



OUR TOWN  
FOUNDATION

# 2024

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# Annual REPORT

## **OUR TOWN FOUNDATION**

A 501(C)3 CHARITABLE  
NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

## **SHAPING HAMBURG'S FUTURE**

☎ 610-562-3106

✉ [otfmanager@aol.com](mailto:otfmanager@aol.com)

🌐 [www.hamburgpa.org](http://www.hamburgpa.org)



# STAFF

Deena Kershner, Executive Director  
Lynn Weller, Assistant Director  
Jessica Hoagland, Art Alliance Coordinator  
Bethany Sholl, Theater Manager  
Stephanie Adam, Theater Coordinator

## 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 budgets and committee action plans. The Board of Directors strives to get everyone working towards common goals.

### 2024 Board of Directors

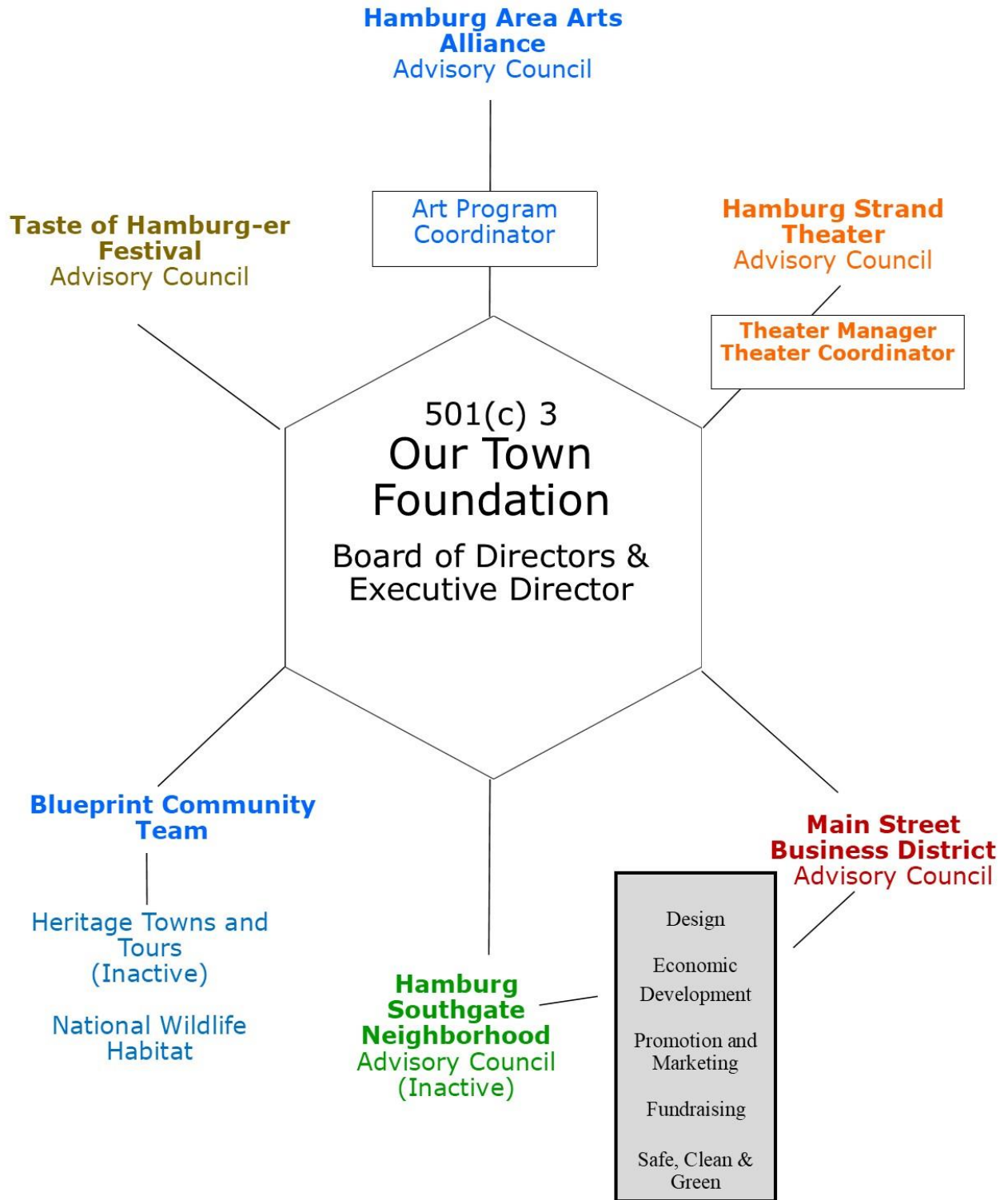
Jeff Pettit, *President*  
Jeremy Hoagland, *Vice President*  
Cindy Blefgen, *Treasurer*  
Linda Wood, *Recording Secretary*  
Stephanie Adam  
Keith Brobst  
Allen Madeira

