

OUR TOWN FOUNDATION

★ Shaping Hamburg's Future ★

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

February 15, 2011



Blueprint
COMMUNITIES



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

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Mary Himmelberger
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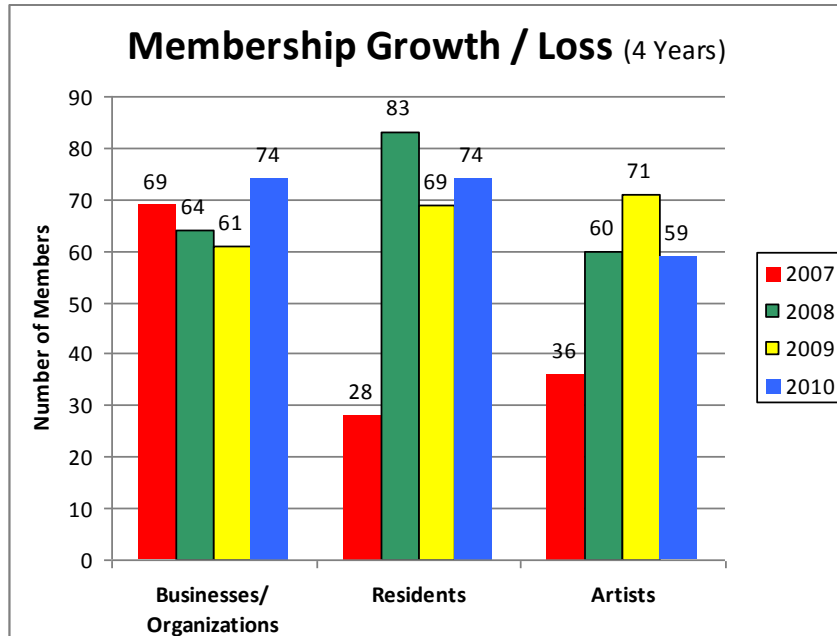
BLUEPRINT COMMUNITY TEAM

Kay Greenawalt
Chuck Figard
Allen Shollenberger
David Hummel
Rick Boyd
Pat Adams
Jeff Adam

Special thanks to all the volunteers who donated 1657 hours of their time in 2010!

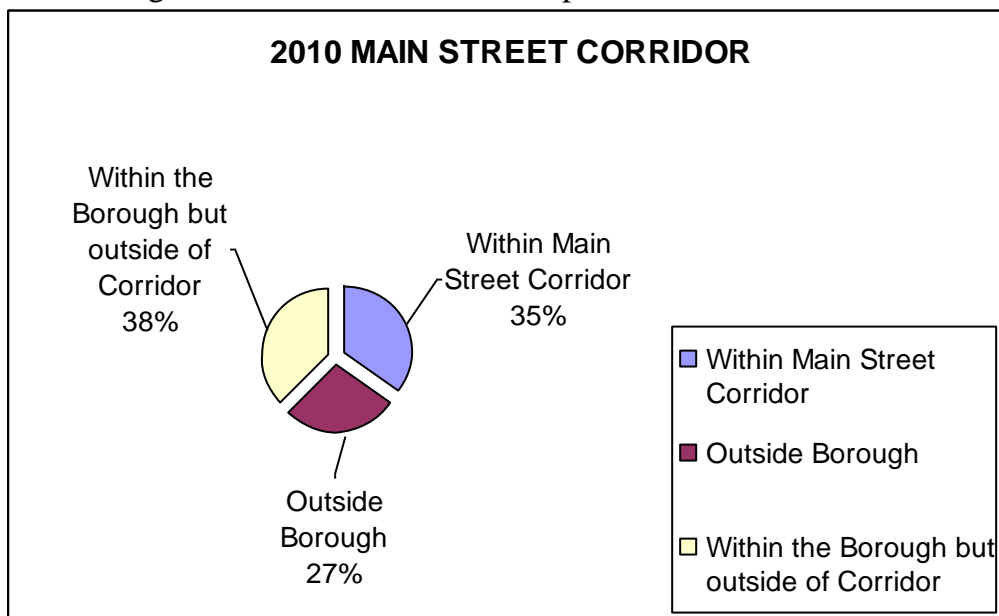
Membership

Through the generosity of donors that have faith in our program, the Foundation is able to carry out its mission. 207 residents, artists, and businesses were members of Our Town Foundation in 2010



Business Membership (74 members)

Business membership remains strong with the Foundation despite the economic hard times we have faced over the last several years. 2010 saw a growth of 13 new business members, many of which were located outside of the immediate downtown business district, and also several from neighboring towns. 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.



