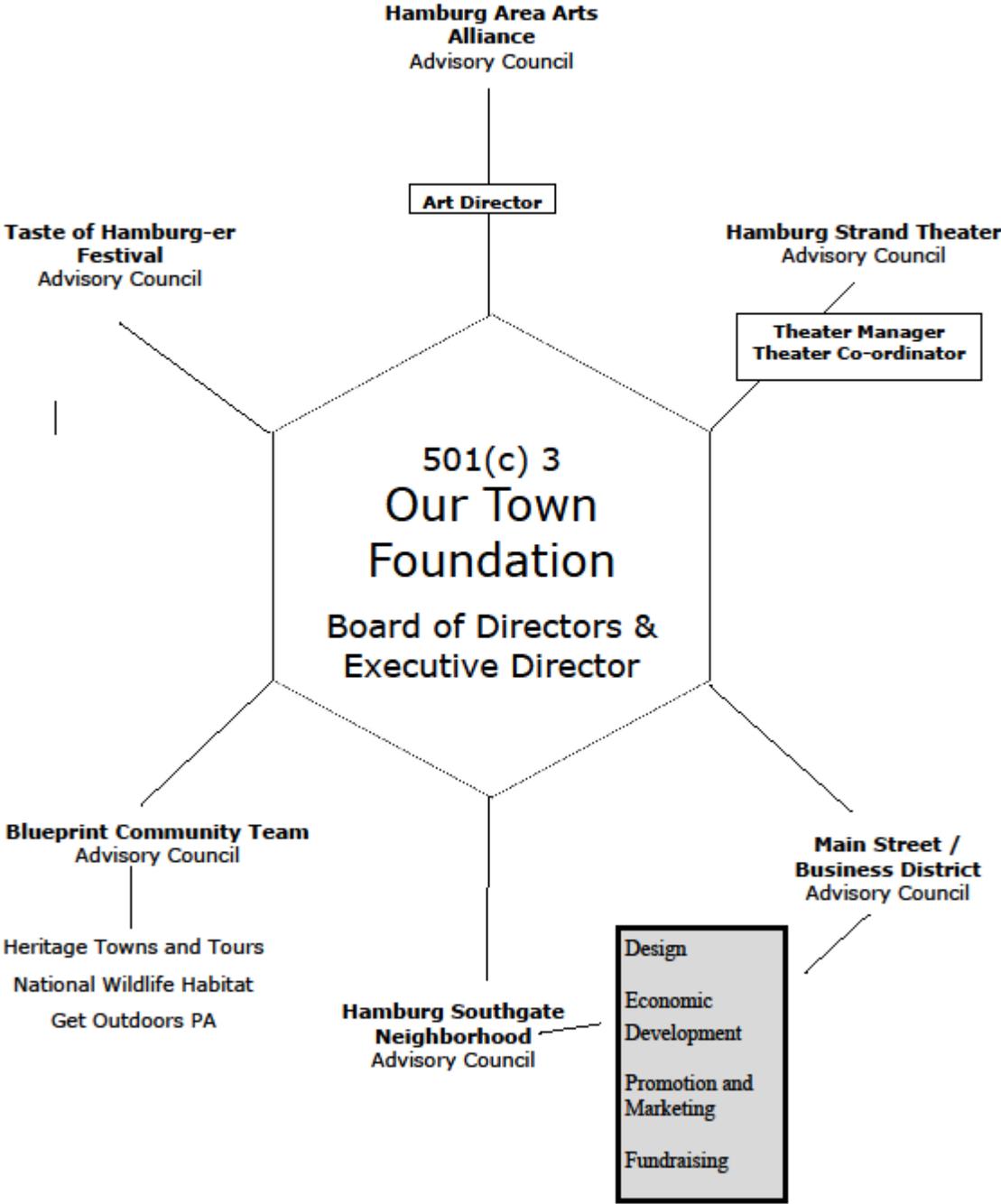
**Special thanks to all the volunteers who donated 3086 hours of their time in 2017. Their volunteer hours equal \$73,742.46 in labor costs, as per government statistics on the value of volunteers.**