Stephanie Menapace  
Donna Palko  
Gerry Schappell  
Ann Steffel  
Vreeland Wood  
Joshua Youpa

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

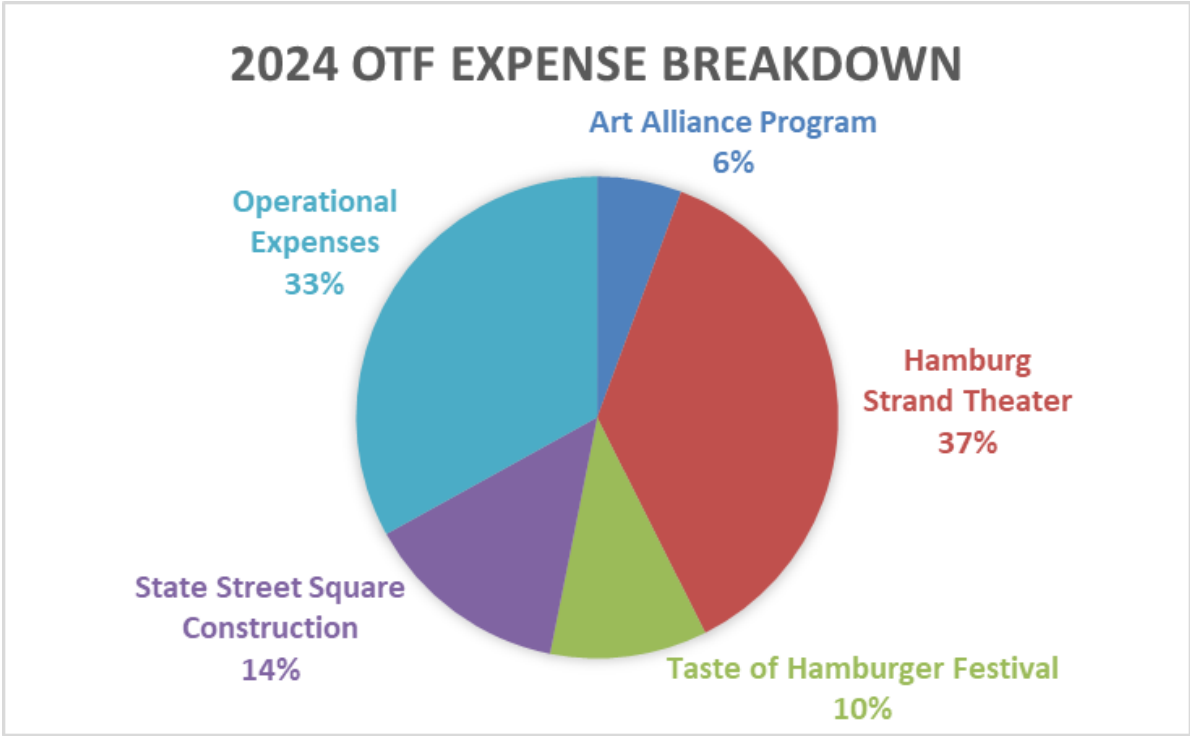
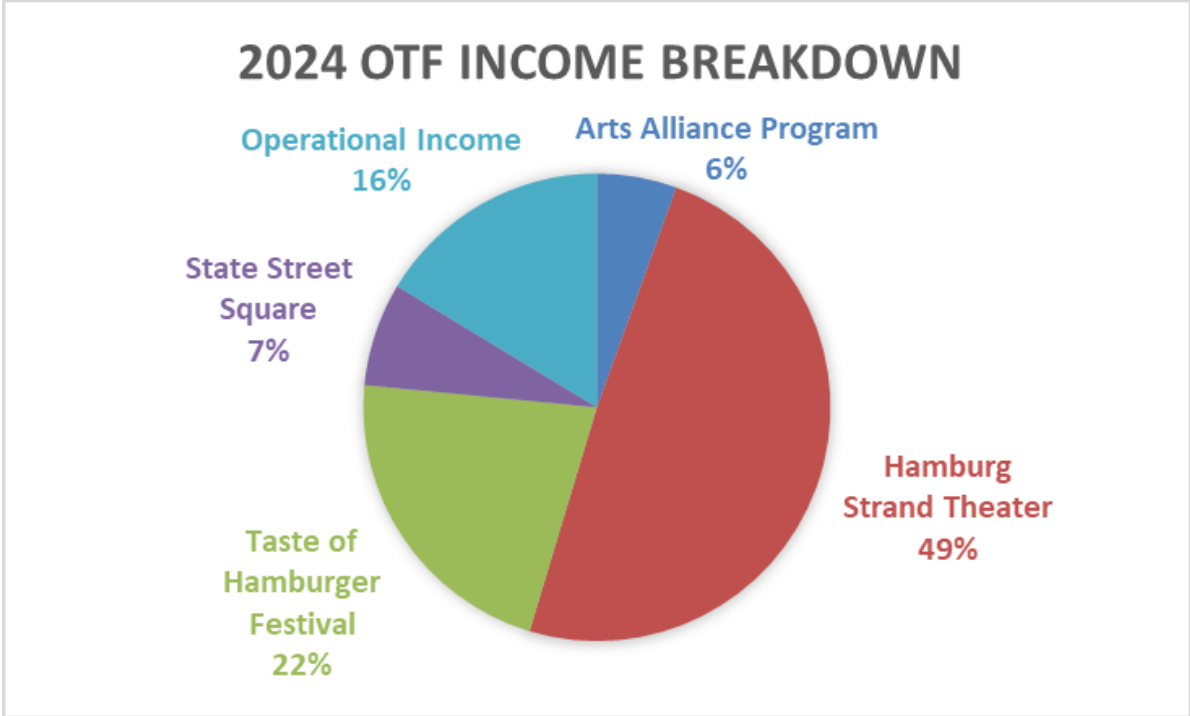
- Assuring sustainability of the organization
- Reviewing all financial aspects of the organization and approving the annual budget
- Assuring all policies and procedures are followed according to by-laws and government regulations
- Coordinates capital campaigns, membership drives
- Researching additional 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
- 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