Resident Membership (74 members)

The residential sector also benefits from the Foundation's revitalization efforts. As community improvements are made, the quality of life improves. Resident memberships from within the Borough as well as the neighboring townships confirm that the community supports our endeavors.

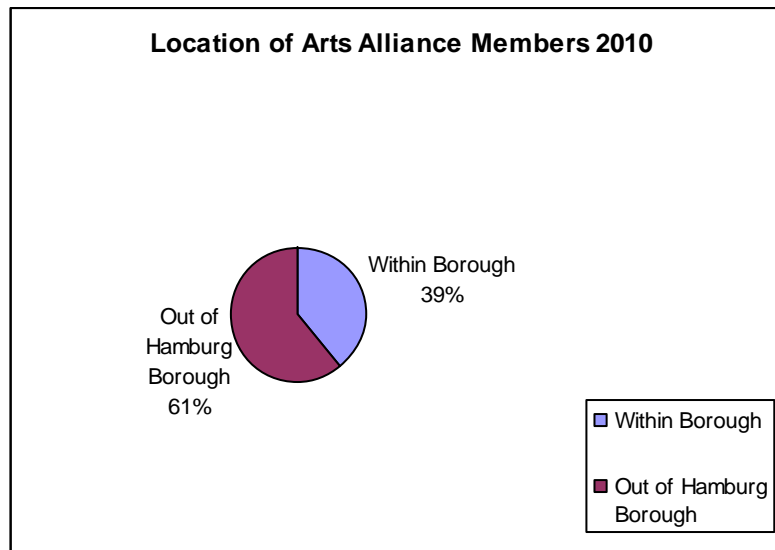
With the onset of a neighborhood revitalization program scheduled to begin in 2011 for the southern end of town, we anticipate additional supporters to come on board, not only financially but also adding to the volunteer pool.

Artist Membership (59 members)

The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance started with less than a dozen members in 2006. When the Gallery of Hamburg opened its doors in July of 2007 membership jumped to almost fifty. One year later, when the Gallery relocated to a bigger home, membership soared to almost 75. Unfortunately, this sector saw a drop in membership from 71 in 2009 to 59 in 2010.

The state of the economy certainly played a role in the decline, as consumers cut back on unnecessary purchases such as artwork, which in turn led several artist members to pull their work from the Gallery.

Despite the downturn, work from over 30 artists remains on display in the Gallery, providing residents and tourists a sampling of our local arts and culture.



General OTF Statistics (2010)

Number of Grants Received by OTF Since Inception	34
Grant Funds (from all sources) Received to Date	\$ 2,570,235

Number of Façade Grants Approved in 2009 & 2010	15
Value of Façade Grants Approved in 2009 & 2010	\$ 27,675
Number of Façade Grants Approved since Inception	75
Value of Façade Grants since Inception	\$ 160,385
Total Investment in Façade Renovations to Date (public and private funds)	\$ 432,107

2010 Business Members	74
2010 Resident Members	74
2010 Arts Alliance Members	<u>69</u>
Total 2010 Members	207

Committee Volunteers	45
Student Volunteers	16
Event Volunteers	36
Office Volunteers	<u>2</u>
Total Active Volunteers	99

Total Volunteer Hours Reported for 2010	1657
Value of Volunteer Hours (\$18.77 per hour)	\$ 31,101

Statewide Main Street Reinvestment Statistics 2010*

Total Number of Reporting Main Street Communities	75
Net (Full Time Equivalent) Job Gains	997
Net New Business Gains	965
Number of Volunteer Hours Contributed	7694
Number of Building Rehabilitation Projects	522,386
Number of Public Improvement Projects	125
\$ Value of ALL Private Investment in ALL Projects	\$1,664,794,341
\$ Value of ALL Public Investment in ALL Projects	\$ 24,276,610
Net Private to Public Investment Ratio	\$68.58 to \$1.00

* Statistics Reported to the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Main Street – Where it all Began

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organization – The Board of Directors

Collectively, the Board of Directors (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.

2010 saw a year of tremendous growth and progress for Our Town Foundation, and with the continued hard work and dedication of our volunteers and staff, 2011 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, it was suggested by the PA Downtown Center (PDC) that the Foundation transform from a Downtown Main Street Program to a full- fledged Community Revitalization Program (CRC) that would oversee and integrate all the community revitalization projects. This organizational structure provides many benefits as listed below:

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

As a Community Revitalization Corporation we are currently administering several projects and programs which require partnerships with other organizations to assure that our revitalization efforts stretch from the downtown corridor to the entire Borough and nearby areas.