## **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 35,000 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  
The Reading Railroad Heritage Museum opened to the public  
Completed a trail link from the town 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
- 2009 Completed the Therman Madeira Switchback Trail linking the Kernsville Dam to existing trails
- 2010 Received designation as an Elm Street Community and the Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization Program was initiated  
Received National Historic District Status  
Partnered with the Schuylkill River Greenway Association to initiate a Heritage Towns and Tours Program
- 2012 Completed an Historic Interpretive Trail at the Kernsville Dam including historical interpretive signs and GPS information  
Completed a feasibility study on the Balthaser building, a huge, vacant building in our downtown
- 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 Hamburg Strand Theater converted to a digital projection system and a new roof was put on the theater
- 2015 Purchased a vacant lot (named State Street Square) within the downtown Main Street corridor to host events and use as a community gathering place
- 2016 Began a public arts initiative. Painted Hamburg's first downtown mural on a building and also placed a large sculpture on the State Street Square lot  
Received a \$165,000 grant to improve and beautify the Borough owned 3<sup>rd</sup> and Grand Street parking lot
- 2017 Surpassed the Hamburg Strand Theater Capital Campaign goal of raising \$200,000 which funded major renovations and improvements to the facility so it would remain a viable community hub

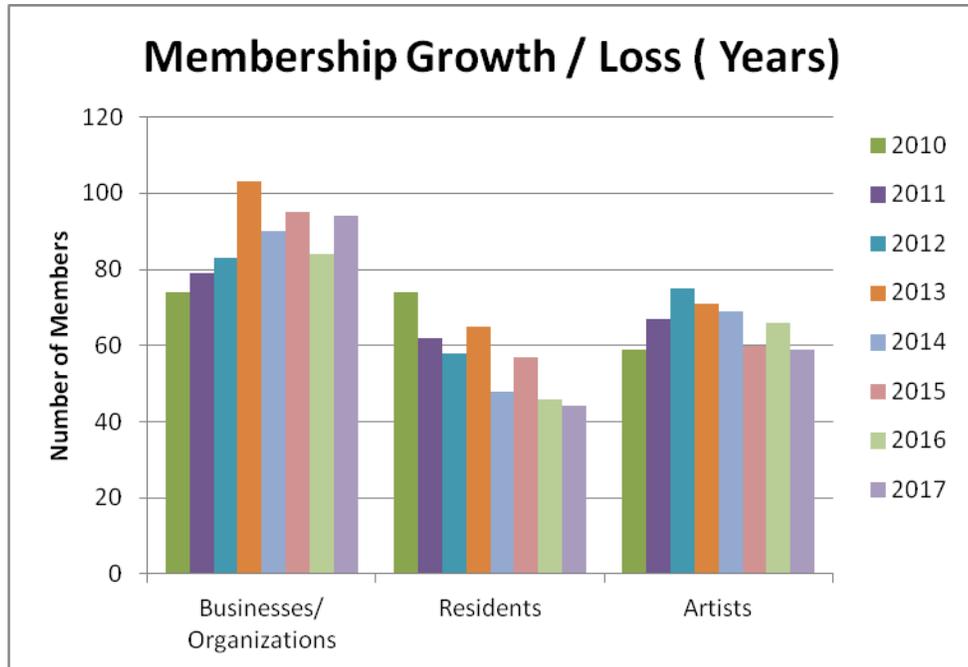
Items above are in addition to our other promotional activities, events, façade programs, smaller beautification projects, etc.

# Our Town Foundation Organizational Structure



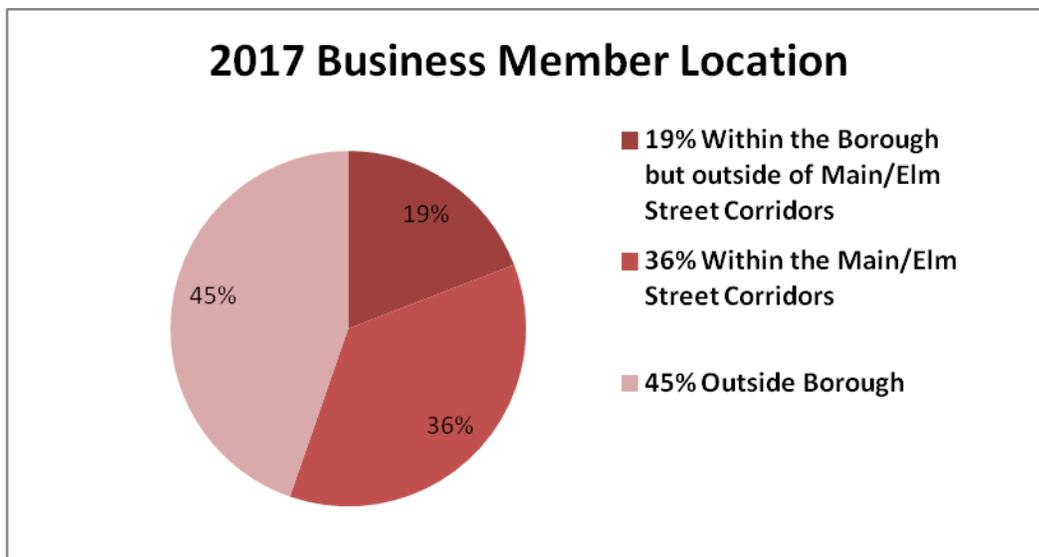
# Membership

Through the generosity of donors that have faith in our program, the Foundation is able to carry out its mission. 197 residents, artists, and businesses were members of OTF in 2017. This was an increase of only one from the previous year.