# Our Town Foundation Organizational Structure



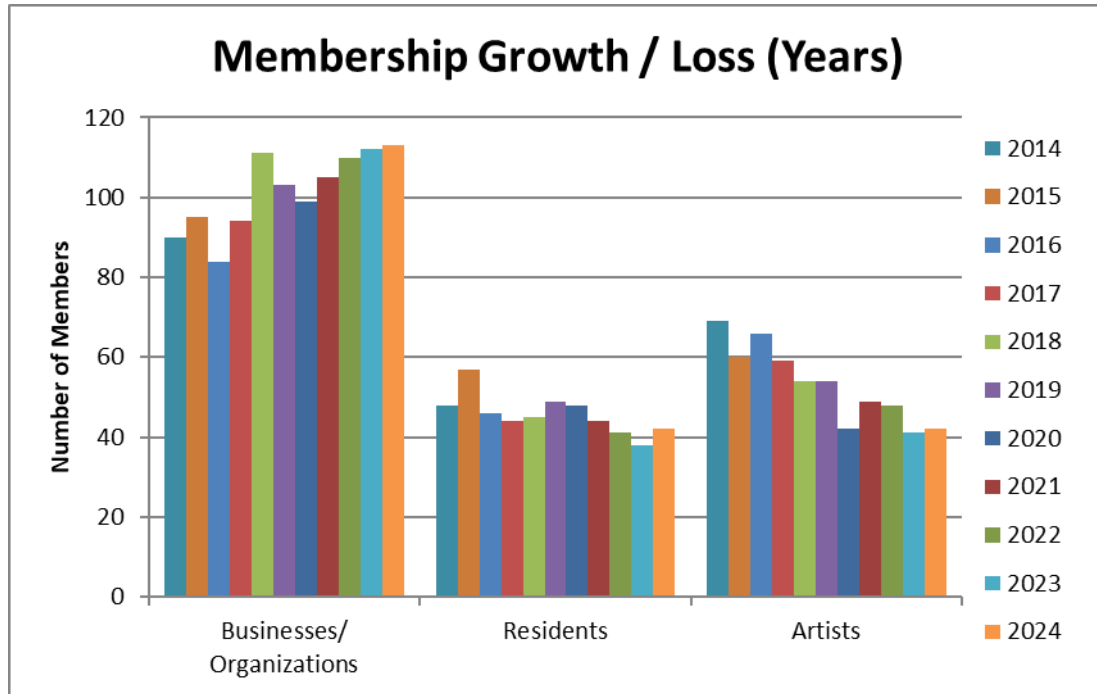
# Organization Income and Expense Snapshot