- Downtown Main Street, organized in 2002
- Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, organized in 2004
- Blueprint Community Program, organized in 2005
- Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, organized in 2006
- Native Wildlife Habitat Program, organized in 2007
- Elm Street Program, planning began in 2008 with designation granted in 2010
- Heritage Towns & Tours, to be planned and implemented in 2011

In addition to the above programs, the Foundation serves as a Visitor/Information Center for the area.

Organizations go through three distinct organizational phases:

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

Our Town Foundation could be considered to be in all three phases. The Elm Street Program and the Heritage Towns and Tours Program are in the catalyst stage. The Arts Alliance, Blueprint Community Team and the National Wildlife Habitat Program are in the growth stage. The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival and the Downtown Main Street Program appear to be in the management phase - the programs have been in existence for quite a number of years and are pretty well managed; however, adjustments and improvements are made as needed.

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 as well.



Several Board of Directors at the 2010 Reorganization Meeting

2010 Major Organization Accomplishments

- Receipt of a USDA Grant in the amount of \$90,000
- Designated as a National Historic District
- Designated as an Elm Street District
- Successful community partnering with various organizations, Borough Council, Cabela's Management, and the Hamburg Area School District
- Received "Achiever" Status through the PA Downtown Center for successfully completing an eight year Main St. Program
- Recognition by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Certified Main Street District
- Program Manager received Manager of the Year Award from the PA Downtown Center
- Program Manager received certification in event management from Temple University
- More student involvement through the school district's community volunteer assistance program

2011 Organization Goals

- Begin implementation of the Elm Street Program and the Heritage Towns & Tours Program
- Research the feasibility of purchasing real estate as a means to sustain the program
- Initiation of a downtown farmer's market
- Assist a local group in building a community dog park
- Increase membership levels in all categories by reaching out to the community stakeholders and educating them about the Community Revitalization efforts
- Continue to search and apply for grant funds from all resources



2011 Goal – To promote the natural recreational opportunities available in the area

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

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. Promote the town as a whole

The Promotions and Marketing Committee is not all about promoting the businesses – it also needs to promote the Foundation. We are aware that after nine years of existence, there are still many 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.



2010 Promotion Committee Accomplishments

- Designed, printed and distributed 12,000 Downtown Hamburg Event brochures
- Updated and distributed Downtown Hamburg maps
- Reprinted 10,000 copies of the Architectural Walking Tour brochure
- Quarterly *Our Town Tidbits* newsletter printed and distributed via the *Hamburg Item*
- Started major design updates to the hamburgpa.org website
- Set up a facebook account for the Foundation
- Coop Advertising
 - State Street Bridge Reopening Celebration
 - Full page in *Berks County Living*
 - Holiday Coupon Sheets
 - Shopping Spree Promotion for the Holiday
- Promoted a Shop Local Campaign
- Continued the Hamburg Bucks gift certificate program
- Business members' brochures / rack cards delivered to Cabela's and Microtel
- Coordinated business open houses during the Holiday Historic House Tours and business extended hours during the Art Strolls
- Promoted the town to the media –
 - Large write up was printed in the *Borough News Magazine* on our program
 - Write up was placed in *PA When & Where Magazine* on our Beach Night
 - Hamburg-er Festival was promoted in the National Publication –*American Profile*
 - One-half hour BCTV show promoted Hamburg
 - All event information was submitted to various media sources to include in their community calendar of events
- Maintained Community Calendar of Events and “Hamburg Happenings” databases

2011 Promotion Committee Goals

- Coordinate one day or multi-day mini vacation packages
- Improve communications with the PA Tourism Dept. and Visitors' Bureaus
- Additional signage along the highways
- Directional signage in the downtown
- Create a flyer entitled “101 Fun Things to do in Hamburg”
- Complete the new design of the hamburgpa.org website
- Promote the Foundation and the town through social media
- Purchase small removable roadway signs for all events
- Market Hamburg to the campgrounds
- Creating a Geocaching program
- Educate the public on the significance of having a community revitalization corporation
- PLUS, continue all of the above accomplishments (except for reprinting of brochures)

Events & Fundraising: Live, Learn, and Progress

Community events are a way for us to join together and support one another, while having fun and reconnecting with our neighbors. Our Town Foundation hosts several downtown events that keep people engaged in the shopping district. Events also serve as a reason for family to return to their roots and visit with their siblings.