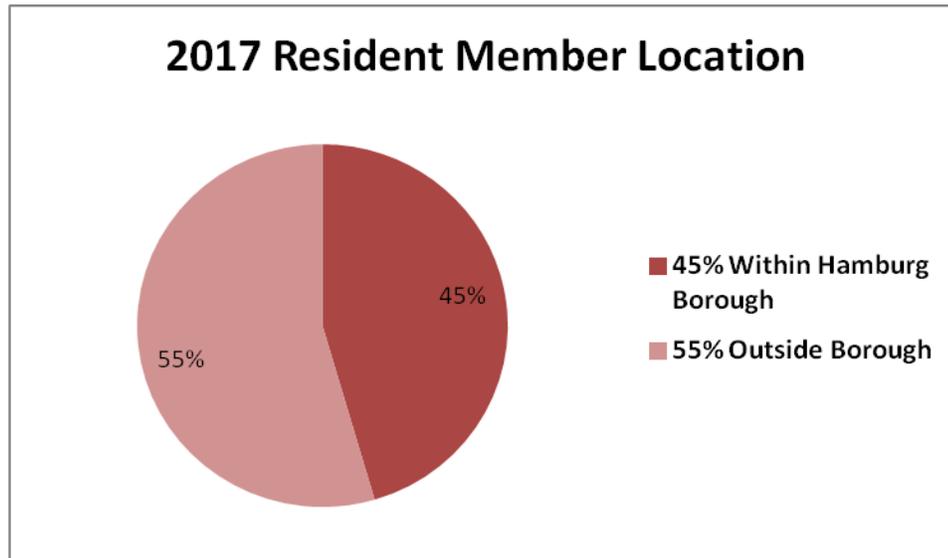
## Business/Organization Membership (94 members)

Business memberships increased by a total of ten members during 2017. This was approximately a 12% increase. Over the past several years the largest growth in business memberships are from those located outside of the Borough. This is due to the fact that there has been a surge in business growth in neighboring townships and a loss of businesses located within the Borough, especially within the downtown corridor. It is vital for the Foundation to support all businesses within the area, since they all play a role in attracting visitors, residents, and additional entrepreneurs into the community.



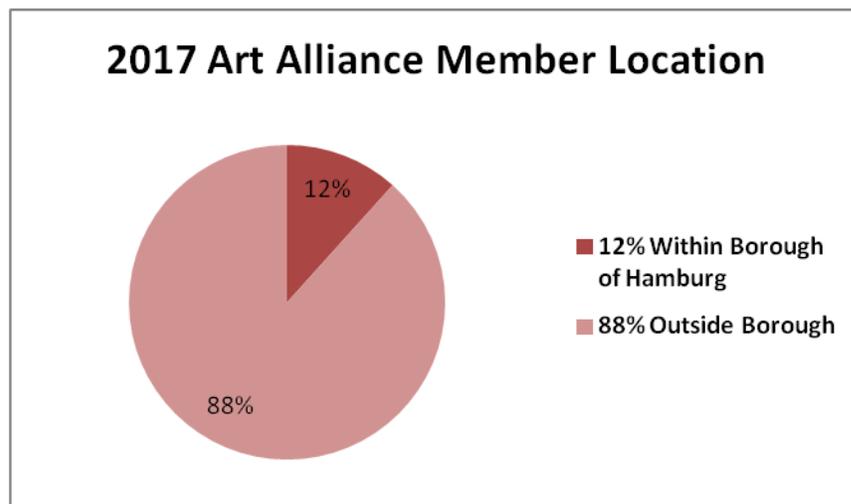
## **Resident/Family Memberships (44 members)**

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.



## **Artist Membership (59 members)**

Upon initiation in 2006, the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) consisted of a handful of local artists - both visual and performing - who supported our goal of increasing arts awareness in the community. The Alliance now boasts 59 members, of which only seven reside within the Hamburg Borough. Of the 59 HAAA members, 43 of them display in the Gallery, providing residents and tourists a sampling of our regional 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.