Our Town Foundation has a diverse income portfolio to fund the various programs and events of the organization. While the Hamburg Strand Theater and the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival provide solid streams of income for the organization, they also incur significant expenses. Our Town Foundation also receives income from generous donations from the community, grant income, membership dues, and property rentals. Our Town Foundation is proud of the financial strength of the organization, keeping it sustainable and benefiting the community for years to come.



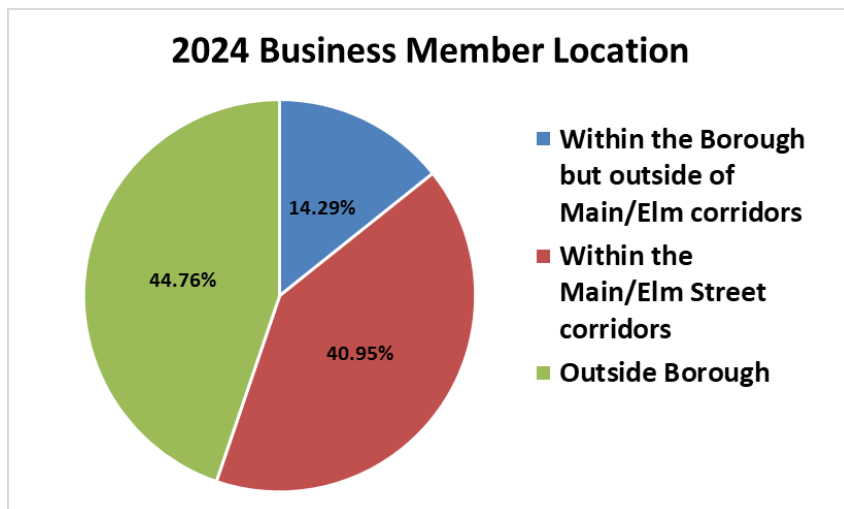
# Membership

Through the generosity of donors who have faith in its program, the Foundation is able to carry out its mission. 197 residents, artists, and businesses were members of OTF in 2024. This was an increase of six members from the previous year.



## Business/Organization Membership (113 members)

Business memberships increased by one member during 2024. Membership includes businesses located within the Hamburg Borough as well as surrounding townships and beyond. 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.