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

Fundraising endeavors are important to sustaining OTF – a hundred dollars here, a thousand dollars there, really adds up. These funds are often used for promoting the town or for designated projects. Kauffman Chicken BBQ sales and Murder Mystery Dinners continue to be opportune fundraisers. Residents have embraced the Hometowne Collectibles – plans for series # 12 are for the old Schlenker Motors building on 4th Street

2010 Events & Fundraising Activities

- Fundraisers
 - Kauffman’s Chicken BBQ fundraiser – 2 per year
 - Murder Mystery Dinners – 2 per year
 - Hometown Collectibles
 - Raffles
 - Pizza Hut Fundraiser
 - Mug sales
 - Haunted Hamburg Ghost Book sales
 - Food Sales at events
- Events
 - Beach Night – with the help of Hamburg’s MaluLani Dancers & Pahutanes
 - Assisted the Hamburg Arts Alliance committee with 1st Friday Art Strolls
 - Taste of Hamburg-er Festival
 - Historic House Tours



Wing eating competition during Beach Night

2011 Fund Raising and Events

- Beer, Bands & BBQ in June
- Catch the Spirit Event in December
- Possible poker run with wineries
- Possible comedy show
- Possible gala dinner event
- Gold Sale fundraiser
- PLUS continue all of the above with the exception of 1st Friday Art Strolls



Mahulani Dancers performing at the annual Beach Night

DESIGN: Receiving a Face Lift

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

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

The Design Committee was not very active in 2010, due to the fact that there were no funds available to initiate beautification projects. Funding for the very successful façade improvement project for the downtown was expended, and there were no major projects that needed to be implemented. However, the committee was always available to meet with the residents or business owners to provide recommendations on design of signs, property improvements, or visual merchandising.

Although funds have been expended for our Foundation backed façade program, the Berks County Community Development office has funding available for property rehab for properties located within the Main Street corridor, the Elm Street corridor, and the Borough’s 2nd Street Redevelopment area.

2010 Design Committee Accomplishments

- Received National Historic Designation for the downtown

2011 Design Committee Goals

- Seek additional DCED grants for the Façade Improvement Program for properties within the Main St. corridor
- Possible extension of streetscape improvements in the 100 block of South 4th Street
- Encourage enforcement of borough ordinances, i.e. weeds, trash, blighted buildings
- Work with the Borough to update the current sign ordinance
- Promote use of the Berks County Rehab program for property owners
- Green up the town by creating pocket parks (if funding is available)
- Continue to seek donations for additional holiday lights



Historic property – VFW



Example of Back-lit signs removed from historic district area

Economic Restructuring Committee: Building a Better Tomorrow

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

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

2010 Economic Restructuring Accomplishments

- Updated and redesigned the Business Recruitment Packet
- Administered a snow removal program for downtown property owners
- Partnered with Cabela’s to create a “destination” for recreational buffs
- Hosted computer classes (power point and Microsoft Word)
- Hosted business workshops and forums
 - Social Media
 - Competing with Mass Merchandisers
 - Staging Your Home to Sell
 - Financial Education
 - Business 101
 - Safety in your Business
- Maintained an available property inventory
- Personal visits to new businesses in town, welcoming them to the community
- Set up a “Banking on Business” Program at local banks with assistance from the FHLB
- Assembled “Welcome Wagon” packets for distribution to new homeowners
- Assisted numerous business entrepreneurs

2011 Economic Restructuring Goals

- Identify roadblocks to business entrepreneurs within the Borough and work towards eliminating the roadblocks
- Design and print a new business directory
- Build relationships with area developers and investors
- Host business workshops on energy efficiency and hospitality
- Assist with a farmer’s market start-up
- Assist artists and businesses with e-commerce opportunities
- PLUS continue all of the above accomplishments

Taste of Hamburg-er Festival



Approximately 20,000 people attended the 7th annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival in 2010! According to our estimates, the festival continues to grow in attendance approximately 40% each year. The first year brought approximately 3,000 and it has grown by leaps and bounds ever since.

The event is one that supports a broad range of stakeholders within the community. It serves 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 request room to 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 non profits 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 attendees. The festival provides an opportunity for the chefs to become creative with their burgers, possibly trying a new recipe for visitors to sample. Approximately 10,000 burgers were consumed during the 7th annual festival!

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 increased marketing, visitors from out of state continue to increase as well. According to the results of a survey done by the PA Downtown Center, in 2010, 12% of the people surveyed traveled from over 50 miles away.

In 2010 we expanded the festival to encompass one square block, which provided space on two additional streets. The space was filled with vendors, burger stands, artisans and crafters, entertainment, children's activities, animals and more.