## **Vision 2020**

Our Town Foundation facilitated a community effort to define a vision for Hamburg throughout three public meetings held in 2016. Approximately 70 people participated in the process. Additionally, a survey was produced and distributed throughout the community. Over 100 respondents added information to be considered during the process. Strengths, areas of improvement, opportunities, and action plans were developed in an open collaborative forum. Discussion was encouraged by using small group interactions followed by whole group reports.

The end result of the visioning process was presented to the OTF Board of Directors who determined which action plans were to be adopted, a timeline for implementation, a cost, and people or groups who would be responsible for the implementation.

### **Strengths of Hamburg were distilled to the following:**

- Location – crossroads of two major highways and centrally located between four cities
- Abundant outdoor recreational opportunities
- Events
- Small town community feeling
- Our Town Foundation
- Strong educational system
- Rich in arts and culture - Reading Railroad Heritage Museum, Art and Craft Gallery, the Strand Theater
- History and historic preservation – National Historic District, Historical Society, Historic churches
- Availability of local services such as the library, post office, District Justice and state legislative offices.
- Community activism, involvement and partnerships

### **Areas of Improvement which create opportunities were synthesized into the following list:**

- Employment and industry, lack of small business and business support
- Narrow streets, parking flow
- Lack of entertainment and activities for all ages, especially the youth
- Beautification efforts needed, especially at the entrances to town - lack of greenery, public art
- Lack of restaurants and shops
- Retail units being converted to apartments
- Snow removal
- Store hours (close to early)
- Reluctance to change

### **According to the surveys and visioning, the following types of businesses were the most desired:**

- Additional dining options
- Coffe/tea
- Small unique shops/specialty stores
- Brew pub/microbrewery
- Craft/hobby store
- Farmers/produce market
- Community center/kids activity center
- Apparel stores

## What has happened since the visioning workshops?

- The Four Twelve Coffee Shop opened in December, 2016 offering specialty coffees, teas, smoothies and more. Pastries, muffins and other breakfast items are available and a limited lunch menu is offered
- Miller's 5 & 10 and Steinmetz Jewelers have been purchased by entrepreneurs who will be opening a brewpub and dining establishment. Major renovations are under way with a planned opening in Spring
- Bouchette winery opened a tasting room in December 2017, and sells wine by the glass or bottle and also sells gift items and décor relative to wine.
- A farmers market was started again in the spring of 2016. Unfortunately, only a few vendors participated so the future of the market is undetermined
- The Hamburg Borough researched one-way streets. Due to the cost to draft Penn-dot required plans (\$35,000), the Borough had to table the study.
- Rutter's Farm Store and gas station opened within the Borough's designated 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Redevelopment corridor and Manderbach Ford plans to open a new car dealership in 2018
- In nearby Tilden Township a Starbucks Coffee opened as well as a urgent care facility. Plans are in the works for another hotel.
- A private individual is developing a community garden within the Southgate Neighborhood
- The public arts initiative was launched with two murals painted in the downtown and a large kinetic sculpture placed on the State Street Square lot.
- Our Town Foundation became a designated "Get Outdoors PA" community
- The Hamburg Strand Theater presented several performances, special movie screenings, and art classes and activities to provide additional entertainment options to the community
- Unfortunately the Doris Berry Shop closed in 2016 and the remaining two apparel shops are slated to close in 2018. However, the Hamburg Antiques Center opened in the former Berry building providing another unique shopping opportunity.



**Four Twelve Coffee Shop**



**Opening in spring, 2018**

## **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 2017 there was substantial progress for Our Town Foundation and with the continued hard work and dedication of our volunteers, committees, and staff, 2018 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 fifteen 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/Heritage Towns and Tours, Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization, 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.

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

- Assuring sustainability of the organization
- Reviewing all financial aspects of the organization and approving the annual budget
- Assuring all proper policies and procedures are followed according to by-laws and government regulations
- Forming additional advisory councils as applicable
- 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
- 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

## Main Street – Where it all Began

*The Main Street Mission: To revitalize, promote, and preserve downtown historic Hamburg for our families and future generations to enjoy.*

Our vision of Hamburg is one of vibrant streets adorned with restored historic buildings filled with shops, restaurants and professional services. The town will prosper from the abundant natural, cultural, and historic resources within the community. 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.