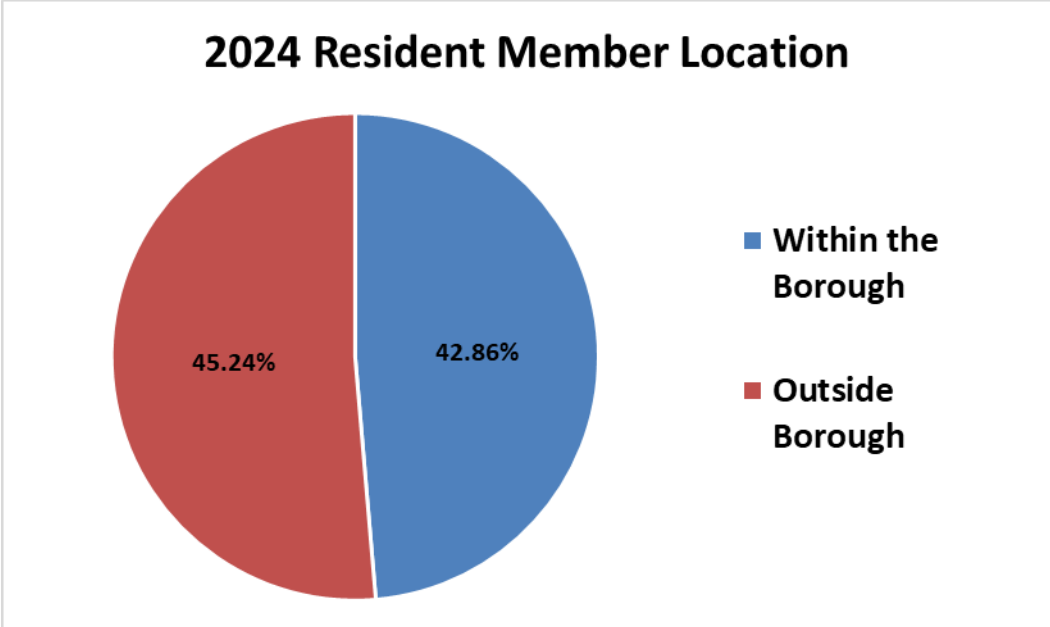


### New Business Members – 2024

- Rich Counseling, LLC
- H&B Site Services
- Physical Therapy at St. Luke's
- Good Shepherd Rehabilitation – Hamburg
- Hamburg Self Storage
- Reading Company Technical and Historical Society
- Comcast Business
- Ernesto Salgado, Coldwell Banker Realty
- Everlong Records, LLC
- Hamburg Napa Auto Parts
- Hamburg Rotary
- Wolfe Mobile Rv
- Mayfield & Co/Hazel's Cafe

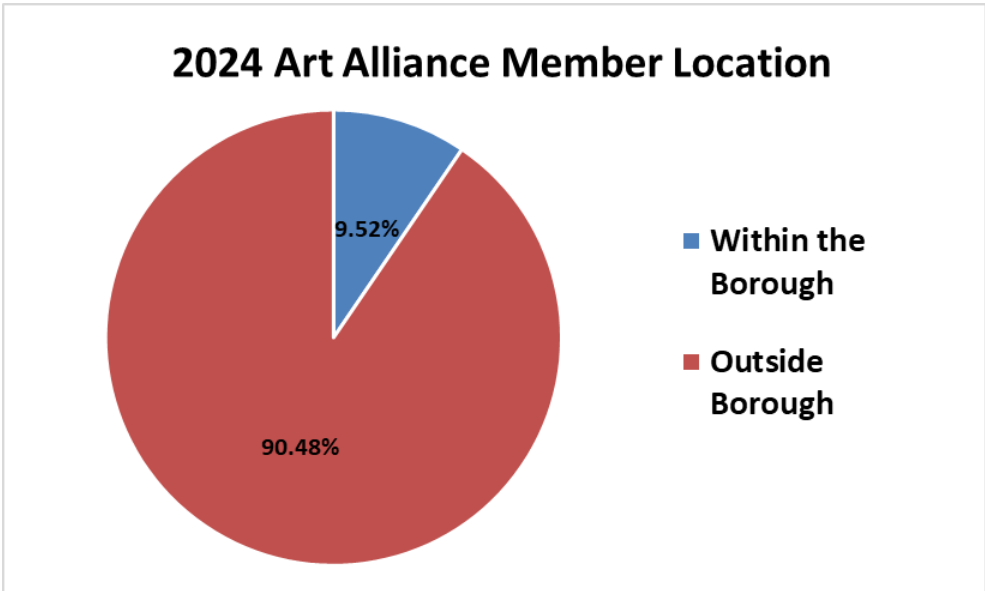
**Resident/Family Memberships (42 members)**

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. Residents enjoy the many events and activities hosted by the Foundation. Resident memberships from within the Borough as well as the neighboring townships confirm that the greater Hamburg community supports the Foundation’s endeavors.



**Artist Membership (42 members)**

The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) is a group of regional artists who carry out its mission to support and showcase local artists and to advance the awareness of arts in the community. The Alliance consists of 42 current members. Of those members, 34 artists display and sell their work in the Art & Craft Gallery of Hamburg, providing residents and tourists a sampling of regional arts and culture.



## About Us

The Foundation is an extremely diverse organization that reaches out to all facets of the Hamburg Community in an effort to maintain and further enhance this already very special place. In 2024, the organization celebrated its 21st Anniversary of its original designation as a Downtown Main Street Program. The organization has since evolved into a full-fledged Community Revitalization Corporation (CRC), expanding its efforts into several areas of the community. This requires partnerships with other organizations and numerous community volunteers to ensure that revitalization efforts stretch throughout the entire borough and nearby areas.

Over the years, Our Town Foundation has administered six different programs under their umbrella:

- Downtown Main Street Program
- Taste of Hamburg-er Festival
- Hamburg Area Arts Alliance
- Hamburg Strand Theater
- The Blueprint Community Program/Heritage Towns and Tours
- Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization

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.