The addition of a beer and wine garden garnered the attention of many attendees, as it was filled to capacity the majority of the day.

The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival Committee is looking forward to 2011's event scheduled for Saturday, September 3.

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.

As the Alliance celebrates its 5th 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 close to 60 members, of which approximately one-half 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 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 types of art to be showcased.

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

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

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.



Artwork displays in the Gallery of Hamburg



Allen Madeira working on his egg shell art

2010 Arts Alliance Accomplishments

- Maintained the Gallery of Hamburg co-op art gallery
- First Friday Summer in the City Art Strolls – accomplished their goal of promoting local arts and getting the community out to stroll the downtown on Friday nights during the warm weather
- Art classes
- Silent art auction
- Cabela's art show
- Organized student art displays in display windows
- Networked with other arts organizations
- Updated the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance website
- Frozen Fountain fund raiser
- Raffle fundraiser

2011 Arts Alliance Goals

- Plan and host the first annual Hamburg Arts Fest to be held in May
- Update and redesign promotional tools, i.e. an arts alliance brochure / rack card and an updated flier for the Gallery of Hamburg
- Augment the ways we utilize the www.hamburgpa.org website to promote the arts; consider stepping into the realm of e-commerce in association with the Gallery
- PLUS all of the above activities, except hosting the 1st Friday Art Strolls



A sampling of art work displayed in the Gallery of Hamburg

The Blueprint Community Team: Let's Work Together!

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

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

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

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

Funding for implementation of specific projects is sought from public and private sources such as DCED, DCNR, USDA, and the Schuylkill River Heritage Association, as well as County programs such as Community Development Block Grants and the Greater Berks Development Fund.

Local partnering organizations include:

- Borough of Hamburg
- Reading Railroad Museum
- Hamburg Area Historical Society
- North Berks Recreation Assoc.
- Blue Mountain Wildlife
- The Hamburg Area School District
- Hamburg Rotary Club

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

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

Heritage Towns and Tours Program

Hamburg was one of five communities chosen to take part in a “Heritage Towns and Tours Program” that is being initiated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. It was created to assist communities with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA) to diversify and develop heritage and cultural tourism offerings and attractions that enhance the character of communities, link to the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail, increase visitation and visitor spending, and help improve the economy of program participants.

Heritage resources are the unique places, attractions and stories that make our community’s identity. Examples in Hamburg are historic buildings such as the Hamburg Public Library, the abundance of natural recreational opportunities, the Reading Railroad museum, the Hamburg Area Historical Society, and the Gallery of Hamburg.

Cultural and heritage tourism can improve our local community if it is promoted. A big part of becoming a heritage destination is being aware of how Hamburg’s historic and cultural assets can draw visitors. Preserved historic buildings and landscapes, events, attractions, and special neighborhoods attract tourists. What visitors want is a sense of being in a “place” not just “any place.”

Our Town Foundation will be partnering with other local organizations that support our heritage, to create a specific action plan for Hamburg describing how we can use the grant funds we are receiving to create a heritage destination.

Some of the ideas are:

- Improve the on ground connections between the water and land trails to our downtown
- Create a brochure on our natural recreational opportunities within the region
- Directional signs in town
- Additional signage on the highways directing people to the cultural resources
- Creating a bike sharing program
- Starting a river tubing business
- Geocaching
- Additional bike racks
- Changeable exhibits at the Reading Railroad Museum
- Distribution of our Architectural Walking Tour brochure
- Expansion of the Hamburg Area Historical Society
- Opening of a dog park
- Erect new signage at the entry points in town, recognizing Richard Etchberger
- Recruit additional businesses that can serve the needs of the destination traveler
- PLUS any other ideas the group feels will support the program

Elm Street Community Program:

Maple Street to Walnut Street Neighborhood Revitalization Program

The Elm Street 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.

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

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

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

After a lengthy planning process and two years of waiting, Our Town Foundation received word that we were finally designated by DCED as an Elm Street community – one of 28 communities in PA to have this designation.

Being designated as an Elm Street Community increases the opportunity to receive up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in residential reinvestment grants, if funding remains available from DCED.

Like the Main Street program, the Elm Street Project must have defined boundaries for revitalization. The chosen neighborhood must be adjacent to the existing borders of the Main Street corridor. In Hamburg it consists of 15 blocks at the southern end of town – between Walnut and Maple Streets, including 3rd, 4th, and Peach Street.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The committees are as follows:

Clean, Safe, and Green

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

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

Neighbors and Economy

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

Employment rates and homeownership

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

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

Image and Identity

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

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

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

Design

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

Architectural consistency

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

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