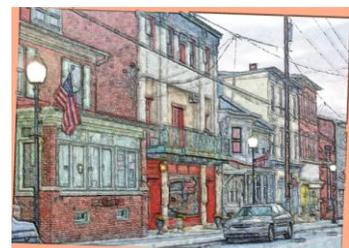
Lastly, a thriving downtown provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, the annual Arts & Craft Fest, and other events all reinforce sense of community. When viewing a movie at the Hamburg Strand Theater, or getting a bite to eat 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



# **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 affordable senior housing
- Formed the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance which manages the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Created the Native Wildlife Habitat Program (the first to be organized in the state)
- Received funding through the Affordable Housing Program (Provided housing rehab funding for fifteen low to moderate income families)
- Schuylkill River Enhancements – connecting trails, canoe launch, State Street Trailhead parking area, picnic tables along the river
- Expansion of the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum
- Received designation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Downtown Historic District
- Initiated a Heritage Towns and Tours Program
- Resurrected a Downtown Farmer's Market
- Kernsville Dam improvements including a butterfly garden and adding historical trail markers
- Purchased new holiday decorations for the 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 which was created in 2011 therefore there were no committee meetings held during 2017

## **Recent Heritage Towns and Tours Accomplishments**

- Our Town Foundation was designated as a “Get Outdoors PA” community by the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
- 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
- Replaced the faded trailhead signs with new ones
- Hosted a Garden Tour organized by the Native Wildlife Habitat Committee

## Taste of Hamburg-er Festival

Named one of the top twelve unique festivals in PA, this event keeps growing, and growing, and growing! The festival was featured on QVC's "In the Kitchen with Dave" in June, 2016. This Festive community event brought approximately 3,000 to the town in 2004, the first year of the event, and currently attracts approximately 40,000 to the Hamburg Borough annually.



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 report an increase in sales due to the volume of people that are strolling right outside 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 this annual event is now the best day of the year for the merchants, even surpassing their annual sidewalk sale profits. Numerous nonprofits and churches also participate, either by selling food or offering an activity providing an opportunity to raise money for their organization and 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 restaurants and caterers who sell a variety of burgers and 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets. In 2011, it expanded again to include ½ block of State Street, and in 2012, another expansion took the festival down to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street on State. In 2015, Our Town Foundation purchased the vacant grass lot located at 222 – 228 State Street and expanded the festival into that location, adding another entertainment area and 2<sup>nd</sup> beer garden. The M & T Lot located at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> & Pine Streets also became a selling area. In past years it was used for parking only. In 2017, due to the number of vendor registrations, the festival once again expanded another block, adding the 200 block of South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The eight block area is completely filled with burger stands, artisans and crafters, entertainment, children's activities, and more.



**The Luther Burger**



**Mac & Cheese**



**Surf and Turf Burger**

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	24%	Schuylkill County	10%
Reading	13%	Other PA Counties	20%
All other Berks County	27%	Outside the State	2%
Lehigh County	4%		

**The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival** has its own Facebook page which has 6818 followers, up from 6169 at the beginning of the year. This represents approximately a 10% increase in followers.

- Approximately 30,000 attended (lower than previous years due to rain)
- 1943 highest number of burgers sold at one stand
- Over 14,000 burgers reported sold
- 165 volunteers the day of the festival
- 1310 volunteer hours
- 60 sponsors
- 37 burger stands
- 91 artists/crafter stands
- 33 home based business stands
- 12 miscellaneous literature/non-profit stands
- 36 miscellaneous food vendor stands
- 10 downtown participating businesses
- 10 activity stands
- 5 stages hosting 17 bands and 12 individual performing artists



**Amateur Burger Eating Competition**



**Professional Burger Eating Competition**

# **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 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.

The arts support economic development by strengthening communities, stimulating demand for local products and supporting the economic activities of other local businesses. Traditional artists work in artistic styles and use techniques that emerge from the values, beliefs, ideas, and practices of communities of people. Studies show that people who participate most actively in arts and culture also participate actively in community and civic life. Investments in the arts are simultaneously investments in the communities that support them.

Our Town Foundation formed the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) in 2006. We now boast 59 members, a decrease of 10% over the previous year. The Alliance's growth to date can be contributed to our devoted artist members – a team of creative and imaginative people who share a common vision of a community rich with culture. 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.

During 2017, 43 member artists displayed and sold their work in the Art & 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 and sold.

A face book page was created in 2014 and currently has 377 likes, an increase of 116, or 44% over the previous year.

The future of the Arts Alliance looks strong as dedicated volunteers and members continue to carry on the mission of supporting the arts movement in the community.