**Special thanks to ALL of the volunteers who donated 2993 hours of their time in 2024. Their volunteer hours equal \$93,680.90 in labor costs, as per government statistics on the value of volunteers. Please note, these are only the hours that have been recorded by the volunteers and there are many more that volunteers fail to report.**



## Grants awarded in 2024

- \$15,000 from the M&T Charitable Foundation for State Street Square patio
- \$35,382 from the Commonwealth Finance Authority to purchase all the plumbing fixtures for State Street Square Event Venue
- \$5,000 grant from Berks County through their Greenways, Parks, and Recreation grant program which will assist with the expense of finishing the concession area of State Street Square.
- \$98,287 grant to purchase new seating and new flooring in the Hamburg Strand. Funding was allocated from the Local Share Account (LSA) Grant Program administered through the PA Commonwealth Financing Authority
- \$5,000 Niagara Cares Grant
- \$10,000 Berks County Community Foundation grant for OTF's visioning expenses

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

*The Main Street Mission: Our Town Foundation exists to revitalize, promote, and preserve downtown historic Hamburg for families and future generations to enjoy.*

*The Main Street Vision of Hamburg is one of vibrant streets adorned with restored historic buildings filled with shops, restaurants, and professional services. The town will build on and prosper from the abundant natural, cultural, and historic resources within the community. Hamburg will once again be the premier location in Northern Berks for family-friendly shopping, dining, and entertainment.*

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. A thriving downtown provides an important civic forum where members of the community can congregate. The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival and other downtown 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. 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.

In 2024, Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development opened the Main Street Matters Program which includes funding for Designated Main Street Organizations. Our Town Foundation completed the extensive process to apply for the state's Main Street Matters Program Designation. This process included a community survey, visioning sessions, updated action plan and transformational strategies, map of program area, and property inventory. Input was received from community members, stakeholders, businesses owners, staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers. The application was officially submitted in November 2024 and is currently in review.



4<sup>th</sup> & State  
Streets  
Then and Now







### Mission and Vision

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

Our vision is 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.



**\$13,176** profit raised at the art bingo fundraiser to support the program



**Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg maintained regular business hours  
M-F 9-4  
Sat 10-3**

**23** arts classes were offered to the community

**2006** year HAAA was formed

**4** artist receptions held in 2024

**3** student artists featured

**2** local schools displayed student art at the gallery

### 2024 Events

- Apr – Bingo, Baskets, & Bar-BQ
- Aug - Silent Art Auction
- Sept - Progressive Dinner
- Sept - Annual Artist Member Picnic
- Nov - Wine and Cheese Reception

- Also participated in:  
February Wine Walk  
Berks Best Kept Secrets Tour  
Hawk Mountain Arts Tour



# TASTE OF HAMBURG-ER FESTIVAL

*August 31, 2024*



The annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival is Our Town Foundation's signature event. Held every year on Labor Day Saturday, the event attracts thousands of people to the downtown. Starting as a three-block festival in 2004, it now encompasses eight blocks, three parking lots, and the grass lot on State Street. It was named one of the top twelve unique festivals in PA and attracts people from all over the United States.



## Festival Highlights

**9%** increase in social media followers

**30,000** approx. attendance **\$32,642** profit raised to support Hamburg Revitalization!

**1,259** recorded volunteer hours **158** people volunteered for the festival

**12,876** burgers reported sold **32** home based business stands

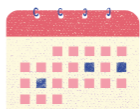
**57** Sponsors with title sponsor Kinley Automotive Group/Manderbach Ford **10** downtown participating businesses

**36** burger stands **35** other food stands **22** performing artists and groups playing on 4 stages

**73** art and craft vendor stands **17** activity stands **37** misc and non-profit stands



**2025 Festival Date is August 30th**



All Star Burger Eating Competition was won by John Diamond.

The newly constructed State Street Square was used for the first time!



Our Town Foundation

# HAMBURG STRAND THEATER



## Mission

To preserve an historic landmark in downtown Hamburg, providing ongoing movie theater entertainment and a facility where special events are welcomed and hosted for the public's enjoyment.

Our Town Foundation purchased The Hamburg Strand Theater in 2013. With the Foundation's continuing investment totaling over \$289,000 for improvements and renovations, both interior and exterior, the Strand is once again a thriving community hub.

## Theater Highlights

**18,810** regular movie tickets sold

**32** first run movies screened

**61** private parties held at the theater

**1,949** increase in ticket sales from 2023

**12** faith nights

**11** classic nights

**2** concert nights

**\$98,287** grant awarded to replace floors and seating in 2025

Continued to maintain the property by fixing the retaining wall at the back of the building and improving the HVAC systems.