## 2017 Arts Alliance Accomplishments

- Continued the public art movement by funding the 2<sup>nd</sup> historic mural which was painted at the Reading Railroad Museum
- Hosted the 7th Annual Hamburg Arts & Craft Fest, and “Rolling Art Exhibition” car show
- Recognized nine member artists during our “Featured Artist of the Month” receptions
- Offered thirteen art classes for the public
- Arranged for Hamburg Area High School art students to paint downtown store front windows in the spring
- Coordinated several “Art and a Movie” events in partnership with the Strand Theater
- Continued to manage the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Received a \$15,000 Rural Arts Grant from the Berks County Community Foundation
- Received a \$2,000 Program Stream Grant from the PA Council of the Arts
- Participated in The Best Kept Secrets Tour for Berks County
- Conducted a silent art auction during the Hamburg Arts Fest
- Sponsored an art contest featuring “Chairs”
- Coordinated an art raffle fundraiser
- Updated and distributed a Hamburg Area Arts Alliance membership directory
- Hosted a holiday open house in the Art and Craft Gallery

## 2018 Arts Alliance Goals

- Offer all the activities we have in the past including the silent art auction, themed art contest, an art raffle, featured artist networking events, and a holiday open house
- Continue our public arts initiative by funding, designing, and creating a third public mural and other public art displays in downtown Hamburg Augment the ways we utilize the [www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org) website to promote the arts by providing e-commerce opportunities for our member artists
- Participate in the annual Hawk Mountain Arts Tour
- Host “Artdrenaline” a summer day camp for kids combining arts and culture with physical activities
- Host a one day music festival in support of our performing artist members
- Partner with the November craft fair held at the Hamburg Area High School
- Improve social media marketing



**Hamburg's 2nd mural painted on the wall at the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum**

# 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 28<sup>th</sup>, 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Realizing the need for major renovations, Our Town Foundation kicked off a capital campaign in 2014 with a goal of raising \$200,000. This goal was surpassed by the end of 2017! Many improvements have been made over the past five years (listed below) but there are still more to be done.

In April of 2015, Bethany Sholl was hired to be the Manager of the Strand with assistance from her husband, Jacob, who is the projectionist. Her mother, Stephanie Adam, is the Theater Coordinator and assists 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. Last year there were 32 special movie nights that included special activities including Faith Nights, Girls Night Out, and children's events. There were also five live performances offered.

The side room, also referred to as the "party room" was quite busy as well. 59 private parties were held, several art classes were offered, and it served as a meeting room for local groups on many occasions.

Social media plays a big role in promoting the activities at the Strand. The Hamburg Strand Theater Facebook page has 3645 followers, up from 3144 followers in 2016, an increase of over 500! The page posts 1-2 times per week posting the upcoming featured attractions, movie trailers, and special events. The Theater's email list also continues to grow. The total number of subscribers at the end of 2017 was 718, an increase of 271, over 50% from the previous year. Emails are sent to all subscribers each week informing them about what is playing at the Strand.

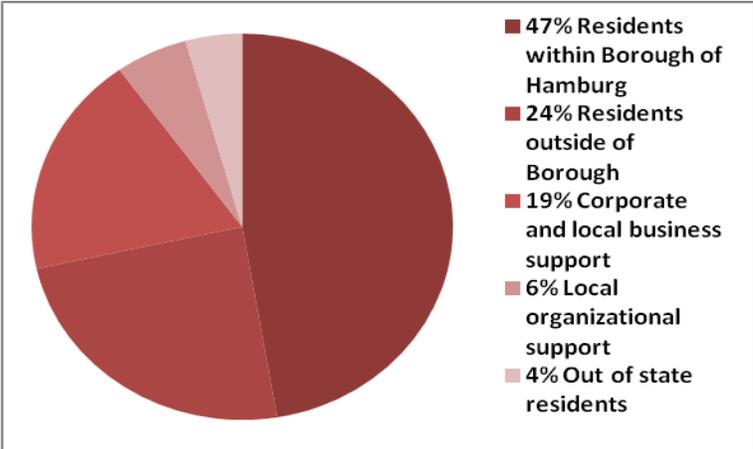
The theater hosts its own website thanks to a Doc Smith, a volunteer on the theater committee who keeps the site current. Here is a glimpse of the theater's website statistics over the past year.

- 15,571 unique visitors
  - 42,022 page views
  - 26,178 sessions
  - 21% returning visitors
  - 79% new visitors
  - 1.61 average pages per visit
  - 54 seconds average site visit duration
  - 66.5% of visitors are viewing from mobile devices, 26% from desktops and 7.5% from tablets
- |                |       |  |
|----------------|-------|--|
| Age breakdown: |       |  |
| 18-24          | 27.5% |  |
| 25-34          | 33.5% |  |
| 35-44          | 15.5% |  |
| 45-54          | 12.5% |  |
| Over 55        | 11%   |  |
| Gender         |       |  |
| Male           | 54%   |  |
| Female         | 46%   |  |

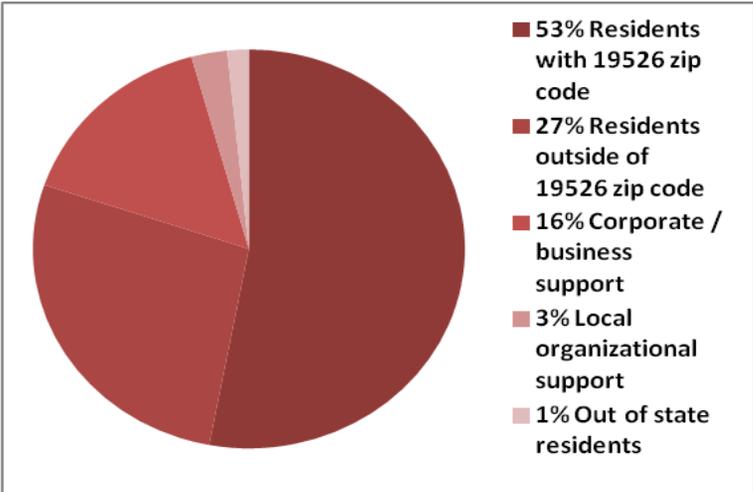
# HAMBURG STRAND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

## TOTAL FUNDS RAISED TO DATE

<b>DCED Grant:</b>	<b>\$ 31,050</b>
<b>Profit from Gala Auctions:</b>	<b>28,014</b>
<b>Misc. Fundraisers:</b>	<b>9,092</b>
<b>Capital Campaign Donations (other):</b>	<b><u>134,168</u></b>
 <b>Total Raised to Date: \$202,324</b>  	
<b>Outstanding pledges still to be received</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>



**DOLLAR VALUE OF  
THEATER  
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN  
SUPPORTERS  
RAISED TO DATE  
\$134,168**



**NUMBER OF THEATER  
DONORS  
TO DATE (187)**

## Theater Renovations/Improvements to Date

- New digital projection system including Dolby surround sound and a new screen
- New insulated roof over theater and garage
- Installed two additional bathrooms on the main level and made additional plumbing improvements
- Refurbished the historic marquee and the exterior entry doors
- Stage renovations including laying a hardwood floor
- Installed new heating/cooling systems in lobby, concession area and party room
- Refurbished the main entry doors
- Completed structural repairs to the exterior brick wall
- Painted both the exterior and the interior of the facility
- Purchased a new popcorn machine, ice machine, beverage cooler and a point of sale system to allow for credit card purchases

## 2018 Theater Goals

- Convert garage area to changing rooms for theatrical performers
- Interior renovations to allow for bistro tables in the rear
- Visual improvements in lobby including new flooring behind the concession area
- Install a new heating/cooling system in the main theater
- Electrical/lighting improvements
- Additional façade improvements
- Apply for a performing arts liquor license (if we meet LCB requirements)
- Host numerous live performances and special events
- Recognize our capital campaign donors on the donor board in the lobby



Original projector on display in theater lobby



Snowy scene captured by local resident, Brian Warfel

# 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Unfortunately, 2014 was the last year OTF received funding from DCED for administrative support; however, the Foundation continues to seek grants and search for additional sources of revenue to implement projects within the Southgate Neighborhood.



3<sup>rd</sup> and Grand parking lot before improvements



3<sup>rd</sup> and Grand parking lot after improvements

## 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.

### **2017 Physical Improvements Accomplishments**

- Coordinated a Hometown Heroes Banner program, hanging 52 throughout the town
- Repaired/replaced damaged directional signs throughout town
- Held two Great American Cleanup events in partnership with local organizations
- Assisted with the “Drinks for Dogs”, a project initiated by a Hamburg Area High School student
- Assisted with a project to create a community garden in the southern end of town
- Maintained the fish feeder at the Mill Creek on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street
- Partnered with the Arts Alliance in their initiative to implement public arts such as murals and painting vacant storefront windows

### **2018 Physical Improvements Committee Goals**

- Continue to host two community cleanups
- Make visual improvements to State Street Square (if grant funds are received)
- Hang 50 additional Hometown Heroes banners
- Seek funding to improve all the gateways into town making them more visually appealing
- Seek funding to design and install historical narrative signs at places of historical interest
- Create pocket parks and seek areas to “green”
- Complete the community garden design and open it up to the residents to participate
- Partner with the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance to coordinate/install additional public art



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

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

Malls and smaller independent stores across America are closing because of the competition with big-box stores and e-commerce. Historic downtowns across the nation need to realize this trend and change their profile if they want to remain a vital community hub. Art and cultural type businesses and activities play an important role in attracting visitors. The Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg, the Hamburg Strand Theatre, the Reading Railroad Heritage museum, two dance studios, B’s Sip and Paint, and other businesses embrace the opportunity of growth through art and culture in Hamburg. Natural recreational opportunities are abundant as well; however, Hamburg is currently lacking some of the hospitality type businesses that support people coming to town to utilize our recreational opportunities.