## Special Events

- Holiday series of Christmas movies with two sold out shows of the "Polar Express" Pajama Party
- The 3rd Drama Club Showcase in partnership with HASD
- Rocky Horror Picture Show
- Footloose Classic Night with Dance Pointe Studio dancers
- Girls Night Out showing of "It Ends With Us"
- Hosted a live performance, Elvis Tribute with Jeff Krick
- Entered "The Strand Pirates" float in the King Frost Parade



**Weekly Showings**  
**Mon @ 7pm**  
**Thurs @ 7pm**  
**Fri @ 7pm**  
**Sat @ 4pm & 7pm**  
**Sun @ 4pm & 7pm**

**Thank you to the Theater team!**  
**Stephanie Adam**  
**Bethany and Jake Sholl**

## **State Street Square Development Project**

In 2015, Our Town Foundation purchased a one-acre vacant lot in downtown Hamburg with a goal of developing the property into an outdoor community hub – one where friends and families gather to enjoy outdoor events, live performances, and cultural activities. These events will create an engaging, vibrant community; thereby, increasing the economic vitality of the town. In addition to stimulating economic growth, the project will assist with neighborhood stability, beautify the area, and create a sense of place for the residents. Business owners will benefit by the increased pedestrian traffic flow in the area and by having an opportunity to partake in many of the events and activities, either through sponsorship of the event, participating as a vendor, having a display area promoting their business on site, or employee/business owner volunteer participation. Residents will have additional day and nighttime entertainment options and activities in an outdoor environment.

Our Town Foundation staff and Board members have been quite busy in 2024 to finish the building. The Foundation was notified earlier in the year that it received a grant from the Commonwealth Finance Authority in the amount of \$35,382 to purchase all the plumbing fixtures, a \$5,000 Niagara Cares grant, and it was recently awarded another \$5,000 grant from Berks County through their Greenways, Parks, and Recreation grant program which will assist with the expense of finishing the concession area. The next phase of the project includes framing and drywalling the interior, installing the plumbing fixtures and all the electrical wiring, and ordering kitchen equipment, which is scheduled for 2025.

There are some final touches that need to be completed on the exterior of the building as well. A stamped concrete patio will be constructed on the front and side of the building to allow seating when the concession windows are open. Thanks to the M & T Bank Charitable Foundation for gifting Our Town Foundation \$15,000 to complete the patio. Correll Construction of Hamburg has been hired to pour the concrete, with an early spring 2025 timeframe.

Our Town Foundation conducted a year-end fund drive in support of this project. Private contributions and pledges exceeded \$15,500 to support the project. The Foundation is extremely grateful for all of our supporters who have contributed to this community project since inception. When the project is completed, name recognition will be placed on the building for any donors who have contributed over \$5,000.



Completed façade and stage at State Street Square.

## **Community Marketing:**

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 the organization does and the benefits of supporting it.

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

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

The following outlines Our Town Foundation’s 2024 marketing strategies for promoting Hamburg and highlighting its attractions and resources to residents and visitors.

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 is maintained and updated by the Our Town Foundation staff.

**E-mail “Hamburg Happenings” newsletters** These attractive email blasts have allowed us to get information to its members and other subscribers faster! In 2024, a total of 34 newsletters were sent to 3,403 “Hamburg Happenings” subscribers. The newsletters included information on major Hamburg events and promotions.

**Commerce Quarterly** write ups are submitted quarterly to the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance. Each edition of this magazine features Berks County’s four Main Streets. The magazine is distributed to Chamber members and throughout the county.

**Our Town News Newsletter** is an in-house multiple page newsletter that announces Our Town Foundation news including upcoming events, new initiatives, grant funding, etc. It is mailed to all members, distributed to downtown businesses, and available to download from the web. The newsletter is done entirely in-house by the staff and is distributed four times per year.

**The Hamburg Borough** started up their seasonal newsletters to residents in 2024 and Our Town Foundation was asked to contribute with seasonal updates.

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

**Social Media** has been in full swing over the past year and all pages saw an increase in followers! Our Town Foundation officially manages several Facebook and Instagram accounts including Hamburg PA, Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, The Hamburg Strand Theater, and the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance. “Hamburg, PA” is OTF’s primary social media account with 3,136 followers on Facebook and 259 followers on Instagram. The Strand Theater has 9K followers on Facebook and 11.3K followers on Instagram. The Arts Alliance page has 931 followers on Facebook and 989 on Instagram. The Taste of Hamburger Festival has the highest number of followers at 12.1K on Facebook and 462 on Instagram.