There is change occurring in the area, and while it is sad to see the loss of many of our mom and pop retail stores, (many which were multi-generational) there is economic growth on our horizon. Some of the retail shops have remained retail, and some have converted to service and hospitality type businesses. The Four Twelve coffee shop opened the end of 2016 and has reported a successful 2017. Bouchette Winery opened the end of 2017 and the Millcreek Brewpub is slated to open in 2018.

## **2017 Economic Development Accomplishments**

- Partnered with the Reading RR Heritage Museum to further develop tourism to their museum
- Hosted networking meetings to improve communications amongst business members
- Hosted an economic development forum
- 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
- Continued to gather data for a parking study
- Provided assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs as requested
- Maintained the business directory on [hamburgpa.org](http://hamburgpa.org)
- Provided information to several business entrepreneurs considering locating in Hamburg

## **2018 Economic Development Goals**

- Host quarterly networking meetings
- Complete a market analysis and marketing plan
- Update our Business Recruitment and Business Retention plans, reflecting the results of VISION 2020
- Be proactive with our recruitment efforts; direct contact with entrepreneurs, informing local economic development agencies of our desired businesses, etc.
- Complete the parking study and distribute data to the borough and local businesses
- 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

Community Marketing 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 2017, we sent a total of 17 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 2476, up from 2188 in 2016.

**Press releases and media alerts** are sent to 16 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.

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

“Hamburg, PA” is Our Town Foundations’ primary **Facebook page**. It currently has 2072 followers, up from 1924 followers at the beginning of 2017. 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:

- 495 posts made in 2017, up from 276 posts in 2016
- 216,066 total reach from all posts, up from 187,620 in 2016, an increase of 28,446 or 15%
- 11059 likes or comments, down from 12,224 in 2016, a decrease of 1,165 or 9%

**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 13 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 announces 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.

The **Hamburgpa.org website** is one stop shop for all local Hamburg businesses and attractions, serving as an online directory of local resources. The site was revamped in 2016 to make it more mobile friendly.

Our Hamburg, PA **Twitter** account posted 20 tweets in 2017. Tweets mimic Hamburg, PA Facebook posts. Currently we have 639 followers, a small increase over the 621 followers in 2016.

Participating in tourism expos and community events is also a great way to introduce visitors to our many community assets. Personal communication and visual displays are a benefit in attracting visitors.



Find us on  
**Facebook**



# Our Town Foundation 2017 Volunteer of the Year



**Dr. John Smith**

Every year during the Annual Meeting, OTF announces the “Volunteer of the Year”. This person is selected based on the number of hours completed in the calendar year, overall reliability and attitude demonstrated while completing tasks. Special consideration is given to those volunteers that serve on more than one committee. This year Dr. John Smith, AKA “Doc”, co-owner of Hamburg Family Eye Care, was bestowed with the award.

Doc was one of the original Board members when the Foundation was incorporated in 2002, but after serving a few years he stepped down from the position. He was appointed to fill an open position in August of 2008 and has served ever since. In addition to serving on the Board, Doc is a member of the Hamburg Strand Theater Committee, in which he has the role of web master. He keeps the website up-to-date with listing the featured movies and upcoming events. He also writes and sends out the weekly email theater newsletter keeping everyone informed as to what is showing. Through his perseverance the email subscribers at the end of 2017 was 718, seeing an increase of 271, which was over 50%, from the previous year. Additional website statistics can be found in this report under the Theater Committee updates. Doc also volunteers at other functions including the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival and he serves as our internal auditor reviewing all of our monthly bank statements for our four bank accounts.

“I respect Doc for always having a level head during our meetings. He is an independent thinker who is willing to speak up when making decisions, prompting the group to further discuss the topics at hand. With his knowledge I am confident that the right decisions will be made.” says Deena Kershner

A special thanks to Doc for his dedication to the Foundation and the Community.

## **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](http://www.hamburgpa.org)**



Natural recreational opportunities abound in the area.