**Brochures** are a key way the Foundation connects with visitors to the area. Brochure distribution is performed by staff and volunteers. We also maintain brochure kiosks at Cabela's and the OTF office. A grant was received from the Natural Land Trust in 2023 to reprint the Historic Hamburg Visitor's Guide which was completed and distributed in 2024.

**Press releases and media alerts** are sent to print, online, and radio media sources, 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 OTF's upcoming events.

**Advertising in local and regional publications** is done throughout the year. In 2024 the Foundation paid for several ads promoting the town including ads in the PA Americana (Berks County Visitor's Bureau) Travel Guide, the *Reading Eagle*, and *Berks County Living Magazine*.

## 2024 Promotions and Events organized by OTF

**The Hamburg Community Clean-up** returned with 22 volunteers collecting 14 bags of trash and 7 bags of recycling.

**Bingo, Beer and BBQ** was organized by members of the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance. Approximately 300 people attended and \$13,176 was raised to support the arts.

**The Annual Garden Tour**, organized by Kay Greenawalt and members of the Native Wildlife Habitat Committee, featured gardens of several residents in the Hamburg area. Participants picked up their information packet with a list of tour stops at the Art & Craft Gallery of Hamburg, prompting tour-goers to visit local businesses as they made their way to tour stops.

**The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival** was held on August 31st. There was a good turnout with approximately 30,000 people in attendance. Several downtown businesses report that they have their best sales day of the year during this annual event. The festival also supports numerous non-profits, local restaurants and food truck owners, and artists.

**Shop Small Saturday** is a nationwide promotional event held the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This year, 20 small businesses in downtown Hamburg participated bringing shoppers into town. Shoppers were given a "passport" to get stamped at participating establishments. Once the passport was completed, they were eligible to be entered into a raffle to win one of two gift baskets with merchandise and gift cards valued at over \$250 each.

**Networking Mixers and Ribbon Cuttings** were held at six businesses in 2024: State Street Lanes, Mayfield and Company, Hazel's Café, Nail Fairy Salon, Lagatta Bakery, Mill on 3<sup>rd</sup> St.

**Activities at the Strand** – Screened 32 first run, 12 Faith Night, 11 Classic night, 8 special event movies, and one live performance, "Elvis Tribute with Jeff Krick"



**Ribbon Cutting at Hazel's Cafe**

**Community Garden** - The organization continues to manage a community garden located in Apple Alley. The garden was originally created in 2018 on a plot of land owned by Vreeland and Linda Wood. Ten garden boxes were available to rent during the first growing season of 2019. By 2022 the garden had grown to 15 beds, and they are rented for a small fee of \$30 each.

# Our Town Foundation 2024 Volunteer of the Year

## Keith Brobst



Now retired, Keith served as the Water and Wastewater Superintendent in Hamburg for 28 years. He grew up in the Hamburg area and graduated in 1973 from Hamburg Area High School. His sister-in-law asked him to serve on the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival Committee 14 years ago and he has been volunteering with Our Town Foundation ever since. He is very giving of his time and always steps up to the task when asked. In 2024 he was asked to fill an open position on the Board of Directors, which he accepted, and has since been one of the most engaged board members. Keith has always been civic minded and it is important to him to support the community.

Keith has a major role in the State Street Square development project and has been involved since its inception. He devotes many hours to the project and works hard to keep it moving despite many challenges. He says, “State Street Square can be a real asset to the community if it’s done right. I want to be involved and make sure that happens!”

For the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, he helps with event planning, set-up, and clean-up. During the festival he manages one of the entertainment stages all day. He even performs every year at the festival with his band. Keith has a passion for music and plays bass for two bands; Olde 22 and Pawn Shop Bound. He has been playing music since he was 10 years old and has a special musical talent.

When asked why he volunteers Keith says, “Everybody can complain and it seems like the people who complain the most do the least. I don’t want to be someone who complains and does nothing. I’m trying to do something to improve the community instead.” He brings a smile to the Our Town Foundation office whenever he stops by and always leaves with a friendly, “Have a good day, ladies!”

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## **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  
320 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)**



**From abundant natural recreation to growing small businesses;  
visit Hamburg, PA!